

THE REFLECTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION BUILT UPON SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY ON THE PERCEPTION OF ALIENATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

From the social perspective of higher education, the effect of organizational identification on undergraduate students gains importance in order to explain their perceptions of alienation. The aim of this study is to investigate and to quantify the relationship between the organizational identification built upon social identity theory and the perception of alienation in higher education. This study was hypothesized that Organizational Identification including the two categorical antecedents; namely, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education. The study group here used was selected from university students studying at a prestigious state university in Istanbul, Turkey in the 2015-2016 Academic Year. The scales of Organizational Identification, Organizational Distinctiveness, Organizational Prestige, and Alienation were applied to 201 university students. The SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used for analyzing the data obtained from the participants from the university. Independent-sample t-tests and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether there are any significant differences among the means of independent groups. In order to determine whether or not there has been any relationship between organizational identification and the undergraduate students' perception of alienation, correlation analysis was performed; and to quantify this relationship Multiple Linear Regression analysis was performed. The results of this study suggested that there was a significant effect of gender on alienation, with women receiving higher scores than men. For the demographic variable "age", there was a significant difference between age groups for organizational identification, organizational distinctiveness, and organizational prestige respectively, with the ones aged between 17-19. Additionally, school type was revealed to have a significant effect on the perceived organizational identification and alienation. For the demographic variable " the order of preference in the university application ", the results suggested that there was no significant difference between participants' order of preference in the university application and factors. It was also found out that organizational identification has a positive effect while organizational distinctiveness has a negative effect on alienation. Moreover, being Science High school graduates and female increased the alienation score. Finally, the scores of organizational identification predicted alienation through a positive correlation, but the scores of organizational distinctiveness predicted alienation through a negative correlation.

Key words: Organizational Identification, Organizational Distinctiveness, Organizational Prestige, Alienation, Regression, ANOVA, and Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Universities are social organizational forms having the aim of transforming people's lives through education and research. The number of studies focusing on the social structure of higher education has been increasing over the last few decades. Universities have always been rather complex social entities serving many different functions in societies (Välilä, 2014). Organizational identification (OID) is the outcome of social construction processes in which individuals define themselves in terms of their organizational membership. Students' identification with their university reflects value congruence with the institution and is reflected in communication (Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold, 2016). A strong attachment, or oneness, with an institution is reflective of organizational identification. Specifically, organizational identification is a form of social identification in which individuals define themselves in terms of their organizational membership (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

An individual's social identity has implications for the organizations with which they develop identification (Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold, 2016). Organizational identification is an important process by which people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives in the organization (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). From the social perspective of higher education, the effect of organizational identification on undergraduate students gains importance in order to explain their perceptions of alienation. This study aimed to explore and to quantify the relationship between the organizational identification built upon social identity theory and the perception of alienation in higher education. This study was hypothesized that Organizational Identification including the two categorical antecedents; namely, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is a social psychological analysis of group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations (Hogg, 2006). Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). The central hypothesis of social identity theory is that group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image (McLeod, 2008). Individuals tend to classify themselves and others into various social groups such as organizational memberships. Organizational identification is a specific form of social identification where the individuals define him- or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization (Mael & Asforth, 1992). As Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed, there are three mental processes involved in evaluating others: The first is categorization. We categorize objects in order to understand them and identify them. In a very similar way we categorize people (including ourselves) in order to understand the social environment. In the second stage, social identification, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to. If, for example, you have categorized yourself as a student, the chances are you will adopt the identity of a student and begin to act in the ways you believe as students act (and

conform to the norms of the group). There will be an emotional significance to your identification with a group, and your self-esteem will become bound up with group membership. The final stage is social comparison. Once we have categorized ourselves as a part of a group and have identified with that group, we tend to compare that group with other groups (McLeod, 2008).

Based on the social identity theory, Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as the part of an individual's self-concept deriving from his knowledge of membership of a social group together with value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Accordingly, social identity is formed mostly by the dynamics based on comparisons in groups. By differentiating between in-group from out-group on dimensions which the in-group falls at the evaluative positive pole, the in-group acquires a "positive distinctiveness", and hence a relatively positive social identity in comparison to the out-group. In this context, the main aim of individuals is to achieve positive social identity. Positively discrepant comparisons produce positive social identity and negatively discrepant comparisons produce negative social identity (Trepte, 2006). In organizations, individuals adjust their organizational behaviors as they identify themselves in the social context of the organization. It can be inferred that organizational identification is a specific form of social identification (Asforth & Mael, 1989). Therefore, identifications in organizational context are complex and difficult to be specified as social identity theory suggests some special components exist in organizations as a social category.

