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The Effect of Employee Empathy Identification and Intention to Support Organizations Intellectual Capital Study Case of Green Oriented SMEs in Jombang Region East Java

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Abstract

The study intends to explore the effect employee empathy and identification on employee intention to support organization's intellectual capital among green-oriented SMEs in Jombang Region, East Java. It is among few studies which focuses on empathy in the context of organizational intellectual support, not to mention even fewer studies that examine empathy in the framework of planned behavior theory. By maintaining the existence of subjective norms which is original characteristic of planned behavior theory, it attempts to find out the nature of mediation identification might play in the relationship between subjective norms and employees' intention to support organization's intellectual capital, which is so far still absent in management literature. By doing so, it is among the first that attempts to integrate empathy and social identity theories within the framework of planned behavior theory. For statistical analysis, it applies PLS that can handle complex model and is appropriate for predictive research. Saturation sampling method is considered the right choice for representation consideration. The results should be that employee empathy and identification have effects on intention to support intellectual capital. By this way, employee identification should play partial mediation in the relationship between subjective norms and intention.

Keywords: Employees empathy; Identification; Intellectual capital

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Introduction

People have become increasingly aware of the relevance of environmental issues in current life. One form that the concern could take is empathy. Its definition according to Baron-Cohen is, "the ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling, and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion" [1]. Other definition is the result from cognitive or perceptual process or as a response with sympathy and concern From above definition, the study develops employee empathy to find out its effect on intention to support intellectual capital in SMEs [2,3]. Elaboration of employee empathy is rather rare in the context of green oriented SMEs. The application within planned behavior theory is also so far absent in the literature, especially in the world of SMEs. By employee empathy, the study intends to mean "the ability of employees to sense their organization struggle and endeavor to protect environment represented in their greenoriented products. Common sense holds that individuals will tend to provide help to other people or organization that they empathize than to those that they do not. In this study, the empathy comes

from awareness of how their organizations have struggled to participate in maintaining environment by offering green products, and they have motivation to help as a result to promote their organization by supporting intellectual capital. The connection between empathy and intellectual capital is a very interesting one to research. In this study, intellectual capital is brought up in planned behavior theory, which is represented by intention to support intellectual capital variable. This paper contributes to the literature by integrating theoretical insights on empathy and planed behavior, thorough empirical exploration of the relationship between these two concepts another form that the concern of environmental issues is identification. People make identification to any organization whose identity they think attractive or similar to their ideals. Relationship between identification and behavioral intention that people with identification tend to have a stronger behavioral intention has been explained by studies such as Lee and Kang and Kim and James among others. While its relationship to support covers the studies such as Carmeli et al. that examined relationship between organizational identification and employee' knowledge sharing

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which represent employees' willingness to support organizational progress through knowledge contribution, that examined relationship between brand global identification and brand commitment which represents consumer's willingness to support affiliation with the brand [4]. While relationship between empathy and support is well documented, that between empathy and intention to support is still vacant in literature management, moreover intention to support intellectual capital in SMEs. For example, that proved the effect of empathy and predisposition to help those in need [5]. Several studies have attempted to apply empathy variable in planned behavioral framework. One of them is Hwang and Griffiths. They intended to find out if empathy of millennial consumers are related to behavioral intent in the context of collaborative consumption. Collaborative consumption refers to sharing underused assets or services, for free or for a fee, directly from individuals" by means of digital network in order to reduce personal burden and cost, and also lowers environmental impact. The other is which explored the factors in story telling blogs that might affect readers' intention to adopt travel products [6]. Their model examined the relationship between reader's empathy and their travel intention with attitude as mediator. Relationships between identification and support and intention to support are relatively unexplored. The exploration would certainly enrich the management literature, especially regarding the consequences of identification. The application of identification variable within planned behavior theory opens the chance of further merging the theories to explain the development of intellectual capital in SMEs. As a whole, the research attempts to integrate empathy, social identity and planned behavior within intellectual capital framework, which is absent in the literature.

