

Research on the Cross-level Mediating Effect of Organizational Attachment between Organizational Inducement and Job Performance

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Abstract. Through literature research and interviews, this study clarified the concept of organizational attachment, developed the measurement of organizational attachment questionnaire for Chinese employees, which consisted of organizational security and organizational nostalgia. We also found that organizational inducement is one of the most important factors affecting the organizational attachment in Chinese enterprises. Via cross-level analysis, this paper has verified that organizational inducement has a significant positive impact on organizational attachment. In addition, this study has also found that organizational attachment played a cross-level mediating role between organizational inducement and job performance.

1. Introduction

In recent years, a new research orientation—organizational attachment, has emerged in the field of employee-organization relationship^{[1][2]}. There are already many studies on employee-organizational relationship, such as organizational identification^[3], organizational commitment^[4], and organizational embedding^[5] etc., but in China, the research on the analysis from the perspective of organizational attachment is still relatively lack.

The concept of organizational attachment originally came from attachment theory proposed by Bowlby^[6], which was an important theory used to explain interpersonal connections^[7], then scholars applied it into organizational contexts, especially in the context of organizational change^[8] and job loss^[9].

The phenomenon that Chinese employees attached to their organization has already appeared a long period. In the 1990s, with the reform of the State-owned enterprises, a large number of employees were laid off. However, many people were reluctant to break away from the unit, they showed a strong sense of psychological frustration and anxiety, thus greatly impacting the emotion of employees' attachment^[10].

Organizational attachment has a greater influence on employees' attitudes and behaviors^{[11][12]}, which directly affect employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, OCB and job performance^{[13][7][14]}. In fact, in recent years, the study of organizational attachment has attracted more and more attention by scholars^[15-16], some studies have explored the influence factors of organizational attachment, including leadership style^[17-18], personality^[19-20] and cultural differences^[21].

In order to verify and supplement the previous research, this study interviewed 29 employees of 28 organizations. Through collation and coding of interview materials by two researchers, finally, five major influencing factors had been obtained, including organizational factors, leadership factors, work factors, individual factors and other factors. Organizational inducement, which belongs to organizational factors, is one of the most important factors mentioned by respondents. Organizational inducement plays an important role in meeting the psychological and material needs of employees^[22].

So this study will deeply analyze the relationship between organizational inducement and organizational attachment. In addition, how does organizational attachment affect employee's performance? Mostly research analyzed the effect of attachment style on job performance^[23-24]. However, employees' attachment style is not the same concept as organizational attachment. Employee attachment style is a relatively stable trait, divided into three styles, including secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant^[25], while organizational attachment is the relationship between employees and organizations, representing the degree of psychological association^[26].

In summary, this study will analyze the influence of organizational inducement on organizational attachment and the impact of organizational attachment on job performance, and verify whether organizational attachment plays a mediating role between organizational inducement and job performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organizational attachment

2.1.1 Concept

Sahu & Pathardikar [27] pointed out that organizational attachment reflected the psychological bond between employees and organization. Tsui et al. [28] defined organizational attachment as an individual's psychological and behavioral involvement in a social group or unit of which he or she is a member. This definition has been adopted by scholars, such as Stainback & Irvin [29], Gonzalez & Denisi [30]. Bolanowski [31] proposed that organizational attachment includes the recognition and conviction of the organization's goal, values and legitimacy, the willingness to make efforts for the benefit of the organization and the strong desire to stay.

Combined the previous research and attachment theory, this study defines organizational attachment as the individual's affection bond to the organization, which manifested the individual's sense of trust and belonging to the organization.

2.1.2 Measurement

The measurement of organizational attachment is mostly replaced by other variables, including positive variables (such as psychological commitment, affective commitment, OCB, organizational identification, job involvement, job satisfaction, etc.) and negative variables (like absences, turnover intention).

Scholars utilized substitutive variables to measure organizational attachment, which had certain shortcomings, because the measurement did not actually measure the organizational attachment itself, nor did it reflect the dimensions of organizational attachment. Most of these variables are the result of organizational attachment, that is, the dependent variable of organizational attachment.

