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# Does Organizational Image Matter? Image, Identification, and Employee Behaviors in Public and Nonprofit Organizations

**Abstract:** *Organizational image, identity, and identification are powerful concepts in terms of understanding members' behaviors and beliefs. In particular, the term "image" has frequently been used to describe the overall impression of the organization, but most scholars have only focused on organizational image as it is perceived by external audiences. However, organizational image as perceived by members within an organization is critical for determining its impact on individual employees' motivation, work behaviors, and further performance at work. This article explores the roles of organizational image and identification in explaining organizational behaviors—extra-role behavior and absenteeism—in public and nonprofit organizations. A series of seemingly unrelated regressions were used to analyze survey data from 1,220 respondents. Results show that organizational image is positively related to employee identification, and identification has a significant influence on promoting extra-role behavior and lowering employee absenteeism.*

## Practitioner Points

- Organizational image as perceived by members of an organization is an aggregate of individual employees' perceptions of the organization based on their own experiences and judgments (perceived organizational identity) and outsiders' judgments about the organization (construed external image).
- Both perceived organizational identity and construed external image influence the extent to which employees are likely to identify themselves as part of their organization.
- The higher an employee's level of identification, the more he or she is likely to engage in extra-role behavior.
- Managing organizational image and identification in a positive way can significantly reduce costly voluntary employee absences, which are reasonably avoidable absences.

After the 2013 government shutdown, polls reported that the shutdown produced major damage to the GOP's image in the nation and, by extension, to the nation's image in the world (Balz and Clement 2013; Dugan 2013). Likewise, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) now holds one of the worst reputations for a bureaucracy ever, especially after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Researchers frequently use the term "image" to describe the overall impression of an organization, an institution, or people. Public administrators in particular need to maintain a wide range of support from various stakeholders, and managing organizational image among various constituencies becomes a critical goal in public agencies (Carpenter and Krause 2012).

Organizational image refers to the perceptions that different people hold of an organization. This conceptualization covers both the way an organization is perceived by external constituents as well as the way it is perceived by internal organizational members.

However, in the field of public administration and management, most scholars have focused on only one aspect of organizational image, which is that perceived by external audience members. They often refer to this as *organizational reputation* (e.g., Carpenter 2010). It is noteworthy that another side of organizational image—image as perceived by members within an organization—is particularly critical when considering its impact on each individual employee's motivation, work behaviors, and further performance at work (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). In other words, FEMA employees' worries and thoughts concerning their own organization after the hurricanes need to be considered as much as external constituents' thoughts about FEMA in such instances. To fill this gap in the public management literature, this article focuses on how employees view their organization (image), how they link organizational image and their definition of themselves (identification), and how this cognitive process in turn affects their organizational behavior (outcome). The present

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article explores the roles of organizational image and identification in explaining organizational behaviors, including extra-role behavior and absenteeism, in the public and nonprofit sectors.

In the sections that follow, we first review prior scholarly efforts to explain organizational image and identification, and then we turn our focus to their impacts on extra-role behavior and absenteeism. Next, we test the model using cross-sectional data from a large sample ($N$ = 1,220) of public and nonprofit employees and present the results of the empirical analyses. Finally, we discuss the implications of the findings, along with limitations, as well as some suggestions for future research on the topic.

## Organizational Image and Identification

Organizational image is critical for an organization in terms of its ability to attract and retain relationships with its diverse internal and external constituents. In particular, a member's perceived image of his or her organization influences the extent to which he or she identifies with the work organization and, even further, his or her behavior in the workplace (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). Social cognitive theory focuses on the cognitive processing of direct, vicarious, and symbolic sources of information in determining individuals' behavioral patterns (Bandura 1977). In other words, individuals make judgments and act based on personal experiences and factors as well as socially constructed beliefs that interact reciprocally with each other. Thus, members can derive such perceptions from both individual experiences and outsiders' judgments about their organizations. According to these sources, the images that members hold of their organizations can be understood in two ways: the way that a member personally thinks about his or her organization and the way that he or she suspects others think about the organization.

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail called the first type of image *perceived organizational identity* and defined it as "a particular individual organizational member's belief and understanding of the distinctive, central, and enduring attributes of the organization" (1994, 244). The term "identity" in this conceptualization is different from the popular notion of organizational identity in many studies. One of the most frequently cited concepts of organizational identity is derived from Albert and Whetten's (1985) study, in which organizational identity refers to one that is collectively taken by organization members to be central, distinctive, and enduring. To foster the shared idea of a distinct, collective identity, members of an organization frequently engage in symbolic actions, such as rituals and ceremonies. However, the collective identity is not always the same as the beliefs of any individual member of the organization (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). In fact, when an individual discovers a contradiction between the collective organizational identity and the organization's actions, his or her perceived identity becomes separated from the organization's collective identity and can influence the degree to which the member identifies with the organization. In this sense, this article focuses on an inside member's unique beliefs about his or her workplace regardless of whether they match a collective organizational identity.

