

EXTENDING ORGANIZATIONAL BELONGINGNESS THEORY: BELONGINGNESS, COMMITMENT, AND FAMILY SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationships between family supportive policies (i.e., family supportive supervisor behaviors, perceptions of family supportive cultures, and family supportive coworkers), employees' feelings of belongingness and their levels of organizational commitment (i.e., affective, continuous, and normative). This research aims to extend the field's understanding by demonstrating the mediating potential of belongingness on the relationship between these dimensions of family supportiveness and commitment. The study tests hypotheses derived from data collected from 123 full-time working respondents in the southeastern United States. Analyses indicated that belongingness mediated most of the relationships between pro-family initiatives at work and commitment as well as pro-family coworkers and commitment. This research includes a discussion of the study's results, strengths, limitations, theoretical and managerial implications as well as directions for future research.

Keywords: Belonging, Organizational Commitment, Family Supportive Behavior, Organizational Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Belongingness relates to individuals' social involvement at work and the degree to which they see themselves as important parts of the community (Avant, 1966). Critically, it alleviates psychological strains, including emotional burnout, depersonalization, and a lack of self-fulfillment (Coissard et al., 2017). Workplace belongingness is a crucial determinant of employees' psychological well-being, including job satisfaction and involvement in the organization (Chan, 2016). Scholars (e.g., Rahn et al., 2020; Shakespeare-Finch & Daley, 2017) examined the concept of belongingness and its influence as a motivating factor in professional settings. Tangvald-Pederson and Bongaardt (2017) delineated the inherent difficulties faced by employees in terms of fulfilling their needs for belonging within the professional environment. Specifically, they found that a sense of belonging experienced at work is characterized by conflicting feelings and ambivalence between the need to be nurtured and the longing for professional recognition. When employees feel vulnerable, they seek support and closeness from those they trust. When they feel underrated, they seek to be appreciated according to commonly accepted norms of professionalism (Tangvald-Pedersen & Bonagaardt, 2017).

Research also highlighted how intricately individual and relational demands related to belongingness, stating that "the sense of belonging in the workplace involves a dual decision: "the initial choice made by others to let one in, and a choice made by oneself deciding how, when, and where to join (Tangvald-Pederson & Bongaardt, 2017). Bryer (2019) expanded on the topic by emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance between personal and organizational components of belonging. He argued that when businesses simply focus on corporate goals and overlook relational efforts, it inhibits employees from feeling socially accepted and validated. Liu (2022) further clarified the organizational components of belonging, highlighting that besides feeling integrated into a system or environment, feedback from the immediate supervisor and organizational support are crucial for workers' sense of belonging. Nevertheless, organizational research literature lacks theoretical and practical frameworks that define the individual and relational needs involved in establishing a sense of belonging in the workplace (Canlas & Williams, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the sense of belonging and social support in the workplace, which ultimately results in improved performance of the organization.