

Does Affective Commitment Mediate the Relationship between Person-Organization Fit and Organizational Identification?

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Abstract The purpose of this study is to analyze the mediating effects of affective commitment in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification. The paper develops a conceptual framework based on a theory and literature review. Person-organization fit was approached as the degree of similarity between the personal values and organizational values. The group of participants is employees from different companies that belong to different sectors. Research scale was answered by 285 participants and statistical package is used to test hypothesis and research questions. According to results of regression analysis, the mediating variable role of affective commitment is supported in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification. The findings imply that managers should pay attention the person-organization value fit when selecting new employees.

Key words: Person-organization fit, values, affective commitment, organizational identification

1. Introduction

Organizational identification (OID) has become a central concept in the area of organizational behavior and more generally, has been drawing attention in management research. OID is seen as a key psychological state reflecting the underlying link or bond that exist between employee and organization and, therefore, it has potential to explain and predict many important attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Organizational identification is defined as “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where individuals defines him or herself in terms of organization(s) which he or she is a member” (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Compared with other variables such as well-being, job satisfaction, OID has received little attention until recently. In the 1970s, Porter et al. (1974) included identification as a component of attitudinal organizational commitment. After Ashforth and Mael (1989) recapitulated the relevance of these psychological concepts to organizational behavior research, the number of empirical analyses concentrated on OID as a unique variable (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Tyler, 1999). Because organizations come into existence with their employees, understanding of implications about commitment and intention to stay with an organization will be crucial. Therefore, it is not surprising that person-organization fit has been

defined as a potentially important factor in the development and maintenance of employees commitment to organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Commitment is a kind of desire to develop a stable relationship, a willingness to make sacrifices on short-term benefits so as to maintain the relationship, and confidence in the stability of the relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1992). Person-organization fit (POF) was found to be positively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bretz and Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1991). POF was also negatively correlated with intention to quit and turnover (Chatman 1991; Vancouver, Millsap and Peters, 1994). According to Cable and DeRue (2002), person-organization fit perception were found to be related to organizational outcomes (correlations with organizational identification, perceived organizational support, citizenship behavior, and turnover decisions were .48, .53, .22 and -.17 respectively, with the significance $p < .05$ or less).

Values, attitudes and behaviors are shaped by the environment that individuals live in. Moreover, values have impact on the professional and personal life of individuals. Therefore, values of organizations and individuals have consistently interactions that can be resulted as a congruence of personal and organizational values. Whether, person and organization achieve value congruence, this would contribute to employees' attitudes, and positive organizational behaviors such as organizational commitment, performance efficacy, and also organizational identification. In this study, the role of affective commitment in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification will be examined.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organizational Identification

Organizational identification is the degree to which a person both cognitively and emotionally identifies with his or her organization and ranges from primarily a cognitive awareness of membership with the organization to a fuller affective connection, including value and goal congruence (Ashforth et al., 2008). According to Martin and Epitropaki (2001) employees with high organizational identification not only shared the organization's goals, but they also saw the leader as embodying the same values and goals as the employee. Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that individuals who identify with employing organization tend to choose activities that are congruent with organization's identity. In other words, when employees perceive the organization's identity as an attractive, their strength of OID increases as well. Through identification, it has been argued that employees can be influenced by getting them to buy-in to the organization's activities. The organizations' goals become the individual's goals, and those who identify strongly are more likely to be motivated to work hard to help achieve goals. Those who identify are also more likely to want to go the extra mile on behalf of the organization and can help "enhance the success of firms" (Rousseau, 1998: 218).

2.2. Person-organization fit

Person-organization fit is defined as "the congruence between the norms and values of organization and the values of person" (Chatman, 1989, 1991). Even all employees have not common values in organizations, norms and values of organizations are taken place by the production of group members (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Wiener, 1988). According to Kristof

(1996) POF has been stated under two distinctions, one of them is *supplementary fit* and *complementary fit* and the other is *need-supplies fit* and *demand ability fit*.

