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The Role of Job-esteem between Psychological Ownership and Organizational identification of Hotel Employees

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of psychological ownership (PO) and job-esteem (JE) on the organizational identification (OI) of hotel employees. Moreover, this paper was designed to test the mediating effects of JE to provide practical suggestions for hotel management. In this study, 2 hypotheses based on literature reviews were introduced. Using an empirical survey, 241 hotel employees in deluxe hotels located in Seoul, Korea were surveyed by questionnaires on PO, JE, and OI. The acquired data was analyzed by utilizing multiple regression analysis through the use of the SPSS program. The results showed that OI is positively related to PO and JE. In addition, PO is a positive predictor of OI. The results also demonstrated that JE has mediating effects on PO and OI. The results of this study may contribute to the better understanding of psychological ownership as it relates to the job-esteem of employees and the possibility of increasing the organizational identification in the hotel. In particular, the psychological ownership has a significant impact on OI, while JE has a remarkable effect on the behavior of organizational identification.

Keywords: psychological ownership, job-esteem, organizational identification, mediating effect.

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction and loyalty in a hotel depends on frontline employees who are in first contact with the customer (Varun & Indu, 2015). Hotel frontline employees are key personnel who make the brand image grow and provide important services. Do they perceive a special meaning in their work as they perform emotional labor daily when they are in close contact with customers and provide front-line customer service (Jung & Yoon, 2016)? If they have a sense

of ownership, wouldn't it be possible to have more attachment to the hotel than to others and not miss out on things that others neglect? Such an increased sense of attachment is called psychological ownership. People can have an increased possession of many attributes or things in their lives, with these possessive feelings toward the relationships appearing to be highly psychological in nature (Asatryan & Oh, 2008). The concept of psychological ownership (PO) reflects a state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (e.g., job or organization) is theirs (Dawkins et al.2017). As Pierce et al. (2003) point out, PO is composed mainly of affective and cognitive factors. In their discussion of PO as part of such possessions, it comes to play an important role in

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extended self. Dittmar (1992) wrote that it is common for people to psychologically experience the connection between self and various targets of possession such as homes, automobiles, space, and other people.

Feelings of ownership toward a hotel have reflected a relationship between an employee and a hotel. Under this context, employees simply fail to feel the hotel as “theirs”. In particular, the employees of labor intensive hotel service have a key role of presenting a product and delivering core service experience to customers (Slatten & Mefmetoglu, 2011). Feelings of ownership toward a hotel might have strong psychological and positive organizational behavioral effects that are deeply relevant to job performance as well. The comprehensive theory of PO offers a conceptual framework and direction for future theoretical development (Lee & Suh, 2015). The majority of previous studies of PO have focused on the results of PO, such as relationship intention, competitive resistance, and work engagement (Asatryan & Oh, 2008; Brown et al., 2014; Paek et al., 2015). However, very few literature reviews of PO have been developed with concern for employees of hotel as target contexts and correlating the meaning of work with qualities such as job-esteem and organizational identification.

This study intends to extend of previous study by highlighting the specific mechanism that shows the relationships among PO, JE and OI. First, the purpose of this research is to verify the specific factors affecting PO and examine the influence of PO for employees’ organizational identification (OI). Second, expanding the theoretical grounds, we will also investigate the mediating effect of job-esteem (JE) on PO and OI.

II. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

A. Psychological ownership (PO) as a Determinant of organizational identification (OI)

Psychological ownership (PO) can be understood as a cognitive-affective construct (Lee & Suh, 2015) and a mental state where a person feels like they own something without actually legal possessing it (Pierce & Furo, 1990; Kwon et al., 2017). Lee & Suh (2015) defined PO as a possessive feeling that an object is “mine” or “ours” and Dawkins et al. (2017) similarly defined PO as a state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (e.g., job or organization) is theirs as well. As noted by Kwon et al. (2017), PO is a psychological connection between employees and an organization. Thus in part, PO consists of an emotional attachment to the organization (Dawkins et al., 2017). However, from the point of view of emotional attachment, PO can be understood as a concept similar to organizational effectiveness, such as organizational commitment and/or organizational identification. PO is mostly conceptualized as a possessing or having feelings of ownership, while other concepts reference a degree of belongingness with an organization or being part of one. Thus, PO can provide an employee with a psychological connection, which is fundamental for providing feelings of comfort, pleasure, and security (Heidegger, 1967; Dawkins et al., 2017).

