

# Team identification more than organizational identification predicts counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior and mediates influences of communication climate and perceived external prestige

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## Abstract

Organizational identification has been linked to both positive behavior and negative behavior at work. Based on theory and research that suggest that for many organizational behaviors, team identification may be a more important influence than organizational identification, we advance a research model proposing that team identification, more than organizational identification, predicts counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior and is the more important mediator of the influence of communication climate (CC) and perceived external prestige (PEP) on these outcomes. This research model was tested in a survey of  $N = 300$  employees of four Italian organizations from different sectors. Results show that team identification, but not organizational identification, predicts counterproductive behavior and citizenship behavior and mediates the influence of CC and PEP. To enhance team identification for sustaining positive voluntary behavior at work, two possible strategies could be considered: improving perceived external prestige and promoting a good communication climate.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognized that employees' psychological linkage to their employing organization plays a key role in motivating positive behavior at work, such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Lee et al., 2015; Riketta, 2005; Sidorenkov et al., 2023) that are key to sustainable and effective organizational functioning (Organ et al., 2006). In attempts to understand and predict this influence of individuals' psychological relationship with the organization, social identity analyses have increasingly assumed center stage (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartel et al., 2007; Blader et al., 2017; Brown, 2017;

Van Dick, 2016; Dutton et al., 1994; Haslam et al., 2003; He & Brown, 2013; van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2018). These analyses highlight the positive influence of employee organizational identification in inspiring positive behavior at work. Research has provided quite consistent support for this, as for instance evident in a meta-analysis by Lee et al. (2015). Yet, from the perspective of research in management, positive behavior is not the only relevant organizational behavior. There is also a desire to understand what leads employees to engage in, or refrain from, undesirable and counterproductive work behavior (CWB; Liao et al., 2021; Marcus et al., 2016; Robinson & Bennet, 1995;

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Spector & Fox, 2010). Such behavior too has been the subject of social identity research and has been shown to be negatively related to organizational identification (Ciampa et al., 2021; De Clercq et al., 2021; Pagliaro et al., 2018).

This work points to organizational identification as a positive influence on organizational behavior. There is also theory and evidence, however, to point to team (workgroup, work unit) identification as the stronger and, at least for positive outcomes, more influential social identification in organizations (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Riketta & Dick, 2005). This is understood from the considerations that stronger identifications tend to be more salient and, thus, more influential, as well as that most behavior on the job is embedded within the team (workgroup, work unit) contexts, which renders team identification the more salient social identification compared to organizational identification. Indeed, even when team identification and organizational identification tend to be positively correlated, they are sufficiently independent to have diverging effects (Van Dick et al., 2008; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Porck et al., 2020). This theory and evidence give rise to the question of whether we can expect team identification to be the more important influence, not only in predicting positive behavior such as OCB, but also in predicting negative behavior such as CWB. In the present study, we address this issue and propose a model in which team identification, more than organizational identification, predicts both OCB and CWB, as well as mediates, more than organizational identification, the influence of two antecedents of identification, namely communication climate (CC) and perceived external prestige (PEP), on OCB and CWB. In doing so, we contribute to the development of our understanding of the influence of social identifications (i.e., organizations offer multiple potential targets of identification, first and foremost team and organization; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2018) on organizational behavior by capturing how team and organizational identification may not only diverge in their role in positive outcomes but also in their role in negative outcomes.

## 2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Core to the social identity approach to employee-organization relationships is the notion that group memberships are, to a greater or lesser extent, self-definitional (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Individuals may conceive of the self in terms of “we” rather than “I,” including the group in their sense of self (Turner et al., 1987). Organizational identification reflects the degree to which an individual experiences this merging of self and employing organization—the perceived oneness between self and organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). The more people identify with the organization, the more the organization's interests are experienced as their own and the more likely the individual is to think and act with the organization's best interest in mind (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Hekman et al., 2016; van Knippenberg, 2000). This extends also to

unethical behavior committed to protect the organization (Conroy et al., 2017).

