

Understanding a Social Identity Theory

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ABSTRACT:

The psychology concept of social identity theory investigates how people create a sense of self based on their affiliation with social groupings. An overview of Social Identity Theory, its core ideas, and its consequences for comprehending human behaviour are given in this abstract. It investigates how group membership affects behaviour, intergroup dynamics, and self-perception. It also looks at how social comparison, social categorization, and social identity salience influence people's attitudes and behaviours. Understanding social identity theory may help you get important insights into how groups are formed, how people interact with one another, and how social environment affects how people behave.

KEYWORDS:

Intergroup, Identity, Group, Social, Social Identities.

I. INTRODUCTION

A psychological paradigm called social identity theory aims to clarify how people create a sense of self based on their affiliation with certain social groupings. Social Identity Theory, which was created by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, examines how belonging to a group affects our self-concept, attitudes, behaviours, and intergroup connections. The idea of social identity, which refers to the portion of a person's self-image that is generated from their group affiliations, is at the centre of social identity theory. The idea contends that people associate with social groups that are highly regarded in order to achieve a good social identity and raise their self-esteem. According to the social identity theory, people put themselves and other people into social groups based on common traits such ethnicity, gender, religion, or organisational membership. This process of social categorization enables people to understand the social environment and serves as a foundation for the development of social identities[1], [2].

According to the notion, when people identify with a certain group, they take on the norms, values, and behaviours of the group, and this social identity forms a significant part of their self-concept. Individuals have a feeling of pride, significance, and belonging via their affiliation with their group, all of which enhance their general wellbeing. The importance of social comparison in forming our sense of social identity is also highlighted by social identity theory. People often contrast their own group with other groups in an effort to elevate and distinguish their group. Social comparison may result in intergroup bias, when people favour their own group while displaying prejudice or discrimination towards other groups. The Social Identity Theory also emphasises how our behaviour is influenced by the relevance of our social identities. Our ideas, emotions, and behaviours are more strongly influenced when our group identification is prominent in a particular circumstance. As a result, there may be more in-group favouritism and a desire to follow the norms of the group[3], [4].

Intergroup interactions, organisational behaviour, and social psychology are just a few of the areas where understanding social identity theory has a big impact. It aids in our comprehension of why people have intense intragroup loyalty, participate in intergroup conflict, or encounter prejudice and discrimination. It also illuminates group formation processes, leadership dynamics, and the influence of social settings on individual behaviour. The main ideas of social identity theory, such as in-group favouritism, out-group derogation, social identity complexity, and the impact of situational

circumstances, will be further explored in the parts that follow. We will also look at how the idea is put to use in managing diversity, developing inclusive settings, and boosting intergroup understanding. We may better comprehend the intricacies of human behaviour and how group identities are formed by knowing Social Identity Theory. This knowledge may help guide initiatives to foster good intergroup interactions, lessen prejudice, and foster social cohesiveness in a variety of contexts. The framework provided by social identity theory is still useful for examining and resolving the possibilities and problems related to intergroup connections and group dynamics. Many different domains, including social psychology, organisational behaviour, and intergroup interactions, have explored and used social identity theory extensively. It offers a thorough foundation for comprehending how belonging to a group affects our attitudes, sentiments, and actions[5], [6].

The understanding of the changing character of social identities is a key component of social identity theory. Our social identities may evolve and develop over time in response to various social settings and circumstances; they are not static. Individuals may traverse various social groups because to this flexibility and modify their behaviour as necessary. The theory emphasises the role that social identity plays in determining intergroup interactions. The process of social categorization often results in in-group favouritism and out-group denigration. People often favour and spend more on the members of their in-group while having unfavourable opinions or preconceptions about the members of their out-group. Having a better understanding of these biases might increase intergroup harmony, lessen prejudice, and develop more empathetic interactions. The Social Identity Theory also affects organisational behaviour in a useful way. Organisations may create interventions and policies that support a feeling of belonging, employee engagement, and organisational commitment by recognising the value of social identity in the workplace. Creating a friendly workplace culture and developing a good organisational identity may boost productivity and employee wellbeing.

