The Role of Salesperson Growth Mindset in Organizational Commitment

By Christopher A. Nelson and Michael F. Walsh

This study adds to the literature on the effect of salesperson job satisfaction and supervisor trust on organizational commitment. We show that when salespeople possess a growth mindset (a trait tendency to believe that individuals' core attributes are malleable), the positive relationship between organizational commitment and both job satisfaction and supervisor trust is enhanced. This impact extends beyond attitudinal commitment to the willingness to voluntarily invest time and effort in the firm. Hiring salespeople with a growth mindset can enhance the firm's efforts in achieving organizational commitment. Fostering an environment that encourages a growth mindset is of fundamental importance to firm.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the factors that influence the organizational commitment of salespeople is of vital importance to both researchers and sales managers (Rajabi et al, 2019). "No longer do salespeople make a career out of selling for one company during their professional life. Instead, most salespeople hold multiple jobs and work for several companies during their lifetime" (Cron et al, 2005, p. 124). Poor retention can be damaging to a firm, as research estimates a direct cost of $100,000 per salesperson with many firms experiencing turnover rates greater than 50% (Rutherford et al, 2019). Additional indirect costs stemming from the reduction in buyer relationship quality and retention further exacerbate these negative financial outcomes for firms (Boles et al, 2000; Johnson et al, 2001), thus suggesting a need to focus on retaining salespeople.

In response, firms have invested heavily in a variety of retention efforts for sales professionals for the purpose of building mutually beneficial relationships (e.g., Cron et al, 2005). Specifically, firms have attempted to increase the salesperson's organizational commitment by reducing role ambiguity and role conflict, and through

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improving socialization, organizational support, and satisfaction (Rajabi et al, 2019). For example, this can occur when the sales manager is able to provide a clear understanding of what is expected, find commonalities with the salesperson, and help the salesperson find aspects of the job that the salesperson enjoys. Of fundamental importance in this approach is the development of trust and satisfaction (Palmatier et al, 2006). For example, research on organizational relationships demonstrates that increased job satisfaction and supervisor trust lead to organizational commitment (e.g., Boles et al, 2007; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Nyhan, 1999; Rajabi et al, 2019). Organizational commitment involves identifying with an organization and being committed to the pursuit of organizational goals (Maltz and Kohli, 1996). However, there is limited research on the potential individual differences underlying the decision to commit to an organization. To fill this gap, we explore the relationships between individual differences in learning and in so doing, identify a personality trait that moderates a salesperson's commitment to his/her organization.

Building on research that demonstrates the importance of salespeople's perceptions of job satisfaction and supervisor trust on increasing organizational commitment, this research proposes that salespeople's mindset can also positively affect organizational commitment. Specifically, salespeople who possess a growth mindset have a disposition that makes them want to learn and grow in their role at the firm. A growth mindset is a trait belief that a person's core attributes are malleable and can develop over time (Dweck et al, 1995; Heslin et al, 2020). This research predicts that salespeople who are satisfied with their role and trust

their sales manager will act on their trait tendency to learn and grow by committing to the firm.

This research contributes to the literature by providing evidence that developing a committed salesforce not only is a function of firm retention efforts but may begin with hiring and developing salespeople with a growth mindset. Hiring salespeople with a growth mindset can enhance the firm's efforts in achieving organizational commitment. This research also makes a contribution to the conceptualization of organizational commitment by examining this construct not just as an attitude but also, behaviorally, as a voluntary choice to invest time in effort in the firm. This research is managerially relevant because it provides the potential for a low-cost screening tool (i.e., trait testing for a growth mindset using survey questions) that firms can use to mitigate the costs of salespeople leaving from a lack of commitment.

