

A STUDY ON BELONGING THEORY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING IN BUSINESSES*

AİDİYET TEORİSİ VE İŐLETMELERDEKİ AİDİYETİN ÖNEMİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

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Öz

Bireylerin gruplar, topluluklar veya sosyal yapılar içerisindeki yerlerini anlamaya yönelik arařtırmalar, sosyal bilimlerin temel taşlarından biri olmuřtur. Bu bağlamda, bireylerin sosyal yapılarla ve gruplarla nasıl ilişkilendiklerini inceleyen aidiyet teorisi, bu alanın en ilgi çekici ve önemli yaklaşımlarından biridir. Bu arařtırma, aidiyet teorisinin temellerini, bireyin topluluk içindeki konumlandırılmasının önemini ve bu teorinin sosyal bilimlere olan katkılarını ele alarak, konunun derinliklerine doğru bir yolculuğa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda teorinin hangi yaklaşımlardan beslendiği ve bir teori formuna ulařtığı ayrıntılı bir şekilde ele alınmıştır. Sonrasında örgütsel seviyede aidiyetin işletmeleri ne yönde etkilediği incelenmiş ve bu etkilerden ne şekilde fayda yaratılabileceği ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, çalışanların işletmeye aidiyet duymalarının teşvik edilmesinin maliyetinin, elde edilecek performans çıktıları ile kıyaslandığında düşük olduđu, fakat işletmelerin bu maliyete katlanmaktan kaçınabildikleri görülmektedir. Ayrıca, çalışanlar arasında beklenenin üzerinde bir aidiyet duygusunun oluşmasının uzun vadede performansa etkisi belirsizdir ve bu konu tartışmaya açıktır. Bu durumun olası olumlu ve olumsuz çıktılarının ampirik çalışmalarla incelenmesi, gelecekteki arařtırmalar için önemli bir öneri olarak sunulmaktadır. Böylece, aidiyetin işletme performansına katkıları daha net anlaşılabilir ve bu bağlamda stratejik kararlar daha bilinçli bir şekilde alınabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aidiyet Teorisi, Bireysel Aidiyet, Kurumsal Aidiyet

Jel Kodları: D23, L20, M10

Abstract

Research aimed at understanding individuals' places within groups, communities, or social structures has been a cornerstone of the social sciences. In this context, Belonging Theory, which examines how individuals relate to social structures and groups, stands out as one of the most intriguing and significant approaches in the field. This study embarks on a journey into the foundations of Belonging Theory, highlighting the importance of an individual's positioning within a community and the theory's contributions to social sciences. The study thoroughly explores the approaches that inform the theory and how it has evolved into its current form. Subsequently, the research examines how belonging at the organizational level impacts businesses and how these effects can be leveraged. The findings suggest that while encouraging employees to feel a sense of belonging to the company incurs costs, these are likely outweighed by the gains in performance. However, the long-term impact of employees developing a sense of belonging beyond expected levels remains uncertain and open to debate. Examining the potential positive and negative outcomes of this situation through empirical studies is presented as an important suggestion for future research. Such exploration would enable a clearer understanding of the contributions of belonging to business performance and inform more strategic decision-making in this area.

Keywords: Belonging Theory, Individual Belonging, Corporate Belonging.

JEL Classification Codes: D23, L20, M10

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1. Introduction

Belonging, which has its roots in the concept of belonging, has been discussed with many different concepts in social, political, and economic fields and eventually began to be called a theory.

Since the term is considered a self-explanatory term in its use in social sciences, its definition has not been focused on much, but within the framework of a general approach, belonging; Identity is used especially for national or ethnic identity. (Antonsich, 2010). Similarly, it is seen that belonging is used as a synonym for the concept of citizenship, if not a synonym for identity (Clark, 2009; McNevin, 2006).

While belonging refers to the state of relatedness, affiliation, and belonging, it finds meaning through the practice of association. The axis on which the association focuses can vary from an object, an individual, a community, an ethnic group, or a social category. The diversity of elements that an individual uses to define himself can also expand the dimensions of the concept of belonging. These elements associated with identity become a reflection of belonging while creating descriptive titles about the individual. From this perspective, the concept of belonging can be considered as an integrative aspect of identity (Alptekin, 2011).