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However, people do not always rely on personal experiences as the sole source of information concerning their organization. Their judgments and expectations are also derived from observation and understanding of how others think about the organization. The way members view and interpret others' perceptions of the organization is labeled *construed external image* (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). This type of image is not necessarily the same as organizational reputation, which refers to outsiders' beliefs about what distinguishes an organization, although reputation can influence and even construct part of insiders' perceptions. Thus, it is likely that inside employees may have misconceptions about the organization's reputation because the psychological processes of insiders and outsiders operate in different manners according to their distinct values and goals in interpreting this information (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). This article is concerned with construed external image, which focuses on an insider's comprehensive judgment, regardless of how outsiders actually perceive and judge the organization.

Organizational identification plays a powerful role in the process of understanding a member's psychological attachment to an organization. Two potential conceptualizations of organizational identification have been developed. Some scholars view identification as a cognitive process that links a member's self-concept and his or her perceptions of the organization to which he or she belongs (Cheney 1983). Self-definition is influenced by memberships in social groups, such as work organizations. Identification occurs when an individual recognizes that his or her values are similar to those of the organization (Pratt 1998) or when an individual adopts the values and beliefs of the organization as his or her own values and beliefs (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). After identification occurs, individuals can perceive themselves as a part of their organization and feel oneness with it (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

On the other hand, organizational identification can be conceptualized as an effective-motivational term (O'Reilly and Chatman 1986). For instance, if employees are confronted by criticisms of their organization, those who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to view such threats personally because they feel proud to be a part of the organization. In this sense, organizational identification is strongly related to "the value and emotional significance attached to [his or her] membership" (Tajfel 1978, 63). Put together, identification links the individual's self-concept and his or her perceptions of the organization to which he or she belongs "either cognitively (e.g., feeling a part of the organization; internalizing organizational values), emotionally (e.g., pride in membership), or both" (Riketta 2005, 361).

## Organizational Image, Identification, and Behavioral Consequences

When do individuals actively identify with their organizations? Social identity theory explains how being a member of an organization helps define self-identity by suggesting two processes of identification: categorization and self-enhancement (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Categorization focuses on the process that individuals use to classify themselves and others. This process involves comparing

themselves to others, and it leads to distinctiveness that influences their organizational identification. The self-enhancement process emphasizes the notion that positive and attractive members' perceptions of their organization are significant to inducing their identification process. Self-enhancement antecedents deal with members' feelings of self-worth in terms of organizational membership (Pratt 1998). Thus, identification is a product of the cultivation of members' cognitive and affective attachment to their organization based on their own judgment, as well as on externally construed beliefs through the categorization and comparison cognitive processes. In this sense, two types of organizational image—perceived organizational identity and construed external image—are likely to affect the degree to which individuals identify with their organization (Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell 2002).

Therefore, the attractiveness of construed external image, as an inside member's beliefs about outsiders' judgments of his or her organization, is likely to increase the possibility of members' organizational identification. Likewise, the attractiveness of perceived organizational identity strengthens identification. Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) explained this mechanism by how well these two types of images reinforce members' self-concept, provide distinctiveness, and enhance self-esteem. Using data from physicians affiliated with three major health systems, Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell (2002) found that the attractiveness of perceived organizational identity and the attractiveness of construed external image are positively associated with the strength of organizational identification. Considering the propositions suggested by previous research, this article empirically tests whether the two types of organizational image are significant predictors of organizational identification.

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived organizational identity is positively associated with a member's organizational identification.

**Hypothesis 2:** An organization's construed external image is positively associated with a member's organizational identification.

Across the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, work motivations and ethics have captured scholarly attention for decades. Particularly, public administration scholars have developed a line of studies on public service motivation, assuming that there are identifiable work ethics or motivations that attract certain individuals to the public sector (Perry 2000). In line with this, numerous studies have been conducted to answer the questions of what attracts employees and how their work ethics affect their commitment, satisfaction, and further individual performance. Despite widespread attention to those issues, the role of inside members' images and identification has been ignored in public and nonprofit management research. It is worth noting that employees' psychological ties to their workplace extend beyond sectoral boundaries, and the role of the identification process among public and nonprofit managers is crucial in explaining their work behaviors (Romzek 1990).

Scholars have posited several outcomes of organizational identification, such as increased cooperation, greater employee compliance, lower attention, lower in-group conflict, and greater orientation

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on extra-role behavior (Aronson 1992; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994; Mael and Ashforth 1995; O'Reilly and Chatman 1986; Tajfel 1978). In addition, identification leads to increases in the level of members' satisfaction, motivation, and commitment at work, which ultimately affect workforce performance, tenure, and promotion (Cheney 1983; Pratt 1998). Among various organizational outcomes of identification, this article focuses on extra-role behavior and absenteeism.

Since Katz (1964) introduced the differences between extra-role and in-role behaviors, a number of researchers have theorized and developed ideas about the distinctive characteristics of extra-role behavior and its impacts in the organization. Extra-role behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and prosocial organizational behavior all provide very similar conceptualizations of certain behaviors that are beyond job requirements and beneficial to the organization as a whole (Schnake 1991). Extra-role prosocial behaviors can be further specified as "positive social acts which are not formally specified role requirements; they are not specifically assigned to individuals as activities to be performed as part of the job" (Brief and Motowidlo 1986, 712). In a similar vein, extra-role behaviors are "1) not specified in advance by role prescriptions, 2) not recognized by formal reward systems, and 3) not a source of punitive consequences when not performed by job incumbents" (Van Dyne and LePine 1998, 108).