In the next section, we provide a conceptual framework that defines the key constructs in our model. Then, we delineate the underlying theory linking these constructs and present the research hypotheses. Next, we describe the data collection and analysis processes and report the study results. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings and provide limitations and directions for future research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We propose a conceptual framework consisting of four variables: job satisfaction, supervisor trust, growth mindset, and organizational commitment. Figure 1 graphically depicts the model. Research has shown that the antecedent conditions of job satisfaction and supervisor trust increase organizational commitment (e.g., Boles et al, 2007; Nyhan, 1999; Singh et al, 1996). We propose that the trait variable growth mindset will strengthen the relationship between organizational commitment and both job satisfaction and supervisor trust.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.
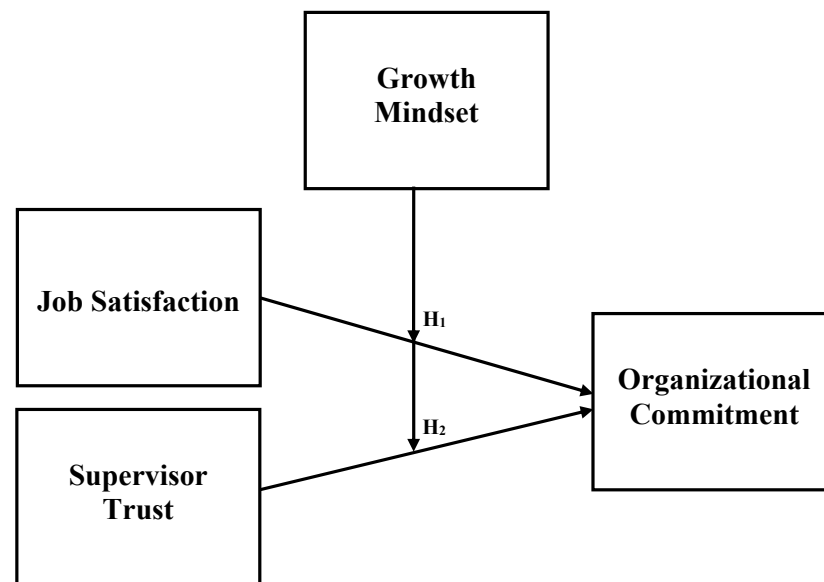
Job satisfaction, supervisor trust, growth mindset, and organizational commitment

Job satisfaction refers to "a pleasurable or positive emotional state, which is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from a job and what one perceives it is offering" (Christen et al, 2006, p. 142). In effect, it is the extent to which employees have a positive or negative attitude toward their job (Bhuian and Mengue, 2002; Hunt et al, 1985).

Supervisor trust is defined as "the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust" (Doney and Cannon, 1997, p. 36). Credibility is an evaluation of the expertise, honesty, and ability of another to follow through on promises. Benevolence is an assessment of whether another individual is concerned with joint success or just individual reward. Trust often grows over time and contains a predictive component of how another individual or firm will behave in the future (Lewicki et al, 2006).

Individuals hold beliefs or lay theories (i.e., theories used in professional practice or everyday life) that organize and give meaning to their experiences (Dweck and Molden, 2005; Kelly, 1955). These meaning systems are critical to an individual's construction of a "world view" (Piaget and Garcia, 1989; Piaget et al,1991). Relating to this world view construction is a growth mindset. *Growth mindset* is defined as an individual that "assumes that personal attributes are relatively malleable" (Heslin et al, 2005, p. 842). It derives from the principle that people can fundamentally change and that challenges, effort, and learning can improve their ability and intelligence. Research in organizational behavior indicates that individuals with a growth mindset are more adept at learning from experience and tend to be more engaged at work (Canels et al, 2018; Heslin and Keating, 2017; Keuting and Heslin, 2015). They also enact more functional responses to complex and anxiety producing challenges (Heslin et al, 2020; Heslin and Keating, 2017). Individuals with a high growth mindset are more resilient, responding positively to setbacks (Seibert et al, 2016; Zingoni and Byron, 2017). As such, salespeople with a growth mindset demonstrate higher job performance, possess better relationships with management, have a greater desire to learn, and show greater persistence when confronted by setbacks and failures (Zingoni and Corey, 2017).

Organizational commitment reflects an "individual's belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization, and a strong desire to remain in an organization … and is characterized as employees' willingness to contribute to organizational goals" (Boles et al, 2007, p. 312). Many studies investigating organizational commitment have primarily assessed organizational commitment as an attitude (e.g.,

Macintosh and Krush, 2014; Rutherford et al, 2009). We build on this approach, by considering the behavioral intention to contribute to organizational goals in addition to attitudinal commitment. An indication of this is a salesperson's willingness to invest time and effort in the organization, which is captured through his or her approach to training. Specifically, when a salesperson demonstrates a desire to maintain the relationship with the firm by investing time and effort in the firm that would be difficult to redeploy in other relationships (e.g., a salesperson investing time and effort in firm-specific training instead of more general training).

Firm-specific training tends to help sales professionals in their current jobs, but this requires that they have a long-term orientation toward the firm to justify the short-term investment required of time and effort in the training. Firm-specific training is organization-specific learning investments that are not easily transferred to other firms, in contrast with generalized training, which can be easily transferred. Firm-specific knowledge is mutually beneficial to both salespeople and the sales firm because it allows salespeople to adapt to each individual customer's needs, increasing their sales effectiveness (Leong et al, 1989; Weitz, 1981). Making this type of investment in firm-specific training can be risky for salespeople because firm-specific skills are not transferable to other jobs, representing the potential for wasted effort if they are considering switching sales firms. Thus, satisfied salespeople are more likely to want to remain with an organization and will be more inclined to demonstrate that commitment by engaging in firm-specific training. In the next section, we develop hypotheses that integrate implicit person theory to provide a more complete explanation of how the trait value growth mindset can enhance the positive relationships between organizational commitment and both job satisfaction and supervisor trust

