Linking perceived organizational support with employee work outcomes in a Chinese context: Organizational identification as a mediator

Yimo Shen, Todd Jackson, Cody Ding, Denghua Yuan, Lei Zhao, Yunlai Dou, Qinglin Zhang

Abstract

Perceived organizational support (POS) is viewed as an important explanatory framework for understanding the relationship between employees and the workplace, and is regarded by some researchers as central in understanding job-related attitudes and behaviors of employees. However, less research has taken into account the role of organizational identification, which reflects how individuals define the self with respect to their organization, as a potential influence on such relationships. Drawing on a cross-organizational sample of 238 subordinate-supervisor dyads from the People’s Republic of China, we examined whether organizational identification mediates the effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on work outcomes including turnover intentions, work performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Results from the current study showed that organizational identification fully mediates the relation of POS to OCB-directed to individuals, and partially mediates relations between POS and other work outcomes (turnover intention, work performance, OCB-directed to organization). Implications for management theory and practice are discussed.

Introduction

The employment relationship between employees and their organizations has been described as an exchange relationship (Rousseau, 1995). Although numerous potential exchange relationships exist within organizations, the relationship between individuals and organizations is one seemingly preeminent relationship that all employees have at work (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) proposed perceived organizational support (POS) as a key influence on employee evaluations of the organization’s role in the exchange relationship. POS refers to employees’ “global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501). There is considerable empirical support for the notion that POS is related to outcomes favorable to employees (e.g., job satisfaction) and their organization (e.g., reduced turnover, performance, lessened withdrawal behavior) (see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

However, it has been argued that some aspects of employee–employer relationship are better understood on the basis of self-definition and self-categorization, not simply in terms of reciprocity and exchange (e.g., Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Some researchers (e.g., Sluss, Klimchak, & Holmes, 2008) have also noted that less research on the employee–employer relationship has taken into account the role of organizational identification, another vital component of organizational life (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Organizational identification is defined as “… perceived oneness between self and organization” (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), and is distinct from organizational commitment (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Riketta, 2005; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006) in that it involves a cognitive connection with the organization and describes the relationship between the individual and the organization in terms of the one’s self-concept (Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt, 1998).

In fact, organizational identification might play an important role in the social exchange process. For instance, the social identity mediation hypothesis put forward by Tyler and Blader (2003) contends that organizational treatment (e.g., procedural justice) has a significant influence on employee identity judgments, and, in turn, shapes employee attitudes, values, and cooperative behaviors. These arguments are supported by Blader and Tyler (2009) who found that identification mediated the relationship between procedural justice and extra-role behavior. Although the notion of POS is distinct from that of procedural justice, the latter has been treated...
as an important antecedent of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For these reasons, we propose that social identity processes might mediate the social exchange relationship between POS and employee outcomes.

Despite these theoretical propositions, little empirical research has documented how and whether social identity processes mediate the relationship between POS and outcomes. Because POS can contribute to enhancing feelings of self-worth and esteem, an analysis from social identity approach may be useful in supplementing the social exchange approach to better understand its impact on employee outcomes (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Therefore, the current study was designed to investigate how the social identity process mediates relationships between POS and outcomes. Specially, we explored the mediating role of a key feature of social identity theory, organizational identification, in attempting to elucidate relations between POS and employment outcomes.

This study contributes to the applied psychology literature in at least four ways. First, we provided a new insight into explaining the POS-work outcome relations by exploring the mediating role of organizational identification from the social identity approach. To our knowledge, little research documented the role of organizational identification as an influence on the relationship between POS and its demonstrated outcomes. Second, our study addresses calls from scholars (e.g., Sluss et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg, Van Dick, & Tavares, 2007) across social exchange, identity, and ‘relationships at work’ literatures. Although social exchange and identity greatly influence one’s organizational experience, these two perspectives on the psychological relationship between individuals and organization has long been developed largely in isolation of one another (e.g., Sluss et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg et al., 2007). Third, unlike most identification-related research, our study was conducted in cross-organizational contexts, instead of a small group settings, and utilized data collected from multiple sources (i.e., supervisors and subordinates) instead of the self-report data that characterize most published studies in the area (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Tyler & Blader, 2002). Finally, because research on POS has been limited to samples in individualistic, Western countries, it is not clear whether findings are applicable to non-Western samples where the world’s population is more heavily concentrated (Yoon & Lim, 1999). Numerous authors have noted that little is known about whether predictions of organizational theories established in the United States hold up in large collectivist countries such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (Brockner et al., 2001; Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). Accordingly, we conducted the current study in the People’s Republic of China to ascertain the applicability of POS theory to the Eastern collectivistic cultures.

