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Organizational Identification at a Multinational Company

ABSTRACT

Objective: The present case study investigates to what extent employees working at the Dutch site of an American multinational biotechnology organization identify with this company. According to prior research, organizational identification leads to higher commitment to the organization. Gaining more insight into which factors drive or impede organizational identification can help organizations increase their employees' identification and thus, commitment. Two hypotheses were tested. First, organizational identification was expected to be higher among international employees than Dutch employees. Second, a correlation was expected between organizational identification and organizational commitment.

Methodology: A questionnaire was conducted among 296 employees of the company site. The scale of Edwards and Peccei (2007) was used to measure the construct of organizational identification. Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was used to measure the construct of organizational commitment. All data was statistically analyzed with the software SPSS; an independent samples t-test was performed to test the first hypothesis and a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to test the second hypothesis.

Findings: Both hypotheses were confirmed. A significant difference was found between international employees ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.05$, $n = 81$) and Dutch employees ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.12$, $n = 215$) regarding organizational identification ($t(293) = -2.03$, $p = .04$, $d = 0.27$). Moreover, a significant positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment ($r(295) = .81$, $p < .001$).

Value Added: Most prior research regarding organizational identification has focused on top-down processes, stressing the roles managers play in developing organizational identification among employees. Scholars have devoted little attention to what factors drive or impede organizational identification in cross-cultural workplaces. Taking on a bottom-up perspective, this study concentrates on the impact of employees' social identities, mainly considering expatriate membership, on the extent of their organizational identification.

Recommendations: In order to increase organizational identification, multinational organizations could: 1) facilitate identity synergy by acknowledging the full portfolio of identities employees seek to enact within organizations, and 2) increase peer identification among employees by initiating group activities that facilitate peer-to-peer interactions, create a sense of community and strongly bond individuals to the organization.

Key words: Organizational Identification, Organizational Commitment, Multinational Organizations, Social Identity Theory, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

JEL codes: F23 Multinational Firms, International Business, J61 Geographic Labor Mobility, Immigrant Workers, M14 Corporate Culture, Diversity, Social Responsibility

Introduction

According to Holliday (2016), interculturality can be thought of in blocks and threads. Cultural blocks "maintain the notion of national cultures as separate experiences and as the prime units of cultural identity" (Holliday, 2016, p. 319). Threads, to the contrary, constitute ways to share experiences and "extend and carry us across the boundaries that are encouraged by cultural blocks" (Holliday, 2016, p. 320). In order to create a feeling of unity, achieve efficient communication and enhance productivity, multinational companies need to cross the boundaries of national cultures and emphasize a common feature among their employees. Nowadays, being part of a particular organization often constitutes the only common feature among employees coming from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. Therefore, the cultural thread of organizational identification, i.e. a shared identity, is one that should be considered highly relevant in all companies that operate on a global scale.

In addition to its social relevance, the notion of organizational identification is widely discussed in the academic world. Studies explaining employee-organization relationships often do so from a psychological and sociological perspective (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2001). Other research is concerned with understanding the relationship between organizational identification and employee performance which, as shown by earlier meta-analyses, is moderately positive (Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg et al., 2002; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Notwithstanding the existing body of research, some less researched areas of organizational identification deserve to be explored further. Scholars have devoted little attention to exploring what factors drive or impede organizational identification in cross-cultural workplaces. Most prior research has focused on top-down processes, with much less consideration of those which are bottom-up. Research on top-down processes stresses "the roles of the organization, the context, and the interaction between the organization and the members in employee OID[1] development" (He & Brown, 2013, p. 19). This study, to the contrary, approaches organizational identification from a bottom-up perspective; its concentration lies on the perceptions of employees and the impact of employees' social identities on the extent of their organizational identification.

This case study concerns a multinational biotechnology company of American origin, located worldwide in approximately 40 countries. This study

1. Organizational Identification.

only investigates the perceptions of employees working at the company's location in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Based on a 2015 investigation by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the number of expats living in the Netherlands varies from 39,000 to 75,000. A considerable part of this group lives and works in the Brainport Eindhoven region, currently Europe's leading innovative region. More than 5000 technology and IT companies can be found in this area, many of which are working on the latest technologies and performing ground-breaking research. The appeal that this region has amongst professionals worldwide is reflected in the workforce of the company that constitutes the current research's environment. As more than 25 different nationalities and cultures are represented at this location, one can assume that employment at the company constitutes one of the only things all employees have in common. Thus, their organizational identification with this company should be considered of great importance. This led to the formulation of the following research question:

To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?

