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Conceptualizations of Societal Development: An Under-Investigated Construct and its Potential Implications for Employee-Organization Fit *Toplumsal Kalkınmanın Kavramsallaştırılması: Yaygın Araştırılmayan Bir Olgu ve Çalışan-Örgüt Uyumu için Olası Çıkarımlar*

Keywords

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Anahtar kelimeler

Toplumsal kalkınma hedefleri, çalışan-örgüt uyumu, sosyal kimlik

Introduction

Talent recruitment and retainment follow a marketing model, as employees are considered serviced customers in exchange for high performance and enhanced intention to stay (Obeng et al., 2021). Therefore, the extent to which individuals feel motivated to work and whether they feel attracted towards employing organizations are, and prospectively, will remain essential considerations in future organizations. Value-based employee-organization fit is an essential aspect of attracting and retaining employees (e.g., Pratt et al., 2003). In this paper, we intend to focus on the concept of fit based on an under-investigated construct in the organizational psychology literature: the perceived contribution of the work and the organization to societal development and sustainable development goals. This reflection paper will focus on societal development as a source of employee and organization fit (E-O) and discusses how organizational psychological perspective can help put a broader viewpoint on whether the corporate

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contribution to societal development goals would create new attraction and attachment channels; and if involvement to work and organizational commitment will enhance.

As major organizations have initiated to embrace public concerns in environmental, social, and cultural matters, social responsibility has become a vital dimension of corporate identity (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000), prompting to re-think and expand established views of mutual perceptions between employees and organizations. Tentatively, a correspondence between employees and their organization's conceptualization of societal development is a source of employee-organization fit (Dickson, Aditya, & Chokar, 2000; Hofstede & Peterson, 2000; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Trice & Beyer, 1993). However, such a fit may involve a formerly unexplored social identity mechanism, with implications for employee motivation and commitment. Because specific societal development goals are publicly associated with various social groups, such as political parties, NGOs, rights groups, and movements, a common view of societal development implies a shared identity between the employee and employer. The prominence of such a fit lies in a clearly defined, shared, and valued *vision* of achieving specific goals to make the world a better place. A collective identity accompanied by a compelling vision deserve attention as they are key components of objectives organizations aim to achieve via leadership. Accordingly, employee-organization fit built on a vision of development goals can serve as a booster or as a shortcut to organizational leadership effects concerning employee readiness, enthusiasm, and excitement to achieve a common goal.

In this paper, we propose expanding the person-organization fit literature regarding employees' conceptualization of societal developmental goals and their perceptions of how organizations serve these goals in various areas of organizational life. We focus on societal developmental goals as a source of motivation embedded in a collective identity employees gain from their work and their organizational membership. Finally, we reflect on how employee-organization fit may play out in future organizations considering the influence of societal development goals and the importance of organizations setting an agenda and opportunity for their employees to achieve those goals.

Societal Development – Past and Current Approaches

From a public policy perspective, societal development has been defined as “enhancing living conditions” (Sen, 1984). Societal leaders are morally expected to meet their citizens and residents' development expectations concerning work, social life, economic welfare, and family, in addition to ensuring well-being and freedom (Sen, 1988, p. 11; Sen, 1985). However, the most prevalent indicator has been economic development, despite research indicating that cultures and individuals differ in conceptualizing societal development (Krys et al., 2019; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009; van den Bergh, 2009). GDP has shortcomings, such as ignoring informal market activities, environmental damage, and social inequalities; hence it offers a limited scope into development (Ahmad & Koh, 2011; Atkinson et al., 1997; Wilkinson, 1997).

Researchers and policymakers have put forward measures to capture better societal development and its economic, environmental, and social aspects (Kryse et al., 2020). For example, “the Better Life” initiative (OECD 2018) and the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz et al. 2009) have identified and articulated societal prosperity, equitability, and sustainability as essential aspects of development (Jackson 2010). In addition, happiness, health, access to education, human rights, and democratic standards are identified as necessary, considering people’s general views regarding developmental goals (Veenhoven, 2012). Therefore, various alternative indicators emerged to address the gap between GDP estimates and a broader reality of development to promote indexes in environmentally, socially, and culturally sensitive ways. Unfortunately, only a few, such as The Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW; Lawn, 2003), Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI; Delang & Yu, 2015), or Sustainable National Income (SNI; Gerlagh, Dellink, Hofkes, & Verbruggen, 2002) compensate between environmental damage and GDP to estimate actual development. In a similar vein, Human Development Index (HDI) is a people-centered indicator that includes three essential components: long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living (HDI; Jahan, 1994). Other alternatives consist of United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, gender inequality index (GINI coefficient), and Human Poverty Index (HPI), referring to deprivation the areas of HDI measured.