Theoretical Review

Empathy

According to empathy is an emotional response that stems from another's emotional state or condition and that is congruent with the other's emotional state or situation [7]. Defined empathy as individual's emotional state resulting from the observation or imagination of another person's state [8]. While Hsiao and LAN viewed that empathy refers to an involuntary merging with another's feelings. Baron-Cohen defines empathy as, "our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling, and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion". For the purpose of the study, it defines empathy as awareness of other individual's trouble in the struggle to achieve his purpose that he thinks important or congruent to his ideal. Within organizational context, employees' empathy refers to employees' awareness the obstacle that organization faces in achieving its purpose that they think important, and which without their contribution, the struggle could be in vain. That's way they are motivated to contribute as they can to reduce the burden. It is in line with arguments that empathy serves as an altruistic motivation for prosocial behaviors driven by compassion or

concern for others [9,10]. Have emphasized close relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior, such as helping behaviors. The employees' empathy in this study concerns with SMEs' endeavors to improve environment conditions commonly impaired by industrial activities, by producing more green products. This empathy might lead to a desire to support, promote or contribute the endeavors by having intention to support intellectual capital which is required by organization to continuously improve products that are increasingly environmentally acceptable.

Identification

The concept of identification is built on social identity theory. Identification is a perception of oneness with a group of persons. Identification process emanates from the need of belongingness. Individuals develop identification to an organization that strengthens and is relevant to their important identity [11]. By means of identification, individual has a sense of being related to future of, the success of, and the failure of a group or organization he or she identifies with [12]. When individuals look themselves in terms of social identity, they proceed into two processes: (1) categorization, which highlight differences between individuals in the social identity and other people in other social identity He & Li, and (2) self-enhancement which makes positive image of organization important as it can uplift self-esteem among its members Serpe dan Stryker. The study views that individuals who think as important categorization process for self-identity clarification tend to have a higher intention to do things that strengthens organization from which they derive their social identity. In the same vein, individuals with stronger selfenhancement motivation tend to have a higher intention to do things that strengthens organizations from which they derive their social identity. To maintain their social identity and self-esteem accordingly, individuals could be motivated to perpetuate the group's or organization's existence on which they are a part. They do so by intending to provide help, support or contribute to the continuous existence of the organization. Within the study's context, they want to take part in organizational progress by supporting to intellectual capital that is important for organization to move ahead in the middle of strict competition. As regard social identity, held that social identity is composed of three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and evaluative [13,14]. Cognitive dimension refers to awareness that individual is a part of a given group based on attractiveness, similarity, or esteem possibility it offers. Affective dimension refers to emotional aspects that individual has toward the group and that keep him or her maintain relationship with the group. Evaluative dimension refers to analysis of suitability between the nature of oneself and that of organization, congruence between the two, esteem it might uplift, and comparison between the cost it entails in identification building and benefit it provides in the forms of heightened esteem.

Planned behavior theory

Planned behavior theory has been one of the most influential framework to capture people's behavioral intention [15]. According to this theory, behavioral intention is determined by three factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. They simultaneously lay the ground for behavioral intention [16]. The first factor is positive or negative judgment on the concerned behavior. Attitude is important factor that determines the performance of intention [17]. Subjective norms represent social pressure either to perform or not to perform the behavior. It might include common judgment or even some important people. The final factor is perceived behavioral control that refers to perceived ease or difficulty in performing the behavior. The present study applies empathy and identification to represent attitude. While empathy refers to emotional state resulting from understanding what other has been through, identification is based on logical consideration that relationship between two parties needs to be made in order to achieve common purpose. The logical consideration includes identity richness, identity extension, and meaningful identity-related purpose achievement. All in all, the study insert empathy, identification and subjective norms as determining variables for intention to support organizational intellectual capital.