While the positive influence of identification is evident in job attitudes such as satisfaction and motivation (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000) and in behavioral outcomes such as performance (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Miao et al., 2019), the behavioral expression of the positive influence of organizational identification can be expected to be most evident in discretionary behavior—extra-role behavior for which the individual has relatively many degrees of freedom (e.g., Organ, 1990). Extra-role behavior, as captured by the concept of OCB (Organ, 1990), reflects discretionary behavior that may benefit others in the individual's direct environment (i.e., colleagues) as well as the organization at large (Organ et al., 2006). Given its clear links to the organization's interest, organizational identification would be expected to be positively related to citizenship behavior, and this is exactly what research has shown (e.g., van Dick et al., 2006, 2008; Lee et al., 2015; Livi et al., 2018; Riketta, 2005; Sidorenkov et al., 2023).

Yet, extra-role behavior does not only include positive and desirable behavior. Discretionary, extra-role behavior may also include acts that, if anything, are counterproductive and harmful to the organization (Spector & Fox, 2010). Just like management has an interest in stimulating citizenship behavior, it has an interest in preventing or reducing CWB.

Coyne et al. (2005) and Hunt (1996) define extra-role behavior as voluntary behavior that goes beyond the prescribed requirements of the job. Such behavior can be either supportive and helpful or detrimental and harmful to the organization, its employees, or both—extra-role behavior includes both OCB and CWB. CWB involves intentional action by individuals to infringe core organizational policies, rules, and procedures. By doing so, these actions damage the organization and/or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). CWB differs in severity and includes both acts of commission and omission, such as deliberately not passing on telephone messages, stealing from the organization, gossiping about its leaders, or acts of psychological or physical aggression (Spector et al., 2006). These undesirable actions can negatively influence organizational performance. Hence, CWB should be studied to prevent their insurgence and, eventually, take action to correct them.

CWB and OCB have been demonstrated to be separate constructs (Dalal, 2005; O'Brien & Allen, 2007). Accordingly, the question of whether team, more than organizational, identification plays a role in predicting CWB is a conceptual and empirical issue to study in its own right (i.e., rather than presume from evidence for positive behavior such as OCB, even when that provides a basis for theory development). Indeed, while, on average, moderate negative correlations were found in the past between the two constructs, it was demonstrated that they are inflated by the same widely used measurement method—self-ratings—which are subject to social desirability (Dalal, 2005). When this variance was taken into account, the correlation observed was much lower ( $r = -.15$ ; Dalal, 2005). Moreover, different antecedents were found for the two constructs, further corroborating discriminant validity. For instance, in one study,

the most important predictor of OCB was conscientiousness, while for CWB, it was trait anger (O'Brien & Allen, 2007).

The core of identification's influence on organizational behavior lies in the motivation it engenders to pursue the organization's best interest (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Hekman et al., 2016; van Knippenberg, 2000). While the relationship with positive behavior may, in that sense, be more obvious, refraining from behavior that would harm the organization or its members should also be stimulated by that motivation (Vadera & Pratt, 2013). We would therefore expect a negative relationship between organizational identification and CWB, and the evidence supports this (Ciampa et al., 2021; De Clercq et al., 2021; Mackey et al., 2021; Pagliaro et al., 2018). In addition, there is some evidence that identification makes individuals less sensitive to influences on behavior that originate in social exchange considerations (van Knippenberg et al., 2007; Tavares et al., 2016). As poor social exchange relationships may render individuals more prone to deviant behavior (Holländer, 1990), organizational identification may also be seen to buffer against influences that might otherwise invite CWB; thus, lowering their occurrence.