Societies aim to develop economically and harmonize economic progress with their indigenous way of societal development. However, they are not always successful in presenting their unique, culturally specific goals. For instance, in Turkey’s 11th Development Plan (2019-2023), the following societal aims are identified: a stable and robust economy, competitive production and productivity, qualified people, strong society, livable cities, sustainable environment, and the rule of law, democratization and good governance. This plan sounds invoking general developmental goals, where, for instance, the United Nation’s declaration about people’s right to self-determination concerning their self-selected direction of development is not highlighted.

The United Nations (UN) proposed 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs; see Table 1) and 169 targets addressing global challenges humans face, such as environmental damage, hunger, poverty, inequalities, and climate change. The UN member states adopted these goals in 2015, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development asserts a 15-year plan to attain these goals.

Tablo 1

United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Goals	
1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Although different approaches incorporate culture into development indexes, the UN's SDGs successfully represent both descriptive and evaluative approaches. While a descriptive approach focuses on understanding people's expectations and preferences about societal development without assessing them as beneficial or harmful, evaluative approaches emphasize beneficial goals for people, society, and the planet, considering both the present and future. SDGs represent a complementary mechanism for descriptive and evaluative approaches due to being eligible to studies shaping cultural preferences towards sustainability (evaluative approach) and understanding pathways recognized as disadvantaged by science, such as demographic growth (descriptive approach), using global institutions like UN's SDGs or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) goals as a framework to examine people's preferences towards developmental pathways in a culturally sensitive way.

Kuba et al. (2020) have initiated a culturally sensitive index for societal development by using the UN sustainable development goals as a framework. Their large-scale cross-cultural research project has been dedicated to map out universal and country/region-specific aims of societal development (Kryse et al., under review). The project, involving 2,684 participants from nine countries (USA, Canada, France, Poland, Brazil, Turkey, Japan, Hong Kong, and Nigeria), applying Multidimensional Scaling as a data analysis technique, investigated “what constitutes modernization” across countries. The study confirmed that these countries are characterized by both relatively universal and culture-specific preferences about societal development. Remarkably, participants preferred modernization aims such as equality, human rights, education, democracy over conventional aims such as military expansion, demographic growth, or religious influence. Thus, the study is an empirical justification of cultures and individuals’ autonomy to determine and follow their indigenous development pathway.

Many organizations initiated measures going beyond the requirements of the law to endorse public concerns on environmental, social, and cultural issues to take a competitive advantage in the market (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). Organizations in the private and education sector intend to pursue UN sustainability goals for development. Corporate social responsibility is concerned with how organizations socially construct themselves as responsible companies. Companies began manufacturing eco-friendly products as consumers prefer brands that contribute to environmental sustainability (Johnson et al., 2015). Sustainability is a critical aspect of corporate social responsibility that favorably contributes to organizations’ public image (Dahan & Senol, 2012). Accordingly, employees with a concern for sustainability can be expected to show enthusiasm toward working with organizations that incorporate care for society and the environment into their objectives.

Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive impact on many work-related variables, including organizational citizenship behavior (Farooq et al., 2017), organizational commitment (Shen & Zhu, 2011), turnover intentions (Carnahan et al., 2016), and organizational attractiveness (Iris & Aksehirli, 2015). The proposed underlying mechanisms behind CSR and positive organizational outcomes include signaling (Celani & Singh, 2011) and social identity (Banks et al., 2016). These explain how organizations can attract and retain employees by delivering positive signals to job candidates or employees as socially responsible entities (Albinger & Freeman 2000; Backhaus et al. 2002; Jones et al. 2014). Organizations reflect values, prestige, and prosocial orientation through signaling and enhancing a fit between individual and organizational values. Additionally, CSR signals enhance pride for working with the organization and also an expected favorable treatment. Thus, CSR does not solely affect ongoing work processes but also increases organizational attractiveness. The UN SDGs are a contemporary framework to shape organizations’ CSR efforts.

