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Impact of behavioral integrity on organizational identification

The moderating roles of power distance and organizational politics

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between leader's behavioral integrity and employees' organizational identification as well as to test the moderating roles of power distance and organizational politics on that relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – Data encompass 969 employees from 19 five-star hotels in Turkey. The relationship between behavioral integrity and organizational identification and the moderating roles of power distance and organizational politics on that relationship were tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) and moderated hierarchical regression analyses.

Findings – The PLS-SEM and moderated hierarchical regression analyses results reveal that there was a significant positive relationship between leader's behavioral integrity and employees' organizational identification. In addition, the positive relationship between behavioral integrity and organizational identification was weaker when both power distance and organizational politics were higher compared to that when they were lower.

Practical implications – This study showed that leader's behavioral integrity enhanced employees' organizational identification. Leaders need to show the perceived alignment between their words and deeds and strive to form high quality leader–follower exchanges to create a trust-based culture that satisfies the necessary affective and cognitive components required for trust formation. Moreover, the results of this study indicated that perceived organizational politics weakened employees' identification with their organizations. Organizational practices and policies, especially human resource practices, should be carefully designed and implemented as to prevent organizational politics, an important source of employee dissatisfaction and distrust.

Originality/value – The study provides new insights into the influence that leader's behavioral integrity may have on employees' organizational identification and the moderating roles of power distance and organizational politics in the link between behavioral integrity and employees' identification with their organizations. This paper also offers a practical assistance to employees in the hospitality industry and their leaders interested in fostering organizational identification and lowering perceived organizational politics.

Keywords Organizational politics, Behavioural integrity, Power distance, Organizational identification

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The hospitality sector is highly labor intensive with the performance of its human resources being a significant and determining factor in its sustainability. Consequently, this reliance on human resources for its proper functioning and growth demands both effective and efficient workforce practices for employees to perform at optimum levels, thereby enabling the sector to remain viable in a rapidly changing, and fiercely competitive, global environment (Ogbeide and Harrington, 2011; Zopiatis and Constanti, 2007). As organizations in the hospitality sector have become increasingly aware that mismanagement of resources can lead to their demise, they have focused on enhancing employee satisfaction, commitment and identification with the organization to gain competitive advantage (Birdir, 2002).

Increasingly, hospitality organizations are seeking for employees who not only believe that their organization is a good place to work, show loyalty and have no intention to leave, but those who go beyond that and see the organization identity as closely interweaved with their own self-identity and believe that their fate is, to a great extent, interlinked with the fate of the organization (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007). As organizations become larger, complex and boundaryless, organizational identification is viewed as a means for providing cohesion and as a key ingredient of organizational success (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Reade, 2001; Smidts *et al.*, 2001).

Ashforth *et al.* (2008) state that:

[...] understanding organizational identification is important to organizations. The concept of identity helps capture the essence of who people are and, thus, why they do what they do – it is at the core of why people join organizations and why they voluntarily leave, why they approach their work the way they do and why they interact with others the way they do during that work. Identification matters because it is the process by which people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives, work-wise or other (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008, p. 334).

It is associated with a number of positive outcomes in organizations, including cooperative behaviors that support organizational goals, reduced turnover intentions and increased in-role and extra-role behaviors (Riketta, 2005).

Employees who identify strongly with their organization are more likely to show a supportive attitude toward it and to make decisions that are consistent with organizational objectives (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Organizational identification may induce employees to behave in accordance with the company's identity, reputation and strategy (Ashforth and Mael, 1996). Such behaviors are particularly important in hotel management, where employees play a vital role in delivering quality and in achieving customer satisfaction (Curtis *et al.*, 2009). It has indeed been shown that strong identification on the part of employees may positively contribute to an organization's success and may explain the superior and sustained performance of some organizations in the hospitality industry (Buonocore, 2010). Hence, organizations should engender identification to facilitate their functioning (Pratt, 1998).

Organizational identification as a process in which the set of attributes perceived to adhere in an organization are incorporated into an employee's self-concept, results in a sense of oneness or shared destiny between the individual and organization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton *et al.*, 1994). While increasing self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-consistency has been acknowledged as motives for identification, scholars have also argued that identification may be driven by such fundamental needs as the trust in

leadership, the desire for safety and the reduction of uncertainty (Pratt, 1998; Hogg and Terry, 2000). Building on these insights, this paper argues and attempts to establish empirically that the more employees view their leaders' behaviors as trustworthy (behavioral integrity), the more likely it is that a bond of identification will form.