Employees who manifest identification with their organization or with an individual (e.g., a respected supervisor) and those who have an affective attachment to the work organization are more likely to share the values of the organization and to internalize its mission and vision as a personal sense of importance (Romzek 1990). Such employees are more likely to commit to tasks that benefit their organization rather than focus on what they stand to gain or lose (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). Taken together, identification can be understood as a process of psychological attachment that is not based on compliance for the purpose of earning extrinsic rewards but on a desire for affiliation. Such identification is positively associated with extra-role behavior because "having a membership that shares the organization's goals and values can ensure that individuals are instinctively to benefit the organization" (O'Reilly and Chatman 1986, 493). Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell (2002) found that identification has positive impacts on an employee's willingness to engage in cooperative behaviors and that the model of identification is applied differently to various types of outcome variables—cooperative behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, this hypothetical relationship will be tested in the context of public and nonprofit organizations as follows:

**Hypothesis 3:** The strength of an employee's identification with his or her organization is positively associated with extra-role behavior.

Another important behavioral pattern that is of concern to public and nonprofit organizations is withdrawal from the job, such as employee turnover and absenteeism. Because these behaviors can

cost organizations a lot of money, researchers have tried to explain what influences these behaviors, not only financially but also psychologically (e.g., Rogers and Herting 1993; Scott and McClellan 1990). Among work-related attitudes, commitment and job satisfaction have been most frequently examined as major factors affecting employee turnover in private and public organizations (e.g., Bright 2008; Culpepper 2011). However, scholars have found relatively little empirical evidence concerning the impact of work attitudes on absenteeism. This is in stark contrast to the numerous studies focusing on other withdrawal behaviors (Sagie 1998). In addition, besides commitment and job satisfaction, researchers have paid little attention to the identification process, which relates to an individual's beliefs about his or her organization. In this sense, it is important to examine whether the strength of organizational identification affects the level of absenteeism.

> Because voluntary absences are more likely to be related to work attitudes, it is expected that identification is more negatively related to voluntary absences than to involuntary absences.

Using social exchange theory and social identity theory, Van Knippenberg, Van Dick, and Tavares (2007) explained how organizational identification could reduce withdrawal rates. From the social exchange perspective, a high level of affective attachment to a partner in an exchange relationship leads to a decrease in withdrawal and an increase in motivation for active involvement in the organization. From the social identity perspective, employees are less likely to withdraw from the job when they exhibit strong identity through the process of incorporating organizational interests and values into their self-concept. Despite the different perspectives, both processes are likely to reduce the possibility of withdrawal and to motivate members to be actively involved in the organization. This explanation can be applied to a specific case of withdrawal, employee absenteeism, as shown in the hypothetical relationship.

> **Hypothesis 4:** The strength of an employee's identification with his or her organization is negatively associated with absenteeism.

Finally, extra-role behavior is expected to have an impact on absenteeism. George and Bettenhausen (1990) found that extra-role behavior is negatively related to turnover because attractiveness and cohesiveness can be enhanced through extra-role behavior; in turn, attractiveness can reduce the likelihood of voluntary turnover. March and Simon (1958) assumed no difference between absenteeism and turnover insofar as the factors inducing such forms of withdrawal behaviors were concerned. In this way, the relationship between extra-role behavior and turnover developed in George and Bettenhausen's (1990) study can be applied to the relationship between extra-role behavior and absenteeism. Therefore, extra-role behavior would be likely to decrease absenteeism.

> **Hypothesis 5:** The willingness to engage in extra-role behavior is negatively related to absenteeism.

In their classic study, March and Simon (1958) categorized absenteeism into two types: involuntary (e.g., certified sickness, funeral attendance) and voluntary (e.g., vacation, uncertified sickness).

Involuntary absences are beyond an employee's control, but voluntary absences are often within his or her control. Employees are likely to make decisions to take voluntary absences based on their motivation to attend work, while involuntary absences are based on the employee's ability to attend work (Hackett and Guion 1985). Because voluntary absences are more likely to be related to work attitudes, it is expected that identification is more negatively related to voluntary absences than to involuntary absences. For other work attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment, however, the literature has shown little evidence that consistent comparative results exist. While some scholars have confirmed this difference (e.g., Dwyer and Ganster 1991), others found that correlations between absenteeism and commitment do not significantly differ according to the type of absence—voluntary or involuntary (e.g., Randall 1990). Testing the different ways in which identification and extra-role behavior influence the two types of absenteeism will highlight further theoretical implications about the relationship between absenteeism and work attitudes.

## Data and Methods

The primary data source for this article is the National Administrative Studies Project III (NASP-III), which was completed in January 2006. The survey, which was developed to increase empirical knowledge of public and nonprofit management and administration, included seven sections: (1) motivation for taking the current job, (2) work environment, (3) organizational rules and procedures, (4) civic and political activity, (5) mentoring, (6) job history, and (7) demographic characteristics. In the initial stage, the study randomly selected a total of 2,000 employees from the public sector and 1,328 employees from the nonprofit sector in the states of Georgia and Illinois. After distributing the survey questionnaires to 1,850 public employees and 1,307 employees in nonprofit organizations, a total of 1,220 competed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 38.6 percent—43 percent from the public sector and 33 percent from the nonprofit sector.