Sdgs as a Contribution to the E-O Fit Lit Literature

Research on conceptualizations of societal development (e.g., Kuba et al., 2020) provides an opportunity to incorporate employee and employer preferences for societal development goals into the organizational psychology literature. We reflect a social identity perspective concerning the literature on employee-organization fit and related areas, including organizational identity and leadership. Specifically, employees' views of societal developmental goals can be considered regarding the profile of organizations that may or may not aim at achieving those developmental goals. Societal development is a timely contribution to the employee-organization fit literature, which has been concerned with sharing similar values or meeting needs reciprocally between the employee and the employer (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011).

Societal development goals, an issue for public debate, can involve a complex *social identity-based mechanism* by linking employees' societal identities with organizational identity. A key point of our argument is that societal development goals do not exist in a social vacuum. Instead, they are associated with various societal groups, including political parties, work organizations, NGOs, environmental and rights groups, which articulate their views publicly on societal development. Accordingly, such an employee-organization fit speaks of corresponding values and a shared social identity, which involves a common view of how societies should develop. Thus, societal development goals are essential to study as they provide means by which societal identities fuse with organizational identity.

Following further aspects of the organizational psychology literature, we may propose that a shared identity based on a common view of societal development has implications for *organizational leadership*, too. Organizations spend large amounts of their resources on equipping leaders with abilities to motivate employees towards achieving organizational objectives. For instance, the transformational leadership approach (Burns, 1978; Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006), well represented in corporate life, proposes that leaders motivate followers by specific behaviors, such as intellectual stimulation and individualized instruction consideration (Sosik & Jung, 2010). The social identity view adds that leaders achieve such transformational influence by articulating a vision that represents the prototypical viewpoint of the group, thus giving rise to a salient collective identity and enhanced motivation to achieve a common goal (Hogg, 2001; Reicher, Haslam and Hopkins, 2005). A shared view of societal development can provide the groundwork for such a charismatic leadership-like effect. As the employees recognize that their views of societal development are shared by their organization, alongside the opportunity to achieve developmental goals, collective identity and a valued vision may arise, accompanied by enthusiasm and excitement for working toward those goals.

From a social identity perspective, a focus on societal development can contribute to the literature by providing insight into how work and organizational membership provide *meaning*. Person-environment (P-E) fit is an interactionist theory to explain employee behavior in organizations, drawing research attention for over 100 years (Parsons, 1909; Schneider,

1987). Although it is a broad and complex term, the central assumption refers to “congruence, match or similarity between the person and the environment” (Edwards, 2008, p.168). Despite much debate about the precise definition of “congruence or match”, empirical research indicates that as the match is attained, better organizational outcomes are achieved (Ostroff, 2012). P-O fit is a widely investigated construct due to its positive impact on work engagement (Cai et al., 2018), contextual performance (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Han et al., 2015), and prosocial behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006).

Although organizations can benefit from a value-based fit, a deeper digging into the meaning of work in terms of societal development goals can reveal further implications. Social identity theory posits that individuals are inspired and motivated to achieve goals that correspond to a salient social identity (Haslam, 2004). Therefore, when organizational aims are not aligned with their members’ social identity, the employee - employer relations prospectively lose ties. Accordingly, favorable effects of fit should be qualified by the extent to which employees perceive that their work contributes to achieving valued societal development goals. When employees are restricted from working toward identity-consistent goals, performance may be maintained out of compliance and conscientiousness; however, employee enthusiasm and excitement would decline.

The social identity perspective is a timely addition to the current social-cognitive and motive based explanations of employee-organization fit. According to Schneider’s Attraction-Selection- Attrition model (ASA, 1987), organizations act in a supplementary way to attract and hire employees who share similar values and goals. As a result of homogeneous values, the associated behavioral patterns determine organizational culture and a congruent organizational purpose. On the other hand, CAPS (Cognitive-Affective Processing System; Mischel & Shoda, 1995) is a more interpretative model that focuses on cognitive and situational influences, such as constructing shared schemas and behavior. The model explains P-E fit and related employment indicators (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational identification) resulting from the underlying cognitive mechanisms, including the encoding of environmental influences. (Chatman, 1989). From a need perspective, employees prefer workplaces based on their need alignment and value salience among employees (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Thus, depending on one’s salient needs and values, some employees may have ethical expectations from the organization, whereas others may seek monetary rewards or fringe benefits.

