

Psychological Ownership in Organizations: The Role of Person-Organization Fit and Consequences on Support for Change and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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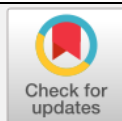
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the antecedent and consequences of psychological ownership, where employees develop possessive feelings towards the organization. Person-Organization Fit (PO-Fit) is required to increase psychological ownership through various organizational activities. Psychological ownership produces significant psychological, emotional, and behavioral consequences, including employees support for change and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). This study involved 210 staff from educational institutions. A total of 191 survey questionnaires were returned, and 121 were eligible. According to hierarchical regression analysis, the result indicated that PO-Fit had a positive effect on psychological ownership ($\beta=0.42$, $t=4.81$), psychological ownership had a positive effect on support for change ($\beta=0.26$, $t=4.01$) and OCB ($\beta=0.21$, $t=3.12$). The study concluded that psychological ownership is necessary to support positive organizational behavior.

Keywords: OCB; Organizational Change; Person-Organization Fit; Organizational Positive Behavior; Psychological Ownership

1. Introduction

Ownership is a multi-dimensional phenomenon experienced both objectively and psychologically (Pierce et al., 2001). A sense of ownership plays an important role in self-identity, where the self expands the own object. This is in line with the basic conceptual framework of psychological ownership, which lies in the concepts of 'ownership' and 'target' (Avey et al., 2009). Pierce et al. (2003) define psychological ownership as a condition where individuals sense that ownership target – or a part of the target – belongs to them. In addition to self-identity, psychological bonding between a person and several ownership targets also has further important dimensions such as self-efficacy, accountability, and belongingness. Avey et al. (2009) suggest that the concept of psychological ownership can be placed inside an additional concern of constructive organizational behavior.

A sense of belonging to a particular target motivates a person to pay attention, maintain, protect, and develop the ownership object (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Along with responsibility, a sense of belonging could also build effective teamwork (Kimbal, 2020). Psychological ownership in an organizational context is a psychological experience where employees build ownership of a target, which can be directed to the organization as a whole or to specific aspects of the organization such as groups, tasks, work equipment, or work itself. Some individuals may psychologically feel they own a job, but others could have these feelings towards the organization. Within the literature, a limited amount of studies examined the role of psychological ownership in the organizational context. Empirical evidence confirmed that psychological ownership produces essential psychological, emotional, attitude, and behavioral consequences in organizational life (Mayhew et al., 2007; Pierce et al., 2001; Pierce et al., 2004; Zhu et al., 2013). The current study analyzes the antecedents and consequences of psychological ownership towards organizations to understand the construct better. In particular, the study analyzes the role of Person-Organization Fit (PO-Fit) as the predictor variable and investigates the impact of organizational psychological ownership on employees' positive behaviors.

One important aspect of improving a sense of psychological ownership is the closeness between individuals and the organization (Pierce et al., 2001). The organization provides several opportunities for employees to discover ownership targets such as jobs, assignments, groups, and specific projects through a series of related processes between the two parties. If individuals feel that their values and characteristics follow the organization, it tends to produce a better relationship as a target of ownership. A person's association with a target can better obtain information and knowledge. When individuals are compatible with the organization, the desire to invest energy, thoughts, and time will be greater. PO-Fit is a fit between an individual and their environment that exists when their characteristics are commensurate (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This suitability can be addressed to several specific aspects such as compatibility of individuals with work, workgroups, superiors, or the organization as a whole. In short, the better the relationship between individuals and organizational aspects, the psychological ownership of the members to their workplace will be higher. Previous research confirmed that individuals compatible with their work environment have stronger bonds with the organization and tend to perform better (Cable & Judge, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001), motivating them to work harder (Ali et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 1: Person-Organization Fit (PO-Fit) has a positive effect on organizational psychological ownership.

A sense of ownership of the organization has been linked to several positive behaviors, including support for changes being carried out by the organization. Both small and large scales, organizational changes affect employees' work processes (Daly & Geyer, 1994). So far, change success requires fundamental changes in employees' behavior, attitudes, goals, and values (Ashforth & Mael, 1998). One internal factor of change is leadership replacement, which impacts structural transformation and the duties and responsibilities of organizational members. When ownership towards the organization is high, employees feel obliged to ensure that organizational change goes as planned. Previous research by Md-Sidin et al. (2009) found that psychological ownership supports employees' attitudes at work.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational psychological ownership positively affects the organization's change support.