In studies on the concept of belonging, the inner nature of the individual and its relationship with the tendency to obey come to the fore. Views arguing that human beings have an innate tendency to obey argue that this tendency is facilitating, whereas disobedience is a challenging and energy-consuming process for the individual. This natural tendency to obey allows the individual to feel secure regardless of the nature of the power to which he obeys. This obedience, whether to an institution or a community, gives the individual a sense of belonging, thus contributing to a process of integration built around common values. The individual feels strong in this unity and reinforces his sense of trust with the protection shield offered by belonging. As this integrity within the individual expands and his/her opportunities increase, the value of belonging increases exponentially. However, a point to consider here is how affiliations interact with the individual's will. On the one hand, there are the individual's innate and unchangeable affiliations; On the other hand, there is the individual's capacity to make choices with his or her free will and the affiliations created by these choices. Therefore, there is a fundamental dynamic difference between the innate belonging to a family, nation, or culture and the affiliations that the individual establishes with his own will. These two different types of belonging can diversify an individual's interaction with power dynamics and increase his capacity to shape his social experiences (Fromm, 2001).

In affiliations that arise outside of one's will, especially in the context of family, tribe, and national community, the individual can be expected to put his original identity aside to a certain extent. Because the individual is socialized from birth by being shaped by the culture, values, and norms of the community to which he belongs. In this context, the individual's integration process with the community results from his or her effort to adapt to the general structure and values of the community. However, this process is more complicated in affiliations created based on will. For the individual to embrace such affiliations, he is generally expected to diminish some aspects of his unique individuality, and sometimes even reject them completely. In this case, strengthening belonging is achieved by giving the individual the message "The identity presented to you is the most valuable and meaningful identity and you can express yourself with this identity." In this way, the individual tends to identify with the identity of the community he has voluntarily chosen, rather than with his original individual identity. This identification process results from the voluntary adaptation to the norms and values of the chosen community (Bilgin, 2011).

Individuals establish social bonds in order to reduce uncertainty and feel secure. These bonds are a basic reflection of the need for belonging. While this emotion expresses individuals' desire to be included in a community or group, it is also a manifestation of the protection and support mechanisms that this community or group offers to individuals. In this context, the main dynamic underlying the sense of belonging is mutual responsibility and the mutual trust that this responsibility brings. When an individual belongs to a group, he shares both rights and responsibilities with that group. Likewise, the group respects the rights and responsibilities of the individual. This interaction allows the individual to feel safe and to cope more effectively with uncertainties in the social context. Therefore, the sense of belonging is of critical importance in establishing and maintaining relationships of mutual trust and responsibility at both individual and social levels.

Many scientific studies have focused on the concept of belonging, contributed to the emergence and development of the concept, and thus supported the validity of the concept. Based on these researches, the conceptualization process has been tried to be revealed and is presented below.

One of these studies, Greene and Organ's (1973) research revealed the causal relationship between the role assigned to the individual by the organisation and job satisfaction. According to them, the role assigned by the organization has three dimensions: role validity, role clarity, and role consensus, and most of the studies evaluate these as antecedents of job satisfaction. However, there was a gap in how exactly perceptions of the role affected job satisfaction, which led them to this study. For the study, they predicted and tested four different models through

the "adaptation" variable. Its methods consist of a survey form applied to 142 first-line managers in 4 companies from the finance and R&D sectors. The results revealed that there is no relationship between role clarity and job satisfaction, and in order for role clarity to provide satisfaction, the individual should be willing to take responsibility or adapt to the situation. By making changes to the initially created model, it was determined that role definitions in which the issue of "adaptation" was directly related to satisfaction could provide satisfaction through "adaptation" (Greene & Organ, 1973).

Another important study on the subject, Vandenberg and Lance's (1992) research examined the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment attitudes and questioned which one leads to the other. In the model they established, they tested their ideas based on the point that value congruence leads to organisational commitment, fair practices lead to job satisfaction and also organisational commitment and job satisfaction interact with each other. Organizational commitment was measured by the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) created by Mowday et al. (1982); They measured job satisfaction with a six-item scale they developed. Within five months, the application was carried out twice in a company in the IT sector with 455 employees; however, only 100 people were able to participate in both surveys. Therefore, the number of samples is 100. As in the initial model of the study, it was confirmed that value congruence, commitment to the organization, and fair reward practices increase job satisfaction. However, a very important finding is that commitment to the organization causes job satisfaction (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992).