According to the steps of questionnaire development, we developed the organizational attachment questionnaire. The overall Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.905, the Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of factor 1 (organizational security) and factor 2 (organizational nostalgia) was 0.892 and 0.859 respectively. Both were above the standard of 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire had a high reliability.

2.2. Organizational inducement

2.2.1. Concept

March & Simon [32] suggested that inducements are reward and support provided by employers to employees to attract, retain, and make rewards for organization; Aselage & Eisenberger [33] defined organizational inducements were material and non-material reward to motivate employees' efforts and loyalty. Eisenberger et al. [34] proposed that organizational inducements are good working conditions for the purpose of achieving the hard work of employees.

2.2.2. Classification

March & Simon^[32] and Rynes & Barber^[35] divided organizational inducements into monetary inducement and non-monetary inducement; Rusbult & Farrell^[36] classified organizational

inducement into external and internal inducement; Walker & Yip^[37] divided organizational inducements into transactional inducement and relational inducement. Wang et al.^[22] classified organizational inducement into material inducement and developmental inducement. The classification has been recognized and supported by other scholars, such as Shin et al.^[38].

3. Research Hypothesis

3.1. The influence of organizational inducement on organizational attachment

Studies have shown that the more satisfied with the inducements provided by the organization, and the more employees are willing to contribute their time, money and psychological commitment^[39], showing positive working attitudes and job performance^[40], and strong retention intention^[41]. Cai et al.^[42] pointed out that the organizational inducements could help to improve organizational commitment and career commitment; Hui et al.^[43] pointed out that organizational inducement had a positive impact on the organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

Based on the previous research, the higher level of perceived organizational inducement, the easier it is to promote employees' positive work attitude, behavior and job performance. Mitchell et al.^[5] showed that the more employees perceived organizational inducement, the more they thought themselves were valuable and supported, thus showing positive emotions towards the organization. From the concept of organizational attachment, when the organization provided the functions of "secure base" and "safe haven", which helped employees attach to their organization. Therefore, this study proposed the research hypothesis:

H1: organizational inducement has a significant positive impact on organizational attachment.

3.2. The influence of organizational attachment on job performance

Most of the previous studies have analyzed the relationship between individual attachment style and work performance. For example, Simmons et al.^[15] showed that secure attachment style was positively correlated with hope, trust and job performance, and trust played a mediating role between secure attachment style and job performance. Neustadt et al.^[30] also found that secure attachment style was positively related to job performance. Some studies have not found the relationship between attachment style and job performance, such as Joplin et al.^[23], Ronen & Zuroff^[24]. Previous articles had mentioned that organizational attachment and individual attachment styles are not the same concept. Thus, the effect of organizational attachment on job performance still needs to be discussed.

According to social exchange theory and attachment theory, when employees felt satisfied, they should actively explore and show better job performance, conversely, if the employee's attachment needs were not met, there would be a series of negative consequences, such as increasing pressure, occupational exhaustion^[44] and turnover intention^[45]. Based on the above analysis, the study proposed:

H2: Organizational attachment has a significant positive impact on job performance.

3.3 The mediating effect of organizational attachment between organizational inducement and job performance

According to the hypotheses above, organizational inducement has a positive impact on organizational attachment, and organizational attachment also has a positive impact on job performance. So, is organizational attachment a "bridge" to associate organizational inducement with job performance?

According to the emotional affairs theory of Weiss & Cropanzano^[46], the work environment and work events induced employees' emotional response, and the accumulation of emotion will produce corresponding work attitudes and work behaviors. Usually, positive emotional accumulation leads to positive attitudes and behaviors. Organizational attachment reflected the employees' trust and

belonging to the organization. It is a positive attitude, when employees had lasting and stable attachment to the organization, it was easier to improve their job performance. Based on the attachment theory ^[6], the individual can actively explore and expand after obtaining the material and developmental inducements provided by organization, and can be assured to seek help from the organization when they were in pressure and frustration. If the organization continues to provide the two functions of “secure base” and “safe haven”, then will promote employees’ attachment to the organization, thereby improving their performance. Based on this, the study proposed:

H3: Organizational attachment plays a mediating effect between organizational inducement and job performance.

