



# MAKING GOOD THINGS LAST LONGER: THE ROLE OF SAVORING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HRM AND POSITIVE EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

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*This work studies sales managers' perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices, and the mediating and moderating processes through which these practices are linked with affective commitment. Specifically, we tested whether work engagement mediated the relationship between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and affective commitment using a sample of 117 sales managers from one large retail store. Furthermore, we tested whether managers' savoring strategies would moderate the positive relationship between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement, and if the strength of the hypothesized indirect effects were conditional on the use of savoring strategies. Results showed that the relationship between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and affective commitment was mediated by work engagement. In addition, savoring strategies were found to moderate the relationship between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement, so that the highest levels of work engagement were found in individuals who reported high perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and high use of savoring strategies. Finally, results support a conditional indirect effect of performance-oriented HR practices on predicting affective commitment via work engagement when levels of savoring strategies were moderate to high, but not when their use was low. Altogether, these results demonstrated that work engagement and savoring strategies represent key elements in explaining how perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices are associated with affective commitment. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.*

*Keywords:* performance-oriented HR practices, savoring, engagement, affective commitment

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Sales managers act on behalf of the organization and are responsible for leading and motivating others. Commitment to the organization and its goals is of utmost importance for this profession. Affective commitment is an attitude that represents the emotional bond between the employee and the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and may be cultivated through investment made in human resource (HR) practices (Takeuchi, Wang, Lepak, & Takeuchi, 2007). HR practices are an important marker by which workers evaluate how they are treated by the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). Indeed, earlier research has found consistent support for this relationship (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Paul & Anantharaman, 2003; Zacharatos, Hershcovis, Turner, & Barling, 2007). These studies, however, failed to address the contextual situations that aid in development of affective commitment. Therefore, understanding how and when perceived HR practices leads to affective commitment is fundamental. This study analyzes sales managers'

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perceptions of whether HR practices are relevant for their performance (performance-oriented HR practices) and considers two processes that explain the relationship between these perceptions and their affective commitment: one direct, through social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and another indirect, through work engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2014).

Work engagement is defined as a persistent, pervasive, and positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). A sales manager is usually very involved in motivating and empowering others, for example, by putting up sales contests and rewarding employees. In order to motivate others, they need to be motivated themselves. To be effective, sales managers need high dedication and energy—in other words, they need to be engaged at work.

Considering how important work engagement is, it is important to understand how we can increase its levels. Indeed, this seems to be a necessity, as a recent Gallup report indicated that 7 out of 10 employees in the United States are not engaged or are disengaged at work, which leads to less productivity (Gallup, 2013). Performance-oriented HR practices can foster engagement by providing sales managers with available job resources, which stimulate personal development and work motivation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

However, we further propose that sales managers' ability to sustain work motivation

(engagement) is contingent on how they deal with the upregulation of positive emotion, that is, the strategies that they use to create, maintain, and enhance emotions such as joy, happiness, and pride (Bryant, 2003). These strategies are known as savoring strategies and occur during a positive event where one intensifies or prolongs the positive feelings associated with the occasion through specific thoughts or behaviors (Bryant, 2003). For this study, we analyzed the use of multiple savoring strategies, namely, memory building, comparison, sharing with others, self-congratulation, and counting blessings (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). We propose that the cultivation of positive emotions could initiate a "upward spiral," boosting the positive effect of HRM on work engagement.

The inclusion of savoring strategies into the HRM literature helps us understand how managers can genuinely reciprocate performance-oriented HR practices by making a conscious effort to enjoy the positive events rather than simply playing a role as a manager. To our knowledge, no studies have yet analyzed how savoring can influence the relationship between performance-oriented HR practices and an individual's work engagement. Furthermore, we propose that the capacity to savor the moment will strengthen the relationship between performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement, which in turn will be associated with higher affective commitment. Thus, in exploring sales managers' experiences of HR practices, this research adds to the literature by proposing mediated and conditional indirect effects to explain how it translates into higher levels of affective commitment (Figure 1).

## Literature Review and Hypotheses

### *Link Between Perceived Human Resource Practices and Affective Commitment*

Organizational commitment is an attitude that reflects the attachment between the employee and the organization, and it is related to the desire to maintain organizational membership (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Commitment to the organization and its goals has long been considered

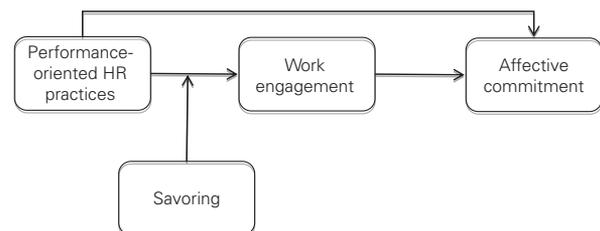


FIGURE 1. Research Model

an important feature for organizational competitiveness. It is a necessary condition so that employees who possess valued capabilities do not choose to leave to join competing firms (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

According to Meyer and Allen (1997), there are three forms of organizational commitment: affective (wish), continuance (need), and normative (obligation) commitment. Of these three forms of organizational commitment, in this study, we focus on affective commitment, because it concerns employees' emotional attachment and identification with organizational values and goals, and it is the one that has been developed as a result of HR practices (Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Whitener, 2001). Furthermore, affective commitment is the type of organizational commitment that is considered to exert the strongest influence on general attitudes and behaviors (Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002, 2008).

