

PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP: LINKING EMPLOYEE PAST AND FUTURE IN AN ORGANIZATION TO EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

Modern day management has placed increasing importance on creating organic and substantive relationships between employees and employers as in knowledge based economies, organizational efficiency and effectiveness depends much on employees' initiatives and extraordinary efforts. In the present study, we focus on psychological ownership, described by Pierce (2003) as a cognitive-affective state that reflects employees' awareness, thoughts, and beliefs that the target of ownership (e.g. the organization) is theirs, as a form of such relationships. We adopt a temporal perspective in conceptualizing how psychological ownership may be cultivated and how psychological ownership, in turn, would lead to employee career satisfaction and voice. The temporal perspective suggests that what happened in the past and what holds in the future for the employee will determine psychological ownership, which in turn determines employees' attitude towards past events and behaviors that would alter the future of the organization. We operationalize what happened in the past as employees' past accomplishment in the organization. Future outlook includes employees' general perceptions of whether the employee has a future in the organization and the specific perceptions of whether the employee enjoys career growth opportunities in the organization. Employees' attitude towards past events is operationalized as career satisfaction and employees' attempt to affect the future of the organization is operationalized as employee voice, a behavior that attempts to bring out problems of the organization or support important initiatives of the organization. We collected two waves of data from 475 matched supervisor-subordinate dyads from two organizations. In wave 1, we collected the data on past accomplishment, future prospect and career growth opportunities from subordinates. In wave 2, we collected data on psychological ownership and career satisfaction from subordinates and employee voice from supervisors. We found a significant three-way interaction of past accomplishment, future prospect and career growth opportunities on psychological ownership, which in turn predicted employee career satisfaction and voice. We discussed the utility of a temporal perspective for conceptualizing the antecedents and outcomes of psychological ownership.