Intellectual capital

Intellectual capital is defined as knowledge resources in the forms of work force, customers, processes, and technology that an organization can exploit for value creation [18]. Intellectual capital is an important resource for an organization to achieve its purposes [19]. Thus, intellectual capital is resources available to an organization to capitalize on to obtain higher profits in the future. Components of intellectual capital include resources of work force (human capital), knowledge regarding on consumers (relational capital), and infrastructure that an organization possesses (structural capital). Human capital covers education, experience, skill, creativity and behavior. Structural capital covers technological system, operational system, patent, trade mark, and brand. Relational capital concerns with organization's network with outside stakeholders including customers, supplier, government and market. Intention to support intellectual capital denotes to employees' intention to improve resources of human capital, relational capital and structural capital that the organization exploit to increase its competitive edge and achieve its purposes. Employees can support organizational intellectual capital by improving skill and knowledge through learning and training on human capital side, by increased attention on consumer satisfaction and loyalty, on cooperation with government agencies in environmental issues, and with suppliers and distributors for ontime delivery and market tapping on relational capital side, and by making higher effectiveness and efficiency oriented change accommodation and technological change acceptance on structural capital side.

Proposition building

Relationship between Empathy and Intention to Support One study that puts empathy as one variable in the planned behavior framework is Hwang and Griffiths. Empathy in their study derives from the idea of cost-sharing for the purpose of decreasing cost burden and maintaining eco-environment through collaborative consumption. Empathy represents one attitude on collaborative consumption service seen as a sustainacapible way of living. Their research show that empathy among young consumers represented by college students at a large US university. As regards its relationship to support, evidence has shown that empathy could lead to altruism, co-operation and prosocial behavior [20]. Graziano et al. held that empathy is "processes that influence both decisions to help and the amount of help offered". Pointed out that empathy would lead to support or helping behavior when there is a psychological cost for not giving help, and no benefit for not doing so. Thus, it puts forward the following hypothesis: P1. Employees' empathy has a significant effect on employees' intention to support organization'

Relationship between employees' identification and intention to support organization's intellectual capital

intellectual capital in green-oriented SMEs [21,22].

When individuals want to see themselves in terms of social identity, they two process come into play: (1) categorization, which highlights differences between themselves as members in one group and outsiders, and (2) self-enhancement to uplift selfesteem that can be achieved through positive image. The study views that individuals who think as important categorization process for self-identity clarification tend to have a higher intention to do things that strengthens organization from which they derive their social identity. In the same vein, individuals with stronger self-enhancement motivation tend to have a higher intention to do things that strengthens organizations from which they derive their social identity. Some research found that identification has an effect on commitment to the organization's goals [23,24]. Other found that intention is related to individual identity [25,26]. Thus, it puts forward the following proposition: P2. Employees' Identification has a significant effect on employees' intention to support organization's intellectual capital Relationship between Subjective Norms and Intention to Support

According to Planned Behavior Theory, subjective norms affect individuals' intention to perform a certain behavior. Subjective norms refer to the significant role played by reference groups, people some individuals consider to be important to account of, ideal opinion voicing the interest of society or future life, or even a mainstream way of life. The emphasis on the significant role of important others is also explained by theory of needs proposed by suggested that individuals have a propensity to exhibit a behavior that is admired by their reference groups, as they seek relationships and group associations. Individuals tend to follow people whose opinions matter the most. Subjective norms will

influence behavior when individuals are motivated to comply with the norms of referent others [27]. Reveal that group norms which serve as subjective norms affect group intention to accept advertising online social networks [28]. Applying planned behavior Theory, found that subjective norms influence compliance decisions [29,30]. Also found that subjective norms influence buying intention in context of buying organic food among students and faculty members of universities who should have higher awareness and familiarity with the concept of organic food because of their higher education which served as subjective norms [31]. Thus, it puts forward the following proposition: P3. Subjective norms have a significant effect on Employees' intention to support Organization' intellectual capital

Relationship between subjective norm and identification

Individuals suit normative attitudes into their identities within a specific institutional context. That is, they tend to identify themselves with roles, occupation or categories that are highly valued and avoid those that are otherwise. Following this logic, this study suggest that individuals tend to build identification with institution or organization that pursue purposes many people commonly value, including themselves. Individuals might learn to value the purpose of institution, already aware the importance of the purpose, or are inspired by other people that value the purpose. In the case of environmentally oriented institution, common predisposition that favor green products than non-green products might strongly affect individual attitude toward the company. Thus, it proposes the following proposition: P4. Subjective norms have a significant effect on employees' identification.