Supplementary fit exists when there is similarity between an organization and a person on the relevant characteristics (Kristof, 1996). *Complementary fit* occurs when there is similarity between expectation and needs of organization and expectations and needs of individuals. Cable and Edwards (2004) resulted that complementary and supplementary fit are interrelated, and these two types of fit contribute to individual and organizational outcomes independently.

Need-supplies fit exists when organizations satisfy the needs of employees. When people's need are satisfied, they have tendency to show positive work behaviors (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, Johnson, 2005). *Demand-abilities fit* occurs when there is similarity between requirements of work and abilities of individual. This kind of fit has been discussed as a person-job fit in literature (Scroggins, 2007). We are going to discuss about POF in our study on the base of "supplementary fit" which is defined as a similarity between culture, climate, values, goals and norms of organization and values, goals and attitudes of individuals.

Person-organization fit researches have successfully improved the prediction of crucial outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). According to Olsen et al. (1995), the existence of lower fit between individual and environment has been found as related with lower level of job satisfaction and higher level of turnover rate. In addition, Chatman(1991) has indicated that person-organization fit has positive correlation with span of membership whereas negative correlation with turnover intentions. The findings prove that employees' perceived person-organization fit significantly predict their organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions and also willingness to recommend their organizations to others.

2.3. Affective Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined by Mowday et al (1982) as "the employee's affective bond with the organization". This viewpoint claims that organizational commitment is characterized by (a) "a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization" (Mowday et al., 1982: 27). Meyer and Allen (1991) has divided organizational commitment into multidimensional work attitudes as affective(emotional attachment to the organization), continuance(evaluation of costs and benefits associated with leaving the organization) and normative(perceived obligation to remain with the organization) commitment. In a similar vein, Allen and Meyer (1990) have pointed out that "employees with strong affective commitment remain because they want to, those with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to, and those with strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so" (Allen & Meyer, 1990: 3). The most prevalent subject is through the affective commitment, in which commitment is taken into consideration as an emotional or affective attachment to the organization. Affective

commitment is also defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday et al., 1982; Wong et al., 2002; Porter et al., 1974; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Work attitudes/perceptions have been considered as the most important category of antecedents of affective commitment by Meyer and Allen. Meyer and Allen (1991) found that work attitudes/perceptions (i.e., organizational dependability, peer cohesion, role clarity, personal importance, job challenge, participation, goal clarity, goal difficulty, management receptiveness, equity, feedback) were the best predictors of affective commitment.

3. The differences between affective commitment and organizational identification

Affective commitment is closely related to the concept of organizational identification. In this commitment, employees feel themselves as a part of their organization and have a strong sense of belonging to the organization. Hence, they are willing to stay in the organization without a sense of necessity (Balay, 2000: 21). As mentioned before, OID refers to the cognitive bond between one’s self and organization definition (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994). As it can be understood from the definitions above mentioned, whether individuals adopt the behavior styles of their organizations, in other words if they commit themselves to their organizations; we might mention about existence of identification. Because identification provide attraction in a way, it satisfies the employees in the workplace. However, this attraction can be lost easily. In order to keep this attraction alive, employees should feel commitment toward their organization. OID includes dimensions such as; attachment feeling, feeling proud of being organization member, organizational loyalty, supporting organization’s goals, and value and goal congruence between organization and employee (Cheney, 1982). Although similarities between organizational identification and organizational commitment draw the attention, organizational identification is relatively more temporary and flexible than commitment (Wagner & Ward, 1993: cf. Pratt, 2001). Therefore, it can be considered that commitment is an attitude and more stable and long standing than identification.