What these studies do not address, however, is the influence of team identification on CWB, and this is what assumes center stage in the current study. In addressing the differential importance of team identification and organizational identification in predicting CWB, we also included tests of relationships with OCB to contextualize the findings for CWB in relationship to the study of these more established relationships. We, thus, also advance formal hypotheses for OCB but do not present these as a contribution of the current study other than by its contribution to contextualizing CWB findings. Moreover, to more fully capture the proposed diverging influences of team identification and organizational identification, we do not only focus on CWB and OCB as behavioral outcomes but also on how these identifications may mediate the influence of antecedents to these identifications as indirect influences on these outcomes. Specifically, we focus on CC and PEP as two well-established influences on organizational identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts et al., 2001) and develop our model to include how team identification can be expected to be more important as mediator than organizational identification.

### 3 | CC, PEP, AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TEAM VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Research in the determinants of identification has identified two important classes of antecedents (cf. Fuller et al., 2006; He & Brown, 2013; Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003): factors that convey the group or organization's respect for the member, which cater to individuals' need to belong; and factors that give rise to pride in group or organizational membership, which speak to individuals' desire for a positive self-image. CC and PEP represent these two classes of antecedents.

CC captures the experience of openness and trust (candor) in communication, perceived participation in decision-making (or the feeling of having a voice in the organization), and supportiveness (or the feeling of being taken seriously; Dennis, 1975; Guzley, 1992; Redding, 1972; Smidts et al., 2001). It is psychological climate—individuals' perceptions and interpretations of organizational communication in terms of psychological meaning and significance (cf. Jones & James, 1979). CC is an important predictor of organizational identification—more important and more proximal than the content of organizational communication (Neill et al., 2020; Smidts et al., 2001). The reason for this is that the psychological experience of a positive CC reflects respectful treatment by the organization (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003)—it conveys the organization's respect for the individual.

Respectful treatment is not only an important precursor to identification but it has also been established as an important influence on both OCB (Colquitt et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2020) and CWB (SimanTov-Nachlieli & Bamberger, 2021; Skarlicki et al., 1999). Understood through the lens of respectful treatment then (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003), we may expect that CC is related to both CWB and OCB and that this relationship is mediated by identification.

PEP, or the organization's construed external image (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), reflects perceptions of what outsiders believe about the organization. More specifically, PEP is defined as the way in which an employee thinks outsiders view his or her organization (and thus him or herself as a member of the organization itself (Dutton et al., 1994). This perceived reflected appraisal feeds into the degree to which the individual can derive a positive self-image from the organizational membership, which is a major motive underlying organizational identification (Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Not surprisingly, then, the relationship between PEP and organizational and work-group identification is well-established (Ali al-Atwi & Bakir, 2014; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts et al., 2001).

PEP in and of itself is perhaps less obviously linked to extra-role behavior (Boğan & Dedeoğlu, 2020; Meynhardt et al., 2020; Schaarschmidt et al., 2015; Tuna et al., 2016). As Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) argue and show for OCB, however, as a factor that stimulates identification, PEP may, through its influence on identification, exert an influence on extra-role behavior. In at least one study, the effect of the PEP on CWB toward the organization was found to be mediated by organizational identification (Ali al-Atwi & Bakir, 2014).

Whereas this work points to a mediating role of organizational identification, it did not consider team identification and the theory and evidence suggesting that it may be the more important identification influencing OCB and CWB, as well as the more important identification in mediating the effects of factors that foster identification on these outcomes. There are two elements to this argument. The first is that, as per the earlier work reviewed above, CC and PEP can be expected to not only influence organizational identification but also to influence team identification.

The second is that team identification can be expected to be a stronger influence on OCB and CWB.