In order to provide an answer to this research question, first the current state of knowledge regarding the topic of organizational identification is presented. Subsequently, the methodology and results of this research are presented. Lastly, the final remarks give insights into the outcome and limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

Current State of Knowledge

First, this paragraph defines the notion of organizational identification and elaborates on the impact it can have on the functioning of an organization. The components of social identity and their impact on the extent of an individual's organizational identification are then discussed. Subsequently, a discussion on the measurement of organizational identification is provided, as well as a clarification of the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment. Lastly, the research questions and hypotheses that flow from this theoretical framework are presented.

Defining Organizational Identification

In recent years, organization theorists have examined the ways people define themselves in terms of their relationships to organizations. From these examinations, several definitions of organizational identification have come forth, with varying scopes. In 1992, Mael & Tetrick defined organizational identification as the "tendency of individuals to perceive themselves and their groups or organizations as intertwined, sharing common qualities and faults, successes and failures, and common destinies" (Mael & Tetrick, 1992, p. 813). The word 'intertwined' suggests a large scope of the notion; for organizational identification to exist, the organization must make up a considerable part of an individual's identity. A more modest definition of the notion was provided by Kreiner & Ashforth (2004), who put forth that organizational identification applies when organizational members "define themselves at least partly in terms of what the organization is thought to represent" (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, Kreiner and Ashforth's definition of organizational identification is followed.

Numerous scholars have investigated the role organizational identification plays in the functioning of an organization. Several studies have been able to draw valuable conclusions that display organizational identification as essential to the success of many organizations. For instance, strong identification has been linked to "lower employee turnover, lower levels of burnout due to emotional labor, and increases in employee motivation, job satisfaction, and compliance with organizational dictates" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cheney, 1983; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995, as cited in Pratt, 2001, p. 14). Moreover, organizational members who identify with their organizations are "more likely to make decisions and engage in sense making in ways that favor the organization" (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 2000a, as cited in Pratt, 2001, p. 14).

Though the above-mentioned studies have interrogated the extent of employees' organizational identification and related constructs, the focus lies on the impact organizational identification has on the success of organizations. The point of view and potential gain of the organization are mainly considered. Moreover, identity attributes of employees are not taken into account when measuring the extent of their organizational identification. These studies therefore take on a top-down perspective.

Having defined the notion of organizational identification and its relevance to an organization's functioning, the next section relates the notion to the concept of social identity.

Organizational Identification and Social Identity

As mentioned in the introduction, this researh approaches organizational identification from a bottom-up perspective. It does so by considering the components that make up an individual's social identity and the potential impact these components have on the extent of their organizational identification.

The notion of organizational identification is often approached in a psychological and sociological manner by relating it to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (1978). According to this theory, an individual's social identity is the "knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). As an organization can act as a potentially salient social category with which people can develop identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), Social Identity Theory has been widely applied to explain employee-organization relationships.

However, the notion of multiple identities is inherent to Social Identity Theory, as individuals may have as many social identities as they have group memberships. Thus, one of the main concerns in organizational identification is that members identify with "a social identity associated with organizational membership rather than identifying exclusively with a nonorganizational, subgroup identity" (Pratt, 2001, p. 16). This concern is particularly applicable in today's society; organizations increasingly coordinate activities that span geographical, cultural and organizational boundaries. Cultural differences, for instance, can play a part in the extent of employees' organizational identification. The notion of culture represents "the values, beliefs and assumptions learned in early childhood that distinguish one group of people from another" (Newman & Nollen, 1996, p. 754, as cited in Mukherjee et al., 2012). Nowadays, culture constitutes one of the key issues and most significant challenges in cross-cultural work environments. The research gap in this area is therefore surprising. However, Mukherjee et al. (2012) provide a model of organizational identification for global virtual team members. This model considers how Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance may strengthen or attenuate the organizational identification of virtual team members. The first mentioned dimension may provide useful insights into how culture might influence organizational identification of team members, as it is "perhaps the most distinguishing cultural characteristic in terms of how various societies analyze and process social behaviors" (Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). Individualism-collectivism "affects how an individual evaluates and prioritizes individual goals in relation to collective norms and goals" (Chevrier, 2003; Roth et al., 2011, as cited in Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). The dimension of uncertainty avoidance relates to organizational identification as it "pertains to the degree to which organizational members want to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty in favor of clear goals and operating guidelines" (Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). These cultural components of an individual's social identity are thus believed by the researchers of this study to have an impact on an individual's extent of organizational identification.