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification refers to the person's identification with the total organization, an affective response of attachment to the organization (Efraty, Sirgy, & Claiborne, 1991). Organizational identification is the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization. A person is strongly identified with an organization when (1) his or her identity as an organization member is more salient than alternative identities, and (2) his or her self-concept has many of the same characteristics he or she believes define the organization as a social group (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). In an organization an individual's social identity might be a more complex structure than one that only draws its sense of identification from the organization as a whole. With the given complexity and number of various social identities an individual can possess, it makes sense to also analyze organizational identification in greater detail than only identification derived from the super-ordinate structure of the organization (Moksness, 2014). When organizational identification is strong, a member's self-concept as incorporated a large part of what he or she believes is distinctive, central, and enduring about him- or herself (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994).

Social identity theory highlights the categorization and comparison processes that guide individuals' perception of the organization, such as its prestige or distinctiveness, and stimulate identification (Pratt, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Existing research suggests that individuals' perception of their organization as distinctive and prestigious are key criteria (Jones & Volpe, 2010; Carmeli, Gilat, & Weisberg, 2006; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

First, the distinctiveness of the organization's values and practices serves to differentiate the organization from others and provide a unique identity. Understandably, within the organization, distinctiveness is governed by "clarity and impermeability of group domains and boundaries" (Ashford & Mael, 1989, p. 24). When organizational leaders make salient and reinforce individuals' membership in and relationship to a unique group, they often spark strong levels of organizational identification (Jones & Volpe, 2010). The second factor that increases identification is the prestige of the group (Chatman, Ball, & Staw, 1986; Ashford & Mael, 1989). Willerman and Swanson (1953) found that members of higher prestige groups were more satisfied with their membership, and that there was a reciprocal relationship between membership size and prestige, with changes in one affecting the other. This, in turn, affected the group's ability to attract desirable members.

Alienation

Alienation is purported to be a universal feature of human experience (Seeman, 1983). At the present time, in all the social sciences, the various synonyms of alienation have a foremost place in studies of human relations. Investigations of the 'unattached,' the 'marginal,' the 'obsessive,' the 'normless,' and the 'isolated' individual all testify to the central place occupied by the hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science. (Seeman, 1959).

Seeman (1959) consolidated the concept "alienation" into a taxonomy of six variants: normlessness, cultural-estrangement, social isolation, meaninglessness, self-estrangement, and powerlessness. Therefore, alienation has been treated in the literature as both a psychological state and a sociological process (Barnhardt & Ginns, 2014; Yuill, 2011). The psychological state of 'alienation as powerlessness' may arise from the disempowering experience of excessive workload. The term 'sociological processes' refers, as such, to the causes of alienation that are located in individuals' experiences of social structures. Individuals in the role of 'student' in higher education may become alienated due, for instance, to negative experiences with tutors or lecturers, by the requirements of a course, or by failed attempts to assimilate into various social groups (Barnhardt & Ginns, 2014).

Alienation has been identified with a number of problems and negative consequences. These problems were found within the organization; however, it has wider social and psychological consequences (Sookoo, 2014). Underlying the particular research is the premise that lack of identification with either organizational or professional norms and values results from indifference or opposition to the norms and values. Where organizational norms and values conflict or are at least to some degree incompatible, the potential for role conflict is high (Greene, 1978). Indifference to the norms and values, on the other hand, would be expected to produce feelings of uncertainty or ambiguity, since the individual essentially has withdrawn from or limited access to two major sources of role definition (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).