Highly motivated employees with PO toward organization are important to the success of a hotel. The reason for this is that the nature of the work performed by hotel employees obliges them to provide excellent service and emotional labor to their customers in a “moment of truth” (Jung & Yoon, 2016). According to Baer & Brown (2012), PO may provide the impetus for individuals to actively cultivate their work and also make people to feel a need to “protect” their opinions, thoughts, and ideas. As a result, an employee rejects attempts by others to induce stress and make them to burnout from emotional labor. As service providers, employees do not always feel happy with

customers, thus PO may lead an employee to positively control their perceptions when interaction with demanding customers.

Many researchers have developed and validated measurement tools of PO. Pierce et al. (2003) proposed that PO includes three basic routes: the right of equity, information, and control. What is an interesting point is any single route to PO can result in psychological feelings of ownership, and if all three routes are operating in the objects (tangible and intangible things) it will be strongest with the target. In addition, a following study by Avey et al. (2009) enlarged Pierce et al.'s theory to contain the factor with accountability, and suggested three leading factors of PO: work with the target of ownership, accountable for the target of ownership, and a sense of belongingness with target of ownership. Rochberg-Halton (1980) suggested that when people invest their time and effort in the workplace they might have a sense of ownership. In other words, individual's self-investment makes PO.

Also PO can be understood at the workplace. Previous literature point to a variety of benefits associated with PO. Mayhew et al. (2007) referred to PO as a feeling without any legal possession of ownership and conducted a research on PO in organizational background. What should be noted about their research is that they divided PO into organization-based and job-based PO, finding that both of the two constructs had a positive relation with job satisfaction. Particularly, organizational commitment could be obtained from organization-based PO. Also, similar thinking can be seen in Van Dyne and Pierce's (2004) study where they found PO would involve employee attitudes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organization-based self-esteem, and work behavior (e.g. performance and organizational citizenship behavior). They have observed PO in an organizational context of over 800 employees and provide additional evidence of the value of PO. Specifically, Pierce et al. (2003) presented the research of PO as it associates with the organization of a firm. Based on this understanding, it has been discussed that Lee & Suh (2015) investigated PO in virtual community members and found that PO increases positive

organizational behavior such as satisfaction, self-concept, and knowledge contribution. To advance understanding of PO, McConville et al. (2016) examined that the role of PO of the attitudinal and behavioral changes that employees have experienced. Also, the literature review with PO of an organization in Kwon et al. (2017) showed that PO is related to psychological connection between employees and the organization overall. Their discussion of PO makes us realize that PO might be a positive precedent factor for employees' organizational identification (OI). OI can explain much of employees' behavior, and is closely related to PO (Kwon et al., 2017). He & Brown (2013) conducted a recent study that interactional and interpersonal factors enhance employee OI as well.

Through existing paradigms, PO can be understood as an important driver of organizational identification and stimulates positive attitude of employees. Thus, based upon the discussed research, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1: PO is positively related to the OI

B. Mediating effect of job-esteem(JE)

Self-esteem is an overall evaluation of personal worth and value (Rosenberg, 1965) and can impact one's performance to a large extent (Akgunduz, 2015). Coopersmith (1967) indicated that self-esteem is where the individual believes the self to be acceptable, significant, successful, and worthy. In an organization, Pierce et al. (1989) suggested that self-esteem can be understood by the self-perceived value as organization members acting within an organizational context. Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and JE have little difference between them. Since 2000 there were many studies about JE in Korea, however in Western society, Pierce et al.'s (1989) research led to a major breakthrough in the study of OBSE. OBSE can be usually understood as JE.

Pierce & Gardner (2004) defined JE as the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member. Also they commented that it reflects the

self-perceived value individuals have of themselves as important, competent, and capable within their employing organizations. JE is important to employees and it has implications for linking organizational initiatives to employee behaviors (Liu et al., 2013). Many recent studies have emphasized JE as a specific predictor of work-related attitudes and behaviors. Pierce et al. (1989) commented on their research, noting that JE affects positive organization related behaviors. Consistent with Pierce et al.'s (1989) view of JE, Pan et al. (2014) demonstrated that JE is able to improve employees' sense of organizational responsibility and positive work attitude. In addition, Haar & Brougham (2016) suggested that people who have high JE believe they are valued members of an organization.