The role of affective commitment in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification

Previous researches have suggested that the relation between POF and specified outcome variables may change in the context of different conditions. Individuals enter an organization with specific skills, desires, values, goals, and expect a work setting where they can use their skills, satisfy their desires, find value congruence, and achieve their goals. To the extent the organization is perceived as facilitating these ends, organizational commitment likely to increase. Buchanan (1974: 533) defined OID as “adoption as one’s own, the goals and values of the organization”. He pointed out that “person-organization value and goal congruence” is very essence of identification with the organization and attempts toward aligning the values and goals of the organizational members with the organization which are essential and beneficial for the well-being of both employees and organization as well. In the same vein, DeCotiss and Summers (1987) pointed out that employees are likely to exhibit affective commitment when they have a strong identification with their organizational goals and values, or have a strong willingness to work hard for

their organization. According to Westerman and Cyr (2004) individuals choose the organizations which they will work for according to similarity between their fundamental characteristics and the organization's. When individuals feel closer to their organization emotionally and involve with the organization's values and goals, they have strong affective commitment and continue to work in the organization voluntarily. When employees experience affective commitment toward their organization, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes including identification and loyalty. For instance, whether employees perceive that they work in "true organization", they form positive images about it. They feel proud to identify with such an organization, develop their self-esteem, form affective bonds with the organization, develop a sense of loyalty, and make effort to perform better and benefit the whole organization (Dutton et al., 1994).

From the literature review, the following hypothesis were derived:

H1: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification, such that person-organization fit is positively related to affective commitment, which in turn is positively related to organizational identification

4. Research Design

This study used quantitative methodology to examine the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification. Subjects completed a questionnaire including the measure of their feelings toward their organization.

4.1. Method

4.2. Participants and procedure

A total of 285 people from different sectors and careers participated to this study. Most of the participants (n = 194) are employees from private sector whereas rest of the participants (n = 91) are the employees from public sector. The age of participants ranged between 18 and 66 (m = 34,08) and their total tenures ranged between 1 and 40 years (m = 10,6). Fifty-three percentage of participants were female, 55% were married and majority of them were university graduates (51%) followed by associate degree (19%). The participants of research was reached by convenience sampling method. Questionnaires were sent via e-mail to the individuals who worked in different sectors on condition that they were employed in an organization.

4.3. Measure

Since the research instruments was originally developed in English, it was translated to Turkish, and then it was later back translated to English to avoid translation errors (Ball et al., 2002).

4.4. Organizational Identification Scale

Organizational identification was measured with the Mael and Ashforth (1992) six-item scale (e.g., *When I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'* "). It has

been observed that the Mael and Ashforth's measure is the most frequently used measure of identification (Ricketta, 2005). 6-point Likert scale is used to indicate the degree to which respondents agree. In the present study, internal consistency for the organizational identification was .91 with the 70% explanatory power.

4.5. Affective Commitment Scale

Affective commitment was measured with the six-item scale from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) (e.g., *I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization*). In the scale, the negative statements were turned into positive statements by the researcher. 6-point Likert scale is used to indicate the degree to which respondents agree. In the present study, internal consistency for the affective commitment was .94 with the 80% explanatory power.

4.6. Person-Organization Fit Scale

Person-organization fit was measured with the forty-item shortened version from Cable and Judge (1997). This short version of the instrument has been widely used in the literature (Cable and Judge, 1997; Cable and Parsons, 2001; Judge and Cable, 1997). Respondents rated each of 40 value items separately for their current organization and for their ideal organization on a six-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "a lot" (6). In the present study, internal consistency for the person-organization fit was .95 with the 59% explanatory power.

5. Analysis

Statistical program is used to investigate the relations among variables in the research model. Cronbach alpha reliability scores were calculated for each of the test used. The study's hypothesis were tested with a 3- steps regression model, and the analysis related to demographic variables were examined through one-way ANOVA and t-test tests.

5.1. Calculating Person-Organization Fit

Independent variable of our research is "person-organization fit" was calculated by the difference of "organizational values and individual values". Due to the calculation of the difference between individual and organizational values, POF is increasing when the values are closer to 0 (zero) and POF is decreasing when values are away from zero. Since participants were asked to rate each item on a scale ranging from 1 to 6, maximum person-organization *misfit* score is 5 and maximum person-organization fit score is 0 (zero).