Earlier research has provided strong evidence linking HRM to affective commitment (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Paul & Anantharaman, 2003; Purcell, Hutchinson, Kinnie, Swart, & Rayton, 2003; Sharma & Joshi, 2001; Zacharatos et al., 2007). For example, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton, and Swart (2005) found that employee evaluations of different HR practices were linked to organizational commitment across all categories of employees (managers, professionals, and workers). Indeed, the way employees interpret HR practices is an important indicator of how they judge the way they are treated by the company (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994).

In this study, we analyze how sales managers view HR systems relative to their actual performance expectations. This is important because performance appraisal has a direct impact on other HR issues, such as rewards, careers, and even job security. Indeed, in sales positions, poor performance can lead to a decrease in variable pay, loss in bonuses, and even dismissal. Hence, when sales managers perceive HR practices as an effective contributor to performance management, they interpret this as a strong signal that the organization values and supports them and they reciprocate with affective commitment. This is in accordance with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). For example, when someone is treated well by another person or entity, he or she feels a sense of obligation to reciprocate. If employees consider that HR practices meet their needs and expectations (Hannah & Iverson, 2004;

Kinnie et al., 2005), they tend to reciprocate this treatment with positive attitudes and behaviors, namely, affective commitment (Ostroff & Bowen, 2000; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Whitener, 2001).

Based on previous studies, we can assume that performance-oriented HR practices that are committed to building employee skills and knowledge (e.g., training), recognize and reward best performers (e.g., performance appraisal, career development, compensation and rewards), and demonstrate an organization's concern for employee's welfare (e.g., work-life balance policies) should stimulate personal development and increase feelings of autonomy and competence (Lepak et al., 2006). These feelings, in turn, should nurture one's identification, involvement, and emotional connection with the work and the organization as a whole (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

### *The Role of Work Engagement as a Partial Mediator*

As stated earlier, work engagement is defined as a persistent, pervasive, and positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). It is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, the ability to not be easily fatigued, and persistence in face of difficulties. Dedication refers to a strong involvement in one's work, accompanied by feelings of enthusiasm and significance, and by a sense of pride and challenge at work. Finally, absorption refers to a state in which individuals are fully concentrated on and happily engrossed in their work, whereby time passes quickly and they have difficulties in detaching themselves from work.

Although originally three dimensions of work engagement were distinguished, recent empirical research suggests that vigor and dedication constitute its core dimensions (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006; Llorens, García, Salanova, & Cifre, 2003; Llorenz-Gumbau & Salanova-Soria, 2014; Montgomery, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Den Ouden, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Therefore, in line with Bakker and Leiter's (2014) assertion that academic researchers have defined work engagement as a unique concept, we tested sales

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managers' engagement as an overall construct with an energy dimension (vigor) and an identification dimension (dedication).

According to the job demands–resources (JD-R) approach (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014), job resources are the most important predictors of work engagement (Halbesleben, 2010; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Job resources are those aspects of the job that help workers achieve goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal development. Earlier research has suggested HR practices to be an important job resource (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). In this study, we argue that performance-oriented HR practices have the potential to influence sales managers' engagement, as the inducements provided by it meet their needs for esteem, approval,

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and goals' accomplishment. In fact, Schaufeli and Van Rhenen (2006) found that engaged managers are more inspired, energetic, cheerful, and enthusiastic than nonengaged managers.

Furthermore, work engagement, as a positive affective-cognitive state of mind, will nurture the development of managers' affective commitment toward the organization. The JD-R model proposes a mechanism via the motivational process, in which job resources foster work engagement and affective commitment (Hakanen & Roodt, 2014). Performance-oriented HR practices, hence, can be considered job resources that foster both extrinsic and intrinsic work motivation. This,

in turn, will make it more likely for sales managers to nurture an affective attachment to the organization that makes such an investment in them. Engaged employees will likely feel more committed to the organization that provides them with these job resources. Indeed, other studies have proposed the role of work engagement as a mechanism through which job resources exert positive influences on organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Halbesleben, 2010; Parzefall & Hakanen, 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

However, our assumption is that engagement is a partial mediator between the perception of performance-oriented HR practices and affective commitment. Indeed, based on the norm of reciprocity, we propose a direct effect between performance-oriented HR practices and affective commitment, and, grounded on the JD-R model, an indirect motivational process, through engagement.