Currivan (1999) studied on the causality relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment in labor turnover models, in other words, which one is the antecedent of the other. In the study, job satisfaction is taken as the degree of the employee's positive feelings towards the job role; Commitment to the organization is considered as the emotional commitment form of Meyer and Allen (1991), which is based on the feeling of loyalty to the organization, and workforce turnover is considered as voluntary departures from work. According to Currivan, although the dominant view in the literature is that job satisfaction leads to commitment to the organization, the lack of sufficient empirical studies has been cited as one of the reasons for the study. Although a group of studies argue that commitment to the organization is a priority, there are not as many studies as the first view on this subject. Variables such as autonomy, routine, social support, support from colleagues, manager support, job stress, role clarity, role conflict, workload, wage, and work engagement were taken as subcomponents of job satisfaction. In the research, data was collected in two separate periods, the first from 405 teachers in 1990 and the second from 482 teachers in 1993. Popular belief suggests that job satisfaction and organizational commitment heavily influence workforce turnover. However, some studies found no significant relationship between these factors and employee departures, a surprising result that held true across two distinct data collection periods (Currivan, 1999).

Gaertner's (1999) examined to determine the structural determinants of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workforce turnover and the relationship between them. He conducted a meta-analysis using data from nine studies on the subject, eight of which were unpublished doctoral theses. Since the total sample is 7040 (the total of samples used in nine studies), it can be considered a large field study. Structural equation modeling was used, and although the fit statistics of the model were excellent, it could only explain 50% of the variance for job satisfaction and 57% for organizational commitment (Gaertner, 1999).

Clugston (2000) in his study, which he put forward with the assumption that job satisfaction is an antecedent of organizational commitment, examined the mediation status of multidimensional organizational commitment on job satisfaction and the tendency to quit with the Structural Equation Model under three different perspectives. Job satisfaction was investigated with the 12-item scale of Quinn and Shepard (1974), organizational commitment with the 15-item scale of Meyer and Allen (1991), and turnover tendency with the scale of Schaubroeck et al. (1989). As a result of examining the three cases of full mediation, partial mediation, and no mediation effect, which were evaluated at the beginning, within the scope of the created model, it was determined that the partial mediation effect met the model better. In other words, Job Satisfaction affects the tendency to leave the job partly through commitment to the organization and partly directly, but both negatively. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the study is that emotional commitment was identified as the commitment dimension that most carries the effect of job satisfaction on the tendency to quit. Affective commitment and normative commitment are in the same direction as job satisfaction; but continuance commitment was found to be negatively related (Clugston, 2000).

McIntyre et al. (2002) conducted a study examining the effects of equal opportunity and fair attitudes of the organization and the workgroup on the perceived performance of the workgroup, commitment to the organization, and job satisfaction. The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Research database (prepared by the Defense Equal Management Institute), which contained approximately 1,200,000 observation results at the time the research was conducted, provided the data for the research. In this database, three 5,000 observations were randomly selected, one of which was called "Measurement Model Sample" and the others were called Samples 1 and 2. Three groups were formed whose demographic characteristics were so similar that they did not cause any statistical problems.

The research scale has 124 items and three parts and the results were reached using the Structural Equation Model. One of the results reached in this study, which essentially tests different subjects, is that fair equal opportunities practices affect the "job satisfaction" variable more than the "commitment to the organization" variable. But "job satisfaction" determines "commitment to the organization" with very large relational magnitudes. As a result, although job satisfaction has been taken as a dependent variable by some researchers, it can be said that job satisfaction is an important antecedent of commitment to the organization (McIntyre et al., 2002).

Brown and Sargeant's (2007) their study is based on two themes: the direction of the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and the consistency of the relationship between religious commitment and organizational commitment. They examined the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and religious affiliation of university employees. They applied it to 542 employees at all levels of a religious university. Organizational Commitment was measured by Mowday et al.'s (1974) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ); They measured job satisfaction with the motivation scale created by Allport and Ross (1967) and the level of religious commitment with the scale developed by Hoge (1972). As a result of their studies, they came to three important findings: The longer employees stay at the workplace, the greater their commitment to the organization and their job satisfaction; those with higher levels of education are more satisfied and religiously committed; Managers are more satisfied and religious than others. Although they reached the idea that religious commitment may be a precursor to organizational commitment, they could not diagnose the direction of the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Brown & Sargeant, 2007).