Starting with the latter, for most people, being employed by their organization is psychologically experienced as being employed in their team (workgroup, work unit, department, etc.). The team is the primary social context in which they are embedded and in which they perform their job, and within-team interactions and experiences shape the job experience more than the more abstract membership in the organization as a whole (Moreland & Levine, 1997). This has two important consequences. First, team identification tends to be the stronger and more salient (i.e., cognitively activated; Turner et al., 1987) identification compared to organizational identification (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Riketta & Dick, 2005). Second, not only because it is the stronger identification but also because most job experiences are embedded in the team rather than in the organization at large, team identification is the more salient reference point for these attitudes and behaviors and, therefore, more predictive of most job attitudes and behaviors than organizational identification (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Riketta & Dick, 2005). This not only means that team identification can be expected to predict OCB (as per prior research: Haslam et al., 2009; Janssen & Xu Huang, 2008; Van Der Vegt et al., 2003) but also that team identification is a stronger predictor of OCB compared to organizational identification (indeed, once the influence of team identification is taken into account, organizational identification may not be related to these outcomes). Considering team identification as a predictor of CWB gets us into more novel territory, but the same basic logic should apply: stronger team identification is associated with a stronger internalization of team interests (van Knippenberg, 2000) and, thus, should be negatively associated with CWB as behavior that stands to harm team interests. Importantly, because the team is also the more likely context in which CWB would be enacted, team identification can be expected to be more strongly related to CWB than organizational identification.

Because the employment experience is embedded in the team, influences on social identifications at work such as CC and PEP, are also experienced by most employees as embedded within the team. Thus, even though CC and PEP are perceptions in reference to the organization, it is one's team membership as much as one's membership in the organization that provides the context for these perceptions. Thus, even though CC and PEP reference the organization and will influence organizational identification, both are influences on team identification too. This is an important proposition because of the first consideration outlined here—team identification is the more important influence on OCB and CWB. Accordingly, CC and PEP can be expected to influence OCB and CWB through their influence on identification, and this mediating role of identification can be expected to be stronger for team identification than for organizational identification.

**H1a:** Team identification mediates the negative relationship between CC and CWB more strongly than organizational identification.

**H1b:** Team identification mediates the negative relationship between PEP and CWB more strongly than organizational identification.

**H2a:** Team identification mediates the positive relationship between CC and OCB more strongly than organizational identification.

**H2b:** Team identification mediates the positive relationship between PEP and OCB more strongly than organizational identification.

## 4 | METHOD

### 4.1 | Sample and procedure

Three hundred employees were drawn from four different Italian organizations operating in the following sectors: energy ( $n = 77$ ), food ( $n = 73$ ), entertainment ( $n = 73$ ), and justice ( $n = 77$ ). The first three are private companies, while the last one is public. We intentionally drew our sample among employees who worked in organizational units (i.e., teams), in both the public and private sector and in different commodities sectors to enhance the generalizability of the results. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (via UNIPARK software). The employees received a web link to a specific version of the questionnaire at their email address. Given the academic nature of the study, great emphasis was put on assuring the anonymity of responses, and participants agreed to participate on a voluntary basis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. For each organization, two follow-up emails were sent to increase the response rate. In the final sample, 56% were men and 44% were women, with an age range from 22 to 60 years ( $M = 37.99$ ). Concerning educational qualification, 4.3% declared to have a middle school degree, 53.3% had a high school degree, 39.3% had a university degree, and 3% chose not to specify their educational qualification. The response rate was 85%.

### 4.2 | Measures

Organizational identification was measured by the Italian version of Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item scale. Respondents used a six-point (1 = "not at all agree" and 6 = "completely agree") scale to indicate the extent to which they were in agreement with each item. Item examples are "When someone criticizes (name of organization) it feels like a personal insult"; "When I talk about (name of organization), I usually say we rather than they." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .93. Team identification was measured with the same instrument, and items were modified to directly refer to each organizational unit. Item examples are "When someone criticizes (organizational unit) it feels like a personal insult"; "When I talk about (organizational unit), I usually say we rather than they." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .87.

The measure of PEP was based on the Italian translation of Mael and Ashforth's organizational prestige scale (1992), which is composed of four items (e.g., "Our organization has a good reputation"; "Our organization is looked upon as a prestigious company to work for"). The items were rated on a five-point disagree/agree scale. The four items yielded an  $\alpha$  of .77.

CC was measured by the Italian translation of the 15 statements used by Smidts et al. (2001). These items were rated on a five-point disagree/agree scale. Sample items are: "When my direct boss tells me something, I trust him/her to be candid and honest" and "Our general management is open to suggestions we put to them."  $\alpha$  was .90.