Thus, we expect that:

*Hypothesis 1a: Perceived performance-oriented HR practices are positively associated with affective commitment.*

*Hypothesis 1b: Work engagement partially mediates the relationship between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and affective commitment.*

### *Savoring Strategies as a Moderator of This Mediated Relationship*

In this study, we look at savoring as a way to increase work engagement via performance-oriented HR practices. The concept of savoring was born out of earlier work on subjective mental health when researchers concluded that a positive counterpart to coping was missing (Bryant & Veroff, 1984) on the literature. If individuals are able to make self-assessments regarding their ability to manage stressors, then they should also be able to make assessments about their ability to savor positive events. Indeed, the tendency to savor the moment has been positively associated with present happiness, percentage of time happy, optimism, self-control behaviors, life satisfaction, and self-esteem; and negatively correlated with hopelessness, neuroticism, and depression (Bryant, 2003; Hurley & Kwon, 2012).

Thus, the ability to savor the moment is critical for manager's morale: if sales managers are capable of upregulating positive emotions while celebrating, they might initiate an "upward spiral" that enhances resilience and well-being in the long-term (Fredrickson, 2000). In other words, they may become more engaged. However, studies of savoring strategies in organizational settings are scarce. It seems that savoring can be a useful construct to be applied in the management field, particularly HRM, given the potential benefits savoring may have on employees. For example, Bryant (2003) stated that just because one experiences positive events, it does not mean that one feels capable of savoring these moments, that is, of generating, intensifying, and prolonging enjoyment through one's own volition. Indeed, managers may look forward to upcoming performance targets in ways that undermine present-focused enjoyment when the positive events actually occur. Thus, they may be anxious about the future, without focusing on the success of the present. Bryant and Veroff (2007) elaborated on the idea of savoring the moment and proposed that individuals can savor the moment through multiple means, including behavioral, interpersonal, and cognitive strategies.

Savoring strategies vary from person to person and reflect not only momentary cognitive-behavioral responses, but also dispositional (trait) styles of savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Furthermore, savoring responses are complex and people use a broader range of savoring strategies (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Therefore, in this study, instead of focusing on the isolated effect of specific strategies, we relied on managers' propensity to savor, and analyzed a system composed of five savoring strategies: memory building, comparison, sharing with others, self-congratulation, and counting blessings (Bryant & Veroff, 2007).

- *Memory building.* This strategy includes thoughts about those with whom managers would like to share the moment. These thoughts prompt people to purposefully store the images and details in anticipation of reconstructing and sharing the joy with important relations later (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Thus, they help managers imagine this positive future and feelings of joy.
- *Comparison.* While making comparisons, managers contrast their own feelings with those of others, or contrast a situation with another from the past or an imagined future. Comparing can enhance enjoyment, leading managers to think back to events that led up to the positive moment—to a time when they didn't have it and wanted it, recording other past pleasant events, or reminding themselves that others who were involved in the event were also thinking and feeling the same way. Thus, it is similar to recalling it, but managers purposefully compare those past feelings/imagined future to the positive feelings they are experiencing.
- *Sharing with others.* This strategy is associated with positive affect above and beyond the affect related to the positive event alone (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Sharing with others is considered to increase the perceived value of the event and creates enthusiastic responses about the good news. This, in turn, promotes the development of trust and prosocial interaction (Reis et al., 2010). Thus, the ability to share the news enhances its impact, as others will feel joy related to it and share the positive feelings toward the event.
- *Self-congratulation.* This strategy means that managers tell themselves how proud they are, or how impressed others must be with them. Although this is typically a cognitive strategy, Bryant (2003) points out that self-congratulation can morph into behavioral forms, typically associated with celebrating a cherished

victory. Managers are able to recognize and feel proud about their accomplishments and revel in the joy of it.

- *Counting blessings.* This strategy uses primarily cognitive (e.g., I thought about what a lucky person I am), but also behavioral strategies (e.g., I said a prayer of thanks or said thank you to someone). This strategy creates a feeling of gratitude and has been associated with an increase in psychological well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Thus, it also means managers may recall the positive experience and are able to recognize and relive the joy they feel.

The benefits of enhancing savoring the moment have been documented (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), though studies on these upregulating strategies are still scarce. A recent study by Hurley and Kwon (2012) demonstrates the possibility that savoring can be trained. For example, their study used a group intervention involving education about techniques for savoring the moment in everyday positive events. The intervention resulted in decreased depressive symptoms and negative affect when compared to a control group after two weeks. This is important to HRM: if managers can increase their savoring of positive experiences, this can in turn lead to a series of positive work outcomes.

So far, most studies on savoring the moment focus on students (for a review, see Bryant & Veroff, 2007). The work by Quoidbach, Berry, Hansenne, and Mikolajczak (2010) is an exception, with a mixed sample of students and university employees. These authors found that different savoring strategies were related to emotional and cognitive well-being, and adults who used a broader range of savoring strategies were happier. To our knowledge, no other studies on savoring strategies in the context of work were published. Savoring strategies can help unveil the processes through which workers enjoy positive events. Indeed, it might strengthen the relationship between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and motivation at work if the worker is able to recognize that the positive experience (i.e., accomplishing performance targets) was in part possible because managers relied on effective HR practices that allowed the work to be accomplished. Managers may trigger an "upward spiral" through the cultivation of positive emotions,

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*Managers may trigger an "upward spiral" through the cultivation of positive emotions, such as joy and pride, booting the positive effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on work engagement.*