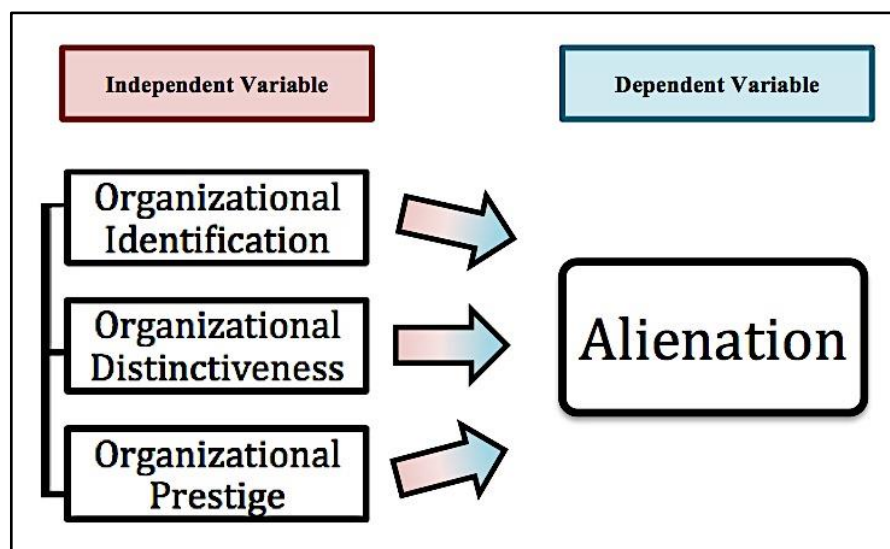
Identification with one's profession and not with the organization, however, was found to be associated with stronger feelings of role conflict and alienation, particularly within more formalized organizational settings. Indifference to both was

associated with role ambiguity and alienation. In short, it can be concluded that while the professional may not necessarily have to side with his or her profession or the organization—since he or she may identify with both or neither—there are nonetheless dysfunctions to not accepting organizational norms and values (Greene, 1978).

2. Research Model and Hypotheses

In the light of the explanations provided in the literature, it is expected that the organizational identification through two categorical antecedents; namely, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige would predict alienation. The aim of this study is to investigate and to quantify the relationship between the organizational identification built upon social identity theory and the perception of alienation in higher education. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1, and is followed by the hypotheses.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model



The theoretical model in Figure 1 illustrates the independent variables; organizational identification, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige can affect the perception of alienation directly.

Hypotheses

Research has shown that organizational identification has an effect on the perceived alienation (Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2007; Efraty, Sirgy, & Claiborne, 1991; Greene, 1978). When the level of perceived organizational identification lowers, some negative outcomes in organizations such as alienation may occur (Nicol & Rounding, 2014; Efraty, Sirgy, & Claiborne, 1991). Therefore, this study was hypothesized as follows:

H₁: Organizational Identification including through the two categorical antecedents;

namely, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education.

H₂: Only the level of perceived Organizational Identification influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education.

H₃: Only the level of perceived Organizational Distinctiveness influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education.

H₄: Only the level of perceived Organizational Prestige influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The research design of this study was specified as quantitative data collection including descriptive survey model in order to find out the relationship between organizational identification and undergraduate students' perception of alienation from the perspective of social identity theory.

Study Group

The study group here used was selected from university students studying at a prestigious state university in Istanbul, Turkey in the 2015-2016 Academic Year. Probability sampling was used to specify the participants. Among the specified groups, random selection was used to make the research.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, Organizational Identification, the independent variable, was measured with a six-item Likert-type scale previously used by Mael and Ashforth (1992). The coefficient α of 0.77 is acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

Two categorical antecedents of organizational identification derived from social identity theory were also examined: organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige (Jones & Volpe, 2010). Organizational Distinctiveness was measured with a seven-item Likert-type scale previously used by Jones and Volpe (2010). The coefficient α of 0.78 is acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003). Organizational Prestige, indicating the "degree to which the institution is well regarded both in absolute and comparative terms," was measured by selecting six relevant items from a perceived organizational prestige scale previously used by Mael and Ashforth (1992). The coefficient α of 0.78 is acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

Alienation, the dependent variable, was measured with a 24-item Likert-type scale created by Dean (1961) in relation to alienation. Therefore, 5 items (namely; item 4, 5, 14, 18, and 22) were excluded to improve test reliability after pilot-tested in order to measure undergraduate students' perception of alienation at university. The 19-item scale was tested and used in this study. The coefficient α of 0.72 is acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

Additionally, the demographic variables such as gender, age, high school type, and the order of preference in the university application were also measured. Besides, all the scales used in this research has a structure of the 5-point Likert scale with the options of “not at all”, “sometimes”, “once a while”, “fairly often”, and “always”.

Data Collection

The scales of Organizational Identification, Organizational Distinctiveness, Organizational Prestige, and Alienation were applied to 201 university students studying at a prestigious state university in Istanbul, Turkey at the place and time specified before.

Data Analysis

So as to analyze the data obtained from the participants from universities, the SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used. Independent-sample t-tests and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether there are any significant differences between the means of independent groups. In order to determine whether or not there has been any relationship between organizational identification and the undergraduate students' perception of alienation, correlation analysis was performed; and to quantify this relationship multiple regression analysis was performed.

