HORUS UNIVERSITY IN EGYPT

Faculty of Business Administration

HORUS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR COMMERCIAL RESEARCH

The Role of Organisational Identification in Enhancing Employee Innovative Behaviour in Merged and Acquired Banks

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June 2025, Vol 1, No 4,

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Abstract

This study investigates how organizational identification influences employee innovative behaviour within the context of post-merger and acquisition environments in the banking sector. Drawing on data collected from 186 banking employees and analysed using PLS-SEM, the research confirms that organizational identification significantly predicts innovative behaviour. The findings have been further enriched by the author's lived experience in a similar post-merger context, offering additional qualitative insight into the psychological and behavioural responses of employees during the institutional transition. This study contributes to the literature by empirically establishing organizational identification as a key mechanism for sustaining innovation post-merger.

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic and competitive global market, frequent job changes among employees are often driven by social instability and weakened organizational ties (Hamzagić, 2018). Within this context, organizational identification, how strongly employees define themselves with their organization, has become a central focus in organizational behaviour studies. It strengthens psychological attachment, enhances a sense of belonging, and improves employees' motivation to contribute to organizational goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

High organizational identification is linked to better job performance, increased organizational citizenship behaviours, stronger job satisfaction, and lower staff turnover (Riketta, 2005).

Furthermore, when employees strongly identify with their workplace, they are more resilient during change, more creative in solving problems, and more engaged in driving improvement. It also reduces job insecurity and enhances commitment to long-term goals. Therefore, cultivating strong organizational identification is essential for fostering innovation, learning, and maintaining a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving business landscape (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Background and Importance of the Study:
Organizational identification boosts employee commitment and drives proactive and creative behaviour by aligning personal and organizational goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This alignment is especially important after mergers when uncertainty and cultural differences can disrupt performance (van Dick et al., 2006). However, research on how organizational identification operates in post-merger environments—particularly in the innovation-driven banking sector, remains limited (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007).

Research Gap and Justification:
Although prior research has linked organizational identification to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Edwards, 2005; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), its direct impact on employee innovative behaviour remains underexplored. Furthermore, little contextualized research examines how this relationship plays out during organizational turbulence—particularly during Mergers and Acquisitions**.** This study aims to address this gap by exploring the role of organizational identification in driving innovation among employees within the post-merger banking sector.

Theoretical Framing and Research Questions:
Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this study posits that employees who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to go beyond formal job requirements and engage in innovative acts. This paper explores the following research question:
To what extent does organizational identification influence employee innovative behaviour in merged and acquired banking institutions?

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the direct relationship between **organizational identification** and employee **employee innovative behaviour**.
- To contribute empirical evidence from a post-merger banking environment.
- To enrich theory by incorporating practical experience and sector-specific challenges.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Organizational identification, or how employees define themselves through their organization, strengthens alignment with organizational goals and values (Ashforth &

Mael, 1989; Edwards, 2005). This is especially important during organizational change, like mergers and acquisitions, which can disrupt employee stability (Van Dick, 2001; He & Brown, 2013).

At the same time, **innovation** is critical for organizational success. Innovative behaviour involves recognizing problems, generating ideas, and implementing solutions (Damanpour, 1991; Agarwal, 2014; Xerri & Reid, 2018). As competition grows, fostering employee innovation has become essential for driving continuous change and maintaining a competitive edge (Tsai & Tseng, 2010).

2.1 Social Identity Theory as a Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their perceived membership in social groups. In an organizational setting, this implies that employees who identify with their organization are more likely to internalize its mission, adopt its values, and engage in behaviours that support its success. Social identity becomes a motivational force that drives employees to go beyond their job descriptions, particularly when they perceive a strong overlap between their personal and organizational identities (Dutton et al., 1994).

2.2 Organizational Identification and Employee Behaviour

Organizational identification improves job satisfaction, and commitment, and reduces turnover (Riketta, 2005; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), but its link to **innovative behaviour**, like idea generation and implementation, is less explored (Janssen, 2000). Studies show it boosts creativity and initiative (Hui et al., 2020). However, mergers and acquisitions can disrupt identity and reduce innovation unless a clear organizational identity is re-established (He & Brown, 2013; Younas et al., 2020). Research on this in post-merger banking contexts remains limited.