Besides being related to organizational change, a sense of ownership of the organization also has an important role in improving Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). OCB is defined as a voluntary behavior performed by organizational members, whereas a whole maintains the well-functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). This extra behavior is not an obligation of the job description as stated formally in an employment contract. The behavior is an individual decision, and its negligence will not get certain actions from the organization. This extra behavior includes helping behavior, loyalty to the organization, compliance, and initiatives to help the organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff et al., 2000). OCB as individual behavior that exceeds the role requirements or task description in an employment contract (Organ, 1997). The higher the sense of belonging to the organization, the higher the drive to work better in supporting work effectiveness. As a self-identity, an organization needs to be protected through positive behaviors and feelings of responsibility. Previous research by Avey et al. (2009) and Van Dyne & Pierce (2004) showed that a stronger sense of belonging to an organization could increase positive employee behavior, even though it is not required in a formal contract.

Hypothesis 3: Organizational psychological ownership has a positive effect on OCB.



Figure 1. Theoretical Model

2. Research Methodology

This study involved two educational institutions in Eastern Indonesia, which experienced a process of top and middle-level leadership replacements in the past six months. These changes have implications for alterations in organizational practices such as employees' positions, main duties, functions, and the flow of work communication. These transformations affect the work process of related organizational units. The distribution of research questionnaires was carried out for 2 months involving 210 administrative staff. As many as 191 questionnaires were returned, 67 questionnaires (84% response rate) from Institution A and 54 questionnaires (68% response rate) from Institution B fulfilled the requirement.

On the other hand, 36 questionnaires were canceled due to: (a) the respondent's length of work with the organization was less than 6 months, (b) respondent did not respond to research questions more than 10% cases, (c) respondent did not fill in the important information needed, and (d) respondent was not administrative staff. Respondents' organizational tenure is considered because it involves closeness relationship and experience with the organization. The low response issue refers to the minimum response rate proposed by [Hair et al. \(2014\)](#). Therefore, the total number of respondents involved in this study was 121 staff. Respondents consisted of 65% men and 35% women. Besides, 54% of the respondents were civil servants, and the remaining 46% were contract employees. The organizational tenure ranges from 0.5 to 27 years, with an average of 8 years.

The study used exploratory factor analysis ([Hair et al., 2014](#)) to analyze the validity of research instruments. To measure the degree of inter-correlation between variables and the appropriateness of factor analysis, the MSA index (Measure of Sampling Adequacy) was the reference. The test found an MSA value of 0.79, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also showed a significant value ($p < 0.01$). Based on the two indices, the data meet the requirements for factor analysis. Using principal component analysis and equamax rotation of all indicators totaling 20 items, the results leave 14 items valid for the next stage. All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Psychological ownership is a condition where the individual feels that the ownership target or part of the target is 'his/hers' ([Pierce et al., 2001](#)). The instrument was adopted from [Van Dyne & Pierce \(2004\)](#), consisting of 7 questions, factor analysis leaving 5 questions (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.80). Person-Organization Fit (PO-Fit) is between an employee's values and characteristics and organizational values ([Kristof-Brown et al., 2005](#)). The instrument consisted of 3 questions, with factor analysis leaving 2 questions (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.80). Organizational change support is an employee's perception of commitment to organizational change. The research instrument was adopted from ([Fedor et al., 2006](#)) and consisted of 4 questions. Factor analysis left 4 questions (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89). OCB is an individual voluntary behavior not directly specified in the official requirements ([Organ, 1997](#)). The instrument consisted of 6 questions adopted from [Wayne et al. \(1997\)](#). Factor analysis leaves 2 questions (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.70).

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations. The analysis showed that organizational psychological ownership was positively associated with PO-Fit ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), support for organizational change ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and OCB ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$). PO-Fit subsequently had a significant and positive correlation with support for organizational change ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) and OCB ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$). Organizational change support was also

positively correlated with OCB ($r = 0.29, p < 0.01$). Employee organizational tenure had a negative correlation with PO-Fit ($r = -0.20, p < 0.05$). Employment status also had a significant correlation with other variables. When compared with the civil servants, contract staff had a significant positive correlation with PO-Fit ($r = 0.17, p < 0.05$), yet had a negative correlation with the organizational tenure ($r = -0.43, p < 0.01$). Different types of organizations also had correlations with other variables. When compared with Institution A, Institution B was found to be positive and significantly related with PO-Fit ($r = 0.20, p < 0.05$), negatively correlated with organizational tenure ($r = -0.28, p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations (N = 121)

| Variable | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|------|------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|---|
| 1. Organizational Psychological Ownership | 3.75 | 0.81 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 2. Person-Organization Fit | 3.38 | 0.81 | 0.39** | 1 | | | | | |
| 3. Support for Organizational Change | 3.87 | 0.59 | 0.35** | 0.36** | 1 | | | | |
| 4. Organizational Citizenship Behavior | 3.73 | 0.61 | 12.28** | 0.37** | 0.29** | 1 | | | |
| 5. Employee Organizational Tenure | 8.34 | 6.06 | -0.09 | -0.20* | -0.00 | -0.06 | 1 | | |
| 6. Employment Status (Contract Workers) ^a | 0.46 | 0.50 | -0.07 | 0.17* | -0.01 | -0.01 | -0.43** | 1 | |
| 7. Organization (Institution B) ^b | 0.45 | 0.50 | 0.05 | 0.20* | 0.05 | -0.03 | -0.28** | -0.15 | 1 |