Underlying theory and hypotheses

Individuals construct meaning systems, which are beliefs or lay theories that organize and give meaning to their experiences (Dweck, 2008). These meaning systems are key to shaping how people think about themselves and other individuals. A key meaning system for understanding others is *implicit person theory* (IPT), which can be defined as "the implicit beliefs people hold

about the stability of human characteristics (e.g. ability and personality)" (Heslin, 2003, p. 269). This theory was born in the literature on motivation and goal pursuit (i.e., learning vs. performance) to explain how individuals view achievement. This theory evolved to also encompass how individuals view their own learning, failure, goals, and relationships; this view of self translates into how individuals interact with and understand others.

A cornerstone of this theory is the idea that successful individuals have mastery-oriented qualities (e.g., they seek out challenges and persist even in the face of obstacles); individuals with mastery-oriented qualities possess a love of learning and strongly value effort (Dweck and Sorich, 1999; Sujan et al, 1994). In sales, mastery oriented qualities improve performance over time (Ahearne et al, 2010). Although it may seem intuitive that mastery-oriented qualities stem from ability, success, praise, and confidence, several researchers have shown that this is not the case (e.g., Diener and Dweck, 1978; Henderson and Dweck, 1990; Leggett, 1985; Mueller and Dweck, 1998); rather, mastery-oriented qualities stem from how an individual understands intelligence (Dweck, 2008). Individuals with a growth mindset tend to possess mastery-oriented qualities and believe that intelligence can be changed as a product of effort (Bandura and Dweck, 1985). These individuals build self-esteem by giving their best effort and growing as a person (Dweck, 2008). Thus, they have an innate desire to commit to the organization in a way that allows them to learn and grow in their role as salespeople. "Commitment is based on the norm of reciprocity where, based on the organization's actions, the salesperson feels that there is a particular way that he or she should behave" (Fu et al, 2009, p. 335). This allows for relationships that look beyond short-term inequities to focus on longer-term mutual gains (Luo, 2002). As such, higher salesperson job satisfaction will lead to an increase in commitment (Bhuian and Mengue, 2002; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Johnston et al, 1990; Macintosh and Krush, 2014; Singh et al, 1996). This occurs because the salesperson and sales firm are engaged in an exchange process through which the salesperson determines if his or her wants and needs are being satisfied by the sales firm, driving the salesperson's feelings and intentions toward the firm (Boles et al, 2007). When satisfied, the salesperson wants to retain the benefits of job satisfaction and is willing to reciprocate to the firm by demonstrating commitment (Fu et al, 2009). This job satisfaction can elicit attitudinal commitment towards the firm or behavioral commitment in the form of increased effort (e.g., Boles et al, 2007; Kim and Brymer 2011; Rajabi et al, 2019). Thus, when salespeople with a growth mindset are satisfied with their job, they will more fully commit to an organization because they can feel confident acting on their trait tendency to learn and grow in a way that contributes to an organization.

> H1: A salesperson's growth mindset strengthens the direct positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment both on an attitudinal and behavioral basis.

There is a strong positive relationship between trust and organizational commitment (Matthai, 1989; Nyhan, 2000). This is because in the salesperson–sales manager relationship, the sales manager represents the face of the firm to the salesperson. "Sales managers have substantial control over many organizational decisions that constrain or facilitate their salespeople's career successes…. [T]he salesperson's livelihood is to a substantial degree dependent on his/her sales manager" (Strutton et al, 1993, p. 2). When the sales manager can be relied on to follow through on promises and is concerned with the best interests of his or her salespeople, a salesperson can feel comfortable accepting risk. In return, he or she is more likely to commit to the organization (Lee and Jamil, 2016).

When a salesperson with a growth mindset trusts the sales manager, the desire to support firm goals is increased by the salesperson's natural tendency to learn and grow. A growth mindset encourages the cultivation of skills to overcome current challenges (Heslin et al, 2020). Specifically, salespeople with this mindset have a strong desire to learn tactics that will be effective in overcoming obstacles to current firm objectives (Zingoni and Corey, 2016). Thus, the salesperson's growth mindset interacts to increase the positive relationship between supervisor trust and organizational commitment. This positive relationship with supervisor trust exists with both attitudinal and behavioral organizational commitment (Goodman and Dion, 2001; Lee and Jamil, 2016).

H2: A salesperson's growth mindset strengthens the direct positive relationship between supervisor trust and organizational commitment both on an attitudinal and behavioral basis.

METHODOLOGY

The hypotheses were tested using a scenario based experiment with practicing sales people. To this end, we first discuss the validation of scenarios and then we discuss the main study.

