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**Impacts of organizational identification on psychological well-being and job stress of
German employees**

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Abstract

This paper explores how organizational identification is related to employees' well-being and stress perception. A model was developed to explore the role of three possible mediators (work engagement, self-efficacy, resilience). Using a sample of N=148 from different German organizations, the results of this cross-sectional study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between organizational identification and well-being through work engagement while resilience mediates the negative relationship between organizational identification and job stress. No significant results were found for self-efficacy. This paper discusses ways to increase organizational identification, focusing on Generation Y&Z and the impact of well-being and stress reduction on organizations.

Keywords

organizational identification; well-being; job stress; work engagement; resilience; self-efficacy; generation Y&Z

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1. Introduction

As Richard Branson stated: “If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients” (Boyle 2018). This assumption is supported by App, Büttgen, and Lohmüller (2016) who emphasize the value of employees as a key resource for companies due to their knowledge and competencies. Therefore, to achieve long-term success, organizations need to attract and retain the best employees. However, the intensified competition for suitable employees has become a significant challenge for many companies, particularly in light of the paradigm shift from a supplier-oriented to a demand-oriented job market (Autor 2015). Nowadays, highly qualified employees have the freedom to choose their employers (Nikolić and Lazarević 2022).

In addition to the shortage of labor, there are other trends and post-pandemic developments regarding the work environment, highlighted by Flüter-Hoffmann and Stettes (2022). Only 10% of employees in Germany (11% in the EU) worked remotely or at least in a hybrid way in 2019. During the pandemic in 2020, this share increased to 49%, mainly due to government regulations. Advantages such as increased flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance have led to 38% still being in home office regularly or occasionally even after the pandemic at the end of 2021. To capture the anticipated individual and organizational benefits of hybrid work, employers must provide support and flexibility as well as redesign physical and digital workplaces to accommodate the changing and diverse requirements of employees (Molina-Sánchez et al. 2022).

This thesis examines the effects of organizational identification (in the further course of this paper abbreviated as OI) on the psychological well-being and job stress perception of employees. The paper aims to sensitize companies to the rapidly changing working environment and offer practical implications to proactively counteract challenges such as a labor shortage. In addition to a literature review regarding the variables examined and employer branding, an anonymous quantitative survey was conducted about the relationship between OI

and psychological well-being as well as job stress. Three other variables - work engagement, self-efficacy, and resilience - were examined whether they could act as mediators to explain the relationship between OI and one of the two dependent variables. Accordingly, six different hypotheses were formulated.

OI is the psychological connection between an individual and the organization in which a sense of affinity and belonging to the organization is created based on cognitive and affective identification (Edward 2005). OI is of great importance to organizations as it brings some positive effects on employees (i.e., increased work engagement, dedication to work, job satisfaction, lower turnover) (Prieto et al. 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Van Dick et al. 2004; Van Knippenberg 2003). In addition, there may be advantages in terms of increased attractiveness as an employer which is essential given the shortage of skilled workers (Banerjee, Saini, and Kalyanaram 2020). Understanding the impact of OI on well-being and job stress is essential as it has significant consequences for individuals, organizations, and society. Increased employee well-being can contribute to greater organizational success in the long run, e.g. through lower turnover and higher productivity (Targoutzidis et al. 2014). Enhanced stress perception can lead to higher healthcare costs and disadvantages in the labor market through increased turnover (Dessler 2000). It is therefore important that management creates a healthy working environment (Vijayan 2017) and strengthens the relationship between employees and the company through authentic, compelling communication of values, mission, and vision (App, Büttgen, and Lohmüller 2016). Since a lot of research has been done about how OI relates to various job outcomes but little research exists about their impact on employee well-being and workplace stress, this paper will explore these relationships.

Peichl, Sauer, and Wohlrabe (2022) show that in a European comparison, the shortage of skilled workers is by far the highest in Germany. 42.8% of German companies stated that they are currently facing a shortage of skilled workers. In comparison, companies from Italy

(7.0%), Spain (8.4%), and Portugal (11.8%) are significantly less affected. For this reason, the empirical research focused on Germany, and the survey was conducted in German. When filling vacancies, German companies have difficulties finding adequate employees and are, regarding the talent competition, required to take appropriate measures to position themselves as appealing employers (Nikolić and Lazarević 2022). Approximately 72% of the study participants were between 20 and 29 years of age, which largely reflects Generation Z. Nikolić and Lazarević (2022) illustrate the change in values of Generation Z. Intangible values, flexibility, purpose, and commitment are more important to the new generation of employees than status. The concept of sustainability also plays a major role in Generation Z's value system. The extent to which companies can meet these challenges is examined in the discussion section.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis

2.1 Organizational Identification

According to Edwards (2005), the concept of OI has become a central concept in the field of organizational behavior and is gaining traction in management research. This is because OI is regarded as an important psychological state that reflects the underlying relationship between the employee and the organization and, as such, can clarify and predict a wide range of important attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Edward (2005) defines OI as a psychological linkage between an individual and the organization where a feeling of attachment and belonging to the organization, based on cognitive and affective identification, is created. Attachment to the employer can be divided into three components (self-representation, goal sharing, and affective commitment) which altogether define the strength of an individual's cognitive and affective attachment to their employer. The first component relates to self-representation, the extent to which the individual identifies as a member of the organization (Ashforth and Humphrey 1997). Edwards and Peccei (2007) suggest that the more an individual

feels a sense of belonging, the more strongly someone identifies with the organization. The same is true for the second component: sharing the organization's main communicated goals and values. At the core of most conceptualizations proposed in the literature is the notion that employees share the organization's goals and values which should be considered one of the most important defining characteristics of identification. The third component concerns the individual's affective commitment to the organization. This is about the feeling of attachment and belonging to the organization felt by employees. The higher the attachment and affiliation of the individual to his employer, the higher the OI (Ashfort and Humphrey 1997). Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) state that through identification, employees can be influenced and used to serve the organization's purpose. Therefore, the employee's goals and the organization's goals become more and more alike, making the employee work harder to achieve the goals.

Since a lot of research has been done about how OI relates to various job outcomes (i.e., turnover and job performance), little research exists about the impact on employee well-being and job stress. Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) indicate that OI has a positive effect on job satisfaction. Employees with a strong and positive attachment to their organization also exhibit high levels of work engagement as well as dedication to their work which accordingly increases job satisfaction (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Van Dick et al. (2004) examined the relationship between OI and turnover using job satisfaction as a mediator and found strong support for this relationship. Van Knippenberg (2003) emphasizes that by promoting identification through identification management strategies, turnover can be prevented or reduced. In this context, highlighting the shared mission, vision, and unique culture of the organization is important. In particular, charismatic, and transformational leaders who communicate a vision to their employees but also set participative group goals can positively contribute towards this (Wegge and Haslam 2003) which is further explored in the practical implications. To expand knowledge

about the role of OI on well-being and job stress, this thesis is going to explore these relationships further.

2.2 Well-being

Well-being was divided by Grant, Christianson, and Price (2007) into the following different dimensions: First, psychological well-being which examines the level of satisfaction with what is happening at work. Here, the emotions and attitudes of workers in the work context are analyzed. In contrast to job satisfaction, subconscious aspects are taken into account. Further dimensions are physical well-being which focuses on health, and social well-being which includes aspects of fairness, equality, and equal opportunities. Psychologists have developed an index of well-being that includes all three parameters to holistically assess a person's well-being (Diener and Seligman 2004). In this paper, well-being refers to the psychological dimension of well-being. Disabato et al. (2016) explain that the psychological dimension can be divided into a eudemonic and a hedonic dimension, with the eudemonic aspect focusing on the employee's potential and goal achievement. The hedonic aspect focuses on the employee's sense of pleasure and enjoyment which can lead to a positive or negative emotional state. Thus, the first aspect refers to fulfillment and reflection of the work while the second refers to fulfillment and satisfaction which is partially the same as job satisfaction.

According to Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) as well as to Hogg and Terry (2000), identification contributes in particular to the satisfaction of important human needs such as the need for belonging, security, and self-actualization. In addition, employees who identify strongly with their group tend to perceive people in the same group more positively which strengthens cooperation. Therefore, employees who identify closely with their organization should have higher levels of well-being than less identified employees. Avanzi et al. (2012) found that OI increases well-being by reducing workaholism but when identification is too

intense workaholism can increase which has a negative impact on the well-being of an employee. The well-being of employees is of great importance for their health, performance, and motivation in the work context. A positive working environment and a good work-life balance can help employees to feel better and thus be more productive (Grant, Christianson, and Price 2007). Preventive approaches in the company can prevent stress symptomatically and thus ensure the health and well-being of employees (Vijeyaranjan and Trautner 2014). Morgeson and Campion (2002) demonstrate that managers may achieve positive synergies for well-being by redesigning work to clarify that challenging tasks are motivating but also exhausting. At the same time, they show that managers can balance complexity and specialization by considering trade-offs, thereby promoting both, job satisfaction and health. Therefore, improving the well-being of employees can contribute to greater corporate success in the long term (Targoutzidis et al. 2014).

2.3 Job Stress

According to Houdmont, Cox, and Griffiths (2010), work stress is defined as a negative psychological state that can arise from an individual's dynamic engagement with their work environment. Workplace stress is often considered in isolation from other important workplace variables. Here, either a person's stressors (i.e., sources of stress) or coping mechanisms (i.e., stress coping skills) are examined. It is becoming increasingly clear that workplace stress should be analyzed in the context of work, thus as part of numerous dynamic workplace variables to identify the effects of organizational stress and individual responses. Vijayan (2017) shows that job stress affects employees in their day-to-day life and therefore harms their job performance. Job stress can be caused by various factors such as low salary, overwork, lack of motivation, or incentives. Dessler (2000) states that other external environmental factors like job security, work schedules, and the workplace can influence work stress. He also points

out that everyone has an individual perception of stress, even though the same job is performed because personal factors also affect the perception of stress. Spurgeon, Mazelan, and Barwell (2012) agree that different types of pressure in the work context can have an impact on employees' well-being and effective work performance. At the organizational level, negative effects can occur for employees such as increased absenteeism, resistance to change, or lower motivation. The negative consequences can also lead to higher healthcare costs for the organization as well as cause costs and disadvantages in the labor market due to increased turnover (Desseler 2000). Vijayan (2017) recommends that management create a healthier work environment through efficient work distribution, the organization of workshops for a better work-life balance, or alternative shift timings.

2.4 Work Engagement

The first mediator to be analyzed is work engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2002) define work engagement as a fulfilling, positive state of mind in the work environment. It is characterized by the following three dimensions: dedication, vigor, and absorption. Dedication refers to experiencing a sense of importance, enthusiasm but also challenge, and at the same time having a strong focus on one's work. Absorption is characterized by the fact that the work is enjoyable with time passing quickly and difficulty in disengaging from the work. Vigor regards a strong level of perseverance, energy, and drive at work (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) explain that the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, used in this paper, refers to these three dimensions. High engagement can be seen as a strong identification with the work, as it is experienced by the subjects as inspiring as well as challenging. Those who score high on absorption tend to be engrossed in their work and feel penetrated and carried away by it. An employee who identifies strongly with their company is more likely to see sense and purpose in their work which in turn can lead to higher levels of work engagement (Meyer

and Parfyonova 2010). When people are engaged, they are more likely to experience a positive psychological state characterized by high levels of energy and immersion in their work (Schaufeli et al. 2006). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argue that engaged employees feel full of energy can identify with their work and see themselves as being able to handle the demands of their job well. They assume that a positive, strong psychological attachment to the organization and the internalization of its goals increase the commitment of employees to their work (dedication), their mental resilience (vitality), as well as the chance to become absorbed in their work (absorption). Shimazu et al. (2014) found out that work engagement predicts future well-being (i.e., high life satisfaction, low ill-health). Engagement is positively related to health, resulting in better performance opportunities for engaged workers. In addition, a moderate negative correlation was found between engagement and psychosomatic complaints such as headaches or chest pain (Demerouti et al. 2001). Therefore, hypothesis 1a (H1a) and 1b (H1b) are proposed:

H1a: Work engagement mediates the positive relationship between OI and well-being.

H1b: Work engagement mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress.

2.5 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy represents a part of self-evaluation (Tafarodi and Swann 2001). It can be understood as an employee's assessment of their competencies for managing tasks in everyday work and associates a high level of self-efficacy with high self-confidence (Bandura 1997). De Clercq, Haq, and Azeem (2019) refer to one's competence in terms of coping with management or strategy meetings as well as long-term problem-solving. In contrast, employees with low self-efficacy rate their problem-solving skills and their influence in everyday work less highly. An employee must believe in his abilities which enable him to cope with the task under difficult

conditions. However, for appropriate, effective performance of the task, an employee needs not only the ability but also the belief or self-efficacy. There is a bilateral influence of both factors which are irreplaceable for the effective functioning of a person (Bhati and Sethy 2022). Higher OI can lead to an increase in self-efficacy as individuals become more confident in their ability to contribute to organizational goals and overcome challenges (Meyer and Parfyonova 2010). Moreover, research by Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) has shown that social comparison processes mediate the relationship between OI and self-efficacy. Thus, employees with increased OI are more likely to compare themselves to their successful and self-confident peers which may lead to an increase in their self-efficacy. Schwarzer and Warner (2013) also address that high self-efficacy beliefs can have a positive impact on motivation and can demonstrate resilience when adversity arises. By activating affective and motivational behavioral mechanisms in stressful situations, self-efficacy beliefs can support resilience and thus reduce job stress. Therefore, hypothesis 2a (H2a) and 2b (H2b) are proposed:

H2a: Self-efficacy mediates the positive relationship between OI and well-being.

H2b: Self-efficacy mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress.

2.6 Resilience

Resilience has been variously defined by Smith et al. (2008) as adaptation, resistance to disease, recovery from stress, or the ability to recover. The last two definitions have been the focus of research for the past several decades and are the focus of the resilience scale used to measure resilience in this paper. Recent research by Shin, Taylor, and Seo (2012) identifies employee's resilience as crucial to organizational adaptability in uncertain and dynamic business environments. This means that a high level of resilience in times of change is conducive to the change process. Resilience can mediate between OI and well-being, as

individuals who identify strongly with their organization can develop a sense of belonging and support, and thus are more likely to develop resilience (Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli 2006). Research by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2006) finds that positive psychological resources such as optimism, hope, and satisfaction which can be elicited through OI are positively related to resilience and can buffer the negative effects of stress. Rutter (2006) also states that resilience helps employees to reduce stress perception and to facilitate their adaptation to stressful and dynamic environments. Therefore, hypothesis 3a (H3a) and 3b (H3b) are proposed:

H3a: Resilience mediates the positive relationship between OI and well-being.

H3b: Resilience mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model that represents the six hypotheses mentioned above.

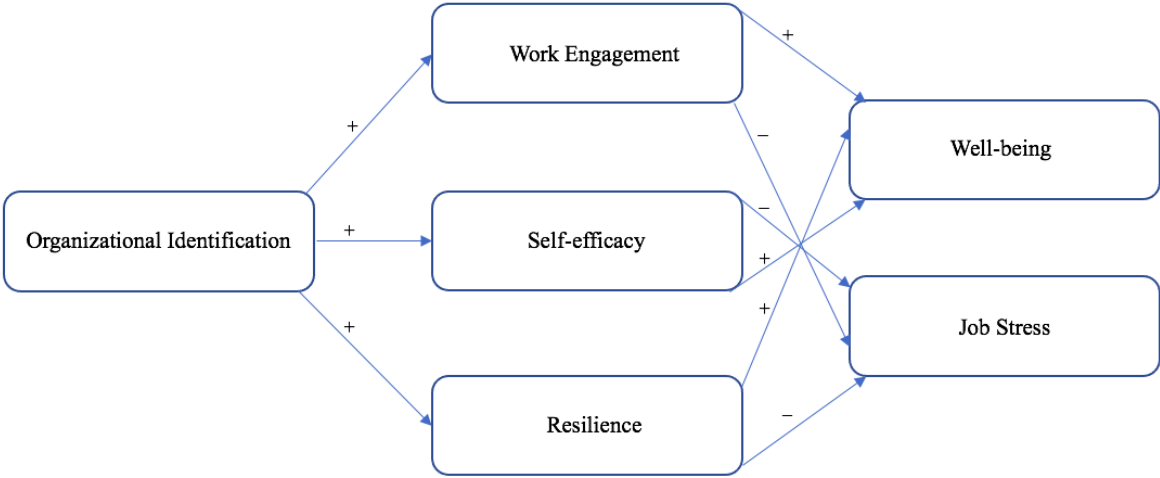


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Procedure

The participants for this study were recruited from various occupational fields and companies throughout Germany as Germany has by far the highest labor shortage in a European comparison (Peichl, Sauer, and Wohlrabe 2022). The requirements for participation in this study were fluency in the German language as it was conducted in German and current employment. The survey was conducted online using Microsoft Forms and took an average of five minutes to complete. A total of 148 participants were registered for this study, with 63% male and 36% female. 73% were between the ages of 20 and 29, 18% between 30 and 49, and 9% between 50 and 69. The majority of employees are working for less than five years (76%), 12% between five and ten years, and 13% more than ten years for their current company. Also, most of them are full-time employed (67%). Nearly a quarter of them are doing an internship (22%), and the other 11% are part-time employed. Regarding the educational level, only 9% have a school diploma as their highest qualification, and about 10% have an apprenticeship diploma or a technical college degree. The greatest part is participants (81%) who have a bachelor's, master's, or diploma degree. Additionally, one of the 148 participants has a doctorate.

3.2 Measures

Validated scales were used to measure the variables in the model. Participants rated each item, except the control variables, using a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Organizational Identification. OI was measured using the six items from Edwards and Peccei (2007). Sample items include “My employment in the company is a big part of who I am.” (Edwards and Peccei 2007). Cronbach alpha was 0.87.

Well-being. Well-being was measured using the four items from Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, and Shacklock (2011). Sample items include “Overall I think I am reasonably satisfied with my work life.” (Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, and Shacklock 2011). Cronbach alpha was 0.73.

Job Stress. Job stress was measured using the six items from Caplan and colleagues (1975). Sample items include “I often suffer from back pain.” (Caplan et al. 1975). Cronbach alpha was 0.83.

Work Engagement. Work engagement was measured using the nine items from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). Sample items include “My job inspires me.” (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Cronbach alpha was 0.91.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured using the four items from De Clercq, Hag, and Barwell (2012). One of them was “I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution.” (De Clercq, Hag, and Barwell 2012). Cronbach alpha was 0.84.

Resilience. Resilience was measured using the six items from Smith and colleagues (2008). Sample items include “I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.” (Smith et al. 2008). Cronbach alpha was 0.76.

Gender, age, tenure in organizations, type of employment, and educational level were controlled. “Gender” was coded as follow: 1 = *male*, 2 = *female*, 3 = *others*. “Age”: 1 = *under 20*, 2 = *20-29*, 3 = *30-39*, 4 = *40-49*, 5 = *50-59*, 6 = *60-69*, 7 = *70 and above*. “Tenure”: 1 = *less than one year*, 2 = *between one and five years*, 3 = *between five and ten years*, 4 = *more than ten years*. “Employment”: 1 = *Full employed*, 2 = *Part-time employed*, 3 = *intern*. “Educational level”: 1 = *Main or secondary school diploma*, 2 = *High school diploma*, 3 = *Apprenticeship diploma*, 4 = *Technical college degree*, 5 = *Bachelor or Bachelor professional degree*, 6 = *Master or Diploma degree*, 7 = *Ph.D.*

3.3 Analytical Strategy

The analysis of the empirical data was performed using PROCESS, a computational procedure for SPSS that implements mediation and moderation analysis in a conditional process model (Hayes 2012). This bootstrap analysis assesses indirect effects, thereby avoiding statistical power issues resulting from asymmetric sample distributions (MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams 2004). It is also appropriate for smaller samples because the intended statistical test is computed on multiple replicate database samples (Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes 2007).

4. Results

The table below shows the means, standard deviation, and correlation between the variables.

Table 1: Mean, Standard deviation, and Correlation

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Organizational Identification	3.77	0.80	(.87)										
Self-Efficacy	4.05	0.80	.49**	(.84)									
Job stress	2.19	0.90	-.21**	-.23**	(.83)								
Work Engagement	3.68	0.70	.69**	.38**	-.25**	(.91)							
Well-being	3.63	0.69	.58**	.34**	-.23**	.65**	(.73)						
Resilience	3.70	0.64	.21**	.34**	-.37**	.35**	.29**	(.76)					
Gender	-	-	-.17*	-.22**	.26**	-.15	-.17*	-.21**	-				
Age	-	-	.20*	.15	-.04	.08	-.05	-.067	-.01	-			
Tenure	-	-	.31**	.27**	-.13	.10	.06	.04	.04	.58**	-		
Employment Level	-	-	-.17*	-.40**	.14	-.13	-.15	-.15	.02	-.24**	-.45**	-	
Educational Level	-	-	-.05	-.00	-.09	.01	.02	.19*	-.16	-.31**	-.41**	.06	-

N=148; * < .05 (2-tailed); ** < .01 (2-tailed)

Mean: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); alphas in the diagonal

Table 2 summarizes the results of hypotheses testing. In Hypothesis 1a, it was predicted that work engagement mediates the positive relationship between OI and psychological well-being. The results show that OI was positively related to work engagement ($B = 0.64, p < .01$), which in turn predicted psychological well-being ($B = 0.42, p < .05$). The indirect effect of OI

on psychological well-being, that is, via work engagement, was significant ($B = 0.42$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [0.24, 0.59]). Thus, Hypothesis 1a was supported. Regarding Hypothesis 1b, it was hypothesized that work engagement mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress, work engagement did not predict job stress ($B = -0.14$, $p > .05$). The indirect effect of OI on job stress, that is, via work engagement, was not significant ($B = -0.14$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.42, 0.15]). Thus, Hypothesis 1b was not confirmed. In Hypothesis 2a, it was predicted that self-efficacy mediates the positive relationship between OI and psychological well-being. The results show that OI was positively related to self-efficacy ($B = 0.41$, $p < .01$), which in turn did not predict psychological well-being ($B = 0.01$, $p > .05$). The indirect effect of OI on psychological well-being, that is, via self-efficacy, was not significant ($B = 0.01$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.12, 0.14]). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was not confirmed. Regarding Hypothesis 2b, it was hypothesized that self-efficacy mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress, self-efficacy did not predict job stress ($B = -0.03$, $p > .05$). The indirect effect of OI on job stress, that is, via self-efficacy, was not significant ($B = -0.03$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.24, 0.19]). Thus, Hypothesis 2b was not confirmed. In Hypothesis 3a, it was predicted that resilience mediates the positive relationship between OI and psychological well-being. The results show that OI was positively related to resilience ($B = 0.14$, $p < .01$), which in turn did not predict psychological well-being ($B = 0.05$, $p > .05$). The indirect effect of OI on psychological well-being, that is, via resilience, was not significant ($B = 0.05$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.09, 0.20]). Thus, Hypothesis 3a was not confirmed. Regarding Hypothesis 3b, it was hypothesized that resilience mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress, resilience did predict job stress ($B = -0.38$, $p < .05$). The indirect effect of OI on job stress, that is, via resilience, was significant ($B = -0.38$; 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.62, -0.14]). Thus, Hypothesis 3b was confirmed.

Table 2: Bootstrapping analysis results

Control Variables	Self-efficacy (mediator)			Work Engagement (mediator)			Resilience (mediator)			Stress (Outcome)			Well-being (outcome)		
	B	t	95% CI	B	t	95% CI	B	t	95% CI	B	t	95% CI	B	t	95% CI
Gender	-0.22	-2.07	[-0.44, -0.01]	-0.03	-0.33	[-0.20, 0.14]	-0.19	-1.92	[-0.40, 0.01]	0.30	2.16	[0.03, 0.58]	-0.7	-0.83	[-0.24, 0.10]
Age	-0.01	-0.20	[-0.15, 0.12]	0.01	0.23	[-0.09, 0.12]	-0.08	-1.30	[-0.21, 0.04]	0.01	0.13	[-0.16, 0.18]	-0.10	-1.89	[-0.21, 0.01]
Tenure	0.01	0.14	[-0.14, 0.16]	-0.12	-2.10	[-0.24, -0.01]	0.06	0.78	[-0.09, 0.20]	0.02	0.22	[-0.17, 0.22]	-0.04	-0.69	[-0.16, 0.08]
Employment	-0.31	-4.22	[-0.45, -0.16]	-0.07	-1.30	[-0.18, 0.04]	-0.09	-1.27	[-0.22, 0.05]	-0.11	-1.11	[-0.31, 0.09]	-0.08	-1.29	[-0.20, 0.04]
Educational Level	0.01	0.19	[-0.08, 0.10]	-0.01	-0.36	[-0.08, 0.06]	0.08	1.98	[0.00, 0.17]	-0.04	-0.69	[-0.16, 0.07]	-0.03	-0.75	[-0.10, 0.04]
Main Effect															
Organizational Identification	0.41	5.72	[0.27, 0.56]	0.64	11.40	[0.53, 0.75]	0.14	2.07	[0.01, 0.28]	-0.01	-0.02	[-0.27, 0.26]	0.25	2.96	[0.08, 0.41]
Mediators															
Self-efficacy										-0.03	-0.23	[-0.24, 0.19]	0.01	0.13	[-0.12, 0.14]
Work engagement										-0.14	-0.95	[-0.42, 0.15]	0.42	4.68	[0.24, 0.59]
Resilience										-0.38	-3.09	[-0.62, -0.14]	0.05	0.71	[-0.09, 0.20]

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Tims et al. (2011) conducted a study among Dutch employees and found that work engagement mediated the relationship between OI and both emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. They argue that employees who identify with their organization are more likely to experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their work which in turn increases their engagement and well-being, corresponding with the findings of this study. One possible explanation for why work engagement mediates the relationship between OI and well-being is that OI enhances an employee's sense of meaning and purpose in their work which in turn can lead to greater work engagement (Prieto et al. 2008). The study conducted was able to show that this in turn predicts psychological well-being. Wright and Bone (2007) found that employees with elevated psychological well-being showed higher levels of engagement and were more likely to identify with their employer. This shows that there are feedback effects regarding hypothesis H1a. Not only does higher OI through work engagement lead to increased well-being but also the other way around. Increased well-being also leads to lower absenteeism and increased employee retention (Goetzel et al. 2004).

OI may provide employees with a sense of meaning and purpose in their work which can contribute to their sense of resilience (Karakas 2010). Resilience is thought to be a personal resource that can help employees manage the demands and stressors of their work environment (Luthans et al. 2007). Research has shown that more resilient employees are better able to cope with job stress and experience lower levels of job stress (Tugade and Fredrickson 2004). This study also found that higher resilience reduces perceptions of stress which positively impacts organizations in several ways. Spurgeon, Mazelan, and Barwell (2012) found that lowering employees' perception of stress can reduce sick leave absenteeism and health care costs. Furthermore, productivity and morale can be improved, and employee loyalty increased. To

avoid such negative effects for the worker and employee, it is important to avoid job stress, enabled by increased OI which in turn leads to greater resilience.

After developing a measure for OI it was found that work engagement mediates the positive relationship between OI and well-being. Moreover, resilience mediates the negative relationship between OI and job stress. Frazier et. al. (2009) state that once potential mediators have been considered on a theoretical approach, practical aspects must also be examined for the mediators to be tested. In particular, the relationships between the mediator, the predictor, and the outcome can affect the validity of mediation tests which has been shown in this study concerning work engagement. Hayes (2018) shows that due to interactions between the independent and dependent variables using a mediator, certain relationships cannot be explained. This interaction was confirmed by Wright and Bone (2007) regarding the relationship between well-being and work engagement.

Self-efficacy as a mediator did not explain the relationship between OI and well-being and OI and job stress. Increased self-efficacy is related to higher self-esteem, better physical conditions, adaption, and well-being as well as to the control of the stress process (Bandura 1997; Bisschop, Knegsman, Beekman, and Deeg 2004). One reason for the lack of support for self-efficacy as a mediator may be that other influencing factors are more strongly weighted. As Schwarzer and Warner (2013) noted, while self-efficacy is an important predictor of health and well-being, other factors may have a greater influence. Social support, economic resources, and physical health may have a greater impact on well-being than self-efficacy in some situations. A second reason is that the relationship between self-efficacy and the outcome variable may depend on individual differences. According to a study by Frazier et al. (2009), the negative relationship between self-efficacy and perceived stress was stronger for individuals high in neuroticism but weaker for those high in extraversion.

As Hayes (2018) shows, some relationships cannot be explained using a mediator due to interactions. In addition, other factors may have a stronger influence on the relationship which means that certain hypotheses cannot be confirmed. Burns and Antsey (2010), as well as Martínez-Martí and Ruch (2017), suggest that self-reports of self-perceived resilience do not simply correspond to indices of well-being, so resilience may not mediate the relationship between OI and well-being (H3a). Regarding hypothesis 1b, it can be clarified again that work engagement is a positive construct that reflects a person's positive experiences at work (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Therefore, the negative aspects of work experiences, such as work stress, may not be fully captured (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) which may be an explanation for the lack of significance of H1b. This illustrates why not all mediators explain the relationship between OI and outcomes.

5.2 Practical Implications

Khan et al. (2021) state that the origin of OI is in the personality of each individual who merges organizational identity with their self-identity. Identification is shaped by the influence of the organization's norms, values, and goals on one's identity. Employer branding helps to internalize the organization's values in employees, thus establishing their organizational identity (Maxwell and Knox 2009) which is the fundament for the identification of employees with the company (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). The employer brand reflects the identity of the company as an employer and aims to attract, motivate, and retain existing and potential employees in the long term which depends heavily on the company's value system, vision, and policies (Khan et al. 2021). First, according to current research, it can be stated that the employer brand represents the relationship between the corporate brand and the intention to apply so that companies can gain a competitive advantage by selecting the best employees (Banerjee, Saini, and Kalyanaram 2020). During times of personnel shortage, the employer's

brand becomes a tool for differentiating businesses on the labor market and achieving the required competitive advantages in attracting talent (Samoliuk et al. 2022).

Miles and McCamey (2018) find that employer branding has a positive impact on internal processes to provide better recruiting opportunities. A positive candidate experience through employer branding leads to stronger business results, including strengthening relationships with clients and investors, and referrals of friends to the company. Internal branding also referred to as internal marketing, aims to engage employees in the company's values and organizational goals, thereby increasing internal value creation (Tomczak, von Walter, and Henkel 2011; Backhaus and Tikoo 2004). In the following, two possibilities for internal branding are presented to provide recommendations for organizations and managers on how to potentially increase OI.

First, according to Kim and Park (2011), a credibly communicated and practiced CSR concept can function as a signal for a responsible company and thus for an attractive and fair employer. Potential employees seem to infer from a company's special responsibility toward the environment and society that it has an equally pronounced responsibility toward its employees. If individual values are in harmony with the values communicated by the company, applicants will identify more strongly with the company because of its responsible actions. This results in a positive effect of CSR on perceived employer attractiveness. Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010) state that one internal CSR measure that is becoming increasingly important for Generation Z is diversity. In the corporate context, measures to promote diversity mean promoting different genders, sexual orientations, races, and equity. With increasing globalization, the topic of diversity gained importance in the organization-related context, specifically the different cultures of employees being relevant (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Van der Wiele et al. (2001) emphasize that to strengthen cohesion within the company, the diversity lived internally also has to be carried out externally. If there is a lack of transparency

in the external presentation, e.g. if a high level of diversity is presented to the outside but internally a different corporate culture is lived, a company damages its credibility.

Second, Gardner et al. (2010) show that a transformational leadership style can be conducive to diversity management because it aims to encourage and motivate employees to reach their full potential. Through this leadership style, employees are involved in decision-making and can contribute their diversity of ideas and perspectives. This can contribute to a more open and inclusive work environment in which the strengths and abilities of all employees are perceived and valued. These are all aspects that are particularly important to Generation Y and Z, as they are looking for meaning and purpose in their work (Moser 2022). Furthermore, it is important for them to share common values and to be committed to creating a positive impact on society and the environment (Eisenbeiss, Boerner, and van Knippenberg 2008). App, Büttgen, and Lohmüller (2016) explain that the transformational leadership style where the leader radiates a great deal of enthusiasm and optimism and expresses their belief in the employer brand supports the relationship between the employee and employer brand. Such a leader motivates employees through a compelling vision that communicates the future of the employer brand. A positive correlation can be found between a transformational leadership style and brand commitment, related to the employer brand. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) emphasize that managers should first be developed as brand ambassadors so that they can in turn convince their employees of the employer brand which can be achieved through special leadership seminars for managers and team workshops. Employees who have a potential for opinion leadership can act as internal brand ambassadors and thus serve as multipliers through their proximity to colleagues. Particularly in large companies with an international focus, this could help to ensure that the employer brand is experienced and lived in the same way throughout the whole organization.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Although this thesis has delivered meaningful findings, there are certain limitations concerning the conducted research. First, it must be clarified that only six hypotheses were investigated due to the page limitations of the thesis guidelines. Job satisfaction plays a significant role in the performance of workplace activities and is closely related to work engagement which is why an empirical study with job satisfaction as a third outcome variable would be of interest (Amin 2022). In order not to go beyond the scope of this paper, these three additional hypotheses were not investigated. Another limitation is the cross-sectional study design. Causality cannot be inferred since all variables were measured at the same time (Taris, Kessler, and Kelloway 2021). The independent variable can influence the mediator and not just the other way around as proposed in this model (Wright and Bone 2007). Taris, Kessler, and Kelloway (2021) show that it is impossible to distinguish between a presumed cause and its potential effect. Even while two variables may significantly correlate, as has been shown several times in this study, this does not imply that one causes the other. At least one has to prove that the cause is temporally prior to the result, which was not possible using this study design. The survey was limited in scope (148 samples) and may reduce statistical power (Aguinis and Harden 2009). In some cases, only quantitative research cannot capture the complexity of certain research topics. According to Ashford and Schinoff (2016), traditional quantitative methods based on measuring variables and examining relationships between them are not always able to fully capture the complex phenomenon of OI. A further limitation of this study is that the questionnaire is designed for German-speaking employees only. Thus, it did not allow for cultural diversity which decreased the generalizability and applicability of this study to a wide range of cultures (Poortinga 1995).

The above limitations provide opportunities for future research. To increase generalizability, future research can focus on different cultures as well as types of organizations,

e.g. a non-profit company. Furthermore, it is beneficial if this is done in different cultural contexts. Another topic of further research is to conduct a long-term study that examines how OI of Generation Z graduates develops over time and what factors contribute to change. Due to the increasing importance of diversity and inclusion in the organizational context for Generation Z (Mooser 2022), this research area offers even more fields of research. Regarding the variety of research techniques, Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) suggest that qualitative methods such as ethnographic research, interviews, and observations can help to better understand employees' subjective experiences related to OI, ideally in combination with quantitative methods. OI could be further explored with different leadership styles to examine the specific impact of a leader on an employee's sense of identification. Different leadership styles have already been studied many times in the organizational context. The impact on OI and the effects that result could offer another interesting area of research, especially in the context of the changing demands and values of Generation Z.

6. Conclusion

To increase OI, practical implications regarding internal branding for management were presented. High OI leads through increased work engagement to higher well-being and through increased resilience to lower job stress which was confirmed by the significance of H1a and H3b. To increase identification with the organization in times of a shortage of skilled workers practical implications were formulated. Due to the increased importance of a consistent purpose and value system for Generation Y & Z, companies need to carry out activities to increase the employer brand. Therefore, the identification with the company on the part of the employees will grow. The aforementioned positive effects of increased well-being and reduced stress support companies in their efforts to meet the increasing challenges in the work environment.

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire

Demographic Data

Gender

Age

Company Affiliation

Employment status

Highest level/ Degree of education

Organizational Identification

My employment in the company is a big part of who I am

I consider myself as an important person of the company

What the company stands for is important to me

I share the goals and values of the company

My membership of the company is important to me

I feel strong ties with the company

Self-efficacy

I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution

I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management

I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy

I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area

Stress

I often suffer from back pain

I often suffer from headaches

I often suffer from sleep problems

I often suffer from exhaustion

I often suffer from stomach problems

I often suffer from anxiety

Work engagement

At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy

At my job, I feel strong and vigorous

I am enthusiastic about my job

My job inspires me

When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work

I feel happy when I am working intensely

I am proud on the work that I do

I am immersed in my work

I get carried away when I'm working

Well-being

Overall, I think having my job position fulfills an important purpose in my work life

Overall, I get enough time in my job to reflect on what I do at work

Overall, I think I am reasonably satisfied with my work life

Overall, most days I feel a sense of accomplishment in what I do

Resilience

I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times

I have a hard time making it through stressful events

It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event

It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens

I usually come through difficult times with little trouble

I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life

2. Demographic insights