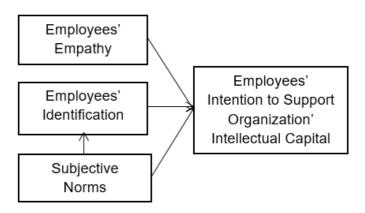


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

Relationship between Subjective Norms and Employees' Intention to Support Organization's Intellectual Capital with Employees' Identification as Mediator

Even though many studies support relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intention, the support for relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intention is weaker than that between attitudes and intention. For example, who made a review of 185 reasoned action/planned behavior studies by looking into beta weight in multiple regression analysis

[32]. The results showed that beta weight for subjective normbehavioral intention link is weaker than that for attitudesbehavioral intention. The average contribution of attitudes in predicting behavioral intentions was 0.49, whereas the average subjective norms-intention correlation was 0.34. As a result, researchers have argued that the subjective norms-intention relationship is the weakest link of planned behaviour models [33,34]. Attitude that can take the forms of trust identification [35-37]. For the purpose of the study, it inserts identification in the place of attitude within the framework of planned behavior theory. In the case that relationship between subjective norms and intention to support organizational intellectual capital in the context of green SMEs is dubious, the study intends to find out if identification has ability to mediate the relationship. Thus, it proposes the following proposition P5. Identification mediates the effect of identification on intention to support intellectual capital in green SMEs

Methodology

The research population are all employees working for green SMEs in Jombang, East Java. Green SMEs are determined from environment-related vision and are materialized in environmentconcerning products. They might range from the application of unused resources with considerable supply in nearby environment as materials for valuable products to that of natural resources as a message of the importance of natural reservation and way to create genuine added-value. The research applies saturating technique for questionnaire distribution, as it intends to cover all possible respondents [38-41]. The reason behind this is that it enables for optimum generalization with small error. Generalization is important to prove the adequacy of research's results. For data analysis, it applies Smart PLS for its several advantages in relation to this nature of research. Smart PLS requires relatively few samples. Moreover, Smart PLS is also appropriate for research with predictive nature since there is a new variable, such as intention to support organization' intellectual capital, the study will perform content validity and face validity to make sure their validity and reliability. Content validity is determined by expert judgment who will evaluate each construct. The match should be made sure of by asking opinions of 30 respondents. Pilot test will follow to ensure construct reliability and validity before performing Statistic analysis with data from whole respondents. Sobel test will be applied to find out mediating variable. The formula is as follows:

$$Z-value = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{b^2Sa^2 + a^2Sb^2 + Sa^2Sb^2}}$$

ab is coefficient of indirect effect which is the result from multiplication of direct effects of a and b. A is a coefficient value of direct effect independent variable (X) has on mediator (M). B is a coefficient value of direct effect the mediator (M) has on dependent (Y). Sa is standard error of a coefficient. Sb is standard error of b coefficient.

Results and Discussion

The results should show that subjective norms do not have a significant direct effect on intention to support intellectual capital in green SMEs. It is grounded on several reasons. For one, some scholars have founded that subjective norms and intention is the weakest link. For another, in the terms of organizational intellectual capital in green SMEs, many factors play parts in determining the intention to support, and subjective norms alone are not sufficient. Ethical belief, identity congruence, identity attractiveness and others might be more determinant in forming intention to support. It means green-SMEs' employees are objective to, and not swayed by, people pressure or majority voice circulating in society regarding on the importance of environment concern. Identification is supposed to have direct effect on intention to support intellectual capital accordingly. Identity is a central part of any individuals and is the strongest attitude that determines almost all of their behavior and behavioral predispositions. Cognitive, affective and evaluative aspects run at the same time makes identification the strongest force for entrenching relationship between individuals and group. The cognitive aspect in identification process involve strong reasons behind decision to form the relationship such as self-benefits, fulfillment and achievement. Affective aspect concerns with selfesteem that group can provide from clear-cut categorization and positive image. Evaluative aspect concern with the weight between the attainment in the terms of two aforementionedaspects and cost individuals burden that determines decision to continue or discontinue (or called dis-identification) relationship. If subjective norms are insufficient in determining decision to continue relationship, they should not have a direct significant effect on employees' intention to support intellectual capital, and requires a detour to arrive at individuals' decision to continue relationship in the form of employees' intention to support intellectual capital. One detour subjective norms could take is identification. If identification can warrant indirect significant effect of subjective norms on employees' intention to support organizational intellectual capital, it means that identification serves as a full mediator between subjective norms and intention. Regarding on the relationship between empathy and decision to continue relationship, the research result confirms the significant effect, implying that employees of green SMEs are commonly aware and attentive to what people at large concern about, responsive to it, and make consideration. If the existence of agreement allows for ideal convergence and purpose congruence, employees would feel the same emotional experience what people have been through. Comparison between what to attain by joining other people's world-view or mainstream voice regarding Pubtexto Publishers | www.pubtexto.com