Although the important implications of organizational identification for organizational effectiveness have been recognized, little work has still been done on the factors that foster identification. The purpose of the present article is twofold:

- (1) we examine the impact of leader's behavioral integrity as an important predictor of employees' organizational identification; and
- (2) we broaden the current framework of research on organizational identification and examine organizational factors as possible moderators of the relation between leader's integrity and identification.

No prior study, to date, has tapped at organizational factors as explanatory mechanisms within the organizational identification domain, although a number of authors have mused about their likely importance (Cooper and Thatcher, 2010; De Cremer and van Knippenberg, 2005; Sluss *et al.*, 2008). Prior conceptual work has suggested that organizational factors may affect a person's propensity to perceive groups as extensions of one's self and, as a result, play a significant role for his/her identification with the organization. In particular, we focus on two organizational variables, i.e. power distance and organizational politics that have been deemed as more relevant for organizational identification processes (Escartin *et al.*, 2013).

The aim of this study is to examine the moderating effects of power distance and organizational politics on the relationship between leader's behavioral integrity and employees' organizational identification in the hospitality industry. This study makes several contributions to literature. First, it is a response to the call for more research on organizational factors that may serve as moderators, buffers or even antidotes to organizational identification and its effects (Cooper and Thatcher, 2010). Second, given that leadership is central to most models of organizational identification (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011), it is important to examine the direct and moderating effects of organizational factors in a single study. Therefore, the pursuit of the identification of the major organizational variables leading the employees to high organizational identification may give us some concrete ideas in terms of possible remedies for both employees and organizations in the hospitality industry.

Behavioral integrity and organizational identification

Behavioral integrity can be defined as "the perceived pattern of alignment between an actor's words and deeds" (Simons, 2002, p. 19). Previous research on behavioral integrity has posited strong theoretical links to trust. For example, Simons (2002) examined the theoretical links between behavioral integrity and trust, with the key point being that a leader's high behavioral integrity may provide followers with a sense of certainty regarding the actions that the leader will take. With this sense of certainty, a follower is more likely to trust the leader. Simons *et al.* (2007) have also provided some initial empirical evidence that supports the idea that behavioral integrity may lead to trust. Based on Simons' reasoning and initial evidence, Palanski and Yammarino (2009) proposed that leader behavioral integrity has a positive impact on follower trust in the leader. In addition, Colquitt *et al.* (2007), drawing upon social exchange theory

(Blau, 1964), noted that trust also plays an important role in leader–follower relationships for two additional reasons. First, in the absence of a comprehensive formal contract, leader–follower relationships have a built-in element of vulnerability, which makes trust necessary for such relationships to function. Second, as a facet of trustworthiness (Palanski and Yammarino, 2011), integrity is a type of currency, which engenders the motivation to reciprocate within a social exchange.

Scholars have outlined a number of individual-level antecedents to organizational identification that overlap significantly with the concept of trust. For instance, organizational identification is related to the individual's desire for safety, the reduction of uncertainty and a sense of order (Campbell and Im, 2014; Hogg and Terry, 2000), concepts which also lie at the heart of trusting relationships. Restubog *et al.* (2008) look at how trust in leadership mediates the relationship between psychological contract breach and identification, arguing that the intentions of employees to form long-term relationships with the organization are frustrated by uncertainty and signs that the organization will be unable or unwilling to fulfill their implicit promises. This violation of trust motivates employees to dissociate themselves from the organization. Therefore, it is expected that leader's behavioral integrity is likely to increase follower's trust in leadership, which, in turn, causes strong organizational identification:

H1. Behavioral integrity is positively related to follower's organizational identification.

Moderating roles of power distance and organizational politics

Power distance refers to the extent to which people believe and accept that power and status are distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1991). In organizations and cultures where the power distance is low, inequalities are minimized, everybody is involved in decision-making, subordinates are consulted rather than just ordered and the same rules apply to everyone. In organizations and cultures where the power distance is high, inequalities among people are expected and accepted, some people make decisions, and others obey; subordinates expect to be told what to do (Littlemore, 2003).