Note. SD = standard deviation, ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

^a Job status is a dummy variable, Contract Worker 1, Civil Servant 0

^b Organization is a dummy variable, Institution B 1, Institution A 0

Hypothesis 1 predicted that PO-Fit had a positive effect on organizational psychological ownership. Based on a hierarchical regression analysis, all control variables (employee tenure, employment status, organization) were regressed with psychological ownership in the first step. In the second step, the PO-Fit variable was regressed with psychological ownership. In this second step, the analysis indicated a significant change in R^2 from the first step to the second step. PO-Fit was able to explain the additional variation in organizational psychological ownership ($\Delta R^2 = 0.16, \Delta F = 23.15, p < 0.01$). Specifically, PO-Fit had a significant positive effect on organizational psychological ownership ($\beta = 0.42, t = 4.81, p < 0.01$). Therefore, **hypothesis 1** was supported. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis are provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Organizational Psychological Ownership as the Dependent Variable

| Dependent Variables | Step 1 | Step 2 |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Employee Organizational Tenure | - 0.02 | - 0.02 |
| Job Status | - 0.22 | - 0.34 * |
| Organization | - 0.01 | - 0.15 |
| Person-Organization Fit | | 0.42 ** |
| ΔR^2 | 0.02 | 0.16 ** |

| Dependent Variables | Step 1 | Step 2 |
|---------------------|--------|----------|
| ΔF | 0.87 | 23.15 ** |
| Adj. R^2 | - 0.00 | 0.16 |
| Overall R^2 | 0.02 | 0.19 |
| Overall F | 0.87 | 6.57 ** |

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Hypothesis 2 predicted that organizational psychological ownership positively affected support for organizational change. After all control variables were regressed with support for organizational change in the first step, organizational psychological ownership was regressed with support for organizational change in the second step. Results showed that when psychological ownership organizational entered into the regression equation, changes in R^2 from the first step to the second step were statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.12$, $\Delta F = 16$, 90, $p < 0.01$). Organizational psychological ownership had a significant positive effect on support for organizational change ($\beta = 0.26$, $t = 4.01$, $p < 0.01$). Accordingly, the results supported **hypothesis 2**, as presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Support for Change as the Dependent Variable

| Dependent Variables | Step 1 | Step 2 |
|--|--------|----------|
| Employee Organizational Tenure | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| Job Status | 0.01 | 0.07 |
| Organization | 0.07 | 0.08 |
| Organizational Psychological Ownership | | 0.26 ** |
| ΔR^2 | 0.00 | 0.12 ** |
| ΔF | 0.13 | 16.09 ** |
| Adj. R^2 | - 0.02 | 0.09 |
| Overall R^2 | 0.00 | 0.13 |
| Overall F | 0.13 | 4.13 ** |

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Hypothesis 3 predicted that organizational psychological ownership positively affected employee OCB. In the first step, all control variables were regressed with OCB, then in the second step, the main variable, organizational psychological ownership, was regressed with the dependent variable (OCB). **Table 4** shows that when organizational psychological ownership was entered into the regression equation, changes in R^2 from the first step to the second step were statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.08$, $\Delta F = 9$, 75, $p < 0.01$). Organizational psychological ownership had a significant and positive effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 3.12$, $p < 0.01$). Consequently, **hypothesis 3** was supported.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results with OCB as the Dependent Variable