We propose a relational approach to studying how JE can be enhanced and how JE may lead to better performance (Liu et al., 2013). Positive cooperation, such as organizational identification (OI) and work attitude of employees can be extremely valuable to a hotel. Much research on OI has concentrated on antecedents such as organizational support and job satisfaction. Ghosh (2016) suggested that JE is affected by several forces, where organization-based self-esteem, namely job-esteem (JE) is positively linked to OI. According to the literature of Pierce & Gardner (2004) several forces determinant of JE can be categorized as (1) the implicit signals sent by the environmental structures to which one is exposed, (2) messages sent from significant others in one's social environment, and (3) one's feelings of efficacy and competence derived from his/her direct and personal experience. Thus, employees with high psychological ownership (PO) have come to believe that "I perform valuable work through my job" (from the JE scale; Ko et al. (2015)). Several previous investigations reveal that JE mediates relationships between many antecedents and consequences such as positive work attitude. Drawing upon *Belongingness Theory*, Ferris et al. (2009) found that JE fully mediated the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance. In addition, Pan et al. (2014), under the background of China, showed that JE has partial mediating effects

on psychological ownership (PO) and positive organizational behaviors such as devoted, responsible, active, innovative, helping, harmonious behavior. Long et al. (2015) provides a supplementary insight into this mediating relationship. He hypothesized and suggested that there is a JE mediated stressor and leader-member exchange on voice behaviors. Bao et al. (2015) explored the relationship between trust of knowledge sharing and integration. They theorized that trust itself is a precondition but not sufficient for actualization of knowledge integration and JE to be mediated between them.

Finally, empirical findings show that JE mediates between antecedents (PO, trust, organizational care, support, fairness, and job authority) and consequences (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and OI), and positive JE is considered an essential solution in an organization. From these research findings, it can be deduced that those with a higher psychological ownership (PO) are more likely to have higher organizational identification (OI) through better job-esteem (JE). Thus, the discussed research findings lead to the following hypothesis and we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: JE positively mediates the relationship between PO and OI.

III. Method

This study aims to observe the role of job-esteem (JE) on the relationship between psychological ownership (PO) and organizational identification (OI), to verify the specific factor of PO and examine the influence of PO on employees' OI.

A. Sample and data collection

A questionnaire was used as the research tool. To test sets of hypotheses, this study conducted a survey that targeted employees who are working in

a deluxe hotel in Seoul. A pre-testing sampling was taken from three (3) hotels and 15 participants in Seoul. The questionnaire has corrected errors through a preliminary investigation. Then the participants of a hotel were segmented into exclusive sub-groups and selected the units based on a specified proportion. The questionnaire survey was conducted from January 8, 2018 to February 9, 2018. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and 233 usable questionnaires were analyzed. To improve the response rate of employees, the purpose of the study was fully explained in advance before the survey was taken. Then the resulting data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis using the SPSS program. Among the survey participants, 108 participants graduated from community college or below (46.4%), 104 from undergraduate school (44.6%), and 21 graduate school (9.0%). Concerning gender, men accounted for the largest part, at 71.7%, and 28.3% were women. The age of participants included those in their 30s (48.5%), 20s (28.3%), and those remaining in their 40s or above (23.1%). In terms of respondents' working experience as a hotelier breakdown was more than 7 years (54%), 2~6 years (39.1%), less than 1 year (6.9%).

B. Measurement

We designed 19 items and employed a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) to measure each dimension. The questionnaire included four closed-ended questions relating to demographic properties of the participants. The factors of this study were based on the previous research and the conceptual grounding was used in the items' development as well. Four (4) Likert-type expressions were related to psychological ownership (PO) in this research. Four (4) items from Avey et al. (2009), Van Dyne & Pierce (2004), Kwon et al. (2017) were modified to fit this study. Items include, for example, "I work for this hotel and feel as though I own the company", "This is my job", "I sense a very high degree of personal ownership for this job", and "I feel like I own this job". For job-esteem (JE),

12 Likert-type expressions were related to JE and items were derived from Pierce & Gardner (2004), Ko et al. (2015). Pierce & Gardner's (2004) instrument for the measurement of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) was 10-item based. They ask the participant to think about their relationship with the organization. Their statement usually focused on their valuable role at the job. This scale measures three (3) aspects of JE, which were chosen from a review of the research. Sample items include, "I am valuable part of this hotel", "My job has an important social value", "I perform valuable work through my job", and "I feel that I myself am growing through life at the hotel". For organizational identification, three (3) items from Martin & Riccardo (2007) and Rockmann & Ballinger (2017) were modified to fit this study. Items include, for example, "If someone were to criticize the hotel, it would feel like a personal insult", "I am very interested in what others think about the hotel", and "The hotel's successes are my successes".