Next to cultural and racial diversity, an important distinction that must be made when it comes to organizational identification is between local employees and expatriates, i.e. "highly skilled temporary migrants" (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 295). Numerous studies have argued that the lives of many contemporary expatriates are strongly dominated by their occupation;

"not only did their jobs make them move abroad (often more than once), but their social contacts are frequently work related as well" (Hannerz, 1990; Burgers & Touborg, 2013; Beaverstock, 2005; Fechter, 2007; Nijman, 2007, as cited in Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 296). In a qualitative study, Van Bochove and Engbersen (2015) interviewed 75 expatriates in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. All participants moved to the Netherlands because of their highly skilled jobs with the intention to stay temporarily. The expatriates were questioned on their identification regarding three spheres of life: the economic, political and sociocultural. The study concluded that the 75 expatriates are connected to their organization in the sense that the main reason to move abroad is their job" (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 306). Additionally, their local network of friends "often consists principally of fellow expatriates" (Hannerz, 1990; Fechter, 2007, as cited in Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 306). These findings raise the assumption that the extent of organizational identification among expatriates is generally higher than among their local counterparts.

This section discussed the components that make up an individual's social identity, as well as the impact of these components on the extent of an individual's organizational identification. The next section focuses on the existing operationalizations of the construct of organizational identification.

Measuring Organizational Identification

In order to measure the construct of organizational identification, numerous measurement tools have been created in the past decades. Regarding organizational identification, Cheney's (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ), a 25-item scale, constitutes one of the earliest and most well-known operationalizations when it comes to this topic. However, in a more recent review of this questionnaire, Miller et al. (2000) argue that only 12 of the 25 items contribute meaningfully to the scale. Furthermore, these 12 items essentially constitute an affective measure of organizational commitment, not organizational identification as theorized (Miller et al., 2000). Therefore, Mael and Ashforth (1992) proposed a reformulated model of organizational identification. This 6-item scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .87 in a questionnaire study of approximately 700 participants (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 110). It has become the main scale used to measure organizational identification.

According to Edwards (2005), however, the scale does not necessarily correspond closely to Mael and Ashforth's original conceptualization of the construct of organizational identification: "their OI scale is based on six items taken directly from a pre–existing scale of Identification with a Psychological Group developed by Mael and Tetrick (1992) and mainly designed to measure the extent to which people feel that they share experiences with their psychological group. Although individuals who identify with an organization may well indicate that they feel that they share experiences with a psychological group, this is not necessarily what the essence of organizational identification consists of" (Edwards, 2005, p. 223). Partly for this reason, Edwards & Peccei (2007) provided a more recent operationalization of the construct of organizational identification. Their 6-item scale is based on the definition of organizational identification as "a psychological linkage between the individual and the organization whereby the individual feels a deep, self-defining affective and cognitive bond with the organization as a social entity" (Edwards & Peccei, 2007, p. 30). Two studies investigating employee attitudes in an NHS mental health Trust in the United Kingdom were carried out by Edwards & Peccei (2007) in order to test the scale. The first study included a sample of 676 respondents whereas the second study included a sample of 768 employees. In both studies, reliability for the overall scale combining all six items was high: the first study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .89 and the second study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93 (Edwards & Peccei, 2007, p. 44).

The next section discusses the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment, as well as the existing tools to measure organizational commitment.

Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

The notion of organizational identification is closely related to the construct of organizational commitment. Meyer & Allen (1991) conceptualize organizational commitment by describing the three themes it generally reflects: "Affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 64). Despite the close connection and similarities in that both organizational identification and organizational commitment involve a sense of attachment to or resonance with the organization, Mael & Ashforth (1992) theoretically differentiated the two concepts. According to them, organizational identification is self-referential as it reflects "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) of which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). Organizational commitment, to the contrary, is not self-referential; "it emphasizes an emotional attachment and positive attitude towards the organization, but the self and the organization remain separate entities" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 333). In contrast, organizational identification reflects a perceived "oneness" with the organization, as the "individual's identity and fate become intertwined with those of the organization" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 333).

