The Concept Differentiation of Organizational Behavior Theory

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Abstract: Through the combing of the literature at home and abroad, this paper expounds these definitions and measuring dimensions of the concepts concerning organizational behavior such as person-organization fit, organizational commitment, organizational identification, psychological contract and organizational citizenship behavior, and analyzes the main similarities and differences among, thus strengthening the clarification of these concepts. In addition, this paper puts forward the prospect of the future study on these several theories.

Keywords: Concept, Definition, Measuring Dimensions

Introduction

With the intensifying competition of modern enterprises, enterprise managers increasingly attach greater importance of human capital, and in order to enhance the competitiveness of their own enterprises, more researches on staff of enterprises gradually arise. The purport of the discipline called organizational behavior is to study the law of human psychological behavior. Based on such reason, staff behavior has become the focus of vast numbers of researchers and managers. Among these researches, some new theories on organizational behavior slowly take shape, most of which apply the psychology and organizational theory and develop, thus inevitably having certain confusion of meaning. Correspondingly, among them the overlap of some concepts exists to some extent and the unclear definitions of the concepts lead to the ambiguity of research conclusions. In many research papers on organizational behavior, we can easily find out the confusion of some concepts causes the indistinctness of research themes and conclusions. Here, I shall study these concepts starting from their formations and measurement methods and attempt to distinguish these concepts, thus contributing to future research on the organization theories to achieve the clear train of thought and have an object in view.

1 Person-organization Fit

1.1 The definition of person-organization fit

The study of Fit derives from psychology and in the 1950’s, the organizational behavior experts introduced the concept of “Person-organization Fit” into management studies. Since the introduction of Fit was introduced into organization management, aiming at occupation (Holland, 1985), choice of work (Hackman and Oldham, 1980) and organizational climate (Joyce and Slocum, 1984), a large number of theories on Fit have been put forward. These theories absorb the content of interactive psychology, taking it into account how individual characteristics and situational characteristics are combined to jointly influence a particular individual’s response to a given situation. Initially, many researchers believe that the concept of “Person-organization Fit” refers specifically to person-organization culture fit (person-organization fit, POF) and reflect the person-organization compatibility and congruence (Kristof, 1996) while O’Reilly(1991) specifically defines the Person-organization Fit as the Person-organization Fit based on values and at present the majority of the theoretical studies adopt this concept. In the aspect of the structure of Person-organization Fit, Chatman (1989) established theoretical model (as is shown in Figure 1) of the interaction between individual and organization. The model analyzes the Fit from both personal and organizational perspectives, thus better reflecting the interactive influence of the two perspectives.

1.2 The measuring dimension of definition of person-organization fit
In accordance with the different research concepts and purposes of the person-organization matching, there exist two different ways of the matching measurement: the direct measurement of individual matching perception and the indirect measurement of the actual person-organization matching. The direct measurement of matching is achieved mainly through individual self-evaluation of whether the good person-organization matching exists or not. The basic assumption of the direct measurement is as follows: Regardless of congruous matching or complementary matching, if individual perceives the existence of the person-organization matching, the matching will exist. They believe that most of the time the perceived matching for personal outcome variable is more influential than the actual measuring matching. However, it is quite easy for us to find out the limitations of this kind of measurement, because many individuals’ subjective perceptions have too much randomness, which will make the research findings overestimate the true correlation between the matching and criterion.

Considering the defects of the direct measurement, many researchers rely on indirect measurement to evaluate the practical and objective person-organization matching. In the indirect measurement, individual characteristics and organizational characteristics under the same concept are respectively evaluated and the methods such as the D-score method, Q-Sort method and polynomial regression method are used to compare the differences between the individual characteristics and organizational characteristics. This measurement strategy is allowed to empirically to evaluate the similarity between person and organization and allows the mutual implicit evaluation. Therefore, it is considered to measure the true matching between person and organization, which can better reflect actual degree of matching.