Theoretical development and hypotheses

POS and the influences on employee work-related outcomes

The relationship between POS and outcomes has been explained primarily in terms of social exchange (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Following social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees who experience more POS should demonstrate more organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and better work performance because such behaviors are beneficial to organizations. Some scholars (e.g., Eisenberg, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993) argue that employees who feel that they have been well supported by their organizations tend to reciprocate by performing better and engaging more readily in citizenship behavior than those reporting lower levels of POS. A growing number of studies have demonstrated that POS is positively associated with OCB. In a meta-analysis representing more than 70 studies, for instance, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found POS had significant, moderate effect sizes in relation to both in-role and extra-role behavior. Shore and Wayne (1993) found that POS was significantly related to job performance ratings and OCB. Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff (1998) found that POS may influence OCB, and can mediate the relationship between procedural justice and OCB. Kaufman, Stamper, and Tesluk (2001) also found that POS can explain significant variance in OCbs directed toward organizations, and individuals, respectively. Based on these findings, several hypotheses can be generated:

Hypothesis 1

POS will be positively related to two types of OCbs (OCBO and OCBI).

Theoretically, employees who experience a high level of POS should work harder to improve their work performance because it is beneficial to organizations. However, the evidence is mixed to date. Whereas some researchers have observed a positive association between POS and work performance (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1990; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009), others have found leader-member exchange, but not POS, predicts work performance (e.g., Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). However, as the matter stands, most researchers tend to believe that POS is positively correlated with employee work performance. For instance, Muse and Stamper (2007) evidenced that POS has an influence on work performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction. Thus, we expected that, among employees who experience high POS, better work performance should result in exchange for organizational support, in part, because POS elicits a sense of indebtedness that can be reduced by reciprocation (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Thus, a second hypothesis follows.

Hypothesis 2

POS will be positively associated with work performance.

As discussed above, in contrast to employees with low POS, employees who experience high levels of POS tend to have more feelings of obligation based on the norm of reciprocity. This, in turn, may contribute to such employees having more favorable attitudes and behaviors towards their workplace. One way for an individual to repay the organization is continued participation. March and Simon (1958) argued that an employee's decision to continue to participate in the organization is based on the balance between the inducements offered by the organization and the contributions expected of the employee. When an employee perceives more inducements from the organization (e.g., high POS), the desire to leave the organization may be reduced. Research has consistently shown a negative relationship between POS and both turnover intentions and actual turnover (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle et al., 2009; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). On this basis a third hypothesis can be generated.

Hypothesis 3

POS should be negatively associated with turnover intention.

Organizational identification as a mediator between POS and work outcomes

Most empirical studies on the relationship between POS and outcomes are based on the social exchange perspective (e.g., Muse & Stamper, 2007; Settoon et al., 1996), yet some scholars also argued that other mechanisms should be considered when
explaining POS-outcomes relations (e.g., Lee & Pececi, 2007). We believe that these associations may be better understood on the basis of self-definition and self-categorization, not just in terms of reciprocity and exchange.