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2.4 Hypothesis Development

When employees see themselves as integral parts of the organization, they are more likely to express novel ideas, advocate for change, and take risks that support organizational progress. Based on this theoretical rationale and existing empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on employee innovative behaviour in merged and acquired banks.

H1a: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on employees' idea generation in merged & acquired banks.
H1b: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on employees' idea promotion in merged & acquired banks.
H1c: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on employees' idea implementation in merged & acquired banks.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative, cross-sectional research design** to examine the relationship between organizational identification and employee innovative behaviour in merged and acquired banks. The study was designed to test the proposed hypothesis using empirical data gathered through a structured questionnaire.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of interest comprises employees working in banks that have undergone recent mergers or acquisitions. The population of this research will include the staff of merged & acquired banks in the last two years. The researcher found that ABC Bank merged with Blom Bank, involving approximately 893 employees. Additionally, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) completed the acquisition of Ahli United Bank Egypt, which employed a total of 3,900 individuals.

So, the population of this research consists of 4,793 employees, and The final sample consisted of 186 respondents who completed the questionnaire. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across departments and job levels. Participants were selected based on their employment during or shortly after the organizational merger to ensure relevant exposure to post-merger dynamics.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a **structured questionnaire** developed based on previously validated scales:

- **Organizational Identification:** Measured using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992), covering dimensions of loyalty, belonging, and value congruence.
- **Employee Innovative Behaviour:** Assessed via the three-stage model of, which includes idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation (Janssen, 2000).

The questionnaire was reviewed through pilot testing with 30 employees to ensure clarity and contextual relevance.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating internal consistency. Construct validity was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Convergent validity was established with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, and discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading checks.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS 3.0. This method is appropriate for models that are exploratory or involve latent variables with complex relationships. The analysis included:

- Measurement model assessment (factor loadings, CR, AVE, discriminant validity)
- Structural model testing (path coefficients, t-values, R^2)
- Hypothesis testing and mediation analysis

4. Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)**,** using SmartPLS 3.0. The analysis proceeded in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (to assess reliability and validity), followed by evaluation of the structural model (to test hypotheses and path relationships).

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

To ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs, the following indicators were assessed:

- **Internal Consistency Reliability:** All constructs reported Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency.
- **Convergent Validity:** All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.50, confirming convergent validity. Factor loadings for individual indicators exceeded 0.70.
- **Discriminant Validity:** Established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, where each construct's AVE square root exceeded its correlations with other constructs. Additionally, cross-loading analysis confirmed that items loaded more strongly on their respective constructs than on others.

These results support the adequacy of the measurement model for further structural analysis.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

The statistical analysis results provide compelling support for the first hypothesis and all its corresponding sub-hypotheses. As presented in table (4.11) and figure (4.1), organizational identification was found to have a statistically significant and positive effect on all three components of employee innovative behaviour, idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation.

An analysis of the coefficient of determination (R^2) values indicates that organizational identification accounts for 28.4% of the variance in idea generation, 15.6% of the variance in idea promotion, and 9.5% of the variance in idea implementation. These impacts can be demonstrated as follows:

- Based on the regression coefficient and its statistical significance ($\beta=0.390$, $p<0.001$), the impact of organizational identification on employee innovative behavior is most pronounced for idea generation, thus corroborating sub-hypothesis H1a.
- The influence of organizational identification on employee innovative behavior is ranked second highest for idea promotion, a finding that supports sub-hypothesis

H1b, as indicated by the regression coefficient and its statistical significance (β=0.216, p<0.001).

- The impact of organizational identification on employee innovative behavior is ranked third in magnitude for idea implementation, a result that lends support to sub-hypothesis H1c, as evidenced by the regression coefficient and its associated statistical significance (β=0.166, p=0.016).