Pre-test

The manipulations were developed based on the conceptualization of trust from Doney and Cannon (1997) and the conceptualization of job satisfaction from Christen et al (2006) (for the manipulation wording, see Appendix A). Consistent with previous scholarship, an experimental vignette was developed to examine commitment (Andaleeb, 1996; Yi, Nataraajan and Gong, 2011). Manipulation wording was reviewed by two scholars with subject matter and methodological expertise before conducting the pre-test. The participants of the pre-test were 111 undergraduate marketing students attending a major Mid-Atlantic university that received credit for participation. As this study focuses on the recruitment of sales professionals with a growth mindset, "this is an appropriate sample for the study of new salespeople since over two-thirds of marketing students are hired into sales positions right out of college" (Bolander, Bonney, and Satornino, 2014, p. 524).

An independent samples t-test was run between the high (5.38) and low (3.93) job satisfaction manipulations which showed a significant difference between the groups. Similarly, an independent samples t-test was run between the high (5.49) and low (3.73) supervisor trust manipulations which showed a significant difference between the groups. As a confound check, a MANOVA was run across the four scenarios to ensure that each manipulation did not inadvertently affect "an independent variable associated with a different manipulation" (Perdue and Summers 1986, p. 322). The job satisfaction manipulation did not have a significant relationship with the trust manipulation check [$F(1,107)=1.52$, $p>.05$]. The trust manipulation

was shown to have a significant relationship with the job satisfaction manipulation check, but the effect size (eta square = .06) was negligible [$F(1,107)=15.98$, $p<.05$]. Based on the results of these checks, the validity of the scenarios was deemed acceptable. Based on these results, we conducted a study with professional salespeople, which is described below.

Sample

We recruited 251 salespeople for an online study via Qualtrics (i.e., panel company). We removed data from 94 respondents for failing an attention check or for speeding through the questions (i.e., responding faster than one-third of the median response time), which left 157 salespeople for data analysis. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to over 61 years, with the largest age category being 31–35 years. The majority were Caucasian (80%) and women (64%). While many industries were represented, the highest concentrations were in services (38%) and retail (22%). Professional work experience was also diverse: 0–9 years (27%), 10–20 years (27%), 21–30 years (25%), and 31+ years (21%).

Design

We employed a 2 × 2 between-subjects design, manipulating both job satisfaction (high vs. low) and supervisor trust (high vs. low). The scenarios were chosen at random for the respondents, with each respondent exposed to only one scenario.

Measures

After reading the scenario, respondents were asked to make a choice between firm-specific training and generalizable training, which served as a behavioral measure of commitment. The scenario stated that firm-specific training would make the salesperson 10% more proficient at his or her current position but that the skill would not transfer (0% more proficient) at all to another company. The generalized training option made the salesperson 5% more proficient at his or her current position and 5% more proficient at another company. Respondents then rated their attitudinal organizational commitment (Cronbach's α = .94) on a six-item scale from Maltz and Kohli (1996). Manipulation checks for trust and satisfaction helped ensure validity. We also measured the trait variable growth mindset (Cronbach's

α = .85) with a four-item agreement scale from Heslin et al (2005). Appendix B lists the measurement items and the standardized item loadings.

Manipulation check

An independent samples t-test run between the high (5.21) and low (3.38) job satisfaction manipulations showed a significant difference between the groups ($p <$ .01). An independent samples t-test run between the high (5.30) and low (3.18) supervisor trust manipulations also showed a significant difference between the groups ($p <$ .01). Following the procedures described in the pretest, we conducted a confound check that further validated our manipulation (Perdue and Summers, 1986). The job satisfaction manipulation had a significant relationship to the trust manipulation check, but the effect size (η^2 = .03) was negligible ($F(1, 153) = 4.25$, $p < .05$). The trust manipulation had a significant relationship to the job satisfaction manipulation check, but the effect size (η^2 = .09) was small ($F(1, 153) = 14.53$, $p < .05$). The results of these checks show that the validity of the scenarios is acceptable.

Measurement reliability and validity

A confirmatory factor analysis of the latent constructs in the conceptual framework evaluated the fit and construct validity of the proposed measurement model. The two factor model provided a better fit (commitment and growth mindset): $\chi^2 = 50.44$, df = 34, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04. We compared this with a single-factor model in which both commitment and growth mindset were loaded on the same factor: $\chi^2 =$ 314.78, df = 35, CFI = .76, RMSEA = .23, SRMR = .20. A chi-square difference test showed that this model possessed a better fit than a unidimensional model using the same items ($\Delta\chi^2(df) = 264.34$ (1), $p < .01$). The average variances extracted (AVEs) for commitment (.73) and growth mindset (.60) were above the |.5| threshold, providing additional evidence for convergent validity (Fornell and Larker, 1981; Hair et al, 2006). Composite reliability exceeded Nunnally's (1978) acceptability criteria of .70 for all measures with item-factor loadings ranging from .86 to .94 (see Appendix B). The AVE values of commitment and growth mindset were greater than the corresponding squared correlation estimates, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Results: preliminary analysis