A social identity approach, focusing on shared views of societal development, would agree with these approaches suggesting that employees and the employer would show mutual attraction in response to recognizing their shared identity. However, taking the argument a step further, this social bond between the employee and the employer provides a vision of how society should develop, accompanied by shared intention to produce a change for development. Therefore, societal development goals as building blocks of organizational identity in-

duce a mutual attraction and imply employee readiness, inspiration, and dedication to achieve shared goals. Notably, as argued above, motivations would be heightened for goals embedded in organizational identity, while motivation would decrease for goals that fall outside the boundaries of that identity.

Societal Development Goals as a Source of Collective Identity

We reflect on the correspondence between individuals' preferred development goals for society and the organization's contributions to achieving those goals as a source of collective identity, providing positive distinctiveness and lessening uncertainty in self-definition. Collective identity in organizations is an exchange between the individual and the group concerning the extent to which work or organizational membership can contribute to employees' self-definition (Ashforth, 2012). Identity is embedded in organization-employee dynamics and flourishes the relationship between the employer and the employee (Kahn, 1990; Pratt, Rock, & Kaufmann, 2001).

Individuals can be part of groups based on demographic factors (e.g., gender category) and personal choices, such as a religious, political, or employment group. Focusing on work identity enables researchers to understand how people centralize their competencies and positive organizational values to achieve distinct identity and self-enhancement. From a social comparison and social identity perspectives, the meaning we get from work and our membership with our organizations contributes to our understanding of who we are and how we perceive ourselves, concerning people around us (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Pratt et al., 2003; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Hogg & White, 1995). Therefore, social identity is construed based on social comparison and self-categorization as we engage in self-serving inter-personal and inter-group comparison to reduce subjective uncertainty, to develop a sense of who we are (Hogg, 2000), and to maintain a positively distinct and valued self-concept (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Festinger, 1954).

Collective identity based on valued societal development goals can help satisfy (a) the need to enhance positive distinctiveness and (b) to reduce subjective uncertainty mentioned above. To reiterate, individuals are motivated to have a positive self-concept; hence they aim to seek membership with groups and self-ascribed identity that positively reflects their self-concept. We posit that societal development goals serve as a dimension of comparison by which employees differentiate themselves from members of other organizations. When employees publicly articulate their organization's position on societal development and engage in behaviors that contribute to those goals, they essentially align themselves with the organizational group prototype, representing the core values and norms of the group. Besides securing a desirable centered position in the group, such acts provide the employee with a positively distinct social identity. Accordingly, the organization embraces societal development goals,

which depict the group prototype and determined boundaries of collective identity employees self-ascribe, leading to fit between the employee and the organization.

Further, social identification has been argued to reduce subjective uncertainty concerning how individuals perceive and define themselves socially. Individuals strive to grab meaning for themselves in response to a general sense of uncertainty (Hogg, 2001). Our profession and organization are often a source of how we define ourselves, as our self-concept, at least partially, is determined by our profession (Steele, 1997). Employing organizations, additionally, as a source of social identity, provide a reference point to individuals' socially expressed views, attitudes, and behaviors; a valued social identity provides schemes for social behavior (Hogg & Abrams, 1993; Hogg & Mullin 1999a).

Conclusion

This reflection paper aimed to draw attention to the importance of societal developmental goals regarding mutual attraction between employees and organizations. In contrast to the common understanding of societal development as GDP, the I-O psychology literature may expand the construct of societal development conceptualization and investigate its implication for employee-company fit and other related outcomes, including organizational identity and leadership. Recent research incorporates universal and culture-specific societal developmental goals; however, a focus on individual differences is equally important from an organizational psychology perspective.

The fit literature would suggest that employee societal developmental preferences are related to how employees perceive their organization, and vice versa, how key representatives of an organization perceive the employees. These reciprocal perceptions can determine the extent to which a consensual fit emerges between the employee and the employer. However, as we suggested, societal development goals as embedded in the organizational agenda imply further implications for employee motivation. Developmental goals place an organizational vision beyond profits, a satisfactory job design, or promotion opportunities. These goals articulate objectives of a higher moral standing, which can raise employee enthusiasm toward being members of their organizations. Crucially, a follower-type of excitement may be maintained or enhanced when the employee and the employer find opportunities to engage in work that contributes to achieving valued societal development goals.

A collective identity based on societal development goals enables organizations to reflect agenda for creating a sustaining value (Hazy & Silberstang, 2009), which, we maintain, contributes to employees' sense of meaning gained from their work and membership in the organization. We believe that a current quest in organizational effectiveness and the fit theory goes beyond a mere value correspondence but making the employees feel that their work contributes to specific societal development goals embedded in their organizational identity.

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