According to above theoretical analysis and research hypotheses, the following theoretical models is proposed:

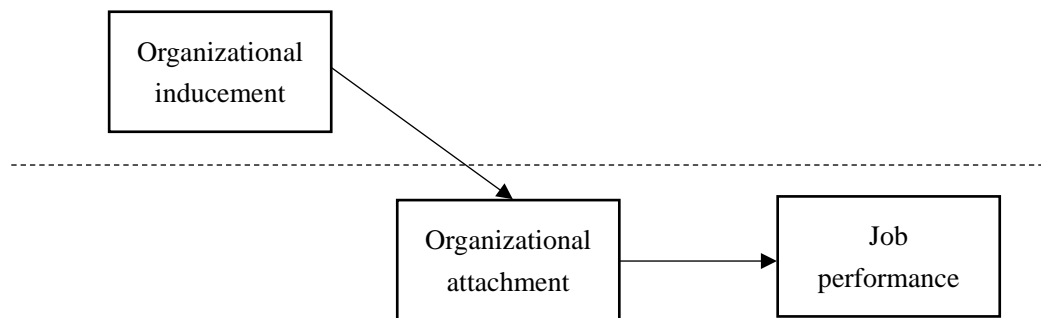


Figure 1 Theoretical Model.

4. Research methods and results

4.1. Research methods

4.1.1. Research procedures and samples overview

We adopted questionnaire survey method, mainly relied on MBA students. After obtaining their consent, each person brought back 10 questionnaires to their company. In addition, depending on the relatives and friends of the researchers, the questionnaire was delivered according to the above requirements, and a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to 40 companies.

Excluding the questionnaires with too many missed and regular answers, and the number of terms with fewer than 3 people, a total of 226 valid questionnaire were got from 35 companies. Among them, 48.8% were males and 51.2% were females; bachelor’s degree is the main educational background, accounting for 61.9%; employees born in the 1980s and 1990s are the majority, accounting for 83.3%; in terms of position level, middle and senior managers, first-line managers and general staffs account for 33.6%, 26.8% and 36.6% respectively.

4.1.2. Measurement

We applied the translation-back translation procedure to translate the English scale into Chinese. All scales used the Likert’s 6 points scoring system, from “1” to “6” indicating that the conformity degree was from low to high.

Organizational inducement: Using the scale developed by Wang et al.^[22], there are 14 items, including 4 items of material inducement and 10 items of developmental inducement.

Organizational attachment: Using the questionnaire developed by the author of this article. The questionnaire has a total of 15 items, which are divided into two dimensions: organizational security and organizational nostalgia.

Job performance: the questionnaire developed by Van Dyne & Lepine^[47].

4.1.3 Common variance test

We used Harman single factor method to test common variance^[48]. All the items were included in SPSS 19.0 for exploratory factor analysis. The result showed that a total of 5 factors were extracted, and explained 62.306% of the total variation, and the first principal component factor was

40.265%, not reaching 50%. Therefore, the common variance in this study is acceptable.

4.2. Research results

4.2.1. Correlation analysis of variables

The correlation between variables, and the mean and standard deviation of the variables were as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Correlation of variables (N=266).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Level-1							
1.OA	1						
2.OS	.910**	1					
3.ON	.921**	.677**	1				
4.JP	.257**	.327**	.150**	1			
Level-2							
5.OI	.782**	.770**	.666**	.299**	1		
6.MI	.650**	.632**	.561**	.236**	.890**	1	
7.DI	.788**	.778**	.668**	.306**	.982**	.788**	
M	0.254	3.967	3.633	4.932	3.756	3.581	3.826
SD	0.0574	0.853	1.041	.757	.947	1.021	.980

Table 1 shows that both organizational inducement and its dimensions are positively correlated with organizational attachment and its dimensions. The correlation between organizational inducement and organizational attachment is 0.782 ($p < 0.01$), and the correlation of material and developmental inducement and organizational attachment are 0.650 and 0.788, respectively ($p < 0.01$).

4.2.2. Hypothesis test

4.2.2.1 The cross-level influence of organizational inducement on organizational attachment

In this study, organizational inducement is variable at the organizational level, which needed to be integrated from individual level data. We firstly used the indicators of rwg, ICC (1) and ICC (2) to evaluate the data^[49].