4. Findings and Results

The demographic variables of the study were investigated at first in order to analyze the independent variables such as gender, age, high school type, and the order of preference in the university application. From descriptive statistics for the variables examined, it can be seen that the number of male students taking part in this research was 138 (68.7%) while the female participants were worth of 31.3% with the number of 63. 76.6% of the data were gathered from the students aged between 17 and 19 whereas 23.4% of the data from the students aged 20 and older. 129 students, worth of 64.2%, had graduated from Anatolian High School; 41 students, worth of 20.4%, from Science High School; and 31, worth of 15.4%, from other schools. In terms of the order of preference in the university application, 119 students, worth of 59.2%, had preferred the university where this study was made as their 1st -3rd order; 49 students, worth of 24.4%, as their 4th -6th order; and 33 students, worth of 16.4%, as their 7th order and more.

After analyzing the demographic variables, factor analysis was applied to the data gathered from the participants who were asked to respond to the items in the scales using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (always). As the questions used in this study had the structure of the 5-point Likert scale, each statement was calculated through the average of the interval values of scale using “not at all” between 1.00-1.80; “sometimes” between 1.81-2.60; “once a while” between 2.61-3.40; “fairly often” between 3.41-4.20 and “always” between 4.21-5.00. Descriptive statistical tests were used in order to analyze factors specified in the scales. Results are indicated in Table 1 through the data of sample size (N), arithmetic mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and standard error (SE).

Table 1: Scores of Measure

<i>Factor</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
Identification	201	2.42	4.68	3.77	0.50	0.04
Organizational Identification	201	1.00	5.00	3.39	0.76	0.05
Organizational Distinctiveness	201	1.57	5.00	3.56	0.65	0.05
Organizational Prestige	201	2.83	5.00	4.41	0.48	0.03
Alienation	201	2.00	4.21	2.97	0.42	0.03

As noted in Table 1, the arithmetic mean of Identification including all the sub-categories; namely, Organizational Identification, Organizational Distinctiveness, and Organizational Prestige, is 3.77 and the level of frequency is “fairly often” ($M=3.77$, $SD=0.50$); the arithmetic mean of Organizational Identification is 3.39 and its frequency level is “once a while” ($M=3.39$, $SD=0.76$); the arithmetic mean of Organizational Distinctiveness is 3.56 and the level of frequency is “fairly often” ($M=3.56$, $SD=0.65$). The arithmetic mean of Organizational Prestige is 4.41 and its frequency level is “always” ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.48$). The arithmetic mean of Alienation is 2.97 and its frequency level is “once a while” ($M=2.97$, $SD=0.42$).

As for tests of significance; gender, age, high school type, and the order of preference in the university application were tested to determine whether or not they influence the findings significantly. Independent Samples t-tests were performed for gender and age. There was a significant effect for gender on alienation at 10% significance level, ($t(199)=1.69$, $p < .10$), with women receiving higher scores than men. For the demographic variable "age", the results suggest that there was a significant difference between age groups for organizational identification at 5% significance level ($t(3)=-2.90$, $p < .05$), organizational distinctiveness at 5% significance level ($t(199)=-3.28$, $p < .05$), and organizational prestige at 5% significance level ($t(199)=-2.01$, $p < .05$) respectively, with the ones at the age between 17-19.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there are any significant differences between the means of school types and factors. The results suggested that there was a significant difference between school types and factors at 5% significance level ($p < .05$). Tukey HSD as a post-hoc analysis was performed in order to determine which school types among the sample have the significant differences. Accordingly, Anatolian High School graduates’ means of identification scores ($F(2.198)=3.096$, $p = .047$), of organizational distinctiveness scores ($F(2.198)=4.150$, $p = .017$), and of organizational prestige scores ($F(2.198)=3.076$, $p = .048$); Science High School graduates’ means of alienation scores ($F(2.198)=2.952$, $p = .055$) were found significant at 10% significance level. In other words, school type has a significant effect on the perceived organizational identification and alienation. For the demographic variable " the order of preference in the university application ", the results suggested that there was no significant difference between participants’ order of preference in the university application and factors at 5% significance level ($p > .05$).

The Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the strength of a linear association between organizational identification and the perception of alienation.