Numerous studies have documented the effects of leaders' power distance orientation on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Brockner *et al.*, 2001; Farh *et al.*, 2007; Lam *et al.*, 2002; Yang *et al.*, 2007). Because leaders act as formal heads of their work groups, we contend that their disposition toward power distribution symmetry affects the extent of their influence on employees' outcomes. Leader's power distance is an important aspect of the group context, which influences all interactions between the leader and the rest of the group members. Drawing from social impact theory (Latané, 1981), we reason that leaders who have a high power distance orientation inadvertently reduce the social proximity with their employees, thereby limiting the effects of their emotion perceptions on employees' outcomes. This is because leaders' power distance orientation characterizes their psychological distance with employees, which, in turn, affects their approachability, the degree to which employees are aware of leaders' self-emotional awareness and the ease of communication with employees (Vidyardhi *et al.*, 2014). Being less approachable combined with strained communications would act as to limit the degree to which leaders' sensitivity to their own emotions is capable of affecting employees' outcomes. We, therefore, posit that because power distance impedes the flow of socio-emotional resources in leader–employee interactions, the greater the power distance, the weaker the relationship between emotion perceptions of leaders and

employees' organizational attitudes. Another way to envision this proposed moderating effect is to acknowledge that, because low power distance conditions serve to link employees more closely with their leaders, leaders' emotion perception skills exert stronger influence on employees' behavioral outcomes than under high power distance conditions.

Furthermore, leaders' high power distance may compel employees to treat leaders as detached authority figures, which would reduce employees' inclination to reciprocate socio-emotional treatment from leaders in commonly expected ways (Farh *et al.*, 2007). Employees of those leaders with high power distance may be primarily concerned with showing respect and reverence to leaders, rather than altering their behaviors as a reaction to leadership skills and may perceive that their leaders develop low level of relationship and support them only when necessary (Lee *et al.*, 2014), which, in turn, lead to low leader–employee exchange. A high leader–employee exchange with the leader (as organizational agent) will signal that the organization values the employee. The felt organizational support and “valuing”, in turn, provides increased feelings of self-worth. Feelings of self-worth and esteem tend to increase self-enhancement – wherein the individual's identity is enhanced (Sluss *et al.*, 2008). Taken together, the effects of leaders' behavioral integrity perceptions on employees' organizational identification are likely to be less pronounced under conditions of high power distance:

H2. Leader's power distance moderates the positive relationship between leader's behavioral integrity perceptions and employees' organizational identification, such that the relationship is weaker when leader's power distance is high rather than when it is low.

Organizational politics is an elusive type of power relationship in the workplace. It represents a unique domain of interpersonal relations, characterized by the direct or indirect (active or passive) engagement of people in influence tactics and power struggles. These activities are frequently aimed at securing or maximizing personal interests or, alternatively, avoiding negative outcomes within the organization (Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud, 2010).

Highly political organizational environments are commonly viewed as a negative fact of life in every organization (Miller *et al.*, 2008), and researchers have suggested that they are responsible for a variety of harmful work consequences including higher stress and turnover intentions, and lower worker satisfaction, commitment and worker productivity (Kacmar and Baron, 1999). Certain meta-analyses have called attention to the detrimental effects of organizational politics on a set of job outcomes and attitudes (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Miller *et al.*, 2008). The results from these meta-analyses show significant negative relationships between perceived organizational politics and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task performance and organizational citizenship, whereas positive relationships were noted with stress, and turnover intentions.

In case of high perception of organization politics, employees are more likely to see politics as a threat. In this situation, employees often respond with defensive, reactive and protective behavior to avoid action, blame or change. Employees who consistently rely on defensiveness find that they lose trust and support (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

Previous research shows that perceptions of organizational politics are related to negative attitudes toward the organization such as lower levels of trust, satisfaction or

commitment (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002). Relationships have been found between perceptions of organizational politics and various negative employee behaviors such as withholding of information, neglect of one's work, tardiness, absenteeism or turnover intentions (Vigoda-Gadot, 2003). In a politicized work environment, employees may feel more susceptible to the political behavior of others, diminishing their sense of control. Moreover, to manage the politicized environment, they may feel compelled to engage in impression management tactics, which would distract them from their job-related duties and undermine their motivation and job satisfaction (Lepine *et al.*, 2005; Rosen *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, frustrated by their inability to control and fulfill their work responsibilities, some employees might attempt to cope with the situation by mentally distancing themselves from their work, others at work and the organization itself, leading to decreased attachment and identification with the organization (Bedi and Schat, 2013; Lepine *et al.*, 2005). Accordingly, we propose that:

- H3.* Organizational politics moderates the positive relationship between leader's behavioral integrity perceptions and employees' organizational identification, such that the relationship is weaker when perceived organizational politics is high rather than when it is low.

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted at 19 five-star hotels in Turkey. These hotels were randomly selected from a list of all 442 five-star hotels in the country (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2014).