![Fig 1: Model of person-organization fit (Chatman, 1989)](image)

2.1 The definition of organizational commitment
Organizational commitment is an important realm of organizational behavior and it originates from the 1960’s. The concept of organizational commitment was put forward by Becker, who initially regarded organizational commitment as a psychological phenomenon in which employees have to continue to stay in the organization with their inputs in the organization increasing. The definition of organizational commitment didn’t gradually form two basic views until the 1970’s: One is the Theory of Behaviour, namely organizational commitment refers to the commitment in the enterprise that employees have to continue to stay in the organization in order not to lose their positions and the benefits for their many years’ Inputs. The other is Theory of Attitude which believes that organizational commitment refers to the individual attitude towards organization or a positive intrapsychic inclination and it is a particular individual emotional attachment to organization and the relative degree of participation of the organization. Although these two points of views have different perspectives, they believe that organizational commitment is the mutual connecting link between employees and organization. (The various definitions can refer to Table I).

2.2 Measuring dimension of organizational commitment
There have always been different views of the structural dimension of the measuring methods of organizational commitment. Initially, the measuring scale of organizational commitment was developed by Porter, including 15 items respectively used to measure three different types of organizational
commitment: identity, participation and loyalty. The scale has been widely used in the past 20 years, but has been questioned a large number of scholars recently. The reason which arouses the doubts lies in the overlap of some outcome variables and there are divergences in the results which are analyzed by using the scale. Now a relatively large number of applications are the three-dimensional measuring methods proposed by Meyer & Allen, namely organizational commitment is divided into three parts: affective commitment, continuous commitment and norm commitment. The measuring scale of Meyer & Allen reflects the multidimensional nature of organizational commitment and embodies the staff’s psychological state, which is of great guiding significance to knowing about employee attendance, job performance and the intention to transform the work. The result has been verified in many studies, has aroused the attention of more and more researchers and has been applied more.

<table>
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<th>Table I: Summary of the concepts of organizational commitment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is a psychological phenomenon in which employees are willing to participate the organizational work whole-heartedly organization with their one-way inputs in the organization increasing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is the fundamental affective linkage between the individuals and organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is a kind of attitude or direction to the organization and attach the individuals and organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is affective linkage among the organizational objective and value, personal role, persona objective and value.</td>
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<td>Organizational commitment is the employee’s emotional dependence on organization.</td>
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<td>Organizational commitment is the relative strength of the personal input based on identification of a certain organization.</td>
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<td>Organizational commitment is the transactional outcome of the organization and personal incentives and is a psychological positive feeling towards the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is personal attitude towards organization or a positive psychological disposition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is “internalized Norms”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is the loyalty, identification towards the organization and initiative to participate in the organizational activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment is to evaluate the personal orientation degree towards the organization and its objective through personal loyalty, identification and input.</td>
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3 Organizational Identification

3.1 The definition of organizational identification
In 1958 March and Simon put forward the first detailed model of organizational identification, Mowday etc. (1974) regarded organizational identification as one essential element of organizational commitment. Thereafter, many scholars regarded organizational identification as a synonym for organizational commitment. At the end of 1980’s, a number of scholars in areas of organizational behavior and social psychology re-discovered that organizational identification was an independent concept. Thereafter, a large number of studies have shown that organizational identification and job satisfaction, motivation, performance, organizational loyalty, cooperative behavior and organizational citizenship behavior are significantly related and organizational identification will further influence individual behavior through the individual cognitive and emotional impacts, resulting in greatly improved organizational performance. Now theoretical circles have not yet formed a consensus on the definition of organizational identification. Most of these various definitions emphasize the cognitive characteristics of organizational identification, and some emphasize the emotional characteristics of organizational identification, and also some take into account both the cognitive characteristics and emotional characteristics. Although the definitions of organizational identification are different, we can see that these definitions reflect the two major characteristics of organizational identification: (1) Organizational...
identification reflects a relationship between self-concept of the staff and organizations. (2) Organizational identification is centered on staff’s ego, in accordance with the staff’s self-standard the confirming and seeks of self-identity; organizational identification is the employees’ self-refraction from the organization. (The various definitions can refer to Table II)

3.2 Measuring dimension of organizational identification
At present, in organizational identification, there are many measurement methods and dimension choices, and the most famous one is the Mael scale of organizational identification. Mael and Ashforth (1992) believe that organizational identification is one-dimensional, and the scale developed by them includes six indicators, the involving content of the scale is about the staff’s emotion towards the organization. The scale is simple and clear with relatively high reliability. The reliability coefficient reaches up to 0.81, and is thus favored by many scholars. In addition, there is Chenney’s organizational identification questionnaire. Dick etc. also use social identity for reference and Wang Yanbin respectively explores the dimensions and measurement of organizational identification from the demand perspective. Judging from these methods of measurement, they are basically the dimensions which are developed on the basis of two major characteristics of organization identification. Mael’s organizational emotion corresponds to the emotional dimension; Chenney’s similarity can be classified into cognitive dimension and the relationship between the members may be classified into emotional dimension; Dick’s cognitive dimension and evaluation dimension corresponds to the cognitive dimension, emotion corresponds to the emotional dimension, and behavior corresponds to behavioral dimension; Wang Yanbin’s survivability organizational identification belongs to cognitive dimension, attribute identity belongs to emotional dimension, and successful organization identification belongs to behavioral dimension.