As a preliminary analysis, we ran an ANOVA to examine the main effects of supervisor trust and job satisfaction on organizational commitment that is found in the literature. We found that there is a main effect of job satisfaction on attitudinal commitment [$F(1,153) =$ 41.74, $p < .05$]. Similarly, we found that there is a main effect of supervisor trust on attitudinal commitment [$F(1,153) = 13.35$, $p < .05$]. There is not an interaction effect between job satisfaction and supervisor trust on attitudinal commitment [$F(1,153) = 3.23$, $p > .05$]. See Table 1 for the mean and standard deviations of each condition. Additionally, we ran a chi-square to evaluate the effects job satisfaction and supervisor trust on behavioral commitment. We did not find that there is a main effect of job satisfaction on behavioral commitment [$X^2 =1.69$, d.f. = 1, $p > .05$]. We found that there is a main effect of supervisor trust on behavioral commitment [$X^2 =17.97$, d.f. = 1, $p < .05$].

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Conditions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage That Selected Firm Specific Training
High Satisfaction/High Trust	5.37	0.26	56%
High Satisfaction/Low Trust	4.21	0.24	23%
Low Satisfaction/High Trust	3.54	0.23	44%
Low Satisfaction/Low Trust	2.96	0.23	12%

Note: Mean and standard deviation scores are provided for attitudinal organizational commitment; percentage that selected firm specific training is provided for behavioral organizational commitment

Results: model testing

We began by running main effects models that examined the relationships between both job satisfaction and supervisor trust on organizational commitment. While we do not formally hypothesize the paths, we test them empirically as a replication (model 1).

We then conducted regression models to examine the hypotheses that stemmed from the conceptual framework (model 2). In both models, we conducted a multiple regression analysis when the dependent variable was organizational commitment (Likert-type variable), which we measured as attitude. We then conducted a logistic regression when the dependent variable was the behavioral measure of organizational commitment (i.e., dichotomous choice to invest time and effort in firm-specific training vs. generalized training). Specifically, we coded the dependent variable as 1 if the respondent chose firm-specific training and as 0 if the respondent chose to make an investment in generalized training. We coded the scenarios using dummy variables in both models. In model 2, we used a hierarchical step-down approach in accordance with Aiken et al (1991) recommendations. As gender has

been demonstrated to impact the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it was controlled for in our models (e.g., Boles et al, 2007). Additionally, we controlled for customer type (business-to-business sales vs. business-to-consumer sales) as consumer salespeople may have a lower level of commitment to the organization.

RESULTS

In model 1, the F-value for the multiple regression analysis is 11.46, which is significant ($p < .01$), and the R-square is .28. Consistent with the existing literature, we found that both job satisfaction ($\beta = .45$, $p < .01$) and supervisor trust ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$) have significant positive effects on attitudinal organizational commitment. Next, the F-value for the logistic regression analysis is 5.30, which is significant ($p < .01$), and the R-square is .15. We found that job satisfaction ($\beta = .13$, $p > .05$) did not have a significant effect on behavioral organizational commitment, but supervisor trust ($\beta = .35$, $p < .01$) did have a significant positive effect on behavioral organizational commitment. This partially replicated the results found in the existing literature on commitment.