Through calculation, it was found that the rwg values of 35 enterprises were mostly greater than 0.9, partly greater than 0.7, reaching the standard of rwg value greater or equal to 0.7^[50]. The values of ICC (1) and ICC (2) were 0.085 and 0.765 respectively. The values of developmental inducement ICC (1) and ICC (2) were 0.830 and 0.760 respectively. Those of material inducement were 0.078 and 0.747. The critical range of ICC (1) is between 0~0.5^[51], and the ICC (2) value should be greater than 0.7, so it can be seen that both ICC (1) and ICC (2) meet the standard.

In this study, a hierarchical linear model (HLM) was used to examine the cross-level effects of organizational inducement on organizational attachment. The result are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2 HLM Regression analysis results.

Dependent variable: OA	Coefficient	Standard error	T-ratio
Independent variable:OI	1.020	0.047	21.601***
Independent variable:MI	0.851	0.046	18.305***
Independent variable:DI	0.959	0.029	33.496***

From Table 2 the organizational inducement is positively predictive of organizational attachment (regression coefficient is 1.020, $p < 0.001$), both material and developmental inducement also have positive effect on organizational attachment, and the regression coefficients are 0.851 and 0.959 respectively, both of which have reached the significant level ($P < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis H1 was verified.

4.2.2.2. Impact of organizational attachment on job performance

Both organizational attachment and job performance are all individual level variables, so SPSS

19.0 can be applied for this analysis. The results of regression analysis are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 Results of regression analysis.

Variables	Job performance	
	Model1	Model 2
CONTROL variables		
Tenure	0.085	0.132*
Position levels	-0.267***	-0.190**
Independent variables		
Organizational attachment		0.221***
R ²	0.092	0.135
ΔR^2	0.085	0.125
ΔF	13.237***	12.867***

From the above Table 3, the relationship between organizational attachment and job performance is significantly positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.221 ($p < 0.001$). Hypothesis H2 has been verified.

4.2.2.3. The mediating effect of organizational attachment between organizational inducement and job performance

This study verified the mediating effect following four steps^[52]:

Step 1: test zero model; Step 2: test the direct effect of organizational inducement on job performance; Step 3: test the direct effect of organizational inducement on organizational attachment; Step 4: test the effect of organizational inducement and organizational attachment on job performance.

Table 4 Cross-level mediating effect test of organizational attachment.

Models	Estimation		
	γ_{00}	γ_{01}	γ_{10}
M0: Zero model 1	4.931***		
Zero model 2	0.253***		
M1:OI---JP	4.929***	0.378**	
M2:OI---OA	0.253***	0.046***	
M3:OI+OA--JP	4.931***	0.273*	2.278**

Note: Zero model 1 and zero model 2 refers to job performance and organizational attachment as the dependent variable respectively.

In Table 4, the values of γ_{01} and γ_{10} are both significant, which indicated the mediating effect of organizational attachment between organizational inducement and job performance existed. Compared with the value of γ_{01} in M1 and M3, the former is larger than the latter, indicating that organizational attachment played a partial mediating effect. Thus, hypothesis H3 is verified.

5. Conclusion

This study applied HLM and SPSS to verify the positive impact of organizational inducement on organizational attachment, and organizational attachment played a partial mediating role between organizational inducement and job performance, and also the positive impact of organizational attachment on job performance. All the hypotheses proposed in this study were pass tested.

The factor of organizational inducement has not appeared in the previous literature, but it was ranked first by the interviewees in the Chinese context, which showed the importance and uniqueness of this factor. Through further analysis, it is found that developmental inducement is more conducive to organizational attachment than material inducement. This research result provided evidence for Chinese managers to better meet the needs of employees, especially for the post-80s and post-90s generation. Compared with material inducement, offering the new generation more respect, trust and development opportunities so as to enhance their organizational attachment.

For enterprise, providing employees with material inducement (such as money) and developmental inducement (such as respect), which can help organizations to cultivate the two functions of “secure base” and “safe haven”, thus promoting employees’ organizational attachment and ultimately improving their job performance. The improvement of job performance can be regarded as the employees’ behavioral reward for organizational inducement, which is mediated by the variable of organizational attachment.

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