Though organizational identification and organizational commitment are two distinct constructs, previous studies have shown a correlation between them. Van Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006), for example, distinguished identification from commitment in a questionnaire study, yet found that the two constructs were correlated with r=0.67 in a sample of 200 faculty members of a Dutch university. Similarly, Gautam et al. (2004) assessed the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment by making use of Cheney's OIQ and Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Mowday et al. define organizational commitment as a person's: (1) belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) desire to maintain membership (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, as cited in Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 105). The study of Gautam et al. found a correlation of r=0.80 between organizational identification and attitudinal organizational commitment (Gautam et al., 2004, p. 310).

Having clarified the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment, the following section discusses the research questions and hypotheses that flow naturally from the current theoretical framework.

Research framework

The previous paragraphs have defined the notion of organizational identification and discussed the existing research on the impact organizational identification has on the functioning of organizations. As several studies have proven this impact to be positive, organizations should consider measurements of the extent of organizational identification among their employees as highly relevant. These assessments can only be carried out within a particular organization, as organizational identification is "a phenomenon that cannot be studied outside the context in which it occurs" (Dasgupta, 2015, p. 151). As a case study can be defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 13), the current research will apply the concept of organizational identification to the specific context of the Dutch site of an American multinational. It will do so by investigating the following matter: *To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?*

Two sub-questions are involved in answering this research question. In an attempt to make a small contribution to filling the void in the existing literature, this research examines the relationship between social identity and organizational identification. To this end, the following sub-question has been formulated: *To what extent does organizational identification differ between Dutch and international employees?* Based on the research of Tsui et al. (1992) and Chattopadhyay (1999) on racial diversity, and the studies of Van Bochove and Engbersen (2015), Hannerz (1990) and Fechter (2007) on identification of expatriates, the following hypothesis has been formulated: *International employees consider the organization to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees.*

The second sub-question flows from the literature review regarding the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment: *To what extent does a correlation exist between organizational identification and organizational commitment?* Based on the studies of Van Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006) and Gautam et al. (2004), the hypothesis for this question is the following: *A positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment.*

The main research-question and sub-questions could bring valuable findings to light that have both scientific and social relevance. The scientific relevance lies in this study's bottom-up approach; the impact of employees' social identities on the extent of their organizational identification is explored. The social relevance lies in this research' application on a multinational company operating on a global scale. As the current theoretical framework has shown, the extent of organizational identification of employees and its correlation with organizational commitment can be of utter importance to the functioning of multinational companies.

Materials and Methods

This section describes in detail the sample, measures and procedure that were used and followed in the course of this quantitative survey study. Survey studies aim at "describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101). The main data collection method in surveys is the use of questionnaires. Dörnyei explains the popularity of questionnaires as due to the fact that they are “relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101/102). Moreover, questionnaires provide quantitative data that allow for statistical analysis. As this study aims to investigate the perceptions of a large group of employees and analyze the statistical behaviour of these perceptions, a questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data.

Sample and procedure

The collection of participants for this study was done through convenience sampling; all participants in the target group were approached with the researcher having no influence on who responds. The only criterion for the participants of this study was to be employed at the Dutch site of this particular multinational organization. After the questionnaire was put together with the software Qualtrics, an invitation to participate in this research was sent through email by the HR department to all 934 employees of the company site. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a general introduction described the purpose of this study (vaguely, so as to not influence the participants), promised confidentiality and anonymity and gave a word of gratitude. The participants were asked to give their informed consent and subsequently directed to the questions of the questionnaire.

The email containing the invitation was sent on the 19th of February, 2020. On the 4th of March, 2020, a reminder was sent stating that the questionnaire could be completed up to and including the 6th of March, 2020. In total, the questionnaire was open for 16 days.

In total, 296 of the 934 employees filled in the questionnaire. This accounts for a response rate of 31.6%. Of these 296 participants, 215 are Dutch and 81 have a non-Dutch nationality. These nationalities include but are not limited to American (n=5), Azerbejan (n=1), Bangladeshi (n=2), Belgian (n=5), British (n=4), Croatian (n=1), French (n=3), German (n=5), Indian (n=6), Irish (n=3), Mexican (n=1), Mongolian (n=1), Polish (n=3), Syrian (n=1) and Tunisian (n=2). The majority of the non-Dutch participants has been living in the Netherlands less than 6 month (n=23), between 6 months and 1 year (n=26) or between 10 and 30 years (n=14).