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such as joy and pride, booting the positive effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on work engagement. With that, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2: Savoring strategies moderate the relationship between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement such that when workers report higher use of savoring strategies, the association between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement is higher when compared to individuals with low use of savoring strategies.*

Assuming savoring strategies moderate the relationship between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement, it is also likely that perceived performance-oriented HR practices should affect affective commitment through an increase in work engagement, conditional on savoring. Therefore, we expect the following:

*Hypothesis 3: The indirect effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices to affective commitment through work engagement will be stronger when savoring strategies are high.*

## Method

### *Sample and Procedure*

All 203 sales managers of a large retail store were invited to participate. We received a total of 117 completed surveys (response rate of 58 percent). The sample comprised 51 male (43.6 percent) and 66 female (56.4 percent) respondents with an average age of 29.69 years (standard deviation [SD] = 5.50). The average tenure was about 38 months (SD = 33.94), and most sales managers were top-tier salespeople who were promoted to a management position (68.4 percent). Concerning education levels, 42.7 percent finished high school, and 57.3 percent held a college degree. The Human Resources Department sent an e-mail to all sales managers explaining research aims, the researchers' affiliation, and a link to the survey. Workers' participation was totally voluntary, and all participants were assured that their individual responses would remain confidential.

### *Measures*

Perceived performance-oriented HR practices were evaluated with 14 items selected from the scales of HR practices developed by Lepak and Snell's (2002) and Takeuchi and colleagues (2007). These items covered the following performance-oriented HR practices: training (e.g., "Part of the training I receive has to do with needs identified in the

assessment of my performance"), performance appraisal (e.g., "The criteria of performance appraisal are clear to me"), career development (e.g., "In this organization, those who perform better have more chances of keeping their jobs"), and compensation and rewards (e.g., "The rewards I get from this company are associated, at least in part, to my performance"). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Following previous studies that demonstrated that one-dimensional conceptualization of HR practices was the most appropriate method to evaluate HR systems (e.g., Batt, 2002; Becker & Huselid, 1998; Delery, 1998; Takeuchi et al., 2007), we proceeded with an exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring extraction by imposing a single-factor solution (see the appendix). All items had factor loadings of .45 or above on a single factor. This factor explained 39.47 percent of the total variance, with an eigenvalue of 5.53 and good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .88). This alpha is comparable to the one that Lepak and Snell (2002) obtained for their HR system scale (.89) and the one that Takeuchi and collaborators (2007) obtained for their HR system scale (.90).

Savoring included 16 items from the Ways of Savoring Checklist (WOSC), originally developed by Bryant and Veroff (2007). Five savoring strategies were measured: memory building (e.g., "I thought about how I'd think to myself about this event later"), comparison (e.g., "I thought back to events that led up to it—to a time when I didn't have it and wanted it"), sharing with others (e.g., "I expressed to others present how much I valued the moment and their being there to share it with me"), self-congratulation (e.g., "I reminded myself how long I had waited for this to happen"), and counting blessings ("I thought about what a lucky person I am" and "I said a prayer of thanks"). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree) indicating how they responded to positive events (accomplishing performance goals) during the past three months.

Although Bryant and Veroff (2007) originally identified multiple savoring strategies, in this study we used a general measure of one's propensity to savor. Therefore, we seek to study a blend of both cognitive and behavioral processes underlying a pattern on multiple savoring strategies that mutually reinforce each other, and upregulate positive emotional experience among these workers. For example, if a worker's common savoring strategy is to share the positive experiences with friends, improving one's ability to mindfully contemplate

the present moment or to relish in mental comparisons will help him/her savor positive moments even if no one is around. To examine the single-dimensional conceptualization of savoring, we performed a factor analysis with principal axis factoring extraction by imposing a single-factor solution (see the appendix). All items had factor loadings of .45 or above on a single factor. This factor explained 40.77 percent of the total variance, with an eigenvalue of 6.52 and good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

Work engagement was measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). We tested the core dimensions of engagement: vigor comprised six items (e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"), and dedication comprised five items (e.g., "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose"). Following previous studies that demonstrated that one-dimensional conceptualization of engagement was the most appropriate (Bakker & Leiter, 2014), we proceeded with an exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring extraction by imposing a single-factor solution (see the appendix). All items had factor loadings of .49 or above on a single factor. This factor explained 55.49 percent of the total variance, with an eigenvalue of 6.10 and good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .92). Items were answered on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never/nothing) to 6 (always, everyday), with high scores indicating high levels of engagement.

Affective commitment was measured using Meyer, Allen, and Smith's scale (1993). Six items were measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). An example item included "I feel a strong sense of belonging to (organization name)." Exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring extraction by imposing a single-factor solution (see appendix) confirmed the single dimension of the construct (factor loadings of .68 or above); one single factor explained 62.47 percent of the total variance, with an eigenvalue of 3.75 and good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .88). High scores indicate high levels of affective commitment.