According to the results, these two variables were negatively correlated ($r(199)=-.176, p<.05$). In other words, undergraduate students' perceptions of organizational identification and alienation were found to have a negative relationship. Next, Linear Regression analysis was performed to predict the value of alienation, the dependent variable. Accordingly, it was revealed that the predictive power of women, age 17-19, Anatolian and Science High school graduates for the scores of organizational identification, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige was specified statistically significant at 1% significance level ($p = .005$) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Results of Linear Regression Analysis

Predictors	Response Variable	R	R ²	Rche	Fche	p
Women, Age 17-19, Anatolian High School, Science High School, Organizational Identification, Organizational Distinctiveness, Organizational Prestige	Alienation	.315 ^a	.099	.067	3.045	.005 ^b

- a. Dependent Variable: alienation
- b. Predictors (Constant)

As indicated in Table 2, this model ($R^2=0.099$) explains 9.9% of the variability of the dependent variable, alienation, in the sample. The regression model is statistically significant at 5% significance level ($F=3.045, p=.005$). On the one hand, organizational identification has a positive effect while organizational distinctiveness has a negative effect on alienation. Moreover, being Science High school graduates and woman increased the alienation score below 0.10 confidence level (see Table 3).

Table 3: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		p
	B	SE	β	t	
Organizational Identification	.140	.042	.253	3.361	.001
Organizational Distinctiveness	-.131	.062	-.203	-2.119	.035
Organizational Prestige	.050	.078	.058	.644	.520
Anatolian High School	.067	.081	.077	.822	.412
Science High School	.185	.098	.179	1.895	.060
Age 17-19	-.001	.069	-.001	-.019	.985
Women	.108	.063	.120	1.732	.085
Constant	2.627	.300		8.770	.000

As a result of Multiple Linear Regression analysis used for interpreting the parameter estimates, it was found out that the scores of organizational identification in the same direction ($p= .001$) and the scores of organizational distinctiveness in the opposite direction ($p= .035$) were significant predictors for alienation at 5% significance level.

In other words, the scores of organizational identification predicted alienation through a positive correlation, but the scores of organizational distinctiveness predicted alienation through a negative correlation, which means both H₂ and H₃ are accepted. The predictive power of other independent variables for alienation was not significant (see Table 3).

None of the hypotheses except H₂ and H₃ were met the assumptions of the conceptual model. The first assumption is that Organizational Identification including the two categorical antecedents; namely, organizational distinctiveness and organizational prestige would influence the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education, which was not met. The second assumption was that only the level of perceived Organizational Identification would affect the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education, which was met. The third assumption was that only the level of perceived Organizational Distinctiveness would influence the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education, which was met by having specified a negative relationship between organizational distinctiveness and alienation (see Figure 2). The final assumption was that only the level of perceived Organizational Prestige would affect the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education, which was not met.

Figure 2: The conceptual Framework of the Accepted H₃

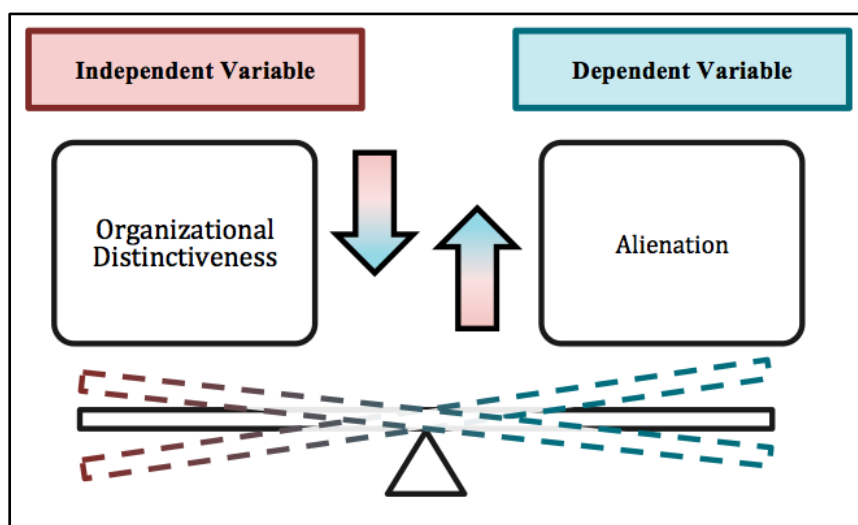


Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between organizational distinctiveness and perceived alienation, revealed in this study. As the level of undergraduate students' perceived organizational distinctiveness gets higher, the perception of their alienation lowers; or as the level of perceived organizational distinctiveness lowers, the perception of alienation increases.