The male/female division of the total sample is 226/65. This was to be expected based on the knowledge that female employees make up around 20% of the location's workforce. However, the male/female division differs strongly between the Dutch and non-Dutch group of employees: the division of the Dutch group is 176/36 while that of the non-Dutch group is 50/29. Ages of the total sample range from 25 to 67, with the average age being approximately 45.[2] Most participants are either between 25 and 35 years of age (n=66), 35 and 45 years of age (n=77), or 45 and 55 years of age (n=92). Lastly, 133 of the 296 participants have been working at the company between 1 and 5 years. The second largest group has been working there between 5 and 10 years (n=62) and the third largest group between 10 and 20 years (n=53). Lastly, 27 participants have been working at the site between 20 and 30 years.

Measures

In order to measure the construct of organizational identification, the 6-item scale developed by Edwards and Peccei (2007) was used. The current study found this scale to be highly reliable (α = .89). Originally, this scale is to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale. However, a study of Benítez Baena et al. (2016) compared the extent of extreme response style, i.e. choosing the extremes of a scale, between Dutch participants and Spanish participants. Results indicated that extreme responding is more common among Spanish than among Dutch, this last group's responses being generally more moderate (Benítez Baena et al., 2016; as cited in Kemmelmeier, 2016, p. 443). As

2. As participants' ages were questioned in groups (1=18-25, 2=25-35, 3=35-45, 4=45-55, 5=55-65, 6=65+), the exact average age cannot be calculated. The group mean amounts to 4.11, hence the average age of 'approximately 45'.

this study's sample consists for the majority of Dutch participants, the use of a 5-point Likert scale could potentially be limiting. Therefore, this study makes use of 7-point Likert scale.

In order to measure the construct of organizational commitment, Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) was used. This questionnaire consists of 15 items which are to be answered on a 7-point Likert scale. Though the scale is quite dated, it is the most frequently used scale to measure the construct of organizational commitment and its reliability is well documented; the Cronbach's alpha values lie between .82 and .93 (Mowday et al., 1992, as cited in Kanning & Hill, 2013, p. 12). A more recent validation of the OCQ is provided by Kanning and Hill (2013), who reported a Cronbach's alpha of .87 with a sample of 348 participants in the United States and Canada (Kanning & Hill, 2013, p. 17). After recoding the negatively worded items, the current study found the OCQ to be highly reliable (α = .80).

The items in the above-mentioned questionnaires constitute attitudinal questions. According to Dörnyei (2007), these type of questions are used to "find out what people think, covering attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102). As this study seeks to examine the perceptions of employees regarding the extent of their organizational identification, attitudinal questions are of utter importance.

Next to these attitudinal questions, some factual questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. These questions are used to "find out certain facts about the respondents, such as demographic characteristics" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102). The participants were asked to fill in the following personal information: gender, age, years worked at the company, nationality and years lived in the Netherlands. When questioning nationality, it is important to take into account the tolerance of multiple nationalities that prevails in the European Union (Kochenov, 2011). As the possibility of participants having more than one nationality exists, two questions were added next to the first question of "What is your nationality?". The second question is the following: "If you have a second nationality, please fill it in here". As it is important for the purpose of this study to make a distinction between the nationalities of participants, only one nationality was considered for each participant. Therefore, a third question has been formulated: "If you have two nationalities, please fill in here which one you identify with the most."

In order to first gain the trust of the participants, these demographic questions were left at the end of the questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 111), together with the terminating, open-ended question of "Is there anything you would like to share?". This question, allowing participants to mention information that they feel is necessary for the researcher to know, was placed at the end of the questionnaire so as to ensure that the "other items will not be affected by the potential negative consequences of the open-ended question (for example, the required work can put some people off)" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 112).

After completion of the data collection, all data from the questionnaires were put in the software SPSS, so as to allow statistical analysis. To define whether a significant difference exists between Dutch and non-Dutch employees regarding the extent to which they identify with the company, an indepent samples t-test was performed between these two groups. Moreover, to test the second hypothesis of a correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

Results

This section discusses the results of the statistical analysis of the obtained data. First, the descriptive statistics that are relevant to this research are presented. The subsequent section elaborates on the inferential statistics pertaining to the results.