### *Control Variables*

Gender and age can be related to the way people savor positive experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) and also to feelings of engagement (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007) and affective commitment (Hanlon, 1986; Marsden, Kalleberg, & Cook, 1993). Accordingly, gender was codified as a dummy variable, coded 0 if the respondent was

male and 1 if female. Age was controlled as an ordinal variable (in years).

### *Statistical Analysis*

To test our hypotheses we used a regression-based path analysis using PROCESS software, which is a computational tool for estimating and probing interactions and the conditional indirect effects of moderated mediation models (Hayes, 2012; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). PROCESS is an SPSS software macro that allows the test of the indirect effects ab, with a normal theory approach (e.g., the Sobel test) and with a bootstrap approach to calculate confidence intervals (CIs). According to MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams (2004), bootstrapping is recommended. Through the application of bootstrapped CIs, it is possible to avoid power problems introduced by asymmetric and other nonnormal sampling distributions of an indirect effect. Hypotheses were tested in two interlinked steps. First, we examined a simple Model 4 in PROCESS using 10,000 bootstrap samples, 95 percent bias-corrected bootstrap CIs for all indirect effects. This model also incorporates the multistep approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). Second, we integrated the proposed moderator variable into the model (Hypothesis 2), and we empirically tested the overall moderated mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 3). Accordingly, the procedures used to test Hypotheses 2 and 3 were integrated such that we considered the possibility of a statistically significant indirect effect being contingent on the value of the proposed moderator. To test for these hypotheses, we estimated Model 7 in PROCESS, which accounts for a conditional indirect effect of perceived HRM on affective commitment through engagement with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95 percent bias-corrected bootstrap CIs for all indirect effects. Following Aiken and West's (1991) recommendations, predictor variables were mean centered, and the conditional indirect effect was analyzed at different values of the moderator variable: the mean, one standard deviation above, and one standard deviation below the mean. Control variables were included all analysis.

### **Results**

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and the intercorrelations of the researched variables.

### *Test of Mediation*

Hypothesis 1a proposed that perceived performance-oriented HR practices were associated with higher affective commitment, and Hypothesis 1b proposed that this relationship was mediated by

**TABLE I** Descriptive Statistics and Study Variable Intercorrelations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	6
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	.57	.50					
2. Age	29.7	5.50	.01				
3. HRM	3.61	.58	-.14	-.01			
4. Engagement	4.65	1.04	-.06	.22*	.38***		
5. Affective commitment	5.34	1.11	-.16	.36***	.44***	.56**	
6. Savoring	3.73	1.20	-.05	-.01	.30**	.32**	.09

Notes:  $N = 117$ .

<sup>a</sup>Dummy variable coded 0 for male and 1 for female.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

work engagement. Table II shows that perceived performance-oriented HR practices were positively associated with work engagement ( $\beta = .59$ ,  $t = 3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Both perceived performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement were positively associated with affective commitment ( $\beta = .55$ ,  $t = 3.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and  $\beta = .40$ ,  $t = 4.85$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Furthermore, we observed a significant indirect effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on affective commitment through work engagement (indirect effect = .24; 95 percent CI from .11 to .42). Therefore, the results supported Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

### Test of Moderated Mediation

Table III presents the results for the moderator effect of savoring strategies (Hypothesis 2), and the conditional indirect effects of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on affective commitment (Hypothesis 3). Results indicated that the cross-product term between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and savoring

strategies on work engagement was significant ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $t = 2.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

These interaction effects are represented in Figure 2. As expected, the association between perceived performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement is higher in individuals with high savoring strategies. When savoring strategies are low, perceived performance-oriented HR practices have a weak effect on work engagement. Results indicate the highest levels of work engagement are found in individuals who report high perceived performance-oriented HR practices and high use of savoring strategies; therefore, the results supported Hypothesis 2.

Although the results show that perceived performance-oriented HR practices interacted with savoring strategies to influence work engagement, they do not directly assess the proposed moderated mediation. Therefore, we examined the conditional indirect effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on affective commitment (through work engagement) at three levels of

**TABLE II** Regression Results for Simple Mediation

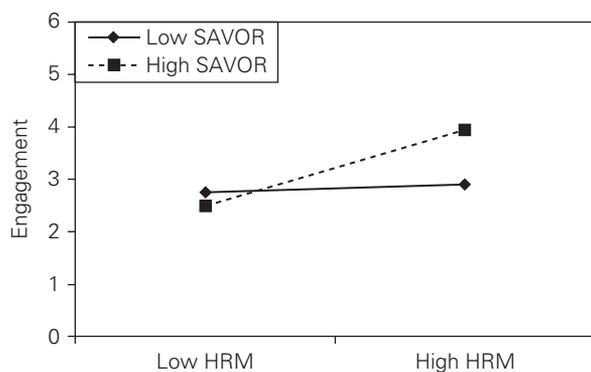
Steps	$\beta$	SE	$t$	$p$
<b>Direct and Total Effects <math>R^2 = .32</math>, <math>p &lt; .001</math></b>				
Affective commitment regressed on HRM ( $c$ path)	0.79	0.16	4.98	< .001
Engagement regressed on HRM ( $a$ path)	0.59	.16	3.58	< .001
Affective commitment regressed on engagement, controlling for HRM ( $b$ path)	0.4	0.08	4.85	< .001
Affective commitment regressed on HRM, controlling for engagement ( $c'$ path)	0.55	0.15	3.61	< .001
<b>Partial effects of control variables on affective commitment</b>				
Gender	-.26	.17	-1.53	.13
Age	.07	.02	4.73	< .001
Unstandardized value	Effect	SE	LL95%CI	UL95%CI
<b>Bootstrap results for indirect effect</b>				
Effect through engagement	.24	.08	.11	.42