It has been argued that POS helps to fulfill important socio-emotional needs for positive self-esteem, approval, and affiliation (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998), which leads employees to incorporate organizational membership and role status into their social identity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to social identity theory, to enhance their self-esteem, individuals would classify themselves and others into different categories to define themselves in given environments, and tend to identify with groups that are perceived positively (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). In line with this view, Shore and Shore (1995) also argued that the perception of organizational support provides employees with important information about his/her relationship to the workplace. Sluss et al. (2008) also argued that organizational support may affirm the employee’s value and informal standing as well as increase the organization’s perceived attractiveness and organizational identification. Accordingly, a handful of empirical studies reported a positive relationship between POS and organizational identification. For example, Sluss et al. (2008) showed that leader-member exchange has an influence on organizational identification through the mediating role of POS. Similarly, Edwards (2009) found that HR practice can have an impact on POS, and, in turn, influence organizational identification. Each of these studies suggests POS is associated with organizational identification. Despite recent interest in the relationship between POS and organizational identification, little research documented the mediating role of organizational identification in the POS-outcomes links. Some scholars (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2001) argued that POS encourages the adoption of organizational membership as a key aspect of an employee’s self-identity (i.e., organizational identification), and thereby facilitates the development of a positive emotional bond to the organization (i.e., affective organizational commitment), that contributes to individuals acting in ways that support these groups. In a similar vein, Tyler (1999) concluded that, when people feel that their organization values and appreciates them (i.e., POS), it is a sign of organizational respect for them or high status within the organization (Tyler, 1999). High status and respect are likely to foster organizational identification, and, in turn increase discretionary organization-supportive behavior (i.e., voice behavior) (Fuller et al., 2006). As well, according to group engagement model, the way employees are treated by organizational authorities has a significant influence on employee identity judgments, and shapes employee attitudinal and behavioral work outcomes (e.g., cooperative behaviors) (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Thus, organizational identification might be a mechanism that mediates associations between POS and outcomes. Such a proposition converges with contentions (Edwards & Peccci, 2010; Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007; Marique, Stinglhamber, Desmette, Caesens, & De Zanet, 2013) that POS predicts organizational identification, which, in turn, predicts organizational involvement, turnover intentions, affective commitment, work performance, and OCB. Based on these ideas, two additional hypotheses follow.

**Hypothesis 4**

Perceived organizational support should be positively associated with organizational identification.

**Hypothesis 5**

Organizational identification should mediate the relationship between POS and (1) turnover intention, (2) work performance, and (3) OCB.

**Method**

**Sample and procedures**

Employees were drawn from 13 companies from Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Nanhang, Suzhou, and Chongqing, six major cities of the PRC. These companies were sampled from various sectors, including technology, electronics, telegraphic, real estate, education, and medicine. This strategy ensured variation in POS and avoided contextual constraints associated with any particular organization (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

Matching survey packets were hand-delivered to supervisors and subordinates in each company. A total of 450 employees (297 subordinates and 153 supervisors) voluntarily responded to a survey during working hours. All respondents were informed that the survey was being conducted for academic research purposes in an attempt to better understand issues that affect people at work. To ensure confidentiality, the respondents were instructed to seal the completed questionnaires in the envelopes and return them directly to us on site.

Prior to administering surveys, we asked each supervisor to generate a list of the names of all of his or her subordinates who were sent the survey. The survey included questions and questions assessing demographics, perceptions of POS, organizational identification, and turnover intention. Questionnaires assessing subordinates’ OCBs and work performance were hand-delivered to the supervisors. A coding scheme was used to ensure matched supervisor-subordinate data.

Two hundred ninety-seven subordinates and 153 supervisor-rating questionnaires were returned, for response rates of 86.4% and 89.7%, respectively. After deleting records with unmatched subordinate-supervisor pairs, 238 valid subordinate-supervisor dyads (238 subordinates and 103 supervisors) were retained in the final sample. Of these, 53.4% were male. Respondents reported an average age of 32 years, an average organizational tenure of 5 years, and an average of 14.6 years of education.

**Measures**

Except for subordinates’ work performance, all questionnaire items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The questionnaire items were originally in English and were translated into Chinese by an academic who was bilingual in Mandarin and English. We followed a back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980) from another bilingual academic to assure equivalence of the measures in the Chinese and the English versions.

**Perceived organizational support**

To measure POS, we followed (Eisenberg et al., 1990) and used eight items with the highest factor loading from the original 36-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). A sample item is “The organization strongly considers my goals and values”. The scale demonstrated an internal consistency reliability of .91 in the current study.