OCB was measured by the Italian translation of nine items from Smith et al.'s (1983) scale (e.g., "Helping other employees with their work when they have been absent" and "Volunteering to do things not formally required by the job"). Respondents used a five-point scale (1 = "not at all characteristic" and "very characteristic") to indicate the extent to which each item was characteristic of oneself. The reliability for this scale was .82.

CWB was measured by the Italian translation of 10 items from Robinson and Bennett's (1995) list of deviant work behavior (e.g., "Exaggerated about your hour work" and "Blamed your coworker for your mistake"). Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had engaged in each of the listed behaviors on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("very often"). All items in this scale were negatively worded. The internal consistency was .89.

## 5 | RESULTS

Data were then analyzed using the SPSS macro PROCESS, Model 4. Two models were computed. In the first model, CC was posited as the predictor, team and organizational identification as the mediators, CWB as the outcome, and PEP as the covariate. The second model was identical to the first one, except that OCB was set as the outcome. In accordance with MacKinnon et al. (2004), we computed 95% confidence intervals using the percentile bootstrap method based on 5000 samples. Confidence intervals that do not encompass zero indicate that the indirect effect is statistically different from zero at  $p < .05$ . Before inclusion in the model, all variables underwent

standardization. As a supplementary analysis, we also ran the models with gender, educational qualification, and company as covariates. The results of these supplementary analyses lead to the same conclusions as presented here.

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all variables are reported in Table 1. The results of the two models are shown in Figure 1. Regarding the first model, both CC and PEP positively predict team identification, which, in turn, negatively predict CWB. Similarly, both CC and PEP positively predict organizational identification, but the latter does not predict CWB. Regarding the second model, similarly to the first model, while team identification positively predicts OCB, there is no significant effect of organizational identification on OCB (see Figure 1).

In Table 2, the indirect effects are reported. As can be seen, the indirect effects of both CC and PEP on CWB through team identification are negative and significant, while through organizational identification, they are nonsignificant. Moreover, the indirect effects of both CC and PEP on OCB through team organization are positive and significant, while through organizational identification, they are nonsignificant. These results confirm our Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b: CC and PEP predict both team identification and organizational identification, but only team identification mediates their influences on OCB and CWB.

## 6 | DISCUSSION

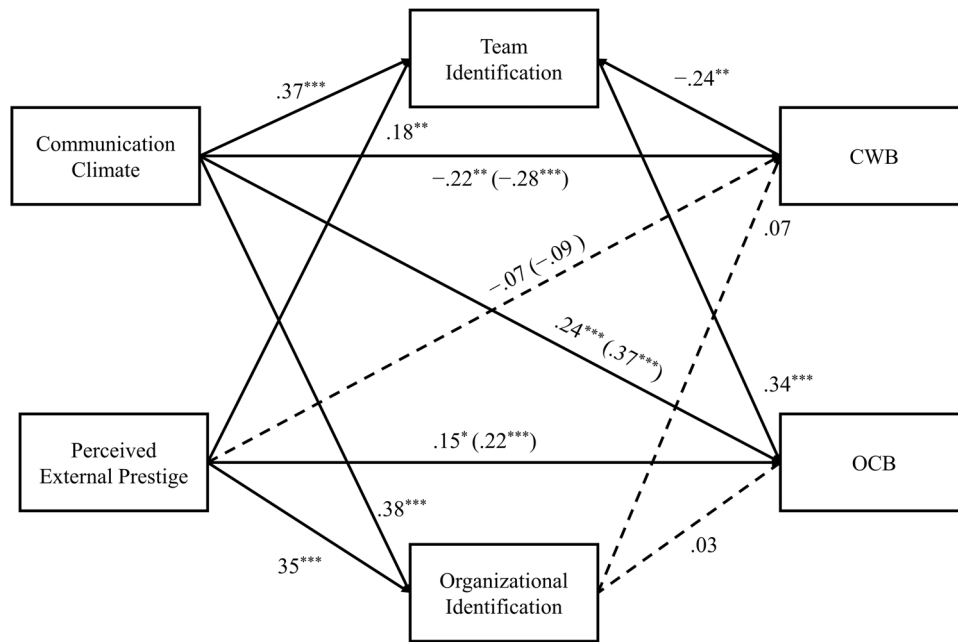
Social identity analyses of organizational behavior have established a positive relationship between social identifications in organizations and valued work attitudes and behavior (Lee et al., 2015; Riketta, 2005). Increasingly, research also shows evidence of negative relationships of organizational identification with undesirable behavior (Ciampa et al., 2021; De Clercq et al., 2021; Pagliaro et al., 2018). The present study contributes to this growing attention to the relationship between identification and negative behavior such as CWB, by bringing in insights about the stronger role of team identification, as compared with organizational identification, in driving most organizational behavior. We show that team identification, more than organizational identification, negatively predicts