Table (4.11)
The Direct Effect of Organizational identification on employee innovative behavior

Relationship	β	P value	Result
Organizational identification → Idea generation	0.390*	< 0.001	Supported
Organizational identification → Idea promotion	0.216*	< 0.001	Supported
Organizational identification → Idea implementation	0.166*	0.016	Supported

Source: Prepared by the researcher in the light of the statistical analysis results

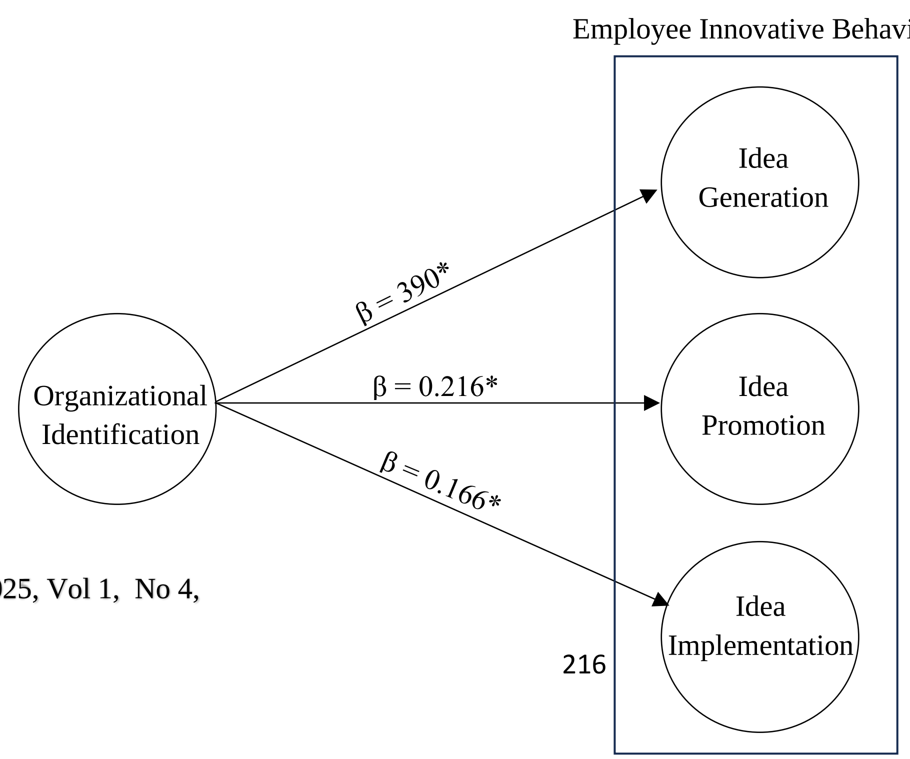

Figure (4.1) Results of testing the first study hypothesis

5. Discussion

5.1) H1: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on employee innovative behaviour in merged & acquired banks. The following sub-hypotheses stem from this main hypothesis:

H1a: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on idea generation in merged & acquired banks.

The study results revealed that Organizational identification has a significant direct positive impact on idea generation among employees in merged and acquired banks that aligns with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which posits that individuals who identify strongly with their organization are more likely to internalize its values and contribute to its goals.

Organizational identification enhances psychological ownership, which can foster creativity and initiative (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Empirically, (Carmeli et al., 2007) found that employees with high organizational identification show greater psychological engagement, which is positively associated with the generation of novel ideas. In the context of mergers and acquisitions, where uncertainty often prevails, (Bartels et al., 2007) argue that a strong sense of identification encourages proactive behaviour, such as ideation, to navigate transitional challenges.

H1b: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on idea promotion in merged & acquired banks.

The results show that Organizational identification has a significant direct positive impact on idea promotion among employees in merged and acquired banks. This result is consistent with Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which emphasizes that when employees perceive alignment with the organization's identity, they are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviours such as advocating for their ideas.

Employees with a strong organizational identity are more willing to share and promote ideas because they trust the organization will support them (Van Knippenberg, 2000). Employees with a high degree of organizational commitment and identification are more inclined to push their ideas forward, especially when they believe in the relevance and benefit to the organization (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). This becomes even more important in post-merger environments, where idea promotion can be vital to innovation and integration efforts.