It's crucial to understand that Social Identity Theory has several drawbacks. It often ignores the impact of societal structures and systemic elements in favour of concentrating largely on the cognitive and psychological components of social identity. The theory also does not completely take into account the individual variations in how people see and feel their social identities. In summary, the Social Identity Theory offers a useful framework for comprehending how belonging to a community affects our identity, attitudes, and behaviours. It gives insight on the dynamics of intergroup connections and emphasises the intricate interplay between personal and societal processes. Understanding the fundamental principles of social identity can help us improve intergroup interactions, enhance inclusion, and lessen bias in a variety of contexts. In the study of human behaviour and social interactions, Social Identity Theory is still an important and relevant theory.

II. DISCUSSION

SIT, which informs the development of a person's self-concept within the framework of social groupings, is crucial to management research and practise since it helps to answer questions like "Who am I?" SIT describes how a person's self-concept is shaped through self-classification in terms of group membership by establishing, defining, and locating his or her place within an intergroup system of meaning resulting from social comparisons and categorizations. When Henri Tajfel originally described social identity as a person's awareness of belonging to certain social categories that become significant in forming behaviours, attitudes, and values when contrasted to other social groupings, he created the essential work for SIT. The idea is applicable to a wide range of management issues, including team development, leadership, social networks, human resources, diversity management, and organisational culture. The discussion that follows outlines SIT's fundamental concepts, examines its primary advancements, and identifies some of its most significant contributions to management theory and practise[7], [8].

Fundamentals

The SIT Model

The SIT model describes a process whereby people's social identification with perceptually salient, distinct social categories leads to self-evaluative and subjective classifications and identifications that can produce internal in-group prototypes and depersonalised out-group stereotypes. This process frequently results in higher self-esteem, less uncertainty, self-reinforcing intragroup assimilation and congruency, and potential conflict arising from intergroup difference. SIT depicts a system of intergroup ties between in-groups and out-groups that are based on membership in social categories. Identity is a term used to describe the meanings and characteristics that people associate with themselves. Membership in several social groupings produces multiple identities. Gender, age, religion, organisational affiliation, ethnicity, and a host of other factors have a role in social group membership. The organisation itself, departments, common professional vocations, committees, prestige, and other sorts of social groupings in organisations are examples of social groups. The distinctiveness of a group's values and practises in comparison to other groups, the prestige of the group's status, the awareness of the out-group, and the traditional factors of group formation—interpersonal interactions, proximity, shared goals, liking, common history, etc.—are important factors that influence people to identify with a particular social group. Turner characterises a social group as two or more people who see themselves as belonging to the same social identity. Thus, joining a social group is a self-directed process that also involves self-evaluation to find commonalities[9], [10].

Focus. Being a part of a social group provides the in-group prototype's ability to reduce ambiguity and provide consensus validation, as well as the positive value for self-esteem based on in-group uniqueness contrasted to out-group differences. People would typically choose the many social groupings that stand out in terms of supplying favourable characteristics that may be extrapolated for their own self-concept. Membership decisions are made based on individual perceptions of relationships or categories. While social identification places a strong emphasis on belonging to various social groups, internationalisation integrates beliefs, attitudes, and associated characteristics. Even while one may be a team member, one need not necessarily share the same goals, values, or other traits.

Group dynamics

Beliefs concerning the legitimacy, prestige, permeability, and stability of intergroup connections are necessary for the development of a good social identity. Tajfel and Turner combined the self-categorization theory with the social identity theory to explain how people represent prototype attitudes and behaviours of their social group rather than their unique uniqueness. Self-categorization theory, in particular, focuses on distinct microprocesses of an individual's social identity development in connection to classification within social groupings. Self-categorization highlights the considered commonalities within the group. In relation to members of out-groups, a similar depersonalization process takes place concurrently. The in-group's traits are integrated into its prototypical traits, which also set it apart from out-groups. However, the notion of optimum distinctiveness explains how some people strike a balance between their common traits and individual uniqueness. However, the cognitive absorption of the self into the in-group prototype results in a multitude of effects, including as cohesiveness and favourable in-group attitudes, cooperation and altruism, group behaviour, shared norms, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism. As a consequence, discrimination against members of the out-group as well as in-group favouritism take place even when there is little to no contact.