environment concern and the costs by not joining in the form of suffer or misery by not providing help would determine the decision to support organizational intellectual capital. Empathy also has a direct effect on intention to support intellectual capital. Some scholars have argued that empathy is a close way to prosocial behaviors. Individuals with empathy have higher propensity to do something to moderate the situation, lessen the burden, and smooth out the obstacles other people is facing, as not doing it make him or herself distressed. Consideration between psychological cost of not doing help or support and gain in performing the behavior determines the decision. Any individuals want to be free from guilt of not providing help, and materializes his or ethical belief by doing something to sort out situation. In identification case, consideration of self-esteem and development, image, and reputation as well as social rules play a part. Individual and social levels differentiates between the two. While the force working in empathy makes it lead to behavioral intention, the strength is less powerful than that in identification.

Future Study

Future research can take a look in identification as a mediator in the relationship between empathy and intention. Sun (2010) proved that empathy did not a significant effect on identification. Future research should confirm between the two constructs in green-oriented SMEs context. By doing so, it could enrich knowledge regarding the nature of mediation served by identification in the relationship between empathy and intention. Identification could mediate relationship between empathy and behavioral intention as empathy does not necessarily lead to behavioral intention. The force provided by empathy is not as strong as identification does. It is also important to take into account of empathy as a mediator in the relationship between subjective norms and intention. The link between subjectivenorms, empathy, and intention is so far under-research, and could convey novelty value to management literature. Since identification and empathy are attitudes, their inclusion in the model of planned behavior should not exclude perceived behavioral control. Future research could bring up a more complete model that includes perceived behavioral control. Different sectors of business might require different attitudes to achieve intention to support organization's intellectual capital. Further analysis might provide a much deeper insight. Examination of their roles in comparison between green-oriented SMEs and non-green SMEs is also worthwhile.

Conclusion

The study should show that subjective norms-intention link is weaker than identification-intention, or even than empathy-intention. Especially in the case of intention to support organization's intellectual capital that entails all best efforts to fulfill. Identification has the highest effect on behavioral intention, as it is associated to identity that incessantly requires behavioral

performance to fulfill and materialize self-esteem, image, pride and reputation through categorization, bias favoritism and selfdevelopment. Identification warrants a closer relationship with organization as it engender sense of oneness as if the organization is within his or her interest. The relationship tends to be longlasting as it is derived from belonging need, which separation requires a strong logic and prolonged time. It is also more solidified as identification characteristically involve more than one individuals acting as a living community or society where mutual influence and common interest keeps their dynamics in motion. As a living community, people inside it follow certain rules. Empathy works in different ways. It comes from knowledge of other's experience, conjuring up the sense of one self's experience. There is no explicit rule of what to do after recognizing other's experience. Obligation to help or enact behavioral performance totally comes from within, exactly from interaction with oneself inner side. The force comes from consideration between psychological cost and gain in deciding behavioral performance. Norms is not social in nature, but from ethical judgment. No matter how close empathy and behavioral performance is, the absence of explicit rule, social sanction and expansion makes distance between thre individual and other people he or she observed linger. The distance is only covered when an individual observes, recognizes and has the same experiences as other does.

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