H1c: Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on idea implementation in merged & acquired banks.

The acceptance of this hypothesis is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory and the Componential Theory of Creativity (Amabile, 1988), which suggest that psychological attachment to an organization empowers individuals not only to come up with and promote ideas but also to implement them. (Scott & Bruce, 1994) argue that organizational identification enhances persistence and risk-taking behaviour, both critical for idea implementation.

In addition, identification with the organization strengthens the motivation to follow through with innovative initiatives that contribute to organizational success. Particularly in merged and acquired settings, the successful implementation of new ideas can serve as a critical mechanism for building unity and fostering a shared culture (Dutton et al., 1994).

Therefore, the current finding is well-grounded in theory and consistent with prior research, reinforcing the role of organizational identification as a driver of creative behaviour in complex organizational contexts.

The identity confusion, altered structures, and redefined leadership left employees feeling disconnected. This empirical observation aligns with the results, confirming that identification is a key predictor of innovative behaviour. However, as the new leadership gradually built a sense of shared purpose and communicated a coherent vision, the feeling of belonging slowly returned, along with creative engagement from employees. The gradual re-emergence of identification supports the theoretical framing of identification as a recoverable construct post-disruption. This adds scientific value to current literature by suggesting that organizational identification can be strategically reconstructed in post-merger contexts, thereby reinvigorating innovative capacities within teams.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the findings offer empirical support for the social identity theory, emphasizing that employees who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to experience higher levels of congruence with their job, workgroup, and organization as a whole. This, in turn, fosters the psychological conditions necessary for innovative behaviour, such as trust, commitment, and engagement. By examining the multidimensional aspects of person-environment fit (person-job, person-group, and person-organization), this research extends the literature by showing that different fit domains contribute distinctly to innovation-related outcomes.

Secondly, the study introduces a novel integration of concepts in a post-merger setting, a context often marked by identity uncertainty, cultural clashes, and job-role ambiguity. By applying the framework in this environment, the research contributes to the growing call for context-sensitive organizational theory, highlighting how identification are particularly critical in periods of organizational change.

Finally, the research encourages further examination of boundary conditions that may moderate the relationships between organizational identification and innovative behaviour, such as leadership style, communication effectiveness, and organizational support, which can inform future theoretical models.

5.3 Practical implications

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on organizational identification and employee innovative behaviour. It is the first to examine the interrelationship among these two constructs, organizational identification, and employee innovative behaviour, within the context of merged and acquired banks.

Firstly, the research highlights the critical role of organizational identification in fostering employee innovation. Leaders should actively promote a shared organizational identity during and after mergers by reinforcing a unified vision, values, and culture. Initiatives such as internal communication strategies, symbolic integration activities, and inclusive leadership practices can strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the new entity, which in turn enhances their willingness to contribute innovative ideas.

secondly, this study suggests that promoting innovation is not solely about resources or rewards, but also about shaping the social and psychological climate in which employees operate. Banks undergoing mergers and acquisitions should invest in developing a supportive environment that values employee voice, encourages experimentation, and recognizes innovative contributions.

By applying these insights, organizations can better navigate the complex dynamics of post-merger integration and build a more adaptive, innovative, and cohesive workforce.

6. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several significant contributions to the organizational behaviour and innovation literature, particularly within the context of post-merger and acquisition environments.

First, it extends the application of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) by empirically validating the role of organizational identification as a key predictor of employee innovative behaviour. While previous studies have linked organizational behaviour to commitment and citizenship behaviours, its direct relationship with innovation-related outcomes, especially in disrupted environments, has received limited attention. This research addresses that gap, positioning organizational behaviour not merely as an attitudinal construct, but as a motivational driver of proactive and creative behaviours.

Second, the study contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of organizational behaviour, showing that identification is not static but constructible during institutional change. The findings support the view that employees can re-establish strong identification with a restructured organization and that this renewed connection significantly enhances innovation. This insight adds nuance to existing models of organizational behaviour by introducing temporal and adaptive dimensions, especially relevant in post-merger conditions.