C. Verification of Reliability and Validity

We assessed the validity of the research measures of PO, JE, and OI with factor analysis using principal components method and varimax rotation. All items loaded with proper factor, the criteria for determining the number of factors is defined as a 1.0 Eigen value. The intended variables in this research are measured that PO and OI were extracted as 1 factor individually. Based on prior research, JE was extracted as three (3) factors. All factors have a loading value in excess of 0.6 and the reliability of variables, which is judged by internal consistency as assessed by Cronbach's Alpha. Overall alpha values of factors was equal to or greater than 0.8, ranging to a high of 0.925 in research. Thus, in this analysis, it is generally accepted to have a reliability and provides evidence for homogeneity. Eigen value and Cronbach's Alpha value are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. The result of exploratory factor analysis

Constructs	Dimensions	Item Numbers (factor loading)	Eigen Value	% of variance	Cronbach's Alpha
psychological ownership		4(.990, .898, .882, .864)	3.309	82.736	.925
job-esteem	work value	4(.812, .793, .785, .745)	5.373	44.771	.858
	pride	4(.820, .801, .733, .695)	1.717	14.309	.829
	reputation	4(.841, .815, .802, .800)	1.134	9.454	.837
organizational identification		3(.893, .891, .793)	2.221	74.025	.823

D. Correlation among factors

Regarding descriptive statistics, the Pearson Correlation Test results among factors before hypothesis testing are shown in Table 2. The multi-collinearity was determined based on the *Tolerance*. The minimum tolerance of 0.538 (over 0.1) show that the statistical significance of the variable was not compromised by multi-collinearity.

E. Analysis of Hypotheses

According to correlation analysis, PO is positively correlated with OI, but it is hard to confirm its predictive role. So, to analyze the relationships among dimensions, we assessed Hypotheses 1 with regression. By taking

PO as the independent variable, employees' OI as the dependent variable, we found that PO have statistical significances with employees' OI, which explain 54 % of the total variation. Thus, H1 was supported.

The second hypothesis is that the effect of PO on OI may be mediated by JE, so three (3) sub-hypotheses were examined with three-step mediated regression analysis which was introduced by Baron & Kenny (1986). Through the detection, as shown in Table 4, the standardized regression coefficient of PO and JE (working value, pride, reputation) indicates that the regression model meets the first-step appraisal of mediating variable. In the second step, the standardized regression coefficient of PO and employee's OI is 0.735, t-values are all at significant level (p<.01). In the third step, JE (working value, pride, reputation) is added to the regression model between PO and

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

	M	S. D.	Inter-Construct Correlations				
			1	2	3	4	5
1. psychological ownership (PO)	3.63	.740	1				
2. work value of job	3.27	.783	.422*	1			
3. pride of job	3.67	.735	.630*	.437*	1		
4. reputation of job	3.714	.707	.630*	.407*	.599*	1	
5. organizational identification (OI)	3.52	.792	.715*	.421*	.563*	.600*	1

* P<.01

Table 3. Result of Multiple Regression

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	SE.	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance
organizational identification(OI)	Constant	.177		3.769	.000	
	psychological ownership(PO)	.048	.735	16.476	.000*	1.000
R ² =.540, Adj. R ² =.538, F=271.445, Durbin-Watson=1.860						

* P<.01

Table 4. Mediated regression analysis for job-esteem

Independent/ mediating/ dependent variables	Steps	St. β	t	p	R ²
psychological ownership (PO)/ working value of job/ organizational identification (OI)	1	.422	7.069	.000*	.178
	2	.735	16.476	.000*	.540
	3	.678	13.982	.000*	.555
psychological ownership (PO)/ Pride of job/ organizational identification (OI)	1	.680	14.095	.000*	.462
	2	.735	16.476	.000*	.540
	3	.655	10.825	.000*	.548
psychological ownership (PO)/ Reputation of job/ organizational identification (OI)	1	.630	12.339	.000*	.397
	2	.735	16.476	.000*	.540
	3	.593	10.652	.000*	.571

*P<.01

employee's OI, the standardized regression coefficient of PO and employee's OI is sharply reduced to 0.678 (working value), 0.655 (pride), 0.593(reputation) from 0.735, though t-value is still at significant level, $p < .01$. Thus, the third-step appraisal of mediating variable is completely met. In addition, we tried to investigate whether demographic factors (gender, age, education, working year) can be an important control factor toward employees' OI, but nothing can explain the total variation.

