

The effect of medical staffs' organizational identification on pro-social behavior under medical disputes: the mediating role of organizational commitment

Qing Zhang ^{1,2}, Yi Dai ^{2,*}, Fengbo Fang¹, Ling Tian¹, Wei Zhang¹, Chen Chen¹, and Geyang Xiao²

¹Jingzhou Institute of Technology, 434020, Jingzhou, China,

²School of Education, City University of Macau, 999078, Macau, China

Keywords: Medical disputes, Healthcare workers, Organizational identification, Organizational commitment, Pro-social behaviour.

Abstract. Objectives: Despite the conclusion of the epidemic era, incidents of medical disputes persist. Under the new normal, healthcare workers still face high occupational risks and psychological pressure, which undoubtedly diminishes their motivation to engage in pro-social behaviors. Therefore, this study draws on social identity theory to explore how organizational identity affects medical staffs' pro-social behavior and the mediating role of organizational commitment. The objective is to improve the doctor-patient relationship and enhance medical staffs' sense of identity and belonging to the organization, thereby enhancing their pro-social behavior and improving the efficiency of hospital management. Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in Hubei Province, China, involving 600 healthcare workers from six hospitals. A total of 574 valid questionnaires were returned. The Identity Scale, Organizational Commitment Scale, and Pro-Social Tendencies Scale were used to measure the questionnaires. Results: The study shows that (1) Organizational identification and organizational commitment of healthcare workers are important factors influencing their pro-social behavior. (2) There are differences in the levels of organizational identification, organizational commitment and pro-social behavior of healthcare workers with different ages, time in the field, educational level and marital status. (3) Organizational identification was a positive predictor of organizational commitment, and both positively predicted pro-social behavior. (4) The mediating effect of organizational commitment between organizational identification and pro-social behavior was 0.247, the indirect effect was 45.7% of the total effect. Thus organizational commitment partially mediated between organizational identification and pro-social behavior. Conclusions: To enhance the quality of hospital services and minimize medical disputes, hospital administrators should focus on strengthening the organizational identification of healthcare workers. By fostering a sense of

* Corresponding author: vidai@cityu.edu.mo

belonging within the hospital, administrators can increase the affinity among healthcare workers and encourage more voluntary acts of assistance.

1 Introduction

The escalating number of medical disputes globally has emerged as a significant public health challenge. These disputes entail disagreements between healthcare providers (hospitals) and patients (or their family members) concerning diagnosis and treatment. In China, medical disputes are on the rise, with a yearly increase of 22.9%[1]. A recent national study in China reported that 31.06% of doctors have encountered medical disputes. The ongoing prevalence of medical disputes has severely impacted the physical and mental well-being of healthcare professionals, resulting in heightened work stress, emotional fatigue, and a high turnover rate within the medical workforce. Surveys conducted in the UK, Germany, the US, France, and Finland reveal that between 11.8% and 22% of doctors express an intention to leave their current positions. In China, a study found that 10.4% of doctors in tertiary hospitals have contemplated transitioning to other healthcare facilities, while 20.5% are considering a career change[2]. Meanwhile, the advent of the Post-Pandemic Generation has led to a deeper understanding of the risks of public health events. Healthcare workers, as frontline personnel in the fight against the epidemic, face a high risk of occupational exposure. After the end of the epidemic, some people's concern about this risk still exists, coupled with insufficient social attention to the risks and pressures of healthcare workers' work, leading to a lower sense of identity and belonging to the profession among some healthcare workers, who thus choose to leave. These factors can potentially lead to unethical pro-social behaviors among medical staff, such as accepting bribes, showing disrespect towards patients, and lacking care for them[3]. The presence of such unethical behaviors not only undermines social trust in medical institutions and disrupts doctor-patient relationships, but also complicates the management of healthcare facilities and impedes the enhancement of medical service quality. Unethical pro-social behavior in hospitals can significantly impact their reputation and the quality of medical services provided. Enhancing the pro-social behavior of healthcare workers has therefore emerged as a critical research topic.

Prosocial behavior is an important professional value in medicine. Pro-social behavior encompasses voluntary actions that benefit others, including helping, cooperating, sharing, and comforting in social interactions. It is integral to individual social development and plays a key role in improving well-being, enhancing interpersonal communication, and fostering harmonious social relationships. However, factors like medical disputes and pandemics have posed new challenges to the mental health and pro-social behavior of healthcare workers[4]. Previous studies have delved into the connection between personality and pro-social behavior, the correlation between empathy, gender, and pro-social behavior, as well as the impact of happiness on pro-social behavior. A study conducted in Taiwan revealed that nurses who had a greater understanding of social responsibility practices within their hospitals tended to exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment. Nevertheless, the relationship between organizational identification, organizational commitment, and pro-social behaviors among healthcare workers remains unexplored.

