

Reconceptualization of Organizational Identification Construct: A Cross-cultural Study

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Introduction

This present study attempts to understand and explain a behaviour which is observed in organizations by the author. Thus an attempt has been made to analyse both theoretically and empirically the observation that “the employees overact in an impatient, subjective and aggressive manner against criticisms about their organisation coming from outside and they take these criticisms personally”. That is, based on these observed behaviours, which are called symptoms by Weick (1995), a deeply theoretical *diagnostic* study was carried out and in conclusion a *prescription* was offered. After observations and in-depth studies the author came to the conclusion that these behaviours can be defined based on organisational identification (OID) concept. However there are a lot of theoretical confusions about OID construct which stem from different conceptualisations. Beginning with the question “*why* (Whetten, 1989) people behave in such a way”, this study investigates the normative base and behavioural aspect of organisational identification construct by using Social Identity (Tajfel, 1982) and Social Categorisation Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

According to Tajfel (1982, p.2) intergroup behaviour requires not only internal criteria which consists of cognitive, evaluative, and emotional components, but also external criteria which consists of outside consensus. On the basis of Tajfel's definition, organisational identification is conceptualised and empirically tested in different ways by scholars. Some of them treat organisational identification as a one dimensional cognitive construct (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Shamir & Kark, 2004). The others define it as a three dimensional construct. Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) defined them as cognitive, affective and evaluative components whereas Ellmers, Kortekaas and Ouwerkerk (1999) defined them as self-categorisation, affective commitment and self-esteem. In addition to these, a four dimensional construct was put forward consisting of cognitive, affective, evaluative, and behavioural components (Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, Christ, 2004). However most of them did not deal with the external criteria which is indispensable intergroup behaviour occurring as Tajfel (1982) mentioned. In this light, this study may contribute to point out the normative base (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Weiner, 1982; School, 1986; Allen & Meyer 1990 and 1991) and behavioural aspects of organisational identification which are mostly controversial (Kelman, 1958 and 1961; O'Reilly & Chatmann, 1986; Mael, Ashforth, 1989 and 1992; Harquail, 1998; Barker, 1998; Haslam et al 2000 and 2003; Hogg et al., 2004). Since our point of view is that organisational identification is a kind of social control or justification mechanism in organisations (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Cheney, 1983/a; Foucault, 1986; Pfeffer, 1997; Barley & Kunda, 1992; Kunda, 1992; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Hogg, Abrams et al., 2004), it can be argued that organisational identification construct must be expanded so as to include a normative base of intergroup behaviour. Consequently, assuming that there is a need for reconceptualization of organisational identification construct, a cross-cultural study was conducted.

Method

The OID Scale (Mael & Ashforth 1992) and Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer & Allen, 1990) were used in this study. Furthermore, five items derived from Self-Categorisation Theory by the author. These are given below:

1. I lose my temper when people talk about my company in a wrong or negative manner.
2. When someone criticises my company I interrupt him/her and defend my company.
3. I feel that our competitors try to harm us.
4. I think that competitors' products are worse than ours.
5. I am proud of working for this company.

The first three items are assumed as representation of partisan behaviour (Buchanan 1974, Greene, 2004), intergroup bias and polarisation (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Tajfel, 1982; Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Ashforth, 1989); depersonalisation, group prototype and stereotypes (Tajfel, 1982; Hogg, Abrams, Otten and Hinkel 2004; Terry & Hogg 2000; Stats & Burke, 2000), external threats perception (Weiner, 1982; Cheney, 1983/a; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996;) and comparative fit (Haslam, Postmes and Ellemers, 2003; Haslam, Powel and Turner, 2000 and Ellemers et. al. 2004) The last two items are proposed in relation to distinctive product perception and positive value connotation to organisation which lead to normative fit. (March & Simon, 1966; Haslam et. al. 2000; Haslam et. al. 2003)

Sample

Sample consists of nurses and physicians from Cezh Republic, Germany, Azerbaijan, Albanian, Macedonia, Bosnia, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey. With the consideration of the cost and time constrain 2000 questionnaire were distributed. At this moment 1852 valid questionnaires returned.

Measures

Organisational Identification (Mael, Ashforth, 1992), Affective and Normative Organisational Commitment (Allen, Meyer:1990), Professional identification (Brown at all., 1986), affective occupational commitment ((Allen, Meyer, Smith:1993), occupational turnover intention (Meyer at all.,1993) and organizational turnover intention (Moore, 2000) measures are used in order to analyze validity and reliability of proposed construct.

Analysis and Results

In order to examine the proposed construct alternative measurement models were designed. Structural Equation Modelling will be conducted to test our hypotheses.

Findings and limitations of the study will be discussed later.

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