In these social and business studies on belonging, especially the effects of belonging on the realization of goals have been revealed. McClure and Brown (2008), one of the studies that reveal what belonging is generally related to, especially in the business universe, based belonging on the feeling of being valuable, needed, or important to others and fitting in. Within the scope of these characteristics, they found six workplace belonging components. These are; being invited and learning to be part of a workplace; connecting with colleagues and wanting to be included; doing work and being recognized; natural selection, competition, being excluded and not belonging; being needed and feeling deeply involved in the work; and reflecting on time, work and people (Thissen et al., 2023).

Based on the fact that the research on belonging has been addressed in businesses a lot in the recent period and that it has significant effects on businesses as well as on all organizations, this study examines belonging in a more in-depth manner in the context of the business, and this study examines belonging in the context of the business. After a detailed discussion and transfer of the theory of belongingness, it is examined how the social belongingness approach, in which the theory was first put forward, corresponds to the universe of enterprises. The effects of employee belonging on the management of enterprises and the evaluation of their performance have been revealed.

2. Approaches to Belonging

It would be appropriate to mention many theories that support the concept of belonging and form a theoretical basis. The sense of belonging or the need to belong refers to individuals' desire to be accepted in social environments, to establish meaningful relationships, and to be part of a community. This need has found a frequent place in the psychological literature and has been at the center of many theoretical approaches. The foundations of belonging theory are based on different theoretical approaches to psychology. These theories are mentioned below.

2.1. Bowlby's Attachment Theory

According to this approach, three main relationship patterns between mother and baby result from the behaviors exhibited by the mother: secure/fully involved, shy/partially involved, and anxious/disinterested. Regardless of the type of mother, the baby develops a kind of attachment to the mother, and the character traits it will have in the future are shaped according to the behaviors under these three main attitudes of the mother.

The result is that every person feels a great need for attachment to something from the day they are born, and over time, this attachment turns to other objects. This is one of the reasons why people are social creatures. In summary, people are genetically hardwired to feel connected to something (Bretherton, 1992).

2.2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In the 1960s, experiential life, personal development, and interest in human values and existential problems, which were discussed within the scope of the Humanistic Psychology movement in psychology, became the focus of wide interest all over the world. Maslow, the pioneer of this movement, argued that the most important factor that directs human behavior is needs, and he also conducted studies on the phenomenon of motivation (Aytaç, 2007).

Abraham Maslow presented human needs in a hierarchical order. In this hierarchy, social needs come after physiological needs and safety needs. According to Maslow, individuals' needs for belonging and love are an important stage on the path to self-actualization (Güleç, 2002). However, another detail emphasized in the theory

is that, in general, unless a lower-level need is satisfied, another higher-level need cannot enter the field of conscious experience (Aydin, 2003).

2.3.Work Commitment

When the literature on work engagement is examined, it is seen that different meanings are used to define work engagement. These are ego commitment, ego-related performance, professional commitment, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, morale, work participation, basic life interests, work role commitment, and psychological commitment to work. If all these different responses are evaluated in general, we can say that each of them is separately related to job commitment, but none of them alone fully meets job commitment (Ergenç, 1983).

Job commitment was first created as an important organizational attitude by Lodahl and Kejner (1965) by integrating the concepts of "morale" and "self-commitment" (Diker & Karacaođlu, 2010). Lodahl and Kejner (1965) base work engagement on two foundations. While the first defines work engagement within the framework of job performance and self-esteem relationships, the second suggests that it is a part of the self-image. While the first foundation is based on the views of Allport and Vroom, the second foundation is based on Dubin's work on 'central life interest'.

Work engagement is the degree of cognitive engagement, activity, and interest in one's current job (Paullay et al., 1994). Work engagement, defined in the mind as a positive, satisfying, and work-related state, enables employees to have power over the work they do. In this case, it motivates employees and increases their commitment to work (Yan & Su, 2013). From an organizational perspective, work engagement is considered a key factor in motivating employees and is considered a fundamental basis for achieving competitive advantages (Zhou & Li, 2008). Three effective sources can be identified in explaining an individual's level of work engagement (Rabinowitz et al., 1977).

- 1) Personal history and socialization
- 2) Job characteristics
- 3) A combination of job and personal characteristics

Work commitment is not about external but about individuals' internal motivation (Lawler & Hall, 1970). The basis of this commitment is that the individual is immersed in his job and feels psychologically connected, even if he is not satisfied (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983).