The respondents had an average age of 49.5 years (SD = 8.877) at the time the survey was conducted. Among the respondents, 54.4 percent were male and 45.6 percent were female, and approximately 85.5 percent were Caucasian, while 14.5 percent were non-Caucasian. In addition, 55.6 percent of the data came from the state of Georgia, while the rest of the samples came from Illinois. The NASP-III database includes responses from 790 public managers and 430 nonprofit managers.

The first dependent variable is organizational identification, a discrete nominal variable measuring agreement with the following statement: "I feel a sense of pride working for this organization" (1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "somewhat disagree," 3 = "somewhat agree," 4 = "strongly agree"). Organizational identification can connote pride in affiliation with the organization. For example, Kelman (1958) viewed pride in affiliation as a central characteristic of identification, and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) used pride as one of the items for their identification measures. This study assumes that pride in affiliation reflects individuals' psychological disposition

when they positively perceive themselves to be part of the organization and identify with it. Second, extra-role behavior is measured using a survey item phrased as follows: "I do extra work for my job that is not really expected of me," with responses ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree").

Employee absenteeism can be divided into voluntary and involuntary absence. Traditionally, voluntary absence was measured by frequency of absence, while time lost was used as a proxy for involuntary absence (Hackett and Guion 1985). However, the heavy reliance on using frequency and time lost as indirect measures of voluntary and involuntary absence has been criticized for both conceptual confusion and measurement contamination (Driver and Watson 1989; Sagie 1998). Voluntary absence has long been defined as a type of absence under the employee's control, typically short term and illegitimate, whereas involuntary absence has referred to those absences that are beyond the worker's control (Hackett and Guion 1985; March and Simon 1958). In this study, involuntary absenteeism includes the sum of the self-reported number of days lost in the past 12 months because of illness, death, or illness in the family. If no excuse was given, the absence was coded as voluntary.

Organizational image consists of perceived organizational identity and construed external image. The NASP-III survey questionnaire included questions about organizational quality and performance from two different viewpoints: employees' perceptions and employees' beliefs about how outsiders view their organization. Perceived organizational identity is measured using a variable created from responses to this statement: "I would rate the overall quality of work being done in my organization as very good." Agreement with this statement is measured using a four-point scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree").

Construed external image captures what respondents suspect clients think about the organization. To measure the attractiveness of construed external image, Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell (2002) used four items from Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-Esteem Scale. Those four items represent the public image of the organization to which a respondent belongs, for instance, including "overall, the Alpha system is considered good by others." Similarly, in the current study, construed external image is measured using a survey item that measures agreement on the same four-point scale with the following question: "Our clients seem quite satisfied with the performance of this organization." Despite the limitations of a single survey item to assess each concept, the survey questions exactly reflect the distinctive characteristics of two different images by looking at the same phenomenon (organizational performance) from the different perspectives.

An assessment of the relationship among image, identification, and behaviors must control for both organizational and personal characteristics that could influence the relationship. One organizational variable is used: sector. In contrast to public agencies, nonprofit organizations have been known for their voluntary involvement, flexible organizational structure, and relatively less political pressure from external stakeholders. These differences may induce different perceptions of images, and they can also influence the process of identification. For instance, research has reported that nonprofit

employees are likely to have distinctive work motivation. As Paul Light said, "They care deeply about what they do, have deep pride in their organization, and show great confidence in the sector's ability to accomplish something worthwhile for their communities and their country" (quoted in Brookings Institution 2002). In addition, employees' extra-role behavior and absenteeism can vary by the characteristics of the organization to which they belong.

Five other variables are used to control for personal and job characteristics of respondents. For personal characteristics, gender and age are included in the model, while job position (managerial, professional, and technical), managerial authority (a measure of the total number of employees the manager supervises), and job tenure (years on the current job) are used to control for job characteristics.

The response categories for organizational identification and extra-role behavior questions are "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." This is a discrete ordered outcome, and therefore ordered-response statistical methods such as ordered probit and ordered logit are appropriate. The direction of the estimated coefficients from the ordered logit or probit is unambiguously determined by the sign of the coefficients; however, the sign of the estimated coefficients does not always determine the direction of the effect for the intermediate outcomes such as "disagree" and "agree" (Wooldridge 2010). Thus, the magnitudes of the coefficients are difficult to interpret. Although this problem can be overcome by considering partial effects at various values of the covariates, this information is not readily summarized (Papke 1998). In contrast, the linear model provides clear interpretation and is likely to give good estimates of the average effects. Moreover, because of the multistage nature of this study, a system of equations approach to hypothesis testing is desirable. However, one of the conditions inherent in the current analysis precluded the use of the structural equations modeling (SEM) approach. The SEM approach requires variables to be latent and to be measured using multi-item scales rather than being observed (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). This condition is not satisfied in this study. Instead, we analyze the model for each of the stages using seemingly unrelated regressions (SURs; see Autry et al. 2010). The SUR model has been demonstrated as effective for estimating which models are capturing mediating conditions (Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes 2007). Based on these criteria, SUR is the appropriate model for evaluating the hypotheses in this study. The equations evaluated during the SUR analysis are shown in table 1.

