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Citation

COMMENTARY

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Although Schneider and Pulakos (2022, p. 2) call for scholars to adopt an "organizational mindset," which includes "an increased organizational frame of reference on variables of interest," the authors have overlooked the importance of contextualizing such a mindset. Contextualizing "entails linking observations to a set of relevant facts, events, or points of view that make possible research and theory that form part of a larger whole" (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 1). Contextualizing is essential because it provides a common vernacular that facilitates the valid and reliable extension of the industrial-organizational (I-O) mindset to the study of organizational differences and effectiveness. According to Rousseau and Fried, there are six features scholars and practitioners should consider when contextualizing research. These features are levels, time, representativeness, point of view, range restriction, and construct comparability. By systematically considering the features of contextualizing, scholars can distinguish organizations based on salient characteristics that can influence the behavior of people and shape the relationship among variables (Johns, 2006).

Extending the organizational mindset to include contextualizing makes several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the six features of contextualizing (Rousseau & Fried, 2001) provide the basis for explaining how and when I-O variables may contribute to organizational outcomes, including organizational success. Contextualizing also supports the integration of scholarship across diverse research settings by highlighting salient points of similarity and dissimilarity (Johns, 2006). By facilitating integration, contextualizing contributes to building the scientific body of knowledge that is necessary for valid and reliable generalization of findings (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). Therefore, contextualizing also contributes to overcoming limitations resulting from research conducted in single organizations (Schneider & Pulakos, 2022). Practically, contextualizing facilitates not only discussions about how I-O knowledge can enhance organizational performance in general but whether it may work in specific contexts. That is, it helps answers a common industry question: "What does previous research mean for *our* organization?"

Levels

The first feature of contextualizing is levels. Levels reflect the characteristics of employees, groups, and the organizational setting that can form the basis for comparison between the present study and previous scholarship. From an organizational mindset perspective, a consideration of levels will facilitate the extension of existing I-O scholarship, which is primarily at the individual level of analysis to the group and organizational level. Although Schneider and Pulakos (2022) discuss trickle effects, a consideration of levels also requires verifying potential changes in construct meaning. That is, do individual-level constructs change meaning when they are conceptualized at higher levels of the organization, and what does this mean for theory? Scholars have considered this issue using composition models that "describe how constructs operationalized at one level of

analysis are related to other forms of the construct at different levels of analysis" (Wallace et al., 2016, p. 839). Power represents an interesting example. Although there are validated measures to tap perceptions of social power bases or generalized sense of power, these measures may prove to be less fruitful to measure the power of top managers as it may be difficult to access this population. As a solution, Finkelstein (1992) generated a proxy measure of power in top management teams that focuses on more objective dimensions of structural power (e.g., executive's number of titles), ownership power (e.g., percentage of shares owned by an executive), expert power (e.g., executive's functional background), and prestige power (e.g., the number of corporate boards on which an executive sits). Similar attempts will be needed for how other concepts studied at the individual level translate into concepts at the group or organizational level. Methodologically, this requires considering measurement issues such as how to capture higher level constructs.

Time

The second feature of contextualizing is time. Time encourages researchers to consider temporal dynamics and institutional factors shaping how individuals and organizations are affected by and attempt to affect the environment. A consideration of time also prompts researchers to consider the duration of observations needed to detect the effects.

Research can be seen as "a product of its time" (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 5). Thus, evaluating the role that time plays when adopting an organizational mindset can help enrich our theoretical arguments and apply appropriate methods to address research questions in at least two ways. First, I-O researchers and practitioners may start focusing on major events (e.g., crises) and explore whether events at the level of the society or organization constitute shocks that alter the nature of existing relationships before and after. For instance, one way to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is to compare the effectiveness of certain human resources policies on a variety of organizational success metrics before and after the pandemic and whether certain organizations will be prone to such shocks. Second, an often-overlooked aspect is time lags in causal effects, or how much time is required to observe the theorized effects. Whereas less time is required to observe causal effects at the individual level, the cycles become longer at higher levels. Thus, the organizational mindset will require research designs that include multiple observations over longer periods and use of methods like time-series analyses and regression discontinuities.

Representativeness

The third feature of contextualizing is representativeness. Representativeness reflects the extent to which study samples are comparable such that they may influence the interpretation and implications of research (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). The extent to which samples are representative can be assessed with respect to their statistical (e.g., means and standard deviations), geographical (e.g., country), and operational (e.g., for-profit vs. not-for-profit) properties, among others (Rousseau & Fried). As part of contextualizing the organizational mindset, representativeness should reflect properties of organizations most pertinent to theoretical (when the goal is research) and practical (when the goal is implementation) concerns. Representativeness is differentiated from generalizability as the former is a property of the research itself, whereas the latter is "a property of a theory" (Highhouse, 2009, p. 556). Representativeness can help infer generalizability when there is sufficient theoretical or empirical justification.