Figure 2: Attitudinal Commitment
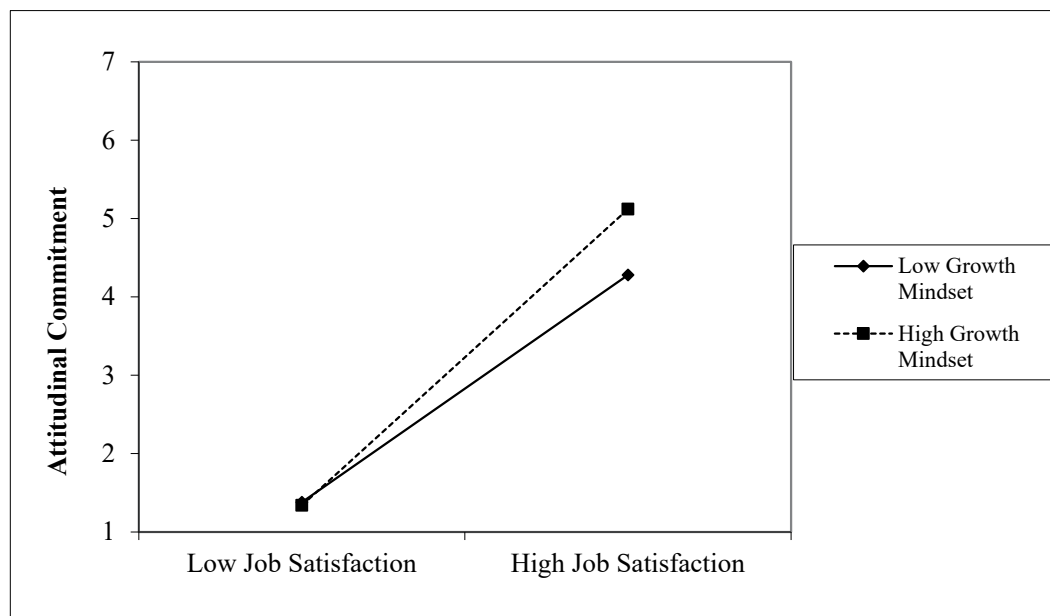
In model 2, the F-value for the multiple regression analysis is 7.23, which is significant ($p < .01$), and the R-square is .28. The amount of explained variance in this model is comparable to that in similar salesperson training research (e.g., Ahearne et al, 2005; Pettijohn et al, 2002). H1 proposes that the salesperson's growth mindset will strengthen the relationship between job satisfaction and attitudinal organizational commitment. This model provides support for the hypothesis as there is a significant interaction between growth mindset and job satisfaction ($\beta = .32$, $p < .01$). H2 posits that the salesperson's growth mindset will strengthen the relationship between supervisor trust and attitudinal organizational commitment, which is not supported. There is not a significant interaction between growth mindset and supervisor trust ($\beta = .13$, $p > .05$). While not specifically hypothesized, it is important to note that there is not a significant interaction between job satisfaction and supervisor trust ($\beta = .16$, p > .05).

Next, the F-value for the logistic regression analysis is 3.35, which is significant ($p < .01$), and the R-square is .15. This analysis provides an additional test of the theory that a salesperson's growth mindset strengthens the relationship between organizational commitment and both job satisfaction and supervisor trust by treating organizational commitment as a willingness to commit to firm-specific over generalized training. This analysis provides no further support for H1 that salesperson growth mindset enhances the positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment ($\beta = .00$, $p > .05$). However, this analysis provides support for H2, which suggests that salesperson growth mindset enhances the positive relationship between supervisor trust and organizational commitment ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$). There is not a significant interaction between job satisfaction and supervisor trust ($\beta = .16$, $p > .05$). See Table 2 for a full depiction of the model results.

DISCUSSION

In today's selling culture, it is common for salespeople to switch firms and, in doing so, take many of their customers with them. In response to this, firms will attempt to foster a level of commitment in key salespeople. Previous research on employee retention
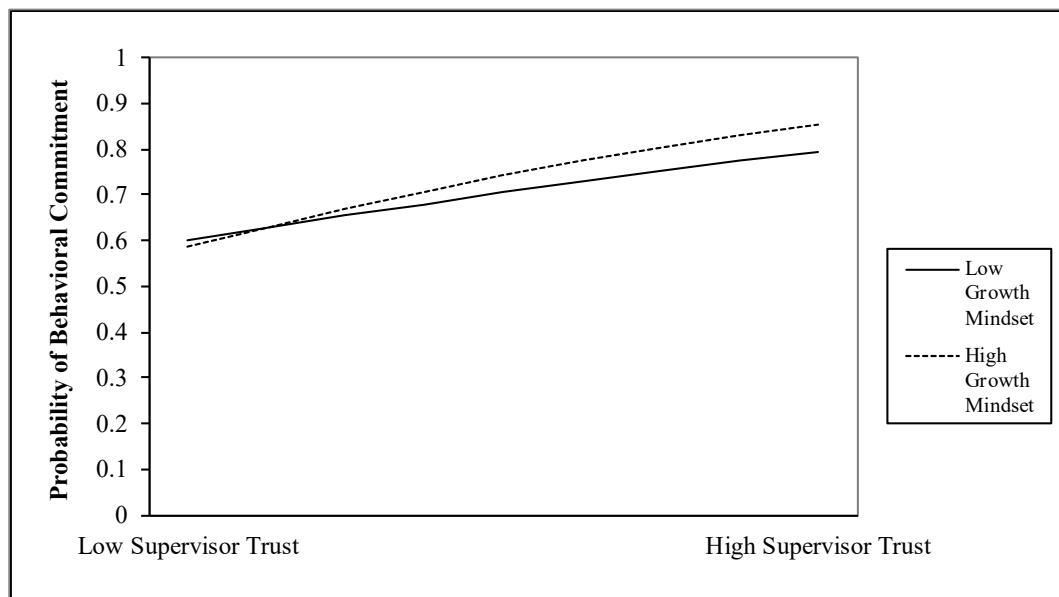
Figure 3: Behavioral Commitment