2.4.Behavioral Engagement

This approach, which is based on Victor Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, argues that the behavior of the individual in the process that begins with his/her entry into the organization shapes his/her commitment to the organization. In other words, the individual exhibits behavior due to his expectations, and the results that come back to him bind him to the organization. It can be evaluated that individuals work hard to stay in the organization and exhibit behaviors to maintain this by adapting to the values within the organization.

According to this view, it is put forward that individuals develop efforts to adapt to internal values around the main idea of continuing their membership in the organization and engage in various behaviors with thoughts such as binding job choices, career choices, and leaving the organization. It is expected that the actions taken will have binding consequences in the future. In this respect, commitment is a dimension that is revealed with the help of behaviors.

2.5.Attitudinal Commitment

With the work of Mowday, Porter, and Steers, (1982) One of the most accepted loyalty classifications has been made based on the individual's ability to express himself with the organization. According to this approach, individual commitment:

- Strong acceptance of the organization's beliefs and values,
- Willingness to exert meaningful effort on behalf of the organization,

It can be explained by the elements of a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

In this approach, a portrait of emotional commitment very close to Meyer and Allen (1991) is drawn. On the other hand, it seems to be closely related to moral commitment. According to this approach, the individual changes from a passive attitude toward the organization to an active one and develops attitudes that are prone to making some sacrifices for the benefit of the organization (Yıldırım, 2003).

2.6.Identity Theory

Focusing on the somatic representation of self-consciousness, psychoanalysts Lacan and Zazzo stated in their research that the process of recognizing the child's reflection in the mirror triggers an integration between the individual's external appearance and internal experiences. This integration enables the individual to gain a real sense of identity for the first time. In other words, psychological and psychoanalytic studies carried out on this subject in the 1930s suggested that the body creates a personal identity area as a result of the combination of internal experiences and external appearance (Zillioğlu, 2008). Therefore, the fact that this formation cannot be explained solely with the concept of self has caused the concept of identity to be included in the literature, and by revealing the personal and social aspects of identity, it has paved the way for identity discussions in many different disciplines.

The concept of identity, which was integrated into social sciences by Erikson in the 1950s, suggests that it is constructed through identifications that occur in a lifelong process, starting from birth and especially under the influence of crises during adolescence. The essential elements of identity; He defined as the individual "sense of specificity", the "sense of continuity" obtained in different experiences, and the "internalization of social values and obligations" (Marc, 2004). Based on Erikson's analyses, the concept of identity began to be examined in different disciplines such as social psychology, sociology, and anthropology since the 1960s and has become a part of our daily lives with the influence of increasing social movements on a global scale. In this context, identity is divided into two main categories in the social sciences literature: "personal identity" and "social identity".

Personal identity is discussed as the way the individual's unique physical, mental, and psychological characteristics are perceived and defined (Minibaş Poussard & Bastounis, 2008). Identity is a necessary condition for an abstract human capacity to exist in reality; It should be noted that an individual can only exist within the context of one identity. Identity contexts are an important factor that affects individuals' goals, commitments, loyalties, activities, desires, emotions, and reactions (Tok, 2003).

Social identity is a concept that examines how the individual integrates with the values and ideals of the communities to which he feels he belongs (Hakan, 1995). The socialization process of each individual is also a process of gaining identity. Therefore, each individual can have more than one identity, because this process; is shaped by imposing many identity elements on individuals that enable differentiation in areas such as gender, language, history, religion, sect, and ethnicity.

2.7.Bias Theory

It is an important conceptualization work by Becker (1960). In summary, Becker argues that the benefits obtained or likely to be obtained from the organization and the effort spent increase commitment to the organization. According to him, as the effort and time spent increases, the expectations from the organization also increase. These expectations make it more difficult for the individual to leave the organization day by day. This approach of Becker was introduced into the model as the "continuance commitment" dimension in the study of Meyer and Allen (1991) (Becker, 1960).

2.8.Etzioni's Classification of Triple Allegiance

Etzioni had a great guiding influence on subsequent studies by dividing commitment into three. According to him, commitment can be divided into three dimensions: moral, interest-based, and coercive/obligatory commitment. Moral commitment includes identification with the goals of the organization; interest-based loyalty, in short, the theory of "partisanship"; Compulsory commitment describes the commitment resulting from the coercive power of the organization. In addition, he accepted the authority and power of the organization over its employees as a precursor of commitment to the organization (Yutzy, 1963).