| Dependent Variables | Step 1 | Step 2 |
|--|--------|---------|
| Employee Organizational Tenure | - 0.01 | - 0.00 |
| Employment Status | - 0.05 | - 0.00 |
| Organization | - 0.07 | - 0.07 |
| Organizational Psychological Ownership | | 0.21 ** |
| ΔR^2 | 0.00 | 0.08 ** |
| ΔF | 0.13 | 9.75 ** |
| Adj. R^2 | - 0.02 | 0.05 |
| Overall R^2 | 0.00 | 0.08 |
| Overall F | 0.13 | 2.54 * |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Results of the current study suggest that PO-Fit had a significant positive effect on organizational psychological ownership. Consistent with [Pierce et al. \(2001\)](#), an important element in developing a sense of psychological belonging to the organization is the closeness between individuals and ownership targets. The more information about the target, the deeper the relationship between the two parties. As a target of ownership, the organization provides opportunities for employees to understand organizational values through the relationship process. When employees have personal values that match the organization's, a sense of belonging will increase. The study results support previous research in which PO-Fit has important implications for organizational behavior. Based on the studies of [Cable & Judge \(1996\)](#) and [Lauver & Kristof-Brown \(2001\)](#), individuals who are suited to the work environment have closeness with the organization and tend to have better performance than other colleagues. This research adds another important finding that the extent of the value match encourages a psychological sense of belonging to the organization. Considering that PO-Fit plays an important role, management must ensure that staff has similar values and characteristics to maintain psychological ownership of the organization. Accurate employee recruitment and selection process will help organizations find employees with the right values and characteristics. In the process, development activities can also help shape values, attitudes, and behavior to ensure conformity between staff and the organization.

Previous studies indicated that psychological ownership had important implications for organizational commitment, employee satisfaction, intention to stay, OCB, transformational leadership ([Avey et al., 2009](#)), self-esteem, and employee performance ([Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004](#)). In addition to that, the current investigation revealed that psychological ownership could increase employees' support for organizational changes. Every organization experiences both planned and unplanned changes. Leadership changes in educational institutions are planned changes and carried out regularly. However, leadership replacement has implications for several internal changes, seeing that organizational policies and strategies are closely related to the roles of a person who is at the top level of leadership ([Bigley & Wiersema, 2002](#)). The results of previous studies revealed that some organizational changes failed ([Fay & Lührmann, 2004](#)) because they required fundamental changes in attitudes, behavior, and values ([Ashforth & Mael, 1998](#)). Our research demonstrates that when psychological ownership towards the

organization is strong, it can increase support for organizational change. This exists since the organization as a target of ownership is part of the employee's self-identity that should be protected (Pierce et al., 2001). A sense of belonging to the organization as a target of ownership makes individuals pay more attention and try harder to maintain, protect, and develop the organization (Avey et al., 2009). In this case, leadership changes that have implications for some organizational processes must also be supported for future success.

The current hypothesis testing discovered that psychological ownership of the organization was able to increase employee OCB. OCB is understood as an extra behavior outside the formal expectations of work, including helping others, tolerating non-ideal organizational conditions, being responsible for the organization's survival, and having extra initiative (Organ, 1997). Besides having a dimension of self-identity, Pierce et al. (2001) revealed that psychological ownership also includes dimensions of self-efficacy, sense of belongingness, and territory relevant to OCB. Self-efficacy stands for the belief that a person can carry out specific tasks successfully and responsibilities (Avey et al., 2009). When employees have high self-efficacy, they behave extra hard at work even though it exceeds the demands of formal roles.

Furthermore, belongingness as a basic human need can lead to a sense of security and comfort (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). The sense of belonging to this place can satisfy one's social-emotional needs (Avey et al., 2009). Therefore, when belonging to the organization is strong, social behavior to help fellow members increases. Similarly, when individuals feel they have a certain territory, it will increase the drive to protect ownership targets. Shortly, another important dimension of OCB is protecting and maintaining the organization's survival. Therefore, the higher the sense of belonging to the organization, the higher the OCB of employees.

4. Conclusion

This research provides several important contributions. Conceptually, the results of this study support the development of theoretical and empirical models related to psychological ownership. Specifically, it provides an understanding of the antecedents and consequences of this construct. The findings also indicated that the psychological sense of organizational ownership plays a leading role in forming positive behavior in organizations, consistent with previous research. When psychological ownership is high, employees will provide support for organizational changes. Sense of belonging to the organization was also able to encourage voluntary employee behavior in supporting organizational success. This is possible because the sense of belonging to the target reflects one's self-identity, which needs to be protected and developed.

The current research has many significant implications applied to educational institutions. One substantial factor that contributed to increasing organizational ownership is PO-Fit. Management must ensure that employees share values with the organization through effective human resource management practices. Improving the quality of recruitment and selection activities would help organizations afford new employees with appropriate values, attitudes, and behaviors. Training and development activities can also be directed to form the character of employees following the work values of the organization. Besides, organizations need to encourage a sense of belonging because it empirically increases positive organizational behavior. When ownership is high, organizational change receives support, and employees also have extra behavior in helping colleagues. Finally, future research needs to expand research to organizations with more varied types of industries. The ownership concept is also to be directed

to the psychological ownership at the workgroup/unit level, as presently, many organizations utilize team-based works to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. Besides, scholars believe that a sense of ownership is experienced at the individual level and works collectively at a team level (Pierce & Jussila, 2010).

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6. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article,

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