Table 2: Regression Results

Dependent Variable		DV: Attitudinal Commitment				DV: Behavioral Commitment			
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Hypothesized Path		β	t-Value	β	t-Value	β	t-Value	β	t-Value
Interactions									
Job Satisfaction x Growth Mindset	H_1			0.32	3.66**			0.00	-0.04
Supervisor Trust x Growth Mindset	H_2			0.13	1.45			0.21	2.16*
Job Satisfaction x Supervisor Trust				0.19	1.86			0.16	1.38
Main Effects									
Job Satisfaction	Replication	0.45	6.48**	0.49	1.49	0.13	1.67	-0.07	-0.25
Supervisor Trust	Replication	0.25	3.60**	0.20	0.63	0.35	4.64**	0.46	1.60
Growth Mindset		0.14	1.94	0.16	2.42	-0.08	-1.07	-0.10	-0.71
Controls									
Type of Buyer		0.02	0.23	0.01	0.19	0.04	0.47	0.04	0.49
Gender		0.04	0.62	0.04	0.59	0.12	1.55	0.09	1.19
F-Value		11.46		7.23		5.30		4.15	
R-Square		0.28		0.28		0.15		0.23	

Notes: Model 1 utilized a main effects model as a replication of the existing commitment literature. Model 2 utilized a hierarchical step-down approach in accordance with Aiken et al, (1991) as a test of the hypotheses.

*p<.05; **p<.01, standardized coefficients reported

provides evidence that both job satisfaction and supervisor trust lead to organizational commitment. The current study extends that research by demonstrating that when salespeople have a growth mindset (i.e., trait belief that people can fundamentally change their core attributes through effort and learning), the positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that between supervisor trust and organizational commitment are enhanced. Specifically, satisfied salespeople who have a growth mindset have an increased attitudinal commitment to the firm. Our findings stress the importance of sales managers acting in a trustworthy manner, as supervisor trust affects the salesperson's willingness to display organizational commitment by voluntary undertaking firm-specific training. One possible explanation for this is that when a salesperson with a growth mindset is satisfied with an organization, that salesperson is willing to update his or her attitudes related to organizational commitment because individuals with a growth mindset are not anchored to previous attitudes. For the same salesperson to move past attitudinal commitment to being willing to behaviorally commit, that salesperson may need to trust their sales manager as the sales manager supervises the salesperson's allocation of time and effort. A salesperson may trust his or her manager and still have uncertainty about the organization leading to a lack of attitudinal organizational commitment. In addition, it reveals a benefit of hiring salespeople with a growth mindset.

Managerial Implications

Organizational research provides evidence that people with a growth mindset tend to possess many positive attributes, such as a higher level of self-efficacy (e.g., Martocchio, 1994), improved goal setting (e.g., Wood and Bandura, 1989), resiliency following setbacks (e.g., Seibert et al, 2016; Wood and Bandura, 1989; Zingoni and Byron, 2017), enhanced coaching of employees (Heslin et al, 2006), cultivate skills to overcome challenges (Heslin et al, 2020), and improved performance when making complex decisions (e.g., Tabernero and Wood, 1999; Zingoni and Corey, 2016). The current study uncovers another important attribute—that is, salespeople with a growth mindset will complement existing firm initiatives focused on organizational commitment (e.g., job satisfaction initiatives and training; coaching related to being a trustworthy sales manager). Integration of this finding with extant organizational literature suggests that hiring managers might consider adding a growth mindset to the list of attributes they currently screen for during the recruitment and hiring process.

Additionally, while a growth mindset is a trait that is relatively stable over time, there is evidence that it can be fostered based on how management frames goals and challenges (Heslin et al, 2020). Leaders with a growth mindset can substantially change the culture of their firm (Dweck, 2008). Often sales managers praise salespeople when they meet or exceed a performance quota. It is also important for sales managers to provide positive affirmation to salespeople when they undertake a difficult challenge, demonstrate resilience under pressure, seek to learn new strategies, and take action to grow as a person. This will allow salespeople with a growth mindset to flourish and can positively influence salespeople that do not have a growth mindset to think about challenges and goals in a different manner.

Theoretical implications

This research identifies the personality trait growth mindset as another driver to commitment. To this end, we added to the contributions of Boles et al (2007) by showing that a committed salesforce is not only a function of firm retention efforts but could potentially be impacted by a firm's recruitment process. Hiring salespeople with a growth mindset can improve the firm's efforts to achieve organizational commitment. In addition, this research makes a contribution by treating organizational commitment not just as an attitude but also as a voluntary behavior to invest time and effort in the firm.