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics of the two constructs determined in the methodology section: organizational identification and organizational commitment. In both tables, the data is shown as a function of both nationality and gender. This is done because the nationality of the participants (Dutch or non-Dutch) is relevant to the purpose of this study, as well as to show that gender is not evenly distributed among the participants.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Employees' Organizational Identification on a Scale of 1 to 7 and as a Function of Nationality and Gender

	Dutch employees			International employees			Total		
Sex	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Male	4.96	1.14	175	5.31	1.13	50	5.04	1.14	225
Female	4.94	1.10	36	5.18	0.93	29	5.05	1.02	65
Different	-	-	-	4.17	-	1	4.17	-	1
Not specified	4.83	0.60	3	5.50	-	1	5.00	0.59	4
Total	4.96	1.12	214	5.25	1.05	81	5.04	1.11	295

Source: own study.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Employees' Organizational Commitment on a scale of 1 to 7 and as a Function of Nationality and Gender

	Dutch employees			International employees			Total		
Sex	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Male	4.68	0.90	175	4.93	0.88	50	4.74	0.90	225
Female	4.84	0.89	36	4.79	0.96	29	4.82	0.91	65
Different	-	-	-	3.73	-	1	3.73	-	1
Not speci-fied	4.24	1.25	3	5.93	-	1	4.67	1.33	4
Total	4.70	0.90	214	4.88	0.91	81	4.75	0.91	295

Source: own study.

Inferential Statistics

The mean of the total sample regarding the construct of organizational identification is 5.04 (*SD* = 1.11). In order to determine whether international employees differ from Dutch employees regarding the extent to which they identify with the company, an independent samples *t*-test was carried out. This *t*-test shows that the 215 Dutch employees (*M* = 4.96, *SD* = 1.12) and the 81 international employees (*M* = 5.25, *SD* = 1.05) differ significantly from each other when it comes to the construct of organizational identification (*t*(293) = -2.03, *p* = .04, *d* = 0.27). This suggests that international employees identify with the company to a greater extent compared to Dutch employees. Additionally, an independent samples *t*-test was carried out to determine whether the two groups differ from each other regarding the extent of their organizational commitment. This *t*-test shows that international employees (*M* = 4.88, *SD* = 0.91) do not differ significantly from Dutch employees (*M* = 4.70, *SD* = 0.90) when it comes to this construct (*t*(293) = -1.49, *p* = .14).

In order to assess the relationship between the constructs of organizational identification (*M* = 5.04, *SD* = 1.11) and organizational commitment (*M* = 4.75, *SD* = 0.91), a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. As shown in table 3, results indicate that a significant positive correlation exists between these two constructs (*r*(295) = .81, *p* < .001). This suggests that the higher an employee's organizational identification, the higher his/her organizational commitment, and vice versa.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Between the Constructs of Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

Variable		Commitment	Identification
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.812**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	295	295

Identification	Pearson Correlation	.812**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	295	295

Source: own study.

Final Remarks

This chapter first concludes this study by summarizing the results and responding to the research questions. Subsequently, the findings of this study are connected to the literature that was discussed in the theoretical framework. Additionally, light is shed on the managerial implications that the results of this study entail. Lastly, the limitations of this study are discussed, as well as suggestions for future research.

Conclusion

This research applied the concept of organizational identification to a specific organizational context by investigating the following matter: *To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?* Table 1 in the previous chapter shows that the mean for organizational identification of the total sample is 5.04 (SD = 1.11). Considering the 7-point Likert scale that was used, this is equivalent to the answer option of "somewhat agree" on the six items of the scale of Edwards & Peccei (2007). Employees thus consider the company a part of their identity to a moderate extent.

The first sub-question of this research was the following: *To what extent does organizational identification differ between Dutch and international employees?* The previous chapter concluded that the formulated hypothesis, i.e. *International employees consider the organization to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees*, can be confirmed; an independent samples t-test shows a significant difference between the two groups, with international employees (M = 5.25, SD = 1.05) obtaining a higher score for organizational identification than Dutch employees (M = 4.96, SD = 1.12). As reflected in its effect size (d = 0.27), this difference can be considered small, yet significant.

Lastly, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed in order to answer the second sub-question: *To what extent does a correlation exist between organizational identification and organizational commitment?* Table 3 in the previous chapter indicates that the following hypothesis can be confirmed: *A positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment.* A correlation of .81 was found, which suggests that the two constructs are closely related; the higher an employee's organizational identification, the higher his/her organizational commitment, and vice versa.