2.8.1.Moral Commitment:

It describes identification with authority and positive orientation towards the organization by internalizing organizational goals, values, and norms. The truths of the organization leave an impression on the individual that it produces beneficial results for society, and the individual joins the organization by considering that this is suitable for him. The overlap between the goals of the organization and the individual is most commonly used to define this type of commitment(Colby & Damon, 1993; Matsuba & Walker, 2004).

2.8.2.Self-Interest Commitment:

Here, emotions are not at the forefront and interests are negotiable. Members become attached to the organization; because of the time, effort, etc. they spend on the organization. They find the fees and rewards they receive for services useful and rational. Everything is mutual; One side serves, and the other side pays for it. There is almost no emotional side that brings up the issue of commitment. The relationship between the organization and the

individual is fixed by the content of a contract. It is determined in advance what will be given mutually in which situations (Esin & Erdem, 2022).

2.8.3.Coercive Commitment (Coercive Intimacy):

It is used to describe the dimension of commitment in which the individual's behavior is kept under control due to the unshakable authority of the organization and the orientation between the individual and the organization is negative. Etzioni demonstrated this as a result of his studies among military units and individuals in prison. In his study, he concluded that individuals participate in the activity due to the sanctioning power of the organization. Although it may seem like a negative commitment dimension, various organizations still have to use this dimension. The strength of commitment is proportional to the power of the authority that creates this commitment (Monahan et al., 1995).

2.9.Integrated Commitment

Kanter defined a unique tripartite division and argued that these interact and that all of them should be strengthened at the same time to increase the commitment of the individual (Dilek, 2004). According to him, continuance commitment, which is very similar to the reciprocal, investment, and calculable commitment made by others, is about expecting rewards for sacrifices made and trying to strengthen the organization. Interlocking commitment is related to strengthening the work environment and interpersonal relationships. Everything the organization implements to bring employees closer together and create team bonding is aimed at this commitment. Control commitment, on the other hand, is a type of commitment resulting from the overlap between the rules of the organization and the social rules and the similarity of the truths.

When considered in more detail, integrated commitment appears in three ways. These;

2.9.1.Continuity Commitment (Continuation Commitment):

The continuity commitment conveyed by Dilek is that members dedicate themselves to the continuity of the organization. However, it is quite reasonable to consider that this is an illusion caused by a translation error or the incorrect placement of the concept in Turkish. All other researchers have based continuance commitment on cost or calculating commitment, where "dedication" is the last concept that comes to mind. The same source further states, "It is costly and difficult for members to leave the organization because they make personal investments in their organizations" and defines the well-known cost-oriented loyalty. Therefore, spiritual feelings, and especially devotion, are difficult to talk about here, and Rosebeth Moss Kanter described an instrumental devotion that many later used. The company that the individual initially chose due to the advantages provided to him/her became the center of the individual's investments over time, and the individual had to strengthen his/her commitment to the organization to prevent the investments accumulated over time from losing value. The continuity of the organization is vital for the individual, and since there is a relationship of interest at the center, reciprocity and expectations are at the forefront. Therefore, it is a better approach to talk about expectations instead of dedication (Crowe & Reznik, 2014).

2.9.2.Interlocking Commitment:

In this type of commitment, social relationships predominate. Solidarity and social relationships developed within the organization can ultimately create unity among individuals. While Kanter (1968) put forward this idea, which was not directly emphasized by those who came after him, he concluded that the social relations developed among organizational members are predictive of their attachment to the organization. Uniforms, symbols, and rituals spent time together, which try to ensure a stronger psychological attachment of the individual to the organization, can be included in such behaviors and practices. However, the inconsistency here is the fact that these activities may not always reflect a positive commitment to the organization. The commitment under investigation is the commitment that has positive results for the organization, and this type of Kanter may not always produce positive results. Moreover, the commitment that Kanter evaluates in this type is not a commitment but is closer to the person-group harmony emphasized by Kristof (1996) and Chatman (1989).

2.9.3.Control Commitment:

According to Kanter (1968), this dimension is a commitment dimension that sees it necessary to fully comply with the rules, values, and goals established by the organization. It occurs when the individual fully believes that the rules and moral values of the organization constitute the basis for behaviors appropriate to social life (Yıldırım, 2003). This dimension, which requires high-level compliance with organizational norms, opens a window to the person-organization fit also mentioned by Kristof (1996).

