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Monograph

Cognitive adjustment as an indicator of psychological health at work: Development and validation of a measure

Marie Malo [a,*], Isabelle Tremblay [b], Luc Brunet [b]

[a] Department of Psychology, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Canada
[b] Department of Psychology, Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Based on organizational socialization literature (e.g., Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007) and Conservation of Resources theory (COR theory; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), this article aims to develop a conceptualization and a measurement of cognitive adjustment at work (CAW), as an indicator of psychological health in the workplace. Two studies, including three independent samples ($N_A = 296$, $N_B = 350$, $N_C = 139$), were conducted to test an operational proposal of CAW. In Study 1, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, as well as reliability and temporal invariance analyses, were performed to test the structure of both the construct and the instrument. In Study 2, nomological network analysis was conducted. Results suggest strong empirical support for the structure and validity of CAW, defined as a second-order factor, which includes task adjustment, work group adjustment and organizational adjustment.

1. Cognitive adjustment as an indicator of psychological health at work: development and validation of a measure

In line with the World Health Organization (1948), which defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (p. 2), researchers have become more interested in researching both negative and positive indicators of psychological health at work (Boudrias et al., 2014). Psychological distress and psychological well-being at work are some of the main indicators that have been studied (Gilbert, Dagenais-Desmarais, & Savoie, 2011).

Beyond the subjective experience of distress and well-being, psychological health at work also should include an assessment of the individual's functioning in the workplace (Gilbert, 2009; Warr, 1990). Notably, individual functioning is considered as one of the criteria to consider in establishing a clinical diagnosis (e.g., DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). In an organizational context, an employee's functioning differs from other spheres of life because of the singularity of the workplace (e.g., rules, norms, need to ensure livelihood; Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). However, few studies focusing on occupational health have examined such a component of psychological health. Now, more than ever, a person's ability to function is constantly being challenged, especially because people face many changes in their workplace (e.g., financial market instability, mergers and restructurings, shifts in the demographic composition of the working population; DeArmond et al., 2006; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Thus, it is crucial to focus on individual functioning in order to understand and measure psychological health at work.

To tackle this issue, we draw on previous work in the areas of organizational socialization (e.g., Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007) and Conservation of Resources theory (COR theory; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) to propose a conceptualization and a measurement of a construct that captures

* Corresponding author at: Université de Sherbrooke, Department of Psychology, 2500, boul. de l'Université, Sherbrooke, Québec J1K 2R1, Canada.
E-mail address: marie.malo@usherbrooke.ca (M. Malo).

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individual functioning in a work environment. Two studies were conducted from this perspective. The former tested the construct structure, while the latter examined a partial nomological network for the construct through the lens of psychological health at work.

2. Theoretical underpinning

The worker's functioning in the workplace has been the subject of analysis in various theoretical fields of study (e.g., set-point theory, Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006; dynamic equilibrium theory, Headey & Wearing, 1989; appraisal theory, Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; opponent-process theory, Solomon & Corbit, 1973). Many labels are used to name the phenomenon (Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012). Adaptation and adjustment are often employed interchangeably (e.g., Bravo, Peiro, Rodriguez, & Whitely, 2003; Reio & Sutton, 2006), creating additional confusion. However, some people have made the effort to distinguish between both constructs (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Matsumoto, Hirayama, & LeRoux, 2006). Adaptation refers to the process by which people change their cognitions and behaviors to better meet the workplace demands (Matsumoto et al., 2006), while adjustment is considered as a result of an adaptation process (Bauer et al., 2007; Matsumoto et al., 2006). These definitions offer a clear distinction between the variables inherent in the adaptation process and those resulting from the process. This paper has been prepared from this perspective.

Several scholars specializing in organizational socialization have focused on the positive indicators of adjustment at work (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Some made a distinction between distal and proximal positive indicators (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks et al., 2007). Distal positive indicators refer to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Many people consider these results to constitute secondary adjustment measures because more proximal adjustment indicators would influence them (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007).

Proximal positive indicators have to do with “how to” act in a suitable manner given the work environment. They are grouped together into different dimensions and multiple terminologies exist to describe them (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Taormina, 2004). By examining organizational socialization literature (e.g., Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003; Reio & Sutton, 2006), we have extracted three proximal adjustment indicators, namely task adjustment, work group adjustment and organizational adjustment. Task adjustment refers to the knowledge and skills required to deal with the different aspects of the job (Morton, 1994;

Table 1
Summary of the positive proximal indicators of adjustment at work instruments.

Instrument	Occupation	Sample	Validation[a]	Comments
Chao et al. (1994)	Engineering, management, academic	$N_{T1} = 780$; $N_{T2} = 609$; $N_{T3} = 522$; $N_{T4} = 472$; $N_{T5} = 432$ Engineers, managers, employed college graduates, newcomers and old employees	A B C E	Confirmatory factor analysis is not performed.
Haueter et al. (2003)	Academic, financial institution, brewery, computer support company	$N_{T1} = 492$; $N_{T2} = 240$ Working graduate and undergraduate students at an urban mid-western university N = 320 Newcomers (type of job non specified)	A B C D E F	Instrument discards the understanding of interpersonal interactions. A statistical model is tested separately for each of the three dimensions of organizational socialization.
Morrison (1993)	Accounting firms	$N_{T1\text{-}3} = 240$ Newly recruited staff Accountants	A B C E	Some items measure task performance. Confirmatory factor analysis is not performed.
Morton (1994)	Administration	N = 513 General services administration and professional recruits	A C	Confirmatory factor analysis is not performed. Some items load on more than one factor. A communality of less than .30 for some items.
Reio (1998)	Service-industry organizations	N = 233 Sales and marketing personnel, managers, customer service representatives, customer service trainees and administrative aides	A C E	One item measures satisfaction of task performance, which does not correspond to the conceptualization that was adopted in this study. Confirmatory factor analysis is not performed. The total sample is made up of subgroups that were used to make comparisons. Their sizes were small and unequal.
Taormina (2004)	Banking, trade and manufacturing, public service, retailing, education, social work, telecommunications	N = 193 Clerks, secretaries, trainees, operators, salespersons, technicians, engineers, teachers and supervisors	A C D	Some items confuse antecedents and results. Inferences are included in some items. Some indicators of model of adjustment do not respect the generally recognized standards.

[a] Forms of statistical analyses conducted: A = reliability (Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency); B = reliability (test-retest); C = exploratory factor analysis; D = confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model; E = nomological network analysis; F = cross-validation analysis with new sample.