**TABLE 1** Correlations, means, and standard deviations of all variables in the analyses.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1. Prestige	-						3.58	0.74
2. Communication climate	.52**	-					3.27	0.72
3. Team identification	.37**	.46**	-				4.45	1.14
4. Organizational identification	.55**	.57**	.74**	-			3.96	1.46
5. OCB	.41**	.48**	.52**	.49**	-		3.78	0.73
6. CWB	-.23**	-.32**	-.32**	-.27**	-.43**	-	1.37	0.49

Abbreviations: CWB, counterproductive work behavior; OCB, organizational citizenship behavior.

\*\* $p < .01$ .



**FIGURE 1** Results of the mediation model. All estimates are standardized. Dotted lines represent nonsignificant paths. Total effects are presented in brackets. CWB, counterproductive work behavior; OCB, organizational citizenship behavior. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001.

**TABLE 2** Indirect effects of the mediation models.

Outcome	Predictor	Mediator	Completely standardized indirect effects		
			Effect	BootSE	BootCI
CWB	Communication climate	Team identification	-0.09	0.04	<b>-0.172 to -0.015</b>
		Organizational identification	0.03	0.04	-0.045 to 0.100
	Perceived external prestige	Team identification	-0.04	0.02	<b>-0.098 to -0.004</b>
		Organizational identification	0.02	0.03	-0.042 to 0.089
OCB	Communication climate	Team identification	0.12	0.04	<b>0.057 to 0.200</b>
		Organizational identification	0.01	0.04	-0.072 to 0.078
	Perceived external prestige	Team identification	0.06	0.03	<b>0.012 to 0.120</b>
		Organizational identification	0.01	0.04	-0.062 to 0.075

Note: Significant confidence intervals are represented in bold.

Abbreviations: CWB, counterproductive work behavior; OCB, organizational citizenship behavior.

CWB as well as positively predicts OCB and that team identification accordingly also plays a stronger role in mediating the effects of antecedents of team and organizational identification on CWB (confirming our H1a and H1b) and OCB (confirming our H2a and H2b). The current theory and findings, thus, add to the argument that the study of social identification at work benefits from not only considering organizational identification but also team identification.

### 6.1 | Theoretical implications

In the organizational literature, the interest in CWB is growing. Deviant and counterproductive behavior can have strong disruptive

effects that belie their low frequency and that are hard to “override” with more positive actions (Felps et al., 2006). Viewed in that light, then, identifying influences that curb people’s tendency to engage in CWB is of great importance to the effective management of teams and organizations, and the present findings pointing to the role of team, over organizational identification, in this respect are of clear theoretical importance.

The fact that we could also tie CC and PEP to CWB in the same model via the mediating role of team identification is also valuable. This complements earlier findings focused on organizational identification with the significant insight that team identification is the more important mediating influence. While the finding that team identification predicts OCB is less novel, here, too, there is a value-added in

support of our research model that points to team identification as a more important influence than organizational identification for OCB—both in terms of its direct relationship and in terms of its mediating role in the indirect influences of CC and PEP.