Notes: Bootstrap sample size = 10,000. LL = Lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

**TABLE III** Regression Results for Moderated Mediation (Conditional Indirect Effects)

Predictor Variable	$\beta$	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>DV: Engagement (mediator) <math>R^2 = .35, p &lt; .001</math></b>				
First step				
Constant	3.01	.47	6.35	< .001
HRM	.55	.16	3.48	< .001
Savoring strategies	.19	.07	2.60	< .05
<b>Second step <math>\Delta R^2 = .06, p &lt; .001</math></b>				
Constant	3.02	.46	6.62	< .001
HRM	.40	.16	2.47	< .05
Savoring strategies	.19	.08	2.70	< .01
HRM $\times$ savoring strategies	.33	.11	2.97	< .001
<b>DV: Affective Commitment (Dependent Variable) <math>R^2 = .46, p &lt; .001</math></b>				
Constant	2.03	0.54	3.78	< .001
HRM	0.57	0.16	3.56	< .001
Engagement	0.43	0.09	4.55	< .001
Partial effects of control variables				
Gender	-.16	.17	-.97	.33
Age	.05	.02	3.07	< .01
Savoring strategies	Effects <sup>a</sup>	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
<b>Conditional indirect effect at savoring strategies = <math>M \pm 1 SD</math></b>				
- 1 SD (-1.20)	.01	.13	-.26	.24
M (.00)	.17	.08	.05	.38
+ 1 SD (+1.20)	.34	.11	.18	.61

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Unstandardized boot indirect. Bootstrap sample size = 10,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit. All predictor variables are mean-centered.



**FIGURE 2.** Interaction Effects of Savoring Strategies on the Relationship Between Perceived Performance-Oriented HR Practices (HRM) and Engagement

savoring strategies (Table III): the mean (.00), one standard deviation above the mean (1.20), and one standard deviation below the mean (-1.20).

Results supported a conditional indirect effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices

on predicting affective commitment via work engagement when supervisors reported the use of savoring strategies (Table III). Results indicated that two of the three conditional indirect effects (based on moderator values at mean and +1 SD) were positive and significantly different from zero. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported, such that the indirect and positive effect of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on affective commitment (through work engagement) was observed when levels of savoring strategies were moderate to high, but not when their use was low.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this article was to study the mediated and conditional indirect effects through which sales managers’ perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices relate to affective commitment. Going one step further in the HRM–affective commitment literature, this work analyzed the mediation effect of work engagement

and included savoring strategies as an important moderator variable in the hypothesized mediated relationship. Indeed, this is the first study to include savoring as an effective tool to increase work engagement as a result of performance-oriented HR practices.

Results demonstrate that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices are related to affective commitment. We found a direct relationship through social exchange and an indirect one via work engagement. As expected, sales managers interpret HRM investments as a signal of their value in the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994) and recognize the inducements associated with it (Hui et al., 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007), which in turn makes them feel more motivated at work (higher work engagement). This finding supports the idea that managers choose to engage themselves in their work to various degrees and in response to the resources received by the organization (perceived

HRM) (Saks, 2006). Given the direct implications of poor performance on incentives and careers, performance-oriented HR practices seem to be a valuable resource for sales managers.

Work engagement, in turn, is positively associated with higher affective commitment. In fact, results demonstrated that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices are indirectly associated with affective commitment through work engagement. Therefore, this study supports the idea of work engagement as a mechanism through which

job resources (perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices) nurture higher feelings of affective commitment (Hakanen et al., 2006; Parzefall & Hakanen, 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Indeed, sales managers work in stressful conditions, leading and guiding a team of salespeople and delivering results upward to the executive team. In these situations, effective HRM systems can make a difference: recognizing that there is a system of performance-oriented HR practices that was designed to develop the skills necessary to perform the job, evaluate the contributions, and reward the achievements of workers has an influence on the joy of achieving work goals and how committed these managers feel to the organization and its goals. An alternative explanation would be that these sales managers see themselves as agents of the organization and act as role models to their team members. Therefore, to perform their jobs effectively and avoid cognitive dissonance, they

must have high levels of affective commitment and must be positive and motivated, not only for themselves but for others.