Table II: Different definitions of organizational identification from different perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashforth and Mael(1989)</td>
<td>The perception of the organizational congruency or the perception belonging to the organization</td>
<td>Cognitive characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Reilly and Chatman(1986)</td>
<td>The attraction and expectation based on keeping self-definition relationship of emotional satisfaction with the identification object</td>
<td>Emotional characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patchen(1970)</td>
<td>(1) The feelings of the organizational unity; (2) The attitude and behavior supporting the organization; (3) The perception of the sharing characteristics with other members in the organization</td>
<td>Cognitive characteristics and emotional characteristics</td>
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4 Psychological Contract

4.1 The definition of psychological contract
The earliest use of the term of “psychological contract” is in the book Understanding of Organizational Behavior written by Argyris in the 1960’s, which uses “psychological contract” to describe the relationship between the subordinates and supervisor. In 1962, Levinson noticed the term, and regarded it as an unwritten contract. According to the views of Levinson and others, “psychological contract” is in the relationship between employers and employees in the organization and employees the various implicit mutual unspoken expectations to each other which are agreed in advance between employers and employees. After that, the definition of the psychological contract is divided into two opinions, one is that Schein, Kotter and Herriot etc thought the definition of the psychological contract could be
defined as the unwritten provisions. This definition is based on bilateral relations (individual and organizational). They think that “psychological contract” is an implicit agreement which includes one party expects what the other party will pay and meanwhile what the other party will get. And then Rousseau and others do not agree that orientation of “psychological contract” is on the organization and they think the organization does not have the subjectivity and there will be no hope of unification. On this basis, she proposed a definition with narrower scope. According to her point of view, psychological contract is the various beliefs regarding bilateral responsibilities form on the basis of promise, trust and perception with employees setting the employment relationship as the background. Such definition starts from the unilateral relationship.

To sum up, “psychological contract” is a subjective psychological agreement in employment relationship in which one party expects what the other will pay and what the other will get meanwhile. The core component of the agreement is the mutual implicit unwritten responsibilities of both parties. However, here is no unified definition of the specific meaning of the concept. (The definitions can refer to table III)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Representative Scholar</th>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is the mutual expectation between organization and employees</td>
<td>Levison etc.(1962)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is a series of unwritten Expectations.</td>
<td>Schein (1965)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is a kind of implicit agreement between organization and individuals</td>
<td>Kotter(1973)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is the personal cognition of the mutual obligations.</td>
<td>Rousseau(1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is a series of beliefs which the employees have for the mutual obligations between organization and employees</td>
<td>Morrison &amp; Robinson(1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is the understanding and perception of the various responsibilities which are provided by the two parties in the employment relationship (namely organization and person)</td>
<td>Herriot &amp; Pemberton(1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract is established through the other party’s commitment or based on reasoning or description.</td>
<td>Chen Jiazhau, Ling Wenquan and Fang Liluo(2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source of Information: Collated by this study.

