The moderating role of individual differences in the relation between transformational/transactional leadership perceptions and organizational identification[☆]

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Abstract

In this study, we examined the relationship between transformational/transactional leadership perceptions and organizational identification and further explored the moderating role of individual difference variables, such as separateness–connectedness self-schema, and positive and negative affectivity. Data from 502 services employees indicated significant positive effects of transformational and transactional leadership perceptions on organizational identification. Regarding the moderating role of individual differences, our data showed that the positive relationship of transformational leadership and organizational identification was stronger for individuals of low positive affectivity as well as for employees of high negative affectivity. In addition, results indicated that transactional leadership had a stronger positive effect on organizational identification for individuals characterized by a connected self-schema.
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1. Introduction

Increasingly, organizations are seeking for members who not only believe that their organization is a good place to work, show loyalty and have no intention to leave, but for members who go beyond that and see the organization identity as closely interweaved with their own self-identity and believe that their fate is to a great extent interlinked with the fate of the organization. As organizations become larger, complex and boundary-less, organizational identification is viewed as a means for providing cohesion and as a key ingredient of organizational success (Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Pratt, 1998; Reade, 2001; Smidts, Pruyn, & Riel, 2001).

Although the important implications of organizational identification for organizational effectiveness have been recognized, little work has still been done on the factors that foster identification. The purpose of the present article is twofold: First, we examine the impact of transformational and transactional leadership perceptions as important predictors of employees' reported organizational identification. Second, we broaden the current framework of research on organizational identification and examine individual differences as possible moderators of the relation between leadership and identification. To the best of our knowledge, no prior study has looked at individual differences as explanatory mechanisms within the organizational identification domain although a number of authors have mused about their likely importance (e.g., Glynn, 1998; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Rotondi, 1975; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Prior conceptual work has suggested that dispositional characteristics may affect a person' s propensity to perceive groups as extensions of one's self and as a result, play a significant role for his/her identification with the organization. In particular, we focus on three main dispositional variables, i.e., separateness–connectedness self-schema and positive and negative affectivity that have been deemed as more relevant for organizational identification processes (e.g., Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Newman, Logan, O'Leary-Kelly, & Whitener, 2002).

2. Theoretical background and research model

2.1. Organizational identification

Interest in identification within organizational settings has recently grown considerably as its important implications for organizations have been highlighted (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Pratt, 1998). Specifically, organizational identification has been found to be positively associated with performance and organizational citizenship behaviors and negatively related to turnover (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; van Knippenberg, 2000). It has also been argued to foster a sense of meaning and belonging at work and positively affect employees' job attitudes and perceptions of their work environment (Ashforth, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Organizational identification concerns the perception of belongingness to or "oneness" with an organization, of which the person is a member (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and is rooted within the framework of social identity theory, SIT (Abrams & Hogg, 2001; Hogg, 2001, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). According to SIT, identification can be considered along a continuum from personal to social identity. A personal identity includes idiosyncratic attributes (e.g., abilities, interests, etc.) and a social identity encompasses salient group classifications (e.g., gender, nationality, and organizational affiliation). Organizational identification can thus be conceptualized as a