A cluster random-sampling method was used to select sample. In this sampling method, first, all the five-star hotels in Turkey were stratified into seven strata according to their geographic regions. Then, hotels in each stratum were proportionally selected by a cluster random sampling; employees working at the selected hotels comprised the study sample. The sample of this study included 969 employees from 19 five-star hotels in Turkey.

This study was completed between May 2014 and June 2014. Participants were told that the study was designed to collect information on the manager's behavioral integrity and their organizational identification in the hospitality workforce. They were given confidential assurances and told that participation was voluntary.

We distributed questionnaires to all heads of department and senior management staff through the human resource department (HRD). After answering the questionnaires, respondents handed them back to the HRD in a self-sealed envelope provided by the researcher. The envelopes were, then, collected from the hotel.

A total of 1,140 employees participated in this study. Incomplete questionnaires reduced the sample size to 969 subjects resulting in a response rate of 85 per cent. Thirty-nine per cent of employees were females with an average age of 26.17 years. Employees' average organizational tenure was 2.93 years. Their primary functional areas were food and beverage departments (61 per cent), rooms division departments (24 per cent) and a variety of other areas such sales and marketing, accounting and purchasing (15 per cent). Potential nonresponse bias was assessed by conducting a multivariate analysis of variance test on demographic variables such as gender, age and organizational tenure. No significant differences were found between respondents and

nonrespondents, which indicates minimal, if any, nonresponse bias in the sample based on these factors.

Measures

Organizational identification

Organizational identification was measured with the five-item scale developed by Ashforth and Mael (1992). Sample items include “When I talk about my organization, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’” and “When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment”. Responses ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The Cronbach’s α of this measure was 0.85.

Leader behavioral integrity

It was measured with eight-item behavioral integrity scale developed by Simons *et al.* (2007). Sample items include, “If (manager) promises something, it will happen” and “There is a match between (manager’s) words and actions”. All items are measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The Cronbach’s α for this measure was 0.89.

Leader’s power distance

It was measured with six-item scale developed by Dorfman and Howell (1998). An example item is “I believe managers should seldom ask for the opinion of employees”. Responses ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The Cronbach’s α of this measure was 0.91.

Perceptions of organizational politics

It was measured by the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1994). POPS included 12 items. Sample items are “Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here” and “There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them”. Respondents reported the degree to which they agreed with the items. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), so that a higher score meant a stronger perception of organizational politics. The overall reliability was 0.83.

Control variables

The demographic factors, such as age, gender and organizational tenure, found to be significantly related to organizational identification (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004; Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000), were controlled. Age and tenure were measured in years, whereas gender was measured as a dichotomous variable coded as 1 for male and 0 for female.

Results

Partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data. PLS is increasingly used as an analytical technique, particularly in organizational studies research (Sosik *et al.*, 2009). A number of recent reviews of PLS SEM have generated evidence supporting its advantages over covariance-based modeling. In particular, PLS is capable of producing more accurate coefficients when there is correlation between independent variables (Sosik *et al.*, 2009). PLS SEM provides information relating to measurement and structural model components.

PLS SEM generates factor loadings for each scale item, which can be used to assess the measurement model. A matrix of factor loadings is provided in Table I. The matrix shows that all coefficients are greater than 0.6. The factor coefficients presented in Table I indicate homogeneity within scales (Thompson, 1997). Evidence of acceptable validity is also provided in Table I, which shows the average variance extracted (AVE), or average squared loading, for each latent variable. To show acceptable validity, each construct should have an AVE greater than 0.5 (Chin, 1998).

Table II shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the study variables. Before testing the hypotheses, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) was conducted to confirm the distinctiveness of the study constructs. Overall model fit was assessed by goodness-of-fit indices including the comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). A