4.2 Measuring dimensions of psychological contract
As a complex psychological structure, psychological contract has subjective, individual, dynamic and social characteristics, and is influenced by personal, organizational, economic, political and cultural factors. Therefore, with regard to the measurement of psychological contract, there are also many different methods. Rousseau (1990) used canonical correlation analysis to analyze the dimensions of employees and employers, resulting in two pairs of canonical variables which are transactional contract based on economic exchange and the relational contract based on socio-emotional exchange. Transactional contract shows the specific characteristics based on material interests. And relational contracts lays emphasis on respect, loyalty and trust between the staff and the organization. And they are the abstract contents which can not be measured in monetary terms. In 1999, Rousseau & Tijoriwala empirical studies showed that in addition to the two dimensions of transaction and relation mentioned by Rousseau, the dimensions include team—member dimensions, team—member dimension refers to the focus on interpersonal support and maintenance of good relations of staff and organization. Although later scholars of different based on empirical studies proposed the different measuring dimensions, they derived either from the transaction or from the relationship. They are mainly internal contract and external contract put forward by Kickul & Lester (2001). The external contract involves commitments made by employers which are related to the employees’ completion of work while internal contracts involve commitments made by employers which is related to the nature of - employees’ work. And Shapiro & Kessler (2000) Empirical studies lead to three factors of psychological contract. The organizational responsibility related to material and economy is known as the transactional responsibility, the responsibility related to the increase of the staff’s knowledge and ability is called the
training responsibility and the responsibility related to the staff’s future is known as the relational responsibility.

5. Organizational Citizenship Behavior

5.1 The definition of organizational citizenship behavior

The study on organizational citizenship behavior can be traced back as early as 1938 when Barnard proposed “willingness to cooperate”. Barnard believed that: for any one organization, the willingness to cooperate among members of the organization is essential. Subsequently, in 1964 Katz and Kahn put forward the concept of citizenship behavior, namely the innovative and spontaneous behaviors that go beyond the role requirements. On this basis, Bateman and Organ in 1983 made a formal presentation of OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behavior, referred to as OCB), and after gradually improving, it is defined as follows: the voluntarily demonstrated individual behavior which is non-directly or clearly recognized by the official remuneration system and which can enhance overall organizational effectiveness. In their view, organizational citizenship behavior is a kind of extra-role behavior and attitude which is beneficial to organization. Organizational citizenship behavior is neither emphasized by the informal role nor is raised by the labor reward contracts, but it consists of a series of informal cooperative behavior. As organizational citizenship behavior goes beyond the requirements of a formal role, the managers can not easily detect whether the staff implements such behavior or not and it is also not easy to enable the staff to implement such behavior according to the reward and punishment systems.

5.2 Measuring dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior

For the characteristics of organizational citizenship behavior dimensions, many researchers have put forward their views, of which there are two-dimensional structure, three-dimensional structure, four-dimensional structure, five-dimensional structure and seven-dimensional structure. Podsakoff etc. (in 1997) divided organizational citizenship behavior into helping behavior, civic virtue and sportsmanship in three dimensions. However, Graham put forward the four-dimensional structure of organizational citizenship behavior from another perspective, namely: Interpersonal Helping, Individual Initiative, Personal Industry and Loyal Boosterism. However, the dimensional structure adopted by more specific studies is the five-dimensional structure of organizational citizenship behavior proposed by Organ, namely: (1) Altruistic behavior, it helps deal with or prevent the problems which are occurring or are about to occur during the work and encourage the Colleagues who lose confidence in the work or personal career development; (2) Civilization, the courtesy behavior showing respect for others; (3) The spirit of the athletes, behavior in non-ideal environment with no complaint and a willingness to stand fast at their posts; (4) Sense of responsibility, the behavior of serious and dedicated work towards their duties; (5) Citizen’s virtues, the behavior of active and conscious participation in the activities of organizations.

6. The Similarities and Differences Among a Few Concepts

Seeing from the above exposition of the several theories on organizational behavior, there exist obvious similarities among them. All of them derive from the need to understand in real earnest the employees’ psychology, behavior and attitudes during work in order to allow the policies and measures of the enterprises to be established and maintain a competitive advantage. Because the nouns such as psychology and attitude involve psychological cognitive state. In practical concept operation it’s quite hard to describe, thus leading to the indistinctness and overlap of the several concepts. As for the two concepts of the person-organization fit and organizational citizenship behavior, they seem to be understood more easily while the three concepts such as organizational commitment, organizational identity and psychological contract involve the psychological feelings of the employees, such as perception and expectations and there will be big ambiguity. Therefore, I shall distinguish the three most
easily confused concepts.

6.1 Organizational identification and organizational commitment
Although there is certain obvious overlap in some definitions of organizational commitment and organizational identification, they are essentially different. Mowday et al. (1979) believed that organizational commitment is the individual identity and the relative intensity of participating in the specific organization. From this we can find out the difference between the concepts of organizational commitment and organizational identification. Organizational identity is an antecedent condition for employees and organization to establish organizational commitment, only when first a cognitive attachment is produced in the organization can lead to the emergence of organizational commitment. However some scholars believe that it is the organizational commitment that leads to organizational identification. At present with regard to this point a unified understanding hasn’t yet formed.