Schneider and Pulakos (2022) note that little I-O scholarship examines phenomena across organizations. At the crux of their observation is concern as to whether findings from one organization will translate to another (i.e., generalizability), which is likely influenced by

representativeness. With this said, research conducted in a single organization should not inherently be less valuable from the perspective of an organizational mindset. Rather, considering representativeness allows both scholars and practitioners to consider the implications of sample-specific properties in shaping theory and empirical findings (Brutus et al., 2012). That is, the extent to which results from one organization will inform another is likely a function of the comparability of samples across critical properties. When applied to the organizational mindset, this will likely implicate forces such as cultural differences, industry norms, and employment law (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

Points of view

The fourth feature of contextualizing is points of view. Points of view prompt researchers to question whose perspective matters most. A shift to an organizational mindset has untapped theoretical and methodological opportunities. First, I-O scholars have excelled at using methodologically justified multisource research designs, a trend that will be critical to an organizational mindset. For example, organizational theorists have put great effort in explaining organizations' strategic choices, behaviors, and outcomes by studying characteristics of the macro institutional environment. They recommend that scarce environmental resources lead organizations to constantly adhere to and respect political, technological, social, ecological, and cultural issues and trends so as to appear legitimate in the eyes of the public. Thus, customers as well as the broader society will present a different (yet essential) perspective when studying the influence of I-O factors on organizational success or even how one defines organizational success, and institutional theory provides a solid theoretical grounding. Points of view encourages I-O researchers and practitioners to broaden their perspectives on who constitutes primary internal and external stakeholders and how various stakeholder insights may inform theory and pratice.

Range restriction

The fifth feature of contextualizing is range restriction. Range restriction becomes an issue when the selection of a specific sample or certain contextual factors influence the amount of variance observed in the criteria. Schneider and Pulakos (2022) argue that the scarcity of studies that are conducted across multiple organizations prevents us from meaningfully comparing how organizational differences contribute to organizational performance and research that focuses on single organizations will have more range restriction. For instance, selection procedures of an organization may lead to only a subset of applicants being hired, and thus the range of variance in certain criteria may become restricted. Further to their concern, we also stopped contextualizing the setting where the research is conducted. Instead, we started talking about range restriction in the somewhat hidden back pockets of discussion sections. This choice prevents us from proactively considering whether range restriction is a concern in our studies.

However, there is work that can help structure how we should approach range restriction. Thanks to the work on situational strength (Meyer et al., 2010), we know that clarity, consistency, constraints, and consequences in a situation determine its strength and how individuals interact with their environment. The stronger the situation, the less likely individual behavior can be attributed to individual characteristics. The question is then how we can apply this framework to the external environment of organizations considering how widespread this issue might be. In fact, Oc (2018) in his review on the context of leadership context demonstrates that in more than 75% the studies that explore the effects of where leadership unfolds, contextual factors lead to range restriction and influence base rates. Thus, we strongly believe that a more systematic approach is needed to better understand and document the potential influence of range restriction when adopting an organizational mindset.

Construct comparability

The sixth feature of contextualizing is construct comparability. Construct comparability reflects the extent to which I-O variables share the same meaning (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). It forms the basis on which scholars and practitioners can ascertain whether findings from one setting can be generalized to another and whether findings across settings can be synthesized. The issue of construct comparability has been aptly captured in the "jingle-jangle fallacy." On one hand, the jingle fallacy describes differences in labels despite a common meaning. On the other hand, the jangle fallacy occurs when two constructs with different meaning share a common label (Kelley, 1927). Jingle and jangle fallacies have important implications for the organizational mindset as they inform both theory and practice.

The issue of construct comparability from an organizational mindset perspective may be illustrated using the extensive research on employee voice. Voice has been associated with a number of positive individual, team, and organizational outcomes. With this said, voice is represented in multiple literatures. In some instances, voice refers to a challenge-oriented citizenship behavior, in others a proactive behavior, whereas in others it can refer to responses to justice-related experiences or even formal representation in unions or committees (Bashshur & Oc, 2015). In their integrative review, Carpini et al. (2017) argue the former two types of voice represent proactive behaviors (i.e., jingle), whereas the latter two are more akin to forms of proficiency (i.e., jangle) based on the *meaning* of the constructs. Thus, those adopting an organizational mindset need to consider the meaning of constructs both theoretically (in the literature) as well as practically (within the organization) to support organizational success.

Addressing construct comparability has important theoretical and practical implications for an organizational mindset. Theoretically, construct comparability must be systematically assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively. This entails returning to the operationalization of constructs by scholars and verifying the practical meaning within the context. It may also require statistical considerations such as assessing measurement invariance or providing convergent validity evidence. Practically, it also means careful consideration is needed to ensure the reliable and valid generalization of scholarship when speaking with industry leaders.

Conclusion

Contextualizing the expanded I-O mindset (Schneider & Pulakos, 2022) is necessary if scholars are to provide insight into how humans (I) contribute to organizational success (O). Contextualizing I-O research offers theoretical, methodological, and practical opportunities to enable the field to have greater influence. Although the six features of contextualizing enable the systematic integration of scholarship across contexts (Rousseau & Fried, 2001), it is important to note that not all six will be relevant in all cases. Scholars and practitioners should be cognizant of when various features may be relevant to their purposes. For example, scholars might use the features (in isolation or combination) when performing systematic reviews and practitioners when advising organizational leaders. Adopting an organizational mindset requires the systematic consideration of context, keeping in mind that it really is all about "location, location, location" (Rousseau & Fried, p. 1).

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