## Findings

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for all variables used in the analyses. As expected, the two organizational image terms were correlated at 0.51. With the sample size close to 1,000 and moderate to low correlations across the independent variables, we can conclude that collinearity did not threaten the coefficient estimates.

The results of hypothesis testing for each of the stages are presented in table 3. The first two hypotheses examine whether the two types of organizational image—perceived organizational identity (POI) and construed external image (CEI)—are critical predictors of identification. Equation 1.1 contains the test of hypotheses 1 and 2, demonstrating support for the predicted relationship between POI

**Table 1** Seemingly Unrelated Regression Equations

| Equation/Dependent Variable | Independent and Control Variables |
|---|---|
| **Model 1: All employees** | |
| (1.1) IDT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times SEC + \beta_9 \times POI + \beta_{10} \times CEI + \varepsilon_{IDT}$ |
| (1.2) EXT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times SEC + \beta_9 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{EXT}$ |
| (1.3) VABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times SEC + \beta_9 \times EXT + \beta_{10} \times IDT + \varepsilon_{ABS}$ |
| (1.4) IVABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times SEC + \beta_9 \times EXT + \beta_{10} \times IDT + \varepsilon_{ABS}$ |
| **Model 2: Employees in the public sector** | |
| (2.1) IDT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_9 \times POI + \beta_{10} \times CEI + \varepsilon_{IDT}$ |
| (2.2) EXT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{EXT}$ |
| (2.3) VABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times EXT + \beta_9 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{VABS}$ |
| (2.4) IVABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times EXT + \beta_9 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{IVABS}$ |
| **Model 3: Employees in the nonprofit sector** | |
| (3.1) IDT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_9 \times POI + \beta_{10} \times CEI + \varepsilon_{IDT}$ |
| (3.2) EXT | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{EXT}$ |
| (3.3) VABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times EXT + \beta_9 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{VABS}$ |
| (3.4) IVABS | $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \times GD + \beta_2 \times AGE + \beta_3 \times MNGP + \beta_4 \times PRFP + \beta_5 \times TCHP + \beta_6 \times YOJ + \beta_7 \times MNGA + \beta_8 \times EXT + \beta_9 \times IDT + \varepsilon_{IVABS}$ |

Note: IDT = identification; EXT = extra-role behavior; VABS = voluntary absenteeism; IVABS = involuntary absenteeism; GD = gender; AGE = age; MNGP = managerial position; PRFP = professional position; TCHP = technical position; YOJ = years on the job; MNGA = managerial authority; SEC = sector; POI = perceived organizational identity; CEI = construed external image.

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics

| Quantitative Variables | Mean | S.D. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Voluntary absenteeism | 0.43 | 3.73 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Involuntary absenteeism | 5.17 | 9.83 | 0.04 | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 3. Extra-role behavior | 3.34 | 0.77 | −0.01 | −0.05 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 4. Identification | 3.33 | 0.76 | −0.11 | −0.07 | 0.17 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 5. Perceived organizational identity | 3.34 | 0.75 | −0.06 | −0.05 | 0.12 | 0.60 | 1.00 | | | | |
| 6. Construed external image | 3.04 | 0.77 | −0.05 | −0.05 | 0.09 | 0.48 | 0.51 | 1.00 | | | |
| 7. Age | 49.46 | 8.87 | −0.07 | −0.06 | 0.07 | 0.12 | 0.10 | 0.13 | 1.00 | | |
| 8. Years on the job | 7.58 | 6.44 | −0.04 | −0.02 | 0.00 | −0.02 | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.14 | 1.00 | |
| 9. Managerial authority | 21.32 | 73.86 | −0.03 | −0.06 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.08 | 0.07 | 1.00 |

| Categorical Variables | Proportion | S.E. |
|---|---|---|
| Gender (1 = male, 0 = female) | 0.54 | 0.01 |
| Position (managerial)) | 0.70 | 0.01 |
| Position (professional) | 0.19 | 0.01 |
| Position (technical) | 0.06 | 0.01 |
| Sector (1 = nonprofit, 0 = public) | 0.32 | 0.01 |

and identification ($\beta$ = .436, $p$ < .001) and support for the predicted relationship between CEI and identification ($\beta$ = .207, $p$ < .001). The results show that regardless of sector, both types of organizational image are positively associated with members' identification with their organization, supporting hypotheses 1 and 2 (equations 2.1 and 3.1). Thus, employees are more likely to identify themselves as parts of their organizations and to feel a sense of belonging to them when they believe that outside clients seem to have positive impressions of their organizations and when they have a positive impression and perceptions of their own organizations. The evidence found in this table supports the previous research on the relationship between both types of organizational images and identification (Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell 2002).

