Discussing the Structural Models

The empirical analyses performed within this book shed light on a number of interesting findings relevant to gaining a better understanding of the notion of organizational identification. In this chapter, I discuss all these empirical findings in relation to the propositions and arguments presented in the wider literature on psychological bonds between individuals and organization. Specifically, the chapter sets out to highlight the impact of organizational identification by discussing contextual performance elements as potential importance indicators for university settings. The three key frameworks organizational scientists frequently adopt to explain the occurrence of organizational identification are also discussed in light of the empirical findings, before the role played by biases associated with common method variance is considered. Lastly, the chapter accentuates the key theoretical contributions and advancements this book makes to the study of organizational identification and offers a final visualization of the Coalescence Model of Organizational Identification.

Highlighting the impact of organizational identification

One key concern organizational scientists need to address when studying an organizational phenomenon is its likely effect on other related issues. Given that this book seeks to develop and expand our understanding and knowledge of the occurrence of identification in organizational settings, a key issue to look at is whether or not such identification has any relevant outcomes for organizations or, more specifically for the research at hand, for universities. When determining the impact of organizational identification in general and for universities in particular, as such, it is important to look at consequences associated with identification. While some studies choose to look at organizationally undesirable consequences of identification in organizations (see, for instance, Aquino & Douglas, 2003, for antisocial behavior as an outcome; Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003, for heightened levels of resistance to change; and Haslam et al., 2006, for escalated commitment...
to failing organizational projects), this study determines the importance of organizational identification by investigating organizationally desirable consequences. Two of the most important desirable consequences organizational scientists may investigate when determining the impact of a phenomenon are an employee’s level of task performance and the extent to which she or he engages in contextual performance. Even though some scholars argue for a positive relationship between organizational identification and task performance (see, for instance, van Knippenberg, 2000), this book argues that these more distal outcomes of organizational identification are problematic as their contribution to explained variance may be rather low. For instance, Campbell, McCloy, Oppler and Sager (1993) argue that an employee’s knowledge relevant to a given task, in their theory referred to as “declarative knowledge” and “procedural knowledge”, and cognitive, psychomotor, physical, self-management and interpersonal skills, among others, are important elements which contribute significantly towards overall levels of task performance. Well-functioning tools, machinery and equipment, necessary material and supplies (Peters & O’Connor, 1980) and effective rewards schemes (Spector, 2008), moreover, are also highly relevant to an employee’s actual level of task performance. The more proximal notion of contextual performance, on the other hand, is likely to share greater levels of variance with organizational identification. While dispositional factors and provisions made by the organization heavily influence levels of task performance, contextual performance is likely to be more commonly triggered by favorable perceptions and attitudes about various elements of the employee-organization relationship (Organ, Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2006). Some of such favorable attitudes are, to a significant extent, captured in the notion of organizational identification. Consequently, when trying to establish the impact of identification in organizational settings, it is useful to choose more proximal over more distal organizational outcomes as determinants of the importance of organizational identification. Thus, while the proposed directional link between organizational identification and task performance may be appealing at face value (van Knippenberg, 2000), this book suggests that more proximal and directly related consequences should be adopted in determining its impact, as these are less likely to be influenced by a number of other, often only remotely related variables. The notion of contextual performance (or organizational citizenship behavior), essentially, provides such an organizationally relevant and proximal consequence which helps to address the key question of whether or not identification in organizational contexts truly matters.

A further rationale for why contextual performance serves as a good indicator when seeking to establish the impact of organizational identification refers to the specific context in which the organization under scrutiny operates. Specifically, contextual performance increases in importance for organizations which design their work in a way which gives employees great