Construct	No. of items	Cronbach's α	Variable	Standardized factor loadings	C.R. (<i>t</i> -value)	AVE	Composite reliability
B. Integrity	8	0.89	BI1	0.83	–	0.61	0.91
			BI2	0.81	14.13 (***)		
			BI3	0.89	16.10 (***)		
			BI4	0.91	14.93 (***)		
			BI5	0.87	15.09 (***)		
			BI6	0.92	16.03 (***)		
			BI7	0.90	15.66 (***)		
			BI8	0.81	15.29 (***)		
O. Identification	5	0.85	OI1	0.91	–	0.62	0.88
			OI2	0.89	17.93 (***)		
			OI3	0.80	17.66 (***)		
			OI4	0.88	17.15 (***)		
			OI5	0.86	16.69 (***)		
Power distance	6	0.91	PD1	0.79	–	0.58	0.92
			PD2	0.81	13.69 (***)		
			PD3	0.88	14.11 (***)		
			PD4	0.83	14.55 (***)		
			PD5	0.84	14.42 (***)		
			PD6	0.86	14.03 (***)		
O. politics	12	0.83	OP1	0.83	–	0.56	0.86
			OP2	0.81	14.77 (***)		
			OP3	0.73	15.21 (***)		
			OP4	0.76	15.68 (***)		
			OP5	0.78	15.11 (***)		
			OP6	0.75	15.99 (***)		
			OP7	0.80	15.01 (***)		
			OP8	0.84	15.19 (***)		
			OP9	0.89	15.06 (***)		
			OP10	0.85	15.87 (***)		
			OP11	0.79	15.18 (***)		
			OP12	0.90	15.76 (***)		

Table I.
Coefficients for the four-factor measurement model^a

Notes: ^an = 969; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001

reasonable model fit is indicated when the CFI and IFI are above 0.90 and the SRMR is below 0.08. The four-factor measurement model (i.e. behavioral integrity, organizational identification, power distance and organizational politics) showed a good fit. We also estimated several alternative measurement models and compared them with this four-factor model. The CFA results, as presented in Table III, suggest that the four-factor model fit the data better, indicating that the respondents can distinguish clearly the constructs under study. The poor fit of the fourth measurement model, with a single underlying latent variable, indicates that common method bias, or single-source bias, is not a major concern with our data. Moreover, an explorative factor analysis, enabling us to investigate whether one single factor accounts for the majority of the variance in the variables, shows that the first unrotated factor accounts for 21 per cent of the variance. Thus, with no factor explaining the majority of the variance, the Harman single-factor test also suggests that common method bias is not a major concern (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986).

To investigate interaction (moderating) hypotheses, a standardized cross-product interaction construct was computed and included in the model as suggested for PLS analysis, and in common with approaches advocated for multiple linear regression (Chin et al., 2003). Our PLS SEM results, depicted in Figure 1, support all hypotheses. The PLS SEM data indicate a positive relationship between behavioral integrity and organizational identification ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$).

Unlike other SEM techniques, PLS does not test for model fit (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982); however, the r^2 statistics has been argued to provide an approximation of the models utility by depicting the extent to which the predictors account for variance in the dependent construct. PLS analysis revealed that the overall model explained 41 per cent

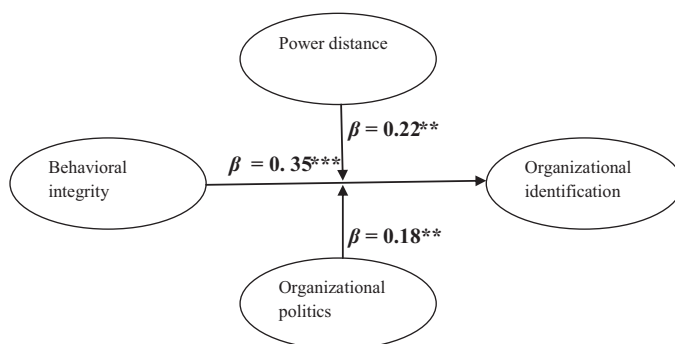
Table II.
Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables^a

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	26.17	1.39						
Gender	0.61	0.39	0.03					
Job tenure	2.93	1.13	0.23**	0.02				
Power distance	3.23	0.83	0.13*	0.07	0.17*			
Organizational politics	3.69	0.96	-0.11*	0.03	0.16*	0.33***		
Leader behavioral integrity	3.77	0.93	0.04	0.06	0.03	-0.23**	-0.31***	
Organizational identification	4.15	0.88	0.15*	0.07	0.14*	-0.27**	-0.39***	0.36***

Notes: ^an = 969; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table III.
Results of confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement models

Measurement models	χ^2/df	SRMR	CFI	IFI
Four-factor model (i.e. behavioral integrity, organizational identification, power distance and organizational politics)	1.13	0.070	0.95	0.95
Three-factor Model 1 (combined behavioral integrity and organizational politics into one factor)	9.19	0.081	0.86	0.86
Three-factor Model 2 (combined behavioral integrity and power distance into one factor)	10.93	0.083	0.83	0.82
One-factor model (combined all items into one factor)	39.36	0.13	0.66	0.65



Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1.
Hypothesized model

of the variance in organizational identification, which can be interpreted as an indicator of moderate fit (Chin, 1998).