Strong results are identified when testing the predictions for the effect of identification on extra-role behavior (equation 1.2). Hypothesis 3 predicted that the strength of an employee's identification with his or her organization is positively associated with extra-role behavior, and there is support for this hypothesis ($\beta$ = .121,

$p$ < .001). Individuals who have higher levels of identification are more likely to do extra work for their employers. While identification is no longer statistically significant for nonprofit employees' extra-role behavior, it is a strong predictor of extra-role behavior among public sector employees (equations 2.2 and 3.2).

Hypotheses 4 and 5 addressed issues related to absenteeism. We tested these hypotheses across each of the two absenteeism cases—voluntary and involuntary—in order to allay external validity concerns. Equations 1.3, 2.3, and 3.3 examine the relationships of interest to voluntary absenteeism as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 4, which posited a direct relationship between identification and voluntary absenteeism, is supported as predicted ($\beta$ = .323, $p$ < .001). Hypothesis 5 predicted the negative impact of extra-role behavior on voluntary absenteeism, and it is also supported ($\beta$ = .134, $p$ < .005). However, little indication of significant effects is observed for identification and extra-role behavior in the involuntary case (equation 1.4). Significant effects are revealed for identification only in equation 3.4, linking identification to

**Table 3** Seemingly Unrelated Regression Results

| Factors | DV = Identification | | | DV = Extra-Role Behavior | | | DV = Voluntary Absenteeism | | | DV = Involuntary Absenteeism | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Equation 1.1 All Employees | Equation 2.1 Public Employees | Equation 3.1 Nonprofit Employees | Equation 1.2 All Employees | Equation 2.2 Public Employees | Equation 3.2 Nonprofit Employees | Equation 1.3 All Employees | Equation 2.3 Public Employees | Equation 3.3 Nonprofit Employees | Equation 1.4 All Employees | Equation 2.4 Public Employees | Equation 3.4 Nonprofit Employees |
| **Image** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Perceived organizational identity | .436*** | .451*** | .371*** | | | | | | | | | |
| | (.030) | (.038) | (.048) | | | | | | | | | |
| Construed external image | .207*** | .237*** | .129*** | | | | | | | | | |
| | (.030) | (.039) | (.043) | | | | | | | | | |
| Identification | | | | .121*** | .133** | .079 | −.323*** | −.133** | −.126** | −.372 | −.130 | −.780** |
| | | | | (.035) | (.038) | (.085) | (.052) | (.065) | (.056) | (.305) | (.419) | (.342) |
| **Extra-role behavior** | | | | | | | −.134*** | −.384*** | −.083 | −.477 | −.639 | .280 |
| | | | | | | | (.048) | (.065) | (.086) | (.331) | (.413) | (.512) |
| **Personal characteristics** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender (0 = female) | −.014 | −.006 | −.030 | −.048 | .004 | −.149* | −.247*** | −.233** | −.276*** | −1.925*** | −2.204*** | −1.312*** |
| | (.039) | (.052) | (.049) | (.051) | (.062) | (.087) | (.075) | (.104) | (.089) | (.479) | (.663) | (.538) |
| Age | .004* | .003 | .007 | .005* | .007** | .001 | −.005 | −.0057 | −.003 | −.079** | −.102*** | −.049 |
| | (.002) | (.003) | (.003) | (.003) | (.004) | (.005) | (.004) | (.006) | (.005) | (.029) | (.041) | (.031) |
| **Job characteristics** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Position (managerial) | .049 | .025 | .118 | .019 | .037 | −.015 | −.072 | −.091 | −.044 | −2.552** | −3.811*** | 2.375 |
| | (.096) | (.119) | (.153) | (.125) | (.142) | (.270) | (.186) | (.236) | (.273) | (1.180) | (1.504) | (1.504) |
| Position (professional) | −.036 | −.070 | .036 | −.056 | −.058 | −.063 | −.169 | −.168 | −.142 | −3.243*** | −4.669*** | 2.736 |
| | (.099) | (.123) | (.163) | (.130) | (.146) | (.287) | (.193) | (.243) | (.291) | (1.223) | (1.546) | (1.758) |
| Position (technical) | −.051 | −.105 | .424 | −.039 | −.041 | .231 | −.134 | −.185 | −.137 | −2.724* | −3.863** | .181 |
| | (.121) | (.145) | (.291) | (.159) | (.172) | (.510) | (.236) | (.287) | (.516) | (1.497) | (1.827) | (3.119) |
| Years on the job | −.011*** | −.012*** | −.006 | −.003 | −.005 | .0002 | −.004 | −.009 | .007 | .071* | .089* | .029 |
| | (.003) | (.004) | (.004) | (.004) | (.005) | (.007) | (.006) | (.008) | (.007) | (.039) | (.054) | (.043) |
| Managerial authority | .001** | .0007** | .0002** | −.00005 | −.0002 | .0003 | −.00004 | −.0002 | −.0004 | −.005 | −.005 | −.002 |
| | (.0002) | (.0003) | (.0003) | (.0004) | (.0004) | (.0007) | (.0005) | (.0006) | (.0007) | (.003) | (.004) | (.004) |
| **Organizational characteristics** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sector (0 = public) | .188*** | | | .122** | | | .033 | | | −2.216*** | | |
| | (.043) | | | (.056) | | | (.083) | | | (.529) | | |
| Model chi-square | 657.42*** | 357.60*** | 144.03*** | 35.13*** | 21.05*** | 4.35 | 71.09*** | 54.40*** | 17.20** | 65.62*** | 36.19*** | 18.66*** |
| Observations | 951 | 636 | 315 | 951 | 636 | 315 | 951 | 636 | 315 | 951 | 636 | 315 |

involuntary absenteeism in the nonprofit sector. Figure 1 shows the overall results of the main hypotheses testing.