Age and length of service in the organization, which March and Simon (1958) consider important commitment criteria and determinants in terms of labor turnover, are also indirectly related to this issue (Hrebiniak & Alutto,

1972). Because advancing age and increasing length of service prevent them from easily accepting and adopting other authorities, these people become more attached to the current system.

2.10.Three-Dimensional Attitudinal Commitment According to O'Reilly and Chatman

In their study, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) defend the thesis that three forms of psychological commitment form the basis of commitment to the organization. According to them, commitment is a three-dimensional attitude consisting of adaptation, identification, and internalization. Compliance is instrumental behavior performed to avoid punishment and obtain rewards. Identification is the individual's desire to resemble the organization that creates the impact he is exposed to, even if it does not match his values. Internalization is the behavior of the individual to adopt organizational values and goals that are compatible with his values (Yıldırım, 2003). According to them, while commitment resulting from identification and internalization causes extra-role and pro-social behaviors; compliance will not create such a result (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Triple Loyalty Classification According to Allen and Meyer

The most accepted segmentation is Allen and Meyer's study of attitudinal commitment. The first part of their study was aimed at explaining whether organizational commitment has separable layers, resulting in a typology. Thus, they defined organizational commitment in three dimensions: emotional, continuance, and normative. Emotional commitment; is the individual feeling emotionally attached to the organization; commitment to the organization due to the cost of leaving the organization, and continuance commitment; They defined normative commitment as having a moral understanding that it is right to stay in the organization.

According to Koç (2009), the individual with emotional commitment feels the desire to stay in the organization, the individual with a continuity bond feels the need to stay in the organization, and the individual with normative commitment feels the obligation to stay in the organization (Koç, 2009). Likewise, Herrbach (2006), who built his study on the accuracy of Allen and Meyer's (1991) classification, stated that what makes each form of commitment to the organization different is the nature of the force that binds the individual to the entity and that this means "perceived cost" in continuance commitment and "desire" in emotional commitment." and underlines that there is a "perceived obligation" in normative commitment. They have a holistic view that wants to see emotional, continuance, and normative commitment as sub-elements of attitudinal commitment rather than separately examinable types.

The second part of Allen and Meyer's (1991) study aims to elucidate the premises that reveal these types of commitment. In their opinion, they explained emotional and continuity commitment very well; however, they were inadequate in explaining normative commitment. One of the reasons for this is that in the first part of the study, the level of explanation of both dimensions overlaps for some topics (they are perceived as explaining the same topics according to the participants), and there is only one variable (loyalty) in the predefined scale for normative commitment in determining the premises.

2.10.1.Emotional Commitment

According to them, it is the most mentioned and most frequently encountered approach in the literature. It is the emotional or emotional attachment of the individual to the organization and the display of this as an attitude of satisfaction with being included in the organization. This view is called "attachment to group feelings" (Kanter, 1968); They developed it based on the idea conceptualized as partisan and emotional attachment to the goals and values of the organization (Buchanan, 1974), solely for the benefit of the organization, without considering the interlocking commitment and individual benefits it will bring.

According to Mowday et al., the "relative strength of the individual's identification with his/her organization" approach is the most valid definition of emotional commitment. The 15-item Organizational Commitment Survey developed by Mowday et al. (1979) and the blue-collar employee commitment scales developed by Cook and Wall (1980) are psychometrically adequate and appropriate scales. The four antecedents of emotional commitment reported by Mowday et al. (1979), consisting of personality traits, job characteristics, work experience, and structural characteristics, are also seen as meaningful by Allen and Meyer (1990).

2.10.2.Continuity (Perceived Cost) Commitment:

According to Allen Meyer (1990), most researchers talk about the existence of cost-related commitment rather than emotional commitment. Cognitive continuance commitment with partisanship theory (Becker, 1960; Kanter, 1968) defined a continuance commitment that can be summarized as bonding due to the interests that will be lost.

This type of commitment can be measured with a scale finalized by Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972); However, according to Allen and Meyer (1990), it seems possible to partially measure emotional commitment with this scale. They also argue that continuance commitment has two bases, emphasizing the number or intensity of investments

made by the individual and their perceived alternative needs. The first of the two foundations reflects Becker's "side-bet" theory, in which the individual bets his/her means on the organization and does not think of leaving to collect the results. The second is because the scarcity of new job opportunities increases the perceived cost of leaving the organization. In their study, Meyer and Allen found that those with higher education felt