**Organizational identification**

A six-item measure developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) was used to assess organizational identification. All of the items used the organization in which respondents worked as the referent. Respondents were asked to report their levels of perceived oneness with their workplace. Items included, “When I talk about [name of organization], I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’, “when
Perceived subordinates’ work performance

A three-item scale developed by Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996) was used to measure supervisor perceptions of subordinates’ overall work performance of subordinates with each item rated on a 7-point scale (1 = very unsatisfactory; 7 = excellent). Items included, “In comparison to others of the same rank, how do you [the supervisor] think of his or her [the employee’s] work performance?” “How do you think of the subordinate...does his or her work performance meet the standards?” and “In comparison to others in the work unit, how do you think of his or her contribution to the effectiveness of the unit?” In this study the scale had an alpha of \( \alpha = .89 \).

Turnover intention

To measure intention to change jobs, a three-item Likert scale (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; adapted from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) was used. Items included, ‘I often think about quitting my job with my present organization’ and ‘I will probably look for a new job within the next year’. The scale had an internal consistency of \( \alpha = .86 \) in the current study.

Organizational citizenship behaviors

OCBs were assessed by scales adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991), which suggested that OCB includes two broad categories (OCBI and OCBO). OCBI was assessed by a six-item scale (e.g. “takes a personal interest in other employees”, “takes time to listen to co-workers’ problems and worries”). OCBO was tapped by a seven-item scale (e.g. “adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order”, “gives advance notice when unable to come to work”). Internal consistencies for OCBI and OCBO scale were \( \alpha = .89 \) and \( \alpha = .84 \), respectively, in this research.

Covariate variables

To evaluate unique effects of the measures described above, we controlled for selected demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, education, tenure with one’s firm), and one organizational variable (i.e., firm size) in analyses. 

Data analysis

Prior to testing our hypotheses, we conducted a series of CFAs with LISREL 8.7 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004) to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the seven core variables in this study. We compared the fit of our hypothesized model to several plausible nested alternative models.

After demonstrating the distinctiveness of the study variables, we tested the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between POS and outcomes. To test the mediation model, we followed Baron and Kenny’s three-step procedure (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, independent variables should be significantly related to mediating variables. Second, independent variables should be related to dependent variables. Third, mediating variables should be related to dependent variables after effects of independent variables are controlled for in the model. If the unstandardized beta weights of the independent variables are still significant in the last step, partial mediation is present. If the unstandardized beta weights of the independent variables are not significant, full mediation is present. However, because Baron and Kenny’s (1986) method suffers from low statistical power in most situations (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002), we followed recommendations of MacKinnon et al. (2002) who compared 14 methods of assessing mediation effects and concluded the Sobel test (and its variants) are superior in terms of power and intuitive appeal (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Consequently, to evaluate whether mediation was significant, the Sobel test with 95% confidence interval (95% CI) (Sobel, 1982) was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004). As argued by Preacher and Hayes, bootstrapping is advantageous for two reasons. First, it is nonparametric in nature and allows for effect size estimation without meeting the assumption that the variables or the sampling distribution are normal. Second, bootstrapping can be applied with greater confidence than non-bootstrapping approaches when using small sample sizes. Results based on estimates from 5000 bootstrapping samples were utilized in the current study.

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses

Taken together, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 1) indicated the hypothesized six-factor model (POS, organizational identification, turnover intention, work performance, OCBI, and OCBO) fit the data well (\( \chi^2 = 1040.78; df = 480; \chi^2/df = 2.17; \text{NNFI} = .96; \text{CFI} = .96; \text{RMSEA} = .070 \)). We compared these results with those of four alternative models: a five-factor model incorporating OCBI and OCBO into one factor (Model 2); a four-factor model incorporating work performance, OCBI, and OCBO into one factor (Model 3); a three-factor model incorporating POS and organizational identification into one factor with other factors from the third model (Model 4); and a one-factor model that included all seven measures (Model 5). As shown in the Table 1, Models 2–5 exhibited significantly poorer fits than that of the baseline model based on significant chi-square difference tests and model fit indices.