Besides the main antecedents reported earlier, the findings indicate significant relationships between absenteeism and personal characteristics, such as gender and age. First, women are either voluntarily or involuntarily absent more than men both overall and within each sector. These relationships are supportive of the common view that female employees may be prone to absenteeism (Hackett and Guion 1985). Research has revealed that female absenteeism is expected to increase with family size (e.g., dependent children) and age (especially during their childbearing years) (e.g., Nicholson, Brown, and Chadwick-Jones 1977; Scott and McClellan 1990). At the same time, scholars have also mentioned that the differences between male and female absenteeism have been overstated (Leigh 1983). In the context of this study, the mean number of involuntary absences by women is 6.40 in contrast to 4.19 for men, and the mean number of days voluntarily taken off by women is 0.68 in contrast to 0.22 for men. In addition, when controlling for behavioral aspects, job-related characteristics, and age, a gender variable still shows a negative association with both absence types.

Regarding the second personal characteristic—age—the empirical research has reported conflicting and ambiguous results for the relationship between age and absenteeism. Because the age of employees is considered a proxy for their health condition, it is assumed that older employees are more likely to experience higher absenteeism (Leigh 1983). On the other hand, older employees are less prone to absences because they are more likely to enjoy their current working conditions (Farrell and Stamm 1988). Moreover, Scott and McClellan (1990) found a significant interaction effect between age groups and gender in explaining the number of occurrences of absenteeism but no interaction effect between them in explaining the total number of days absent. Particularly, women tend to have more absenteeism during their childbearing and parenting years, while involuntary absenteeism for men is likely to increase with age because of health reasons (Steers and Rhodes 1978). As age contains job-related information, such as tenure, experience, job attachment, and duties, age contains the "portmanteau" characteristics in explaining employee absenteeism. Even though the current study did not include interaction terms between age and other variables, among these conflicting arguments, the results reported in the table support the negative relationship between age and involuntary absenteeism (equation 1.4). Thus, older employees are likely to have a lower
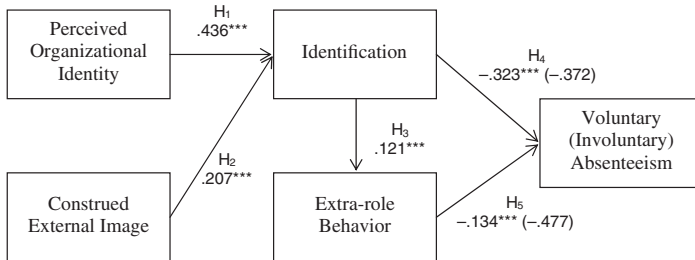
> The roles of image and identification are critical in explaining and changing employees' behavior.

level of involuntary absenteeism than younger employees. However, we found an insignificant effect of age on voluntary absenteeism (equation 1.3).

Job characteristics are mostly insignificant for voluntary absenteeism. However, for involuntary absenteeism, all job-related variables (except managerial authority) are significant for the sample of all employees and the sample of public employees. First, employees with longer tenure in the current job are absent more often. By sector, these relationships are only significant for public employees. In addition, the effect of job position is statistically significant, although the directions of the relationship between each position and involuntary absenteeism are opposite by sector. Many studies have revealed the negative impact of job position on absenteeism because of "greater opportunities for challenging work and subsequent job satisfaction, which encourage attendance, and to the increased responsibility of occupants of higher level positions" (Hammer, Landau, and Stern 1981, 564). The findings in the current study partially support this notion.

## Conclusion

Since the mid-1970s, the relative size of the public sector in terms of the government's share of total employment has decreased, and public organizations have recognized the importance of both economic and psychological incentives to motivate and attract high-quality employees. In this context, scholars have for decades devoted substantial effort to understanding the role of social and environmental factors that facilitate or undermine work motivation. Public administration researchers in particular have paid enormous attention to public service motivation, commitment, involvement, satisfaction, and work ethics; yet they have ignored the importance of organizational image and identification.

The roles of image and identification are critical in explaining and changing employees' behavior. Thus, "if members think of their employing organization differently (by changes in the perceived organizational identity or construed external image), we argue they will behave differently" (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994, 256). Most notably, scholars and practitioners have recognized the importance of managing organizational image in crisis situations from the perspective of public relations or reputation management. Compared with the scholarly and practical attention paid to managing the perceptions of outside constituents, little is known about how these images can influence organizations' inside members' everyday work behavior. This article takes the first step toward addressing that research gap, suggesting that managers in both public and nonprofit sectors need to consider methods for enhancing organizational image and strengthening identification to improve organizational effectiveness. In such a vein, the purpose of this article is to enhance our understanding of the role of organizational image and identification in regard to employee behaviors—extra-role behavior and absenteeism.