6. Result

Means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations, and reliabilities for the study variables are displayed in Table 1. Regardless of the types of dependent or independent variables, correlation analyses were performed in order to find out the degree and direction of relationships between them. As seen in table 1, there is a positive and significant relationship between "affective commitment" and "organizational identification" ($r = .745, p < .01$). As expected person-organization fit has significant and negative relationship with both organizational identification ($r = -.464, p < .01$) and affective commitment ($r = -.363, p < .01$). POF

is increasing when values are closer to zero. Because of this reason, these negative correlations between variables should be interpreted as positive. Therefore, when POF increases affective commitment and organizational identification increases as well. Since POF has 1,32 mean score we can say that participants' value fit with their organization is high. Additionally, organizational identification has 3,88 mean score and affective commitment has 3,60 mean score.

Table1. Means, standart deviations, correlations and reliabilities

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Affective commitment	3,60	1,52	(0,94)		
Organizational identification	3,88	1,35	,745**	(0,91)	
Person-organization fit	1,32	1,10	-,464**	-,363**	(0,95)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

6.1. Hypothesis Testing

At this part of the research, the multiple regression analyses have been conducted in three steps in order to test whether affective commitment has mediating role in the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification. Firstly, the contribution of the independent variable to mediating variable has been tested. Secondly, the contribution of independent variable to dependent variable has been tested. At last step, both independent variable and mediating variable have been inserted and their contribution on dependent variable has been tested. To ascertain the effect of mediating variable, the significant contribution of independent variable on dependent variable which is emerged at the second step, should decrease or disappear at the last step (Baron and Kenny, 1984). In accordance with the findings, at the first step, person-organization fit has strong and significant contribution ($\beta = -,464, p < .001$) on affective commitment. At second step, it is found out that person-organization fit has strong and significant contribution on ($\beta = -,363, p < .001$) on organizational identification.

Table 2. Contributions of POF to affective commitment and organizational identification

***P≤ 0.001, P* < 0,05, n.s. P > 0.05

		Step 1				Step 2			
		Mediating variable				Dependent variable			
		Affective Commitment				Organizational Identification			
		R	R ²	F	β	R	R ²	F	β
Ind. Variable	POF	,464	,216	77,786***	-,464	,363	,132	42,944***	-,363

At the third step, the contribution of person-organization fit and affective commitment on organizational identification has been conducted. As it can be seen in table 3, when affective commitment is inserted to analyze, the significant contribution of person-organization fit, which was obtained at the second step, disappeared. Affective commitment has a strong and significant contribution ($\beta = ,735, p < .001$) on organizational identification. These results support the hypothesis. Additionally, all of the 2 regression analysis models has a VIF value that were under than 10 and all of their CI values were smaller than 30. In other words, there is no multicollinearity possibilities between independent variables.

Table 3. Contributions of POF and affective commitment to organizational identification

		Step 3					
		Dependent Variable					
		Organizational Identification				Collinearity	
		β	R	R ²	F	VIF	CI
Ind. Variable	POF	-,022 n.s.	,746	,556	176,527***	1,275	2,436
	Affective Commitment	,735***				1,275	7,494

***P≤ 0.001, P* < 0,05, n.s. P > 0.05

6.2. Roles of the Demographical Variables on the Person-Organization Fit, Organizational Identification and Affective Commitment

As it can be seen from table 4, at the end of the difference test performed by gender, a significant difference has been observed between men and women with regard to affective

commitment ($p = ,030$) and person-organization fit ($p = ,000$). We found out that mean score of women ($m = 3,42$) is lower than men ($m = 3,81$) with respect to affective commitment. Additionally, men ($m = 1,04$) have higher mean value than women ($m = 1,56$) as regards to person-organization fit. As it has been mentioned previously, the closer the value fit is to zero, the higher the fit is. There has been no significant differences in the organizational identification between these two groups.