To explore the data further, we used the moderated hierarchical regression analysis, according to the procedure delineated in Cohen and Cohen (1983). The significance of interaction effects was assessed after controlling all main effects. In the models, gender, age and job tenure were entered first as control variables; behavioral integrity and predictor variable were entered in the second step; the moderator variables (i.e. power distance and organizational politics) were entered in the third step; and, finally, the interaction terms, in the fourth step. To avoid multicollinearity problems, the predictor and moderator variables were centred and the standardized scores were used in the regression analysis (Aiken and West, 1991).

Test of the first hypothesis produced similar results to the PLS SEM. The analysis revealed a significant positive path coefficient for the impact of the behavioral integrity on organizational identification ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$) supporting *H1* (Table IV).

To test *H2* and *H3*, a standardized cross-product interaction construct was computed for each moderator (power distance \times behavioral integrity and organizational politics \times behavioral integrity) and included in the model as is usual in regression analysis (Aiken and West, 1991). The results show that both power distance and organizational politics moderated that impact of behavioral integrity on organizational identification, supporting *H2* and *H3*. The moderated hierarchical regression analysis revealed a significant path coefficient for each interaction variable regressed on organizational identification ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$ for power distance and $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.01$ for organizational politics).

Figures 2 and 3 graphically show the interactional behavioral integrity – organizational identification relationship as moderated by power distance and organizational politics, for which high and low levels are depicted as one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively.

As predicted, when employees perceived high levels of power distance, the relationship between behavioral integrity and employees' identification with the organization was weaker. Similarly, it was found that organizational politics weakened the positive relationship between behavioral integrity and organizational identification. As presented in Figure 2, the positive relationship between behavioral integrity and

Table IV.
Results of the
moderated
hierarchical
regression analysis
for power distance
and organizational
politics on
organizational
identification^a

Steps and predictor variables	Models							
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	β							
<i>Step 1</i>								
Age	0.12*	0.09	0.08	0.05	0.12*	0.09	0.06	0.03
Gender	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.01
Job tenure	0.13*	0.10	0.09	0.04	0.13*	0.10	0.10	0.06
<i>Step 2</i>								
Leader behavioral integrity (LBI)		0.35***	0.34***	0.30***		0.35***	0.31***	0.28**
<i>Step 3</i>								
Power distance (PD)			-0.26**	-0.23**				
Organizational politics (OP)							-0.37***	-0.29***
<i>Step 4</i>								
LBI \times PD				0.22**				0.18**
LBI \times OP					0.05		0.41	0.43
R^2	0.05	0.25	0.33	0.37	0.05	0.25	0.16	0.02
Change in R^2		0.20	0.08	0.04		0.20	0.39***	5.13***
F		3.69***	3.76***	4.53***		3.69***	0.39***	

Notes: ^an = 969. β is standardized beta; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

organizational identification was less pronounced when an employee's perception of organizational politics was high.

Discussion

In this study, we have examined the influence of leader behavioral integrity on employee's organizational identification. Further, to develop our understanding of the factors that shape this relationship, we incorporated employees' perceptions of power distance and organizational politics as potential moderators in the conceptual model. The study findings revealed that both power distance and organizational politics moderated the positive relationship between behavioral integrity and organizational identification. These findings are consistent with previous researches suggesting that power distance (Brockner *et al.*, 2001; Farh *et al.*, 2007) and organizational politics (Bedi and Schat, 2013; Lepine *et al.*, 2005) have moderating effects. In this study, employee's perception of leader power distance was negatively and significantly associated with employee's organizational identification. Leaders who have a high power distance orientation inadvertently reduce the social proximity with their employees, which, in turn, affect their approachability and the ease of communication with employees (Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014). For leaders with high power distance, leader-employees relationship may be less important in the formation of attitudes toward the organization.