The findings generally support the hypothesized relationships among image, identification, and extra-role behavior. Thus, both perceived organizational identity and construed external image influence the extent to which employees are likely to identify



**Figure 1  Hypotheses Testing Results**

themselves as part of their organization. In addition, the higher the levels of identification that an employee has, the more he or she is likely to engage in extra-role behavior. The results are consistent with the arguments and findings of Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) and others (Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell 2002). The results raise important questions about how extra-role behavior is psychologically promoted among both public and nonprofit employees.

Another important contribution that this research provides is the finding that identification has a significant influence on lowering employee absenteeism, supporting the notion that employees' psychological attachment to work is closely related to attendance motivation (Nicholson 1977). The results demonstrate that the relationship between organizational identification and absenteeism can vary by the type of employee absenteeism. For example, the influence of identification on absenteeism is statistically significant for voluntary absence but not significant for involuntary absence. These findings imply that managing organizational image and identification in a positive way can significantly reduce costly voluntary employee absences, which are reasonably avoidable absences.

Compared with voluntary absenteeism, involuntary absenteeism has been considered to be less controllable, and organizations overlook ways to reduce this type of employee absence. However, some scholars argue that "involuntary" absenteeism may also be influenced by other psychological factors, and therefore "this type of absenteeism is, in actuality, 'less-voluntary' rather than involuntary" (Avey, Patera, and West 2006, 44). By separately testing the antecedents of two different types of absence, the current study found that involuntary absenteeism is negatively associated with one's strength of identification for nonprofit employees. Even though the empirical evidence is relatively weak compared with voluntary absenteeism, the findings further suggest that practitioners must develop a viable means of predicting and potentially managing even involuntary absenteeism and its associated costs.

Finally, this article contributes to the public and nonprofit management literature by suggesting useful insights with regard to organizational image, identification, and their outcomes. Some scholars have developed such models mainly based on the private sector (e.g., Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994), but little attention has been paid to investigating such relationships in both public and nonprofit sectors. In this sense, this study provides interesting evidence that applies Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail's model, which is based on the private business sector, into different societal contexts, such as public and nonprofit organizations. Using the case of a Japanese company as an example, Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) noted that connections between an organization and an individual's beliefs and actions vary according to the context. The current article reveals that the model of identification is applicable across sectors, despite the distinct values and self-concepts of public employees. The perspective offered in this article should help develop future studies that explore determinants of the perceptions of organizational image and causal relationships with identification and employee behaviors. We believe that knowledge derived from this article will significantly advance public and nonprofit management research on organizational image, organizational identification, and employee job choice motivation and behaviors.

Despite its contributions, this article has some limitations. Because of the characteristics of cross-sectional data, it is limited to testing causal relationships, and reverse causal relationships cannot be ruled out. Although we developed causal directions from the literature, our model is suggestive rather than conclusive. If data can be collected over time, it will be possible to reflect the dynamic nature of causal relationships among these concepts as well as the changing conditions and their impacts on members' image and the behaviors that result (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). Second, the article utilized survey items that were collected through self-reports, which have a potential for bias. In particular, both voluntary and involuntary absences were measured by the total number of days absent over a period. Because the measure was extracted from the self-reported survey items, there is potential for common method bias. In addition, the total number of days includes all the time that a worker was absent from work, including long-term leaves. However, frequent employee absences may cause more problems in the organization than a one-time, long-term leave. In the literature of absenteeism, frequency of absence has been used as the most common measure for voluntary absenteeism, while the total time lost over a period is the most commonly used measure for involuntary absenteeism (Hackett and Guion 1985). Thus, absenteeism in the current article focuses on only one aspect of absenteeism. For future study, there is a need for additional work on how different measures of both absence types have various implications. Finally, even though the SUR approach controls for the correlation among the measurement noises on the dependent variables in each of the models, there is a possibility that the measurement errors on the dependent variable, such as identification, are correlated with the measurement errors for organizational identity and image due to the use of the self-reported data.

Besides the methodological improvement for the future, this study raises a wide range of theoretical and empirical agenda for future research. The first direction for the future would be to determine what leads employees to have two different types of images in a positive way. It is likely, for instance, that construed external image affects the level of perceived organizational identity because employees are social actors who interact with others inside and outside of the organization and may perceive themselves through the impressions of others. With regard to this, it is also possible to investigate the interaction effects of both types of images on identification process and organizational behaviors.

A second direction for future research would be to determine, more specifically, the psychological route that forms individual perceptions regarding images, the level of identification, and decisions to engage in different organizational behaviors. Particularly, with longitudinal data or observations, it would be possible to investigate the causal relationships among those constructs and to trace how their perceptions and the strength of identification would be changed over time. Finally, it would be valuable for future research to address how the relationships among image, identification, and behaviors vary across different sectors, including the private sector, or across a wide range of organizational settings. If possible, accounting for other organizational characteristics, such as the size, culture, collective image of the organization, and so on, may provide more context-specific models.

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