Table 4. Difference test results for gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	p
Affective Commitment	Men	134	3,81	1,49	2,180	280,056	,030
	Women	151	3,42	1,52			
POF	Men	134	1,04	1,00	-4,154	282,990	,000
	Women	151	1,56	1,13			

Whether there is any relationship between organizational identification, affective commitment and person-organization fit variables with respect to education and marital status difference *t-tests* has been examined. However, it has been found that any variable has a significant difference with marital status or education. In other words, education and marital status of individual does not have any explanatory power on either organizational identification and affective commitment or person-organization fit. Furthermore, the results of difference test with respect to sector of organization indicate that there are significant differences between public and private sector in terms of each variable. It has been observed that in all of the variables, affective commitment ($m = 3,84$), person-organization fit ($m = 1,13$) and organizational identification ($m = 4,04$), means of private sector outpointed.

Table 5. Difference test results for sector of organization.

	Sector	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	p
Affective Commitment	Public	91	3,08	1,29	-4,346	209,874	,000
	Private	194	3,84	1,56			
POF	Public	91	1,71	1,16	4,038	157,066	,000
	Private	194	1,13	1,02			
Organizational identification	Public	91	3,54	1,36	-2,887	172,231	,004
	Private	194	4,04	1,32			

7. Discussion

Results of this study suggest that the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational identification is attenuated when affective commitment is inserted. According to current study, employee's identification with their organization increases when they experience affective commitment toward their organization. In other words, this study indicates that the feeling of affective commitment toward organization can facilitate the relationship between person-organization value fit and identification. When study variables are examined in terms of gender, it can be concluded that men experience more person-organization value fit, and affective commitment than women colleagues. However, according to various studies, it doesn't seem to be a difference between men and women in terms of organizational commitment (e.g., Lambert et al., 2008; Lambert & Paoline, 2008). In our study, the reason of this finding might be taken into consideration as men give more importance on their organization and work itself. Additionally, men also have higher mean in terms of person-organization fit. Because men have been taking place in the economic world almost since ancient ages and also due to the new entrance of women in this world, men have been likely to close their individual values to the values of business world and their organizations. As Rokeach (1973: 19) pointed out men give more importance on success and intellectual career values whereas women give more importance on love, close relationship and family.

According to results of t-test analysis, the mean of respondents with respect to private sector was found higher than public sector regarding to all variables. Pierce and Furo (1990) pointed out that an important organizational characteristic that accounts for the variance in organizational commitment has been found as the type ownership. In that regard, private sector employees have often been reported to hold higher commitment than public sector employees (Odom et al., 1990). Zeffane (1994) also researched 238 employees in public and private organizations in Australia and found out that public sector employees are relatively less committed to the goals and values of their organizations than their private sector counterparts. In a similar vein, according to results of the study, private sector employees have higher mean scores than public sector employees with regard to person-organization value fit. This might indicate that private sector offers more praise for good performance, is more people oriented, gives more opportunities for professional growth, is more supportive, is more innovative and is more quicker to take advantage of opportunities compared to public sector. In the same vein, private sector employees have experienced more organizational identification than public sector employees. It can be concluded that private sector companies motivated their employees to fulfill organizational needs, goals and to expand the member's self-esteem, self-consistency and self-distinctiveness with respect to public sector companies.

This present study contains some methodological limitations that suggest areas for future research. First of all, the convenience sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings, and this can not be exactly replicated within another context (Creswell, 1994). Therefore, this research may not be generalizable to the whole population of Turkish employees. Another limitation of this study is related to the survey method since it relies on a self-report method of data collection. Survey provide only verbal description of what respondents say, they do or feel about their organization. Responses can not always be taken as accurate description of what respondents actually do or really feel about their organization.

Intentional deception, poor memory or misunderstanding of the question may affect the accuracy of research. In order to eliminate those problems, more research in this area should be applied.

Even with these limitations, we have achieved our purpose for this study. First of all, we have offered an explanation for why affective commitment might take a place among person-organization fit and organizational identification. The apparent mechanism is that person-organization value fit is certainly an important criterion for selecting and retaining employees. Managers and Human Resources professionals should be eager to recruit those individuals with similar values to those of the organization. A good fit on such values as recognition of high performance, quality and innovation will in turn have an increasing effect on affective commitment which creates a climate where the employees are likely to experience organizational identification. Though other possible antecedents were not tested, it can be suggested that actions designed to promote person-organization value congruence might be useful for companies and its employees.

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