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, and correlations among all key study variables are presented in Table 2. As can be seen there, all correlations were significant and in the expected direction.

Tests of hypotheses

As shown in Table 3 (Model 2), after regressing dependent variables on covariates in step 1, we entered POS in step 2. POS was positively related to organizational identification (\( \beta = .66, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .42 \)), OCBI (\( \beta = .31, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .10 \)), OCBO (\( \beta = .35, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .13 \)), and work performance (\( \beta = .38, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .14 \)), but negatively related to turnover intentions (\( \beta = -.55, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .30 \)), lending support to Hypotheses 1–4. Pertaining to mediation hypotheses, we entered organizational identification as a mediator in step 3. As illustrated in step 3 of Table 3, the impact of POS on most of the work outcomes remained significant when the impact of organizational identification was statistically controlled. Specifically, with the POS continued to be significantly related to turnover intentions (\( \beta = -.46, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .01 \)), work performance (\( \beta = .25, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .02 \)), and OCBO (\( \beta = .22, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .03 \)) but not OCBI in the mediation models. As such, organizational identification fully mediated the relationship between POS and OCBI, and partially mediated relations between POS and turnover intentions, work performance, and OCBO.

Aside from following Baron and Kenny (1986), we conducted the Sobel test using the bootstrapping procedure outlined by
between POS and turnover intention, OCBI, OCBO, and work identity perspective provides a new insight into the relationships. "Organizational citizenship behavior toward organization" are abbreviated as "POS", "OID", "OCBI", and "OCBO", respectively.

Hierarchical regression models for testing the mediation of POSa.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the main research measuresa.

Comparison of measurement models of the main research measuresa.

Table 4 holds both for the Sobel test and identification are indeed significant because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval.

Discussion

The purpose of our current study is to examine how the social identity perspective provides a new insight into the relationships between POS and turnover intention, OCBI, OCBO, and work performance. Our findings showed that organizational identification serves as an important mediation mechanism in the relationship between POS and work outcomes (turnover intention, OCBI, OCBO, and work performance). Indeed, although it has been argued that organizational identification is an important mechanism in the relationship between POS and outcomes (Rhoades et al., 2001), yet the relationship has been primarily studied in terms of social exchange (e.g., Chen, Aryee, & Lee, 2005; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001), regardless of organizational identification process. Yet as suggested by Rhoades et al., our studies indicated that POS can foster organizational identification, which leads to positive reactions, i.e., an increased OCBI, OCBO, and work performance, and a decreased turnover intention. Our findings suggested that organizational identification could therefore be considered as an alternative mechanism explaining the relationship between POS and its demonstrated outcomes.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>χ²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>χ²/df</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline model</td>
<td>Six factors; based on model 1, two OCB dimensions (OCBI, OCBO) was</td>
<td>1040.78</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Four factors; OCBI, OCBO and work performance were combined into one</td>
<td>1089.77</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Three factors; based on model 3, POS and organizational identification</td>
<td>1275.36</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>One factor; all six factors were combined into one factor</td>
<td>1572.11</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>One factor; all six factors were combined into one factor</td>
<td>5890.01</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n = 238 (supervisor-subordinate dyads); NNFI, the non-normed fit index; CFI, the comparative fit index; and RMSEA, the root-mean-square error of approximation.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. Perceived organizational support</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>(.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Organizational identification</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
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<td>3. Turnover intention</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>−.58</td>
<td>−.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Work performance</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>−.37</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>−.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. OCBI</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>−.16</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. OCBO</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>−.24</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n = 238 (supervisor-subordinate dyads); reliability coefficients for the scales are in parentheses along the diagonal.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Model 1: OID</th>
<th>Model 2: turnover intention</th>
<th>Model 3: work performance</th>
<th>Model 4: OCBI</th>
<th>Model 5: OCBO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVARIABLES</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>−.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>−.16</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>−.07</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>−.06</td>
<td>−.18</td>
<td>−.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
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<td>Tenure</td>
<td>−.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>−.09</td>
<td>−.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firm size</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.13</td>
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<table>
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<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
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<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>−.55**</td>
<td>−.46**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.08**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.01**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall R²</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.88**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
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* n = 238 (supervisor-subordinate dyads); "Perceived organizational support", "Organizational identification", "Organizational citizenship behavior toward individual", and "Organizational citizenship behavior toward organization" are abbreviated as "POS", "OID", "OCBI", and "OCBO", respectively.