Therefore, this study delves into the correlation between healthcare workers' identity, organizational commitment, and pro-social behavior. The aim is to assist hospitals in enhancing healthcare workers' pro-social behavior and service attitudes through bolstering organizational identification and commitment. In addition, the study aims to promote

teamwork among healthcare workers and improve their adaptability in the face of the new normal of work, thus ultimately reducing turnover rates.

2 Theoretical basis and research hypothesis

2.1 Organizational identification and organizational commitment

Organizational identification has been a subject of extensive research, with many organizational psychologists and experts in organizational behavior recognizing its significant influence on various work-related behaviors. According to social identity theory, organizational identification refers to the extent to which an individual identifies with an organization and views it as a component of the self-concept. Organizational identification is essential for employees as it enhances their self-identity, status, and prestige. The stronger the identification with the organization, the more likely employees are to think, act, and share a common destiny with the organization. Additionally, organizational identification influences employee attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and performance. When employees feel recognized by their organization, they are more motivated to commit to their job and colleagues. Thus, healthcare organizations can influence the behavior of their members by strengthening the organizational identification of healthcare workers, leading to the ability to describe and predict important behavioral trends in healthcare settings.

Organizational commitment has garnered growing interest in the medical literature as a crucial concept for understanding work attitudes and behaviors. Currently, there have been studies on the interrelationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment. Dutton et al. discovered that employees who felt a strong connection to their organization were more likely to stay with the organization, contribute positively, and exhibit high levels of organizational commitment. Building on this, Safran observed that organizational commitment and deep organizational identification appear to interact with each other over time. Furthermore, Rashin Hamidi's research on healthcare workers in Iran revealed that organizational culture plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment[5]. Based on these findings, this study posits hypothesis :

Hypothesis 1: The organizational identification of healthcare workers is positively correlated with their commitment to the organization.

2.2 Organizational identification and pro-social behavior

Caprara defines 'pro-social' as an individual's voluntary actions aimed at benefiting others. Pro-social behaviors, such as sharing, caring, comforting, supporting, helping, and empathizing, are not only essential qualities for healthcare workers personally but also crucial in healthcare settings. Thus, these behaviors play a significant role in the success of hospitals as professionals with pro-social tendencies can enhance service quality through their ability to help, benefit, and empathize with others.

According to social identity theory, individuals strive to cultivate a positive self-image, with employees' identity closely linked to their affiliation with an organization. This connection implies that individual and organizational pro-social behaviors are intertwined. Research indicates that both individual and organizational pro-social behaviors have a significant impact on organizational identification. Kassar et al. suggested that organizational identification is shaped not only by the organization's pro-social initiatives but also by its active involvement in such activities. Furthermore, a commitment to altruism

within an organization enhances both individual and organizational pro-social identities, fostering a sense of pride among members[6]. Moreover, the study revealed that medical staff's identification with the organization positively correlates with unethical pro-organizational behavior. A lack of organizational identification among medical staff may result in unethical practices, jeopardizing patient care and tarnishing the hospital's reputation. In summary, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: organizational identification of healthcare workers has a positive effect on pro-social behavior.

2.3 Organizational commitment and pro-social behavior

A comprehensive understanding of pro-social behavior is crucial for hospital administrators, as it has the potential to enhance organizational performance. Since organizations cannot dictate all desirable behaviors, pro-social behavior becomes pertinent in driving organizational change within hospitals. For instance, Lee discovered that organizational commitment and self-efficacy were key predictors of pro-social behavior among nurses in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Jongseok et al. observed that employees were more committed to the organization when they witnessed higher levels of social engagement within the workplace. Additionally, Grant et al. highlighted that employee participation in corporate volunteering programs fostered organizational commitment by encouraging a pro-social interpretation of personal and organizational identities[7]. Consequently, when organizations are perceived as having pro-social attributes, employees are more likely to respond positively to the organization. In view of this, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 3, Organizational commitment and pro-social behavior of healthcare workers are positively related.

In addition, it has been found that organizational commitment has been identified as a crucial link between employees and their organizations, leading to various positive outcomes such as improved work behavior, employee attitudes, and retention. Strongly committed employees tend to develop a sense of organizational identification, take moral responsibility for the organization, and consider its ethical obligations. Research has further shown that organizational support can positively influence employees' pro-organizational behavior. When employees feel supported by the organization, they are more likely to identify with it and engage in behaviors that benefit the organization. Additionally, a study by Yang et al. revealed that perceived organizational support can enhance employee engagement by fostering organizational identification. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 4, Organizational commitment of health care workers mediates the role of organizational identification towards pro-social behavior.

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Participants

The research was carried out on healthcare workers from six hospitals in Hubei Province, China, comprising four public hospitals and two private hospitals. Data collection was carried out through questionnaire star and finally 574 valid questionnaires were collected. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 for Windows (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA) for Pearson correlation analysis and Bootstrap mediation effect testing.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Organizational identification scale

The study utilized the six-item organizational identification Scale developed by Mael and Ashforth in 1992, a widely recognized tool in healthcare organizational identification research.

3.2.2 Organizational commitment scale

The Organizational Commitment Scale study utilized the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire for Chinese Employees developed by Professor Newman and colleagues. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.87, and the re-test reliability of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire and each factor exceeded 0.70.

3.2.3 Prosocial behavior scale

The Pro-Social Behavior Scale, developed by Carlo and Randall, is a reliable and valid tool with a Cronbach's α of 0.93. The questionnaire is versatile and can be applied to various contexts for measuring pro-social behavior.

4 Results

The study shows that (1) Organizational identification and organizational commitment of healthcare workers are important factors influencing their pro-social behavior. (2) There are differences in the levels of organizational identification, organizational commitment and pro-social behavior of healthcare workers with different ages, time in the field, educational level and marital status. (3) Organizational identification was a positive predictor of organizational commitment, and both positively predicted pro-social behavior. (4) The mediating effect of organizational commitment between organizational identification and pro-social behavior was 0.247, the indirect effect was 45.7% of the total effect. Thus organizational commitment partially mediated between organizational identification and pro-social behavior.

5 Discussion

This study examines the impact of organizational identification and organizational commitment on pro-social behavior, as well as the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between organizational identification and pro-social behavior among medical personnel in Hubei, China. Given the rising number of medical disputes, healthcare workers who have endured a pandemic often face physical and mental exhaustion. The findings indicate that the levels of organizational identification, organizational commitment, and pro-social behavior varied among healthcare workers based on factors such as age, length of employment, education, and marital status. Moreover, organizational identification and organizational commitment are significant factors influencing the pro-social behavior of healthcare workers. The study also revealed that organizational identification was a positive predictor of organizational commitment, and both positively predicted pro-social behavior. Notably, organizational commitment plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between organizational identification and pro-social behavior.

6 Conclusions

Following a thorough analysis, the study revealed that organizational identification was a positive predictor of organizational commitment, and both positively predicted pro-social behavior. Additionally, organizational commitment was identified as playing a partial mediating role in the relationship between organizational identification and pro-social behavior.

However, the study has some limitations that should be addressed. Firstly, it relies on a cross-sectional measurement method without longitudinal tracking and comparison. Future studies should consider a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal research to enhance the representativeness of the research sample. Secondly, the study only focuses on the mediating role of organizational commitment in identifying personnel and pro-social behavior, without considering other variables. Subsequent studies could explore additional variables to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Funding: This paper is supported by the Macao Science and Technology Development Fund(2024) (FDCT) (No.0071/2023/RIB3), Joint Research Funding Program between the Macao Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) and the Department of Science and Technology of Guangdong Province (2024)(FDCT-GDST) (No.0003-2024-AGJ), Macao Foundation's research project (No.MF2342).

References

1. Liu, Y., Wang, P., & Bai, Y. The influence factors of medical disputes in Shanghai and implications - from the perspective of doctor, patient and disease. *BMC Health Serv Res* **22**, 1128 (2022).
2. Feng, D., Wang, Q., Huang, S., Lang, X., Ding, F., & Wang, W. (2022). The Effect of Perceived Stress, Family Companionship, and Mental Health on the Subjective Happiness of Chinese Healthcare Workers: A Mixed Research Method. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, **19**(19), 12058.
3. Zhi, Z., Xiaoyu, W., Xiaoyu, J., & Zhanjie, L. (2022). The Impact of Emotional Labor on Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior of Medical Staff: Taking Organizational Identification as an Intermediary. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, **11**(1), 29
4. Luo, L., Zou, R., Yang, D., & Yuan, J. (2022). Awe experience triggered by fighting against COVID-19 promotes prosociality through increased feeling of connectedness and empathy. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, **18**(6), 866 - 882.
5. Hamidi, R., Barari, R., Sahebdel, F. et al. (2024). Evaluating the Model of Causal Relations between Organizational Identity and Organizational Commitment in Hospital Nursing Staff through the Mediation of Organizational Culture. *Employ Respons Rights J* **36**, 79 - 100.
6. Cha, J., Chang, Y. K., & Kim, T.-Y. (2014). Person - organization fit on prosocial identity: Implications on employee outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, **123**(1), 57 - 69.
7. Grant, A. M., Dutton, J. E., & Rosso, B. D. (2008). Giving commitment: Employee support programs and the prosocial sensemaking process. *Academy of Management Journal*, **51**(5), 898 - 918.