Organizational Identification and Social Identity

This study contributes to the literature on organizational identification by approaching this topic from a bottom-up perspective. It does so by analyzing the impact that employees' social identities have on the extent of their organizational identification. Specifically, the theoretical framework relates the notion of organizational identification to Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory by considering several social categories that individuals can identify with. An organization can act as such a category for its employees, as organizational identification occurs when employees consider the organization a part of their identity. However, as mentioned earlier, the notion of multiple identities is inherent to Social Identity Theory, as individuals may have as many social identities as they have group memberships. In addition to organizational membership, individuals can derive their identity from cultural, racial and/or expatriate membership. The body of research discussed (Pratt, 2001; Mukherjee et al., 2012; Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015) suggests that the prevalence of these latter memberships in an individual's identity influences the extent of their organizational identification. Particularly when it comes to the difference between local employees and expatriates, the findings of Van Bochove & Engbersen (2015) raise the assumption that the extent of organizational identification among expatriates is generally higher than among their local counterparts; international employees' social networks in their host country are smaller than those of Dutch employees, leaving Dutch employees with more social categories to identify with. Additionally, expatriates' social networks often consist mainly of other expatriates working at the same organization. As a result, international employees are reminded of their organizational membership more so than Dutch employees (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015). These findings led to the hypothesis of international employees considering the company to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees. Though a small effect size, the mean score of international employees regarding the construct of organizational identification is significantly higher than that of Dutch employees. The former hypothesis is thus confirmed. In light of the existent literature, this was to be expected.

Managerial Implications

What remains though, is the question as to what the implications of this result are for this particular company and similar organizations. Both Dutch and international employees identify with the organization to a moderate extent, with Dutch employees running behind on international employees. As it is presumable that Dutch employees have more group memberships and, as a result, more social identities, the question that needs to be addressed is how organizational identification is influenced by the pursuit of other identities.

Organizational identification research has long focused on a single primary identity, i.e. that of the individual's identification with the organization (Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Pratt, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Building on this, the most evident implication of this research would be for the company to try and increase the share that this organization occupies in the social identity of their employees. However, Fombelle et al. (2011) argue against this and encourage the leveraging of employees' multiple identities. The findings of their quantitative survey research show that "the pursuit of other identities in the context of an organization leads to stronger organizational identification, especially if the organizational context simultaneously facilitates the pursuit of these other identities (that is, the member experienced a synergy among the other identities and the organizational identity)" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 588). In addition, Fombelle et al. conclude that an increase in the perception of identity synergy is positively related to an increase in peer identification: "… enacting important social identities while interacting with other members of the organization increases the individual's feelings of familiarity with - and thus connections to - fellow members of the organization" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 593). In turn, an increase in peer identification leads to an increase in organizational identification as employees identify with and appreciate the organization more when they become tied to other organizational members (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 593).

The findings of the present study, as well as those of the study of Fombelle et al. (2011), entail several managerial implications. In order to increase organizational identification among both Dutch and international employees, the company should "encourage the incorporation of the members' important identities into that of the organizational to facilitate synergy" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 599). For example, providing childcare and sports facilities lets employees know that the company understands what is important in their lives and is willing to support their other relevant identities, such as their identity as a parent or sports enthusiast. Furthermore, group activities that facilitate peer-to-peer interactions, encourage relationships, and create a sense of community within the organization, e.g. team building activities, are critical; they allow the organization to transform a naturally existing phenomenon already happening within their organization, i.e. employee interactions, into a means to bond individuals more strongly to the organization (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 599). It is vital for the multinational organizations of today to understand that their efforts cannot be centered on the creation of one focal identity amidst their diverse workforce. Rather, managers need to acknowledge the full portfolio of identities their employees seek to enact.

Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

As discussed earlier, strong organizational identification among employees has many positive effects on an organization's functioning; it has been linked to "lower employee turnover, lower levels of burnout due to emotional labor, and increases in employee motivation, job satisfaction, and compliance with organizational dictates" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cheney, 1983; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995, as cited in Pratt, 2001). Regarding the outcomes of organizational commitment, Steers (1977) found effects similar to those of organizational identification, as he found the construct to be significantly related to lower employee turnover: "Strong support was found for the proposition that commitment is associated with increases in an employee's desire and intent to remain with an organization" (Steers, 1977, p. 54). A different effect was found by Aryee & Tan (1992), whose findings showed a significant positive correlation between organizational commitment and career commitment. Career commitment is defined here as an individual's affective identification with a series of related jobs in a specific field of work. This identification is expressed through the ability to cope with disappointments in the pursuit of career goals (Aryee & Tan, 1992, p. 289). The positive correlation between the constructs of organizational commitment and career commitment may be explained in terms of an employing organization that provides a climate which promotes the ideals and goals of a specific occupation: "The pursuit of a career role in this occupation in such an organization will heighten one's commitment to the organization and subsequently to one's career" (Hall, Schneider & Nygren, 1970, as cited in Aryee & Tan, 1992, p. 293). More recently, Kaplan & Kaplan (2018) found affective commitment to have a positive and significant effect on work performance.