PEP and CC are not only interesting in and of themselves but also as representatives of two classes of influences on identification: factors that instill a sense of pride and factors that convey respect (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003). These findings, thus, also suggest that other influences associated with pride and respect (cf. Fuller et al., 2006) may similarly affect CWB through their influence on identification. Tyler and Blader (2000), for instance, advance the fairness of interpersonal treatment as an important factor conveying respect (Koper et al., 1993) and, thus, affecting identification, and we would therefore expect it would fulfill a role similar to that of CC. While, again, such associations should be tested rather than assumed, the present analysis offers a strong basis for the pursuit of these options in future research.

While of less importance conceptually, the fact that we were able to include OCB in the current framework and found relationships consistent with earlier analysis (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) is important in positioning the current study of the identification-CWB relationship within the broader literature. Indeed, the fact that we were able to replicate, in a sense, earlier findings for OCB and, at the same time, establish independent influences on CWB as a distinct behavioral outcome testifies both to the clear connections with earlier work and to the fact that CWB cannot be subsumed under OCB, but should be studied in its own right.

## 6.2 | Limitations and future directions

No study is without limitations, and the current study has its share. A first and obvious limitation is its cross-sectional design, rendering the study mute in matters of causality and common method variance a potential concern. Replication with preferably experimental methodology in future research would, thus, have clear added value. We also recognize that reliance on self-reports of behavior is less than ideal, but at the same time, note that in the case of undesirable behavior such as CWB, the issue is somewhat more complicated than with desirable behavior such as OCB (i.e., which we assessed for comparison purposes and not as the main focus of our study). First, undesirable and deviant behavior is notoriously hard to observe for others (e.g., peers, supervisors) because its undesirable nature invites employees to engage in such acts outside of others' line of vision and awareness (Berry et al., 2012). Therefore, in research, they are routinely assessed as self-reports (e.g., Liao et al., 2004). Moreover, there is reason to believe that self-reports of undesirable behavior are less prone to social desirability biases and more veridical than self-reports of desirable behavior, as for instance evidenced in replications of self-report findings of undesirable behavior with objective behavioral measures (Rus et al., 2010a, 2010b). The self-report nature of the current CWB measure, thus, clearly is no strength, but there is reason to believe that it may be less of a

weakness than it may appear to be at first blush (see Berry et al., 2012 for a meta-analysis). Even so, if future research could include other-source measures of CWB, that would be highly valuable.

Lastly, although we demonstrate that our findings hold across different companies, in both the public and private sectors, and in different commodities sectors, further research is needed to enhance generalizability. First, only one of the four organizations was drawn from the public sector and thus, future studies could consider samples better balanced in this respect. Moreover, further commodities sectors could be considered in the future. All in all, this research may strengthen the value of the findings presented here.

## 6.3 | Implications for practice

In terms of broad managerial implications, results show that organizations may promote identification at the group level to prevent and/or reduce counterproductive behavior. To enhance team identification in relation to voluntary behavior (both OCB and CWB), two possible strategies could be considered: improving PEP and/or capitalizing on it for internal matters; and giving information concerning goals, values, and achievements in an appropriate way (cf. Smidts et al., 2001); more broadly framed, to build pride and to convey respect (Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003). Thus, organizations could promote a good CC in terms of openness and trust in communication, perceived participation in decision-making, and supportiveness; and increase perceptions of external prestige, for instance, through “employer branding” programs targeted at conveying more favorable impressions of their own organization to employees (cf. Dutton et al., 1994).

## 7 | CONCLUSION

The last decade has seen analyses of social identity processes in organizations rapidly developing into a major perspective in organizational behavior. The present study provides an important building block in these analyses by putting a category of discretionary, undesirable, and deviant workplace behavior on the agenda of social identity research and providing important first evidence for the role of team, over organizational, identification in curbing people's tendency to engage in this behavior and, at the same time, in supporting more desirable behavior as OCB.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

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