Based on these results, H2 was supported, JE is a mediating variable between PO and an employee's OI. Therefore, we can find that working value, pride, and reputation of JE have strong impact on employees' OI attitudes in a workplace with PO. Especially, reputation of job plays a strong role toward employees' OI.

IV. Conclusions

A. Discussion and Implications

This study extends Pierce et al.'s (1989) research of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). This study began with the question of the meaning and role of job-esteem (JE), attempting to find that JE and OBSE could be understood in the same sense. Another question was that psychological ownership (PO) plays in employees' organizational identification (OI). To

answer the basic question, this study examined the relationship of PO, JE, and employees' OI with regression analysis. This study revealed the following academic and management implications:

First, PO can significantly influence OI. In this sense, as noted by Kwon et al. (2017), we view PO in this study as a key precedent factor that increases employees' OI. Results also support Pierce et al.'s (2003) finding that PO have a positive effect on the organization or firm. The PO of employees has a profound impact on organizational efficiency, such as OI. From a management standpoint, the promotion of employees' PO can strengthen their OI. Results also presented insight into the process that psychological attachment to the organization must be precede for the formation of OI of employees. Hotels should ensure that employees are satisfied with their duties and improve their organization's identity. Because of this, it is considered urgent to make efforts to develop an attachment to the organization with special treatment and consideration of its employees. Additionally, it is deemed necessary to provide support for the development of individual employees' abilities. Ultimately, education and training, which are useful for self-development of employees and job performance, increase the sense of ownership, directly affecting the employees' OI. Thus, a hotel's managers should cultivate employees to develop PO via deliberate support and elastic empowerment of employees.

Second, we found that JE is a pure parameter that

meditates the relationship between PO and OI, and it was confirmed that the employee's PO affects OI by the sequential dispersal of JE. An academic implication of this study expands the relationship between PO and OI, which has been mainly covered by existing studies, to identify the specific propensity and effectiveness of JE between these concepts. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, this result provided a logical basis for strategically utilizing JE as a new paradigm based on the base self-esteem of an organization's employees. Given the mediating role of JE, hotel managers should pay special attention to supports that strengthen individuals' sense of belonging and being valuable to the hotel. For example, the company's efforts to promote its job value through its social responsibility activities and services, generates corporate positive image advertising that can specifically stress the value and reputation of job as a service provider. This suggests that the PO strategy through JE could double the employees' OI. In light of this research, the most important factor in the promotion of JE was the reputation of the job, which shows the value of the job as a social animal, which values the evaluation of others. It is the result of having a second look at the value of a job. Individuals' subjective meaning of the job in their occupation in the labor-intensive service firm can also relate to working value, pride, and job reputation. The results of the study showed that social recognition and reputation are the most significant value of the job. Namely, employees with job of a high reputation and PO tend to identify stronger OI. In this regard, an important strategic task for securing corporate competitiveness is ultimately to find ways to stimulate job reputation and link it to a psychological sense of ownership.

In summary, the findings of the present study reveal that to strengthen employees' job-esteem (JE), a manager should enhance employees' psychological ownership (PO), and as a result the employees' organizational identification (OI) will be improved. The significance of this study is that this is the first research which studies the relationship among PO, JE, and OI under the background of Korea.

B. Limitations and future research

The significance of this study is that it has presented a more theoretical model OI of employees amid the growing importance of employees as a competitive advantage. It is also meaningful that we have presented practical measures to emphasize JE improvement in sequential phases of PO, JE, and OI. Despite the contribution of this research, there are several limitations, which suggest the need for further research. First, this study was carried out with a major emphasis on the theoretical model for the job-specific PO and did not fully explain the concept of PO for the organization. Therefore, a deep understanding of the relationships between concepts is weak and needs to be supplemented through further study. Second, all sample data was derived from employees found only in a deluxe hotel in Seoul. In this study, the reputation of a job was the most influential variable among the factors of JEs of hotel employees, who are highly emotional labor workers, but in other general enterprises, its importance and sub-variables may differ. Therefore, there could be a problem with the generalization of results in relation to other occupational groups. This is also a potential limitation that needs to be supplemented in further studies.

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