5. Discussion

The present research sought to investigate and to quantify the relationship between the organizational identification built upon social identity theory and the perception of alienation in higher education, and it was hypothesized that Organizational Identification including the two categorical antecedents; namely, organizational

distinctiveness and organizational prestige influences the undergraduate students' perception of alienation in higher education. The results of this study suggested that there was a significant effect for gender on alienation, with women receiving higher scores than men. On the basis of existing research, it is indicated that female students score higher than their male peers on alienation (Woflsetter-Kausch & Gaier, 1981; Loughrey & Harris, 1992), which is consistent with the results found out in this research. However, there are also conflicting findings demonstrating that males most often experience much higher levels of alienation than female students (Shoho, 1996; Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, & Thoma, 2003).

Another important finding in this research is that, for the demographic variable "age", there was a significant difference between age groups for organizational identification, organizational distinctiveness, and organizational prestige respectively, with the ones at the age between 17-19, which points out consistency with the similar existing research (Zheng & Chen, 2013; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Additionally, school type was revealed to have a significant effect on the perceived organizational identification (Roker & Banks, 1993) and alienation. Alienation in education is defined as the act of the individuals alienating themselves from knowledge, learning, from any process related with learning, these processes becoming ever-increasingly meaningless in view of the individuals, lack of interest towards the learning process, and learning process becoming gradually dull and unpleasant (Sidorkin, 2004). In other words, these attitudes cause students to fail to integrate with the school and to fail to belong to the school.

This study also suggested that organizational identification had an effect on alienation, which is consistent with the other existing research in the literature (Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2007; Efraty, Sirgy, & Claiborne, 1991; Greene, 1978). In this research, this effect was detected as positive among undergraduate students. Another finding is that organizational distinctiveness has a negative effect on alienation (Nicol & Rounding, 2014; Efraty, Sirgy, & Claiborne, 1991). In other words, it was revealed that the scores of organizational identification predicted alienation positively, but the scores of organizational distinctiveness predicted alienation negatively. Organizational identification is a central, continuous and a distinct feature of any given university. The term "distinctiveness" here implies a classification that identifies the organization as recognizably different from others (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Organizational distinctiveness is a phenomenon resulting from a common set of values that shape institutional activities and untie key constituencies, both internal and external. A distinctive college or university has a unifying set of values that are apparent to and esteemed by faculty, students, staff, alumni, and the public (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992). Nevertheless, organizational distinctiveness commonly has been associated with highly selective colleges, but selectivity is not a prerequisite to distinctiveness (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992), which supports that the findings obtained from this study, for the demographic variable "the order of preference in the university application", suggested that there was no significant difference between participants' order of preference in the university application and factors.

Social identity theory states that people often become attached to certain group affiliations and desire to describe their own identities in terms of that particular group

(Hogg & Terry, 2001). Therefore, this theory allows students to analyze their approach to prestigious “groups” that they may belong to (Todd, Andrew, & Sowieta, 2009). However, alienation was defined in the literature as a social phenomenon (Fromm, 1955) and also as a psychological standpoint (Seeman, 1959). Students and faculty who are drawn to an institution for its distinctive qualities make a good match and are likely to stay at the institution and sustain the campus culture and ethos (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992). Therefore, as long as their identities match with the values of the distinct universities, their level of perceived alienation lowers as they feel belonging to the university community. Distinctive institutions are viewed as having value systems that have significantly shaped and continue to shape individual and institutional behavior (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992). The stronger an institution has these value systems; the lower its community including the faculty and students perceives alienation.

6. Conclusion

In this research paper, undergraduate students from a prestigious state university in Turkey were the units of analysis. The research found that university students’ level of organizational identification and organizational distinctiveness had influenced their perceived level of alienation. Additionally, this research adds to the body of knowledge about student alienation in higher education. The research indicated that distinct universities have such value systems that their community including the undergraduate students can feel themselves belonging to that prestigious institution. Otherwise, their perceived level of alienation is affected directly by the perceived organizational identification.

Higher education leaders pursue organizational distinctiveness in their institutions if they want the community not to experience high levels of alienation, which hinders learning (Barnhardt & Ginns, 2014), cooperation (Ben-Porat & Yuval, 2012) motivation (Hadjar, Backes, & Gysin, 2015), and indirectly success (Hadjar, Backes, & Gysin, 2015). As for recommendations, in order to create organizational distinctiveness at universities, leaders are expected to identify institutional values, followed by clarification, communication; to act on unifying the values and themes found; to conduct a situation analysis to determine if the school is a likely candidate for distinctiveness (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992); and to create such an organizational culture that its members internalize the process of organizational identification.

Author biographies

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