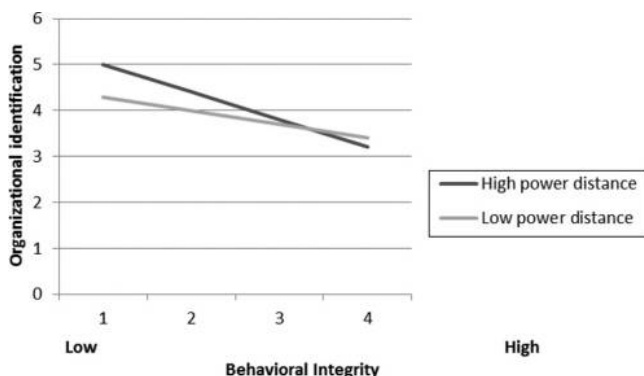


Figure 2. Interactive effects of behavioral integrity and power distance on organizational identification

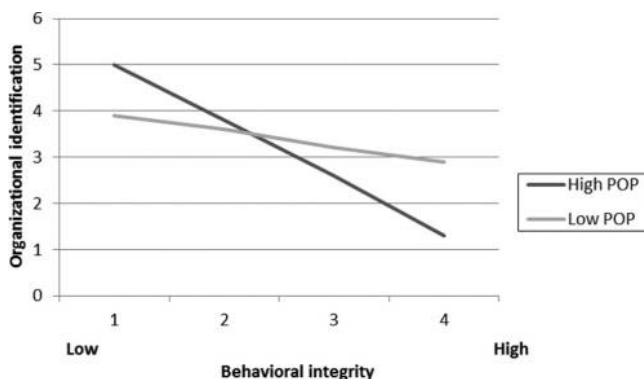


Figure 3. Interactive effects of behavioral integrity and perceived organizational politics (POP) on organizational identification

Employees who perceive high power distance from their leaders tend to have unquestioning respect for authority and role-based loyalty to organizations (Chen *et al.*, 2009) and prefer to keep social distance from their leaders (Kirkman *et al.*, 2009). Such an acceptance of power differences and the extended social distance between supervisors and subordinates reduce the influence of leaders' behaviors on subordinates' attitudes such as identification with their organizations (Loi *et al.*, 2012).

Similarly, an employee's perception of organizational politics may decrease his/her organizational identification in a hotel. In highly political organizations, rewards and important organizational resources are tied to relationships, power and other less objective factors. As a result, "the immediate environment becomes unpredictable because the unwritten rules for success change as the power of those playing the political game varies" (Hall *et al.*, 2004, p. 244). Therefore, it is difficult for employees to predict if their behaviors will lead to rewards and or important organizational resources in political work contexts, and they are likely to perceive weaker relationships between performance and the attainment of desired outcomes (Aryee *et al.*, 2004; Chang *et al.*, 2009; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997). In a political organization, employees perceive the organization to be acting in its own best interest, rather than in the employees' best interest. This perception will deem the organization as less trustworthy due to its lack of benevolence (Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013). Perceptions of a lack of trustworthiness can subsequently lead employees to develop suspicious and cynical attitudes toward the organization and lower employees' identification with their organization.

The results in this study suggest that researchers should continue to investigate psychosocial and contextual factors such as person-job fit (Vigoda-Gadot and Meiri, 2007), organization structure and size (Perry *et al.*, 1994) and a leader's power bases (Perry *et al.*, 1994; Davis and Gardner, 2004), in unveiling perceptions and behaviors. It is plausible that power distance and organizational politics were relevant interpersonal variables in this setting because they were the main sources of macro variation across hotels in the study. In other words, the findings in this study may be sample-specific and in need of replication. In different settings, other contextual factors, such as organizational structure or human resource practices, might become relevant. In developing theoretical explanations for the roles of interpersonal and contextual factors, researchers are encouraged to consider aspects of the organizational context that are most important to the population under investigation. Identifying contextual factors affecting employees' organizational identification seems to be a promising research area.

Research implications

The main strength of the investigation in this study was its multilevel research design. Most research on leader's behavioral integrity and employees' identification has been conducted within single organizations, precluding an assessment of the way in which interpersonal variables influence employees' organizational identification. The multilevel design was capable of capturing the complexity of individual behaviors by considering different contexts. Second, the use of a Turkish sample added to the growing literature examining employee identification in non-Western settings.

The results of this study suggest that relationships, social exchange and situational variables within organizations are important factors in an employee's organizational identification. To the best of our knowledge, research so far has ignored the potential

association between behavioral integrity and employee identification, and also factors that may influence this association. We believe that the theoretical contributions of our research are important from several perspectives. The contributions relate to theory on employee identification with the organization (e.g. antecedents of organizational identification), to theory on behavioral integrity (e.g. outcomes of behavioral integrity) and to the perceived organizational politics literature.