In addition, some scholars expound this difference between the two from the other side. For example, Ashforth and Mael (1989) believes that the scope of the concept of organizational commitment is broader that of organizational commitment. Organizational identity focuses on the cognitive structure, and does not necessarily aspects of specific behavior and emotion. Riketta’s (2005) meta-analysis of organizational identification shows there exists statistically significant difference in the average results of organizational identification and organizational commitment: on the one hand, compared with the organizational commitment and job satisfaction are less relevant, but it has higher relevance with work participation; On the other hand, there are differences of the two in relevance with regard to work behavior and intention, especially as for organizational identification its relevance with absenteeism and turnover rate is weaker than that of organizational commitment while its relevance with extra-role performance is stronger than organizational commitment.

6.2 The psychological contract and organizational commitment
The distinction between psychological contract and organizational commitment. Li Yuan and Guo Dejun (2002) believe that the common point of the psychological contract and organizational commitment is that both of them explore the relationship between employees and organization from the individual perspective while the difference between the two is that the content of organizational commitment is one-dimensional but psychological contract is a two-way relationship. In addition, the study of Rousseau (1995) pointed out that the psychological contract is the underlying causes of organizational commitment, in other words, the satisfaction or breach of psychological contract is the an important factor affecting employees’ organizational commitment.

6.3 The relationship between several concepts
In tremendous amount of studies on organizational behavior and human resource management, we can see exploration and study of the above-mentioned theories anywhere. Among them, we can see the relationship between them shift from time to time, they are sometimes used as independent variables for study. In another study, they are used as dependent variable, and sometimes at the same time as the independent variables and intermediate variables. The common conversions are the relationship conversion among these concepts such as person-organization fit, organizational commitment, psychological contracts and organizational citizenship behavior. For example, the study of the impact of person-organization fit on the other three variables. The study of the impact of person-organization fit, organizational commitment and psychological contracts on the organizational citizenship behavior, this single variable. Moreover, there is impact of a single variable on organizational performance and so on. Therefore, the definition of these variables is particularly important.

7. Prospects for Future Study
Since the fifties of the last century, theories on the staff’s behavior in organizational behavior have gradually increased. In foreign countries, there is more research literature in this area and there are more in-depth and mature studies. However, in the academia of the management theory in China, the
theoretical research in this area is far from being up to the required depth. Therefore, based on the present situation of theoretical research on several organizational behaviors, I believe that the above-mentioned organizational behavior and human resource management theory research should make a breakthrough in the following aspects.

7.1 The well-defined concept
The clear definition of the concepts is prerequisite for scientific research. Although many scholars make meaningful exploration on the clear definition of the above-mentioned concepts, they haven’t reached a common understanding of some concepts at present. For example, as for the concept level of organizational identification, there exist the overlap with the concepts of organizational commitment, psychological contracts and organizational citizenship behavior. The unclear definition of concepts would lead to ambiguity of the conclusions of the study. Therefore, the scientific definitions of above-mentioned theories are the premises to promote the development of its theory.

7.2 The scientification and localization of measuring dimension
For a long period of time Chinese academics have preference for theoretical exposition, and sometimes lack a positive spirit. Although the above theory in foreign countries has their own measurement methods, the specific verification of the methods on the Chinese staff’s behavior is not enough and there are fewer cross-cultural studies of measurement dimension. In fact, the above-mentioned measurement methods of the theories are controversial among the foreign scholars, many studies have shown that different scales will lead to different conclusions in which there is a big difference. Therefore, the combination of a specific cultural environment in China to develop a scientific scale to achieve accurate measurement of the above theory has become a top priority.

7.3 Insufficient research and development
From the explanation given above, we can easily see that our studies of these theories tend to focus on the impact of these organizational behaviors on the large system—organization. Actually, this is precisely the purpose of these studies, that is to say, seeking human capital factors which can enhance the continuous competitiveness of the enterprise. However, in fact we should see sometimes these behaviors not only have an impact on organizational performance, but also have many bilateral impacts. In addition, these behaviors can influence personal behavior, but research in this aspect is few. In the meanwhile, the studies on such bilateral impact are increasing abroad day by day.

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