Preacher and Hayes (2004). As shown in Table 4, Sobel test results indicated all indirect paths were significant (i.e., Z = 2.50, for the link of POS-organizational identification-work performance; Z = 2.76, for the link of POS-organizational identification-OCBO). The result from the bootstrapping analysis also revealed that indirect effects of POS on all employee outcomes (turnover intention, OCBI, OCBO, and work performance) through organizational identification are indeed significant because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval. Table 4 holds both for the Sobel test and the Bootstrapping results.
In addition, our study answers calls from scholars (e.g., Sluss et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg et al., 2007) across the social exchange, identity, and ‘relationships at work’ literatures. Up to date, only a handful of studies (e.g., Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Chen et al., 2005) have examined the mechanisms underlying the relationship between POS and its demonstrated work outcomes. To our knowledge, however, little research documented the mediating role of organizational identification in the relationship between POS and work outcomes. Thus, our finding advanced the understanding of the POS-work outcomes relationship by exploring the mediating role of organizational identification. Overall, our finding represents a promising step toward a better understanding of the relationship between POS and its demonstrated outcomes from social identity approach.

Limitations and future directions

Despite its important contributions, the main limitations of this research should be considered. First, the cross-sectional research design did not allow us to determine directions of causality among the variables. The research approach was based on theoretical logic and findings reported in the extant literature, but it is difficult to completely rule out alternate causal models among the research measures. In the future, more longitudinal and experimental studies wherein both qualitative and quantitative data are needed to provide evidence of causal effects of POS, organizational identification and work outcomes.

Second, findings were based on individual-level analyses. To elaborate, the sample was comprised of 238 lower-level employees from 13 firms. Position within the organizational hierarchy and unique, organization-specific factors might also have affected employee responses in relation to POS, organizational identification, and other work outcomes. Therefore, generalizations of the present results to employees whose job duties reflect higher status positions with organizational hierarchies and types of organizations that were not assessed in this research await further empirical examination. On a related note, the sample size was too small to permit multilevel analyses at the group level due to the requirement that at least 20 groups having at least 30 observations per group are needed to evaluate multilevel models (Heck & Thomas, 1999). More cross-level studies should be conducted in the future by incorporating individual and organizational level variables (e.g., organizational climate, industrial relation climate, and equity climate) within an integrated framework.

Managerial implications

Despite these limitations, our findings highlight the importance of organizational identification in accounting for the relationship between POS and work-related outcomes and advances understanding of possible mechanisms by which POS might influence work-related outcomes. Furthermore, this study has potentially important practical implications, especially from a management perspective, that serve as another basis for future research. POS may have a significant influence on employee work-related attitudinal and behavior variables as a partial function of organizational identification and can result, in part, from supportive human resource management. Thus, one practical application would be to evaluate the impact of management programs focusing on increasing employee perceptions of organizational support and organizational identification on employee outcomes by improving or optimizing organizational human resource management practices such as participation in decision making, fairness of rewards, and growth opportunity (Allen et al., 2003).

Conclusion

As an overall conclusion, the present study illustrated how organizational identification plays an important role in the relationship between POS and employee outcomes. More specifically, organizational identification fully mediates the association between POS and OCBI and partially mediates the relations between POS and work performance, turnover intentions, and OCBO.

Acknowledgement

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References


Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect effects and significant using normal distribution (Sobel test) and Bootstrap result.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sobel test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turnover intention</td>
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<td>Work performance</td>
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<td>OCBI</td>
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<td>Turnover intention</td>
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Note. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit. Bootstrap sample size = 5000; “Organizational citizenship behavior toward individual” and “Organizational citizenship behavior toward organization” are abbreviated as “OCBI”, and “OCBO”, respectively.