6.2 Practical Contributions

From a managerial perspective, the study provides actionable insights for leaders navigating mergers or major structural shifts.

Most notably, it positions organizational identification as a strategic lever for restoring and stimulating innovation. In the early stages of a merger, when employees are often disengaged or uncertain, leaders must invest in communication, transparency, and shared value articulation. This is not merely a cultural exercise; it is directly linked to the organization's capacity for innovation and adaptation.

Second, the study highlights the importance of employee engagement through identity rebuilding. Practitioners can support this process by reinforcing continuity where possible, recognizing individual contributions, and empowering employees to co-create the future vision of the organization.

Third, by showing that employees who identify with their organization are more likely to initiate and implement ideas, this research underscores the need to embed identity-focused practices into innovation management strategies, such as participatory decision-making, innovation labs, and cross-functional collaboration.

In highly regulated and competitive sectors such as banking, these practices can help institutions move beyond compliance and efficiency to achieve sustained innovation and differentiation.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the relationship between organizational identification and employee innovative behaviour within the context of merged and acquired banks. Anchored in Social Identity Theory, the research aimed to address a critical gap in the literature by examining whether Organizational identification, a construct traditionally associated with commitment and satisfaction, can also serve as a psychological driver of innovation during organizational change.

The findings offer robust empirical support for the proposed hypothesis, demonstrating that Organizational identification significantly and positively predicts IB ($\beta = 0.723$, $p < 0.001$). With an R^2 value of 0.523, the model explains over half of the variance in innovative behaviour, highlighting the explanatory power of Organizational identification in shaping creative engagement at work. These results affirm that fostering a sense of belonging, loyalty, and value congruence is not only essential for post-merger stability but also for reigniting innovative energy across teams.

Theoretically, the study contributes to a more dynamic understanding of Organizational identification as a constructible force that can adapt and recover after identity-disrupting events such as mergers. Practically, it underscores the role of leadership and organizational culture in rebuilding identification and leveraging it as a tool for sustainable innovation.

In conclusion, the study offers compelling evidence that employee innovation does not emerge in a vacuum; it is cultivated through identity, shaped by culture, and sustained by alignment. For organizations facing structural transformation, strengthening identification is not simply a cultural imperative, it is a strategic necessity.

8. Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides compelling insights into the role of organizational identification in promoting employee innovative behaviour in post-merger banking institutions, it is important to acknowledge its limitations and outline avenues for future research.

8.1 Limitations

Firstly, the study adopts a cross-sectional design, capturing employee attitudes and behaviours at a single point in time. This limits the ability to infer causality or observe how organizational identification and innovative behaviour evolve throughout different phases of a merger or acquisition. Organizational identity and innovation are dynamic constructs, particularly during periods of change, and may fluctuate significantly over time.

Secondly, the research was conducted within the banking sector in a single national context. While banks offer a rich environment for studying post-merger integration, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other industries or international settings where cultural values, organizational norms, and innovation processes differ. Sector-specific dynamics and national context likely influence how employees interpret and respond to organizational change.

Thirdly, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to common method variance and social desirability bias. Although steps were taken to ensure scale reliability and validity, responses could still reflect perceptual biases, particularly in organizations undergoing structural shifts.

8.2 Future Research Directions

Future studies should consider adopting a longitudinal research design to explore how organizational identification and employee innovative behaviour develop and interact over time during and after organizational transitions. Tracking these constructs across different integration stages would offer deeper insights into identity reconstruction processes and innovation emergence.

Expanding the research to other sectors and cultural contexts is also recommended to test the robustness and generalizability of the findings. Comparative cross-industry or cross-national studies could reveal whether the positive influence of identification on innovation holds across environments with varying levels of structural stability, innovation intensity, and employee autonomy.

Finally, the use of mixed-methods approaches, combining survey data with interviews or observational insights, could yield a more holistic view of how employees interpret and respond to identity changes and how this influences their willingness to innovate.

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