Consequences

SIT's core tenet is that developing a good self-concept depends on valuing the in-group above the out-group. As a consequence, members of an outgroup are treated differently, which leads to unjust discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice. Social identification has the following effects: (1) people pick social groupings that are consistent with their own identities; (2) cohesiveness, collaboration, and altruism are characteristics of group formation; and (3) the antecedents of identification are reinforced.

Identification may take place without the required interpersonal coherence, likeness, or engagement, which is a significant contribution of SIT.

SIT and Management

SIT focuses on work-related identities by strongly referencing social psychology. A composite self is developed via daily interactions at work from various positions, groups, jobs, and activities. Blake Ashforth has used SIT to study intergroup dynamics, role conflict, and organisational socialisation. In order to integrate their self-concept with a positive and distinctive organisational identity, new employees require orientation. This orientation may comprise narrative, symbolism, and associated identity work. When SIT was used to role conflict, it revealed that compartmentalising identities and sorting, separating, and buffering identities might lead to double standards, seeming hypocrisy, and/or selective forgetting. As a result, SIT takes into consideration two incentives in social identification processes: (1) self-enhancement via the acquisition of positive favourable qualities and (2) uncertainty reduction to organise and simplify a complicated social environment.

Internal cognitive processes for identity development and maintenance as well as exterior negotiations of image and reputation are examples of internal identity work. To reduce socially inadequate or excessive identification, one must be able to avoid the difficulties of both "underidentification" and "overidentification". The internal and external processes often include conflicts between group cohesiveness and personal individuality. Identity salience aids in identifying which identities are more crucial to a person's conception of themselves and ambitions for their ideal selves. How much a person's many social groupings are considered to overlap is measured by their social identification complexity. The degree of social identity complexity is lowered when the various groups share members and archetypal traits. Exploration, resolve, and affirmation are the three stages that make up the construction of cultural identity. For instance, discovering the cultural practises and meanings involved in being an American; settling issues between various identities, such as that of an immigrant and that of an American; and reaffirming one's view of oneself as a US citizen. The identity work procedures that take place after job changes, promotions, and mergers and acquisitions are likely to be similar.

Along with providing positive support, belonging to an in-group increases a person's propensity to contribute to the social group and openly help its members. This collaboration has significant effects on productivity in workplaces by facilitating the integration of new workers or the formation of high-performing teams. Identity orientations may be individual, interpersonal, or communal. The three identity orientations acknowledge that people differ in their level of readiness to interact with others and work together. Four theoretical approaches that enable organisational members to access and develop their social resources were outlined in further study on the positive aspects of work-related identity by Jane Dutton and her colleagues. The ethical, evaluative, developmental, and structural dimensions of "positive" work-related social identity are addressed. These lenses take into account the possibility that different people may need various social resources in order to support the growth of their self-concept. Additionally, they stand in for various sources or avenues that managers might open up in order to assist and mould the identity-development process in a specific manner to reach desired organisational goals.

It's also crucial to remember that not all groups have equal status as determined by their social structures. Subordinate groups engage in social change to strengthen their group's favourable position, as in the case of women and minorities in management, whereas dominant groups use their position and power to legitimise the status quo. There are negative disparities in certain in-groups. Through the use of a variety of tactics, members of social groupings that are adversely different, such as lower class and higher class, may develop positive social identities. Individuals may strengthen the positive aspects of their social identity through social mobility if entry to a higher-status group is accessible, without affecting the status of the in-group. Other methods of leaving a negatively distinctive ingroup that people may use include decreasing identification, increasing perceived similarity to a higher status outgroup, decreasing perceived similarity to ingroup, reducing time spent with ingroup, and reducing physical and/or behavioural similarities to ingroup. Collective tactics may be employed at the group level to shift negative distinct in-groups towards more positive orientations.