In this study, we follow Bryant's (2003) idea that experiencing positive events (like achieving goals) is not a guarantee that managers feel capable of savoring those moments. In fact, the capacity to upregulate positive emotions while celebrating the positive events requires the development of multiple behavioral, interpersonal, and cognitive strategies (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Our findings suggest that using savoring strategies (e.g., memory building, comparison, sharing with others, self-congratulation, and counting blessings) is an effective way to deliberately intensify and extend enjoyment. Indeed, results indicate that the association between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement levels is stronger when managers report higher use of savoring strategies. Based on these interaction effects, we can assume that workers acknowledge that the positive experience they are living (accomplishment of performance targets and celebration) is possible in part due to an effective HRM system that developed the skills and guided their behaviors as sales manager. Therefore, the active effort of savoring those positive events strengthens the relationship between performance-oriented HR practices and motivation at work. Managers seem to trigger an "upward spiral" through the cultivation of positive emotions, booting the positive effect of performance-oriented HR practices on work engagement and enhancing well-being in the long term (Fredrickson, 2000).

The inclusion of these moderated effects in our research model allowed us to disentangle the means through which this upward spiral seems to work in order to nurture managers' identification, involvement, and emotional connection with the work and the organization as a whole (Meyer et al., 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Our results supported the idea that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices are related to higher affective commitment through work engagement when managers report moderate to high use of savoring strategies, but not when it is low. This conditional indirect effect highlights the importance of managers' capacity to regulate positive emotions. The strategies that managers use to create, maintain, and enhance emotions such as joy and pride during celebrations play an important role in the HRM–affective commitment relationship.

The idea that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices translate into higher affective commitment is grounded in social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Blau 1964;

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*This is the first study to include savoring as an effective tool to increase work engagement as a result of performance-oriented HR practices.*

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Gouldner, 1960). However, altogether, the results of this study hint at the possibility that the willingness to reciprocate seems to be partially dependent on the motivation at work, which in turn is in part determined by the capacity to savor the moment. Managers might be aware of the positive event (and give away “paper crowns” or monetary prizes to their team members) without actually savoring it. Consequently, managers might not be taking the full advantage that these positive events can bring. Indeed, savoring strategies seem to play a determinant role in explaining motivation maintenance (engagement) elicited at work. As stated by Schaufeli and Salanova (2007), work engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather, it is “a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state” (p. 141). This is of crucial importance since all efforts to develop high-commitment and high-performance HR systems (Batt, 2002; Takeuchi et al., 2007) might in fact be undermined if managers don’t take the time to pay attention and appreciate those moments of celebration.

*Limitations and Future Studies*

These results must be interpreted in light of some weaknesses. First, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow the establishment of causal relationships between research variables; and second, data on these variables were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which might lead to problems such as common method variance. However, as the study seeks to understand managers’ emotional reactions to performance-oriented HR practices and positive events, self-reported data seem the most appropriate to capture employees’ perceptions and appraisals of these variables. Moreover, as Spector (2006) observes, common method variance concerns associated with heavy reliance on self-reported data measurements may be overstated. Researchers should feel encouraged to conduct new studies with longitudinal designs and information gathered from different sources. Third, regarding the study participants, this work exclusively sampled a group of sales managers, raising questions regarding generalization of results to other occupations. Fourth, a potential confound of the present study is that people who are high in savoring might also differ in other meaningful ways. In fact, the tendency to savor the moment has been significantly associated with personality and happiness (Bryant, 2003; Hurley & Kwon, 2012), and in this study we were unable to control for possible confounding effects of individual variables. Future studies should include these variables to provide a more robust test of the role of savoring (instead of a general tendency to see the world in a positive way)

as a moderator variable. While we believe that work engagement is an important prerequisite for sales managers’ effectiveness, we did not measure their actual performance. Researchers should be encouraged to examine this link empirically. Furthermore, it would be interesting to test with a multilevel design whether sales managers with higher affective commitment can influence team’s affective commitment via the contagion effects of savoring practices.

*Implications for Practitioners*

This study has important implications for practitioners. From our results it seems that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices relate to how engaged managers feel and how they reciprocate with affective commitment. Therefore, it is important to promote clear and unequivocal HR practices and their purposes. Findings demonstrate that the capacity to savor positive events is an amplifier of the strength of the relationship between perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and work engagement. This is important because savoring the moment (celebration of goal accomplishment) may increase the perceived value of the achievement and, furthermore, establish a contingency link between the resources provided by the HRM system and the delivery of results. As demonstrated, being aware of one’s positive events is a necessary but insufficient condition for motivation: it is critical for employees to nurture thoughts and promote behaviors that help feeling and communicating the joy and pride associated with those events. Furthermore, it seems that the willingness to reciprocate (with affective commitment) is partially dependent on the motivation at work (engagement), which, in turn, is in part determined by perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices and the capacity to savor the moment. This calls for major attention to sales managers’ capacity and willingness to appreciate the good moments and savor them. As previously discussed, work engagement is not a momentary feeling. Savoring strategies can play a role in sustaining motivation at work, consolidating feelings of vigor and dedication. Indeed, through savoring, managers seem to trigger an “upward spiral” that enhances motivation at work. Savoring strategies are a sort of perceived control over positive emotions, namely,

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*Being aware of one’s positive events is a necessary but insufficient condition for motivation: it is critical for employees to nurture thoughts and promote behaviors that help feeling and communicating the joy and pride associated with those events.*

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the perceived capacity to find it, regulate it, and maintain it; therefore, they can be a target for intervention (Hurley & Kwon, 2012).