The studies mentioned in the theoretical framework (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006; Gautam et al., 2004) led to the hypothesis of a positive correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment. By having confirmed this hypothesis, this study has provided the organizational identity literature with yet another piece of evidence of the relationship between these two constructs.

However, when it comes to the positive correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment, it should be noted that the meanings of these two notions are closely related. Though Mael and Ashforth (1992) have theoretically differentiated the two concepts, several definitions of organizational commitment strongly resemble those of organizational identification. This is true in particular for Mowday et al.'s (1979) definition of organizational commitment as a person's: (1) belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) desire to maintain membership (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, as cited in Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 105). Mainly the first aspect of this definition closely relates to Mael & Tetrick's (1992) definition of organizational identification: "the tendency of individuals to perceive themselves and their groups or organizations as intertwined, sharing common qualities and faults, successes and failures, and common destinies" (Mael & Tetrick, 1992, p. 813). When considering this study's finding of a significant positive correlation between these two constructs, the thin line between their meanings thus needs to be kept in mind.

Managerial Implications

This study has confirmed that a positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment among employees of the Dutch site of a multinational company. This suggest that when the company works to increase organizational identification among its employees, it can expect an increase in organizational commitment as well. Inversely, efforts to increase organizational commitment may simultaneously result in increased organizational identification.

The article discussed several ways organizations can increase organizational identification among employees (i.e. encouraging identity synergy and facilitating peer-to-peer activities). When it comes to organizational commitment, however, few management intervention strategies exist that specifically address increasing this phenomenon. One strategy was developed by Nyhan (1999), who found interpersonal trust, particularly between supervisors and employees, to be key to increasing affective commitment in public organizations. According to Nyhan, three practices are integral to successful trust building interventions in public organizations: "(a) participation in decision making, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) feedback from and to employees" (Nyhan, 1999, p. 64). Similarly, Bhatti et al. (2011) found empirical evidence to support the view that practices like direct employee participation can influence organizational commitment: "Organizations interested in their growth and in a highly committed work force must involve their employees in decision making processes" (Bhatti et al., 2011, p. 22).

Limitations

The implications of this study should be considered in the light of its limitations. First, it is important to note that the mean difference between Dutch (M = 4.96, SD = 1.12) and international employees (M = 5.25, SD = 1.05) regarding organizational identification is of a relatively small size; just big enough to be considered significant. Moreover, both standard deviations are quite big, implicating a less accurate mean. The small size of the mean difference is reflected in the effect size (d = 0.27) which is, although not negligible, considered to be small. Looking back on the literature discussed and the hypothesis that flowed from this, it is fair to say that the difference between the two groups was expected to be of a larger size.

Additionally, the negative formulation of some items in the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire needs to be considered. Though the reliability of this measure has been proven on numerous occasions (see section 3.3), the present study included, several participants found the negative formulations to be a source of confusion. Moreover, recent research has shown the ineffectiveness of reverse worded items as a means of reducing or preventing response bias, particularly acquiescence: "Acquiescence cannot be prevented by reversing, and more errors will be made due to inattention or confusion" (Van Sonderen et al., 2013, p. 6).

Suggestions for Future Research

In general, more research needs to be done into the difference in organizational identification between local and international employees. The present study is one of the few to address the impact cultural differences and expatriate membership have on the extent to which employees identify with their organization. As companies are facing increasingly diverse workforces, expertise of the difference in organizational identification between local and expatriate employees is crucial. Therefore, more scientific insight is needed into the magnitude of this difference, as well as what constitutes the most efficient way to measure organizational identification among employees of multinational organizations. Though the current research has made use of quantitative methods, allowing information to be gained about a large group of people, qualitative methods are worth exploring in the future. Interviews, for instance, would allow a case study to be examined in more detail, shedding light on the underlying perceptions and motives of the research subjects.

Lastly, more experimental research is needed to investigate how organizational identification and organizational commitment can be increased in real-life contexts. As this study has shown, both of these constructs have positive outcomes on the functioning of organizations. Well-founded advice based on scientific research as to what practical changes managers can make to achieve these positive outcomes, is of utter value.

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