Limitations and future research

While the findings are encouraging, this research carries three caveats. First, the experiment primed the respondents with hypothetical scenarios. While this is a common technique in academic research, it limits the external validity of the experiment. Second, the use of an experimental vignette prevented us from including other potentially relevant performance measures in our analysis (e.g., meeting sales quotas, account profitability, and buyer experience). Future studies might consider field research to measure such performance indicators and factor them into the analysis.

Furthermore, due to the nature of using a vignette experiment to manipulate high/low job satisfaction and high/low supervisor trust, a dichotomy is created that eliminates the variability found in Likert-type measures. It also has the limitation of not being able to examine instances where a salesperson may be satisfied with some aspects of his or her job, but less satisfied with others. Future research should build upon on research by employing a "floodlight analysis" with survey data to determine the interactive effect of growth mindset at different levels of job satisfaction and supervisor trust. That approach would also allow for the ability to examine the impact of a growth mindset of different facets of job satisfaction.

Finally, while assessing salespeople's choice to invest time and effort in firm-specific training is a reasonable first step in examining the behavioral aspect of organizational commitment in a sales setting, other variables could also be useful indicators. Specifically, future research could examine factors such as willingness to forgo job interviews/job opportunities and hours devoted to organizational goals, in addition to a willingness to invest in firm-specific training. Doing so would be useful for continuing the discussion on how the behavioral aspect of organizational commitment can be optimally measured in a sales setting.

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Appendix A. Scenario descriptions

Manipulation Wording

Scenario 1 (High Satisfaction/High Trust): You are satisfied with your job as a salesperson at a well-known firm. You would be willing to recommend a similar job to your close friends. You love getting up and going to work in the morning. You are compensated well above average, receive great feedback in your performance evaluations, really get along socially with your peers, and never have to work overtime. Based on all of these experiences you are extremely satisfied with your job. Through experience you find that your boss is very trustworthy. You can believe the information he provides to you, and he is genuinely concerned with your welfare. He is always honest with you, **cares about your long term success** with the company, is credible, and likes you. You are **not very satisfied** with job, but are sure that you can trust your boss.

Scenario 2 (High Satisfaction/Low Trust): You are satisfied with your job as a salesperson at a well-known firm. You would be willing to recommend a similar job to your close friends. You love getting up and going to work in the morning. You are compensated well above average, receive great feedback in your performance evaluations, really get along socially with your peers, and never have to work overtime. Based on all of these experiences you are extremely satisfied with your job. Through experience you find that your boss is **not very** trustworthy. You **cannot** believe the information he provides to you, and he is **not** concerned with your welfare. He can be **dishonest** with you, **cares mostly about his own success**, is **no**t credible, and you **don't think** he likes you. You are **not very satisfied** with your job and are **not sure** that you can trust your boss.

Scenario 3 (Low Satisfaction/High Trust): You are **not** satisfied with your job as a salesperson at a well-known firm. You would be **not** be willing to recommend a similar job to your close friends. You **don't like** getting up and going to work in the morning. Your compensation is **below average**, receive **poor** feedback in your performance evaluations, you **don't** get along socially with your peers, and **always** have to work overtime. Based on all of these experiences you are extremely not satisfied with your job. Through experience you find that your boss is very trustworthy. You can believe the information he provides to you, and he is genuinely concerned with your welfare. He is always honest with you, **cares about your long term success** with the company, is credible, and likes you. You are **not very satisfied** with job, but are sure that you can trust your boss.

Scenario 4 (Low Satisfaction/Low Trust): You are **not** satisfied with your job as a salesperson at a well-known firm. You would be **not** be willing to recommend a similar job to your close friends. You **don't like** getting up and going to work in the morning. Your compensation is **below average**, receive **poor** feedback in your performance evaluations, you **don't** get along socially with your peers, and **always** have to work overtime. Based on all of these experiences you are extremely not satisfied with your job. Through experience you find that your boss is **not very** trustworthy. You **cannot** believe the information he provides to you, and he is **not** concerned with your welfare. He can be **dishonest** with you, **cares mostly about his own success**, is **no**t credible, and you **don't think** he likes you. You are **not very satisfied** with your job and are **not sure** that you can trust your boss.

Note: Bolding is added in the appendix to easily distinguish the differences between scenarios for the reader.

Appendix B. Construct items

Latent Constructs	Item Loadings
Organizational Commitment (adapted from Maltz and Kohli, 1996)	
I would feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization.	.94
I would feel emotionally attached to this organization.	.93
This organization would have a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.94
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.87
I would enjoy discussing this organization with the people outside of it.	.75
I would really feel this organization's problems are my own.	.66
Growth Mindset (Heslin et al, 2005)	
Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.	.71
People can always substantially change the kind of person they are.	.76
All people can change even their most basic qualities.	.80
No matter what kind of person someone is, they can always change very much.	.82

Notes: All items were measured on a 7-point agreement scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).