## Conclusion

The purpose of our research was to begin to build an integrative framework bridging HRM–affective commitment literature with motivation at work and savoring research. Our first conclusion is that perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices are important pieces of information that influence sales managers' affective commitment. However, this article adds to the existing literature by putting forth a theoretical model and studying the moderated mediated effects through which perceptions of performance-oriented HR practices lead to higher affective commitment. In addition, we highlight the importance of savoring strategies, for example, the diverse ways that managers go about trying to increase and savor

positive emotions in their daily lives. These strategies include thoughts and behaviors that can be taught and therefore targeted for organizational interventions. We demonstrate that these strategies have the potential to trigger upward spirals of motivation at work and condition the indirect effects of perceived performance-oriented HR practices on affective commitment through motivation at work. Savoring strategies seem to create a contingency link between the HRM system and the positive event (achieving goals), boosting motivation. Through savoring, managers can genuinely reciprocate performance-oriented HR practices, appreciating the moments and savoring the joy and pride, instead of simply playing an entertainer role to their team.

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**APPENDIX Exploratory Factor Analyses and Reliability Test for the Questionnaire Scales**

<b>HRM Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted</b>
Part of the training I receive has to do with needs identified in the assessment of my performance.	.45	.37	.87
Keeping my job in this organization is dependent on the quality of work performed.	.57	.47	.87
The rewards I receive include fringe benefits (bonuses) in addition to a fixed salary.	.53	.44	.87
The training I have received has made me versatile, increasing my value in the job market.	.60	.50	.86
I have received training that helps me progress here in the organization.	.76	.68	.86
There is an appropriate balance between qualitative and quantitative criteria of performance evaluation.	.73	.67	.85
Those who perform better receive more rewards.	.71	.66	.85
The criteria of performance appraisal are clear to me.	.76	.69	.85
This company prefers to keep the same people working than hiring new employees.	.46	.35	.87
When I started working at this company, I received the necessary training to perform my duties.	.56	.50	.86
The rewards I get from this company are associated, at least in part, to my performance.	.68	.60	.86
My supervisor informed me the criteria for performance evaluation.	.54	.46	.87
In this organization, those who perform better have more chances of keeping their jobs.	.62	.51	.86
The training I have received at this company enables me to get a better job within it.	.71	.66	.86

Notes: Percentage of variance explained = 39.47%; Cronbach's alpha = .88.

<b>Savoring Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted</b>
I thought about sharing the memory of this later with other people.	.47	.42	.90
I tried to take in every sensory property of the event (sights, sounds, smells, etc.).	.60	.53	.90
I thought about what a lucky person I am.	.71	.65	.89
I reminded myself how long I had waited for this to happen.	.56	.51	.90
I thought about how I'd think to myself about this event later.	.45	.36	.90
I said a prayer of thanks.	.76	.70	.89
I reminded myself how lucky I was to have this good thing happen to me.	.64	.56	.89
I thought back to events that led up to it—to a time when I didn't have it and wanted it.	.75	.69	.89
I looked for other people to share it with.	.49	.44	.90
I told myself how proud I was.	.59	.53	.90

**APPENDIX Exploratory Factor Analyses and Reliability Test for the Questionnaire Scales (Continued)**

I consciously reflected on the situation—took in details, tried to remember them, made comparisons.	.72	.64	.89
I reminded myself that others who were involved in the event were also thinking and feeling the same way.	.75	.69	.89
I expressed to others present how much I valued the moment (and their being there to share it with me).	.61	.56	.89
I told myself why I deserved this good thing.	.67	.60	.89
I compared myself to others (asked myself “Am I enjoying this as much as they are?”)	.64	.57	.89
I made associations with other past pleasant events and reminded myself of them.	.71	.65	.89

Notes: Percentage of variance explained = 40.77%; Cronbach's alpha = .90

<b>Engagement Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted</b>
At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	.77	.57	.91
I am proud of the work that I do.	.65	.44	.91
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	.81	.67	.90
To me, my job is challenging.	.84	.73	.90
My job inspires me.	.83	.70	.90
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	.49	.42	.92
I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	.57	.51	.91
I am enthusiastic about my job.	.81	.71	.90
At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.	.84	.78	.90
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	.71	.54	.90
At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	.77	.65	.91

Notes: Percentage of variance explained = 55.49%; Cronbach's alpha = .92

<b>Affective Commitment Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted</b>
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.68	.56	.88
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	.73	.61	.87
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.82	.73	.85
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (R).	.79	.69	.86
I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organization. (R).	.83	.74	.85
I do not feel “emotionally attached” to this organization (R).	.86	.78	.84

Notes: Percentage of variance explained = 62.47%; Cronbach's alpha = .88; (R) = Reversed-coded item.