Aside from the theoretical contributions of this study, we also believe that this study offers a number of insights that will be valuable to management practitioners. Previous research has revealed that employees' organizational identification is a vital cognitive component for an organization to obtain better performance and highly motivated employees by creating a strong psychological binding between employees and the organization (Chreim, 2002; Smidts *et al.*, 2001). Those employees, who strongly identify themselves with the organization, are more likely to feel strong commitment to the vision, values and long-term goals of the organization by maintaining their loyalty and membership. Thus, for the long-term and continuing success of an organization's strategies, managers should try to increase employees' organizational identification.

Theoretically, trust is related to organizational identification (Campbell and Im, 2014). Employees are more likely to form bonds that foster identification when they have trust in the organization and its leaders. The results of this study suggest that if the organization wants to see higher levels of identification by its employees, greater attention should be given to create trust among employees. Given the vital importance of trust in the organizational context, as a practical implication, leaders need to show the perceived alignment between their words and deeds (leader's behavioral integrity) and to address the hearts and minds of employees to achieve a high-trust culture that satisfies the necessary affective and cognitive component required for trust formation.

Another practical implication of this study is that hospitality managers may try to lower sense of organizational politics to foster identification among their followers. The relations that exist between perceived organizational politics and a wide range of negative attitudinal, health-related and behavioral variables suggest that organizational politics has potentially significant direct and indirect costs for individuals and organizations related to compromised trust, feelings of injustice, negative worker attitudes, undermined performance and productivity and costs related to turnover and absence (Bedi and Schat, 2013). Accordingly, the study results should be taken as a call to organizations to give more attention to prevention and effective management of political behavior. Prevention efforts may include steps to reduce ambiguity in the work environment and to ensure that policies related to pay and promotion as well as other managerial decisions are clearly communicated and fairly executed. It is also incumbent on managers in organizations to monitor the social and behavioral dynamics in their organizations and to intervene when they observe unhealthy patterns of behavior. With respect to more effective management of political behavior, research showing the benefits of individual political skill (Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2004) suggests that efforts to develop political and other interpersonal skills (through training) may help individuals to function more effectively and be less negatively affected by political behavior in their work environment.

Limitations and suggestions for future study

The study has several limitations that could be the focus of future research topics. First, some specific characteristics of hotels may have affected the findings, such as their source of funding: Whether hotels had foreign or local funding may have affected their organizational culture, which, in turn, might influence their leadership styles. Second, demographic factors might have affected the results. To illustrate, most of the participants were young with job tenure under three years. Third, most of the samples chosen came from males gender-wise, which would strongly open a debate of whether such results would be obtained if gender composition was different. Moreover, this study is cross-sectional thus limiting one's interpretation of causal mechanisms. Using a longitudinal design would have provided us with an opportunity to examine not only behavioral integrity effect on organizational identification but also whether followers' identification with their organizations impacts improved perceptions of their leaders' behavioral integrity. It is not surprising to think that people who identify themselves more with their organizations or satisfy with their leaders are also more likely to perceive their leaders as benevolent, caring, supportive, etc. Finally, the ratings of the independent, the dependent and the moderating variables were provided by a common source. That is, each participant in the study rated his/her perception of leader's integrity, organizational identification, power distance and organizational politics. With such data, it becomes possible that any observed relationships are influenced by common source variance. Nevertheless, in our case, both CFA and Harman's single-factor tests indicated that this was not a serious problem with our data. However, using a multi-source data would be beneficial because it might enable a strong test of the model and better ascertain the internal validity of the results.

Despite these potential limitations, this study contributes to the research on behavioral integrity and employee identification with the organization by showing that power distance and perceived organizational politics are relevant contextual variables in determining the importance of employee organizational identification to leader–employee relationships. The results in the study support the argument that organizational identification is socially constructed, and, therefore, studies of employees' identification with their organizations in relation to outcomes should recognize the interpersonal context. It is expected that the results of this study would inspire future researchers to consider other interpersonal variables in models of leadership and employee's organizational identification such as social support (Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud, 2010), trust (Mayer *et al.*, 2009), self-disclosure (Ilies *et al.*, 2005), etc.

In conclusion, hospitality organizations must differentiate their services and products through the development and implementation of programs and processes of quality improvement in order to improve performance and gain competitive advantages. The delivery of high-quality services and experiences is a critical success factor to hospitality organizations. Employees' organizational identification and satisfaction, service quality and customer satisfaction and high-quality hospitality experiences are relevant constructs, all of them related to the understanding of the role leaders are to perform in competitive organizations. At the heart of these endeavors is a strong belief that currently employee identification with the organization, satisfaction and commitment influence tomorrow's customer well-being, satisfaction and commitment and, ultimately, the organization's profit and growth.

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Further reading

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