One is social creativity, which involves altering a dimension's negative orientation to one that is more positive or switching the dimension altogether to one that is more positive. Another is social change or social action, which is group efforts to modify the status quo by confronting members of the outside group in order to change the status of the inside group.

Evolution

The post-World War II growth of European social psychology was significantly influenced by Henry Tajfel in terms of the field's new intellectual trend, the integration of important intergroup relations ideas into SIT in the 1970s, and the development of the professional infrastructure. Based on the idea that social psychological functions at the individual level are associated in a reciprocal way with the large-scale social environment and processes, Tajfel's key contributions were social perception and intergroup connections. With Turner's contribution of self-categorization theory, Tajfel and Turner's partnership continued to advance SIT. A approach used to conduct research on the bare minimum criteria for intergroup prejudice gave rise to the minimal group paradigm (MGP). Tajfel created psychological tests that eliminated as much background noise as possible in order to concentrate on subtle distinctions between groups and pinpoint the advantages of in-group behavioural dynamics, norms, and attitudes. MGP was recently used by academics to look at anti-immigrant bias.

As a result of Tajfel and Turner's theories, social psychology study quickly increased in volume. Management scholars started using SIT to look at work-related identities in the 1980s, even though many of its major theories originated in the Cold War setting. Two eminent academics, Blake Ashforth and Michael Hogg, explained the value of SIT in a variety of workplace difficulties. As SIT evolved inside organisations, it took into consideration the membership of different social groups in the context of workplace concerns to analyse intergroup and individual social identity states as well as the processes of social identity development. Important Conflicts resulting from social issues are among the organisational contributors to SIT. identification difficulties, conflicts resulting from multiple identities, and group-level social reform activities aimed at modifying the status of negative uniqueness. Contrarily, processes of decline with rising negative uniqueness have not been studied, yet they call for research that is pertinent for organisations under pressure from scandals or bankruptcies.

As organisations struggle to create more diverse workforces in response to multicultural agendas and expectations from an increasingly global marketplace, SIT research is now being conducted. For instance, SIT studies how individuals compare their own demographic traits, such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity, to those in other demographic groups under the conceptual framework of relational demography and diversity management. Daily interactions within a certain work unit offer the backdrop for comparing in-group with out-group behaviours. To forge a common identity, tap into the talents of various people, and foster a multicultural organisational environment, diverse organisations must construct a framework that permits regular contacts between demographic groups. Micro role transitions and boundary management are likely involved in self-management through using relational demography.

With a broad spectrum of organisational themes in many contexts, research in SIT continues to grow in both depth and breadth. SIT has been linked in some organisational studies to issues like identity management, identity conflicts, identity threat, team diversity management, decision-making, conflict management, leadership, motivation, sexual orientation, stereotypes, commitment, group performance, physical environment, emotions, role transitions, boundary spanning, careers, social injustice, boundary management, and performance feedback. SIT thus has a lot of importance for the management profession, which is predicted to last for a while.

Importance

For a variety of reasons, SIT is crucially significant in management research and practise. First, SIT contributes to the explanation of the relevance of how the social environment affects one's sense of self when there are reciprocal dynamics at play between individuals and social groupings. Researchers drew

connections between SIT and organisations to provide light on how people interact with a composite of numerous group memberships at work, ranging from their local work groups to the superordinate group. The self-concept of organisational group members is influenced by their feeling of group affiliation. A positive organisational reputation and image help people feel good about themselves, which encourages them to act in ways that highlight the good qualities. SIT offers guidelines for maintaining the organisational balance between dedication to the superior group and a productive work environment for management professionals.

Second, SIT describes the relationships between groups, particularly with regard to social identities connected to demographic diversity and cross-cultural groupings. This is become more significant as workplace diversity grows. Tajfel's prior research on bias and stereotypes offers insights into both the positive and negative uniqueness of groups. Researchers in management have since found the most effective tactics for handling bullying behaviours in the workplace, identity threats, and negative uniqueness. Building on SIT and expanding their understanding of how social identities interact with threats to in-group favorability, academics have added depth and breadth to their knowledge of each of these problems.

Third, SIT offered pertinent insights into organisational processes such intergroup relationship dynamics, leadership identities, group dynamics, and individual development. These processes that result in prejudice and discriminatory behaviours between in-group and out-group dynamics are influenced by social and cultural contexts. These processes, as well as those of choosing and hiring new employees, awarding team members rewards, appointing directors to boards, leadership development, various mentoring relationships, minority recruitment, and many other related topics, all revolve around the idea of in-group favouritism bias. Intergroup discrimination may result from treating ingroup members well while treating outgroup members poorly. However, there are times when members of an in-group are biased towards others who are also a part of that in-group. As a consequence, the process of self-concept in SIT is extended by a range of notions. Fourth, academics are using SIT to study novel ideas such group fault lines and Demography in relationships. Fault lines are the fictitious dividing lines that divide a group. due to various variances, often demographic ones.

Employee happiness, group cohesion, and performance results are all impacted by the divide in terms of group procedures. The topic of identity danger, which is defined at the individual level as events deemed potentially damaging to the values, meanings, or enactment of an identity, is brought up by the dynamics of fault lines. identification danger may also occur when a person's sense of self is questioned, when stigma-relevant stresses surpass a person's capacity to handle them, or when the process of identification is impaired by lack of continuity, uniqueness, or self-esteem. Two sorts of responses to identity danger exist: (1) identity defence with derogation, concealment, or positive uniqueness; and (2) identity restructuring with identity exit, meaning change, and significance change. The remaining four have the ability to eradicate the danger, however derogation and concealment lead to a continuation of the identity threat. Additionally, initiatives to change the relational dynamics of in-group and out-group connections based on social identity are only now coming into focus. Researchers are investigating SIT from a critical theory viewpoint in addition to looking at the micro- and meso-processes to address the concerns of power and gender in intergroup interactions.

Overall, SIT's research contributions are significant and wide-ranging, addressing a variety of work-related identity concerns with both depth and breadth. SIT continues to develop as a reference framework with substantial research and management implications and applications in the context of everyday work interactions in organisations because of its explanatory capacity and provocative theoretical and empirical breadth.

III. CONCLUSION

The Social Identity Theory provides important insights into how people create a sense of identity based on their affiliations with certain groups. It draws attention to how our ideas, emotions, and behaviours are influenced by social categorization, social comparison, and social identity salience. The complexity of intergroup connections and why some people favour their own group over others are explained by

social identity theory. The idea places a strong emphasis on the role that social identity plays in determining how we see ourselves and how we behave. It acknowledges that in various social circumstances, our social identities may vary and adapt rather than being static. We may recognise the intricacies of human behaviour and the influence of group membership on both individual and group actions by comprehending the dynamic nature of social identities.

There are several practical uses for social identity theory. It guides initiatives to lessen prejudice, enhance empathy, and encourage constructive relationships between various groups in intergroup relations. It directs activities to create welcoming work environments, increase employee engagement, and foster a feeling of belonging in organisational contexts. It's crucial to understand Social Identity Theory's limits, however. The theory may not adequately account for the intricacies of personal experiences and societal effects since it mainly focuses on cognitive and psychological components of social identity. To develop a complete knowledge of human behaviour and social dynamics, it should be supplemented by other ideas and viewpoints.

The complexity of group dynamics, intergroup connections, and the construction of social identities may still be understood using Social Identity Theory, which continues to be a major and influential theory. Its observations may guide treatments, laws, and procedures meant to increase diversity, lessen prejudice, and enhance pleasant social interactions in a variety of settings. We may improve our comprehension of the effects of group memberships on individual behaviour and seek to build more inclusive and peaceful communities by adopting Social Identity Theory. Understanding the importance of social identity enables us to recognise the variety within and across groups and to construct ties of comprehension and collaboration. The Social Identity Theory serves as a basis for fostering social cohesiveness and wellbeing while also continuing to further our knowledge of human behaviour.

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