

Knowledge Workers' Identities at the Beginning of their Professional Development: Evidence from the Medical Profession

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Abstract

The identities of knowledge workers are shaped by organizational-level factors and by attributes of their occupation. Therefore, we distinguish between professional workers' organizational and professional identification. Organizational identification is considered as a powerful construct having the potential to influence organizational behaviour. This concept was examined both in profit and non-profit organizations and proven to be a powerful predictor of various job-related attitudes and outcomes. Although the professional workforce and knowledge-based workers are becoming more important in the global knowledge economy, the concept of professional identification has been understudied in social identification literature. Given that the identification is a dynamic process, especially intriguing is the question of how organizational and professional identities interact at different stages in a professional workers' career. The purpose of this paper is to examine the organizational and professional identities of knowledge workers at the beginning of their professional development. Organizational and professional identification have been relatively understudied in the university context and this paper tends to fill the literature gap by examining individual and group-level antecedents to identification with the university and medical profession. Several important findings emerged from our analysis. Consistent with the previous studies, our results indicate that levels of organizational and professional identification are correlated. Furthermore, our results show that knowledge workers experience a stronger sense of belonging to their profession at the beginning of their professional development. Finally, we provide insightful findings on the individual and group-level identification antecedents.

Keywords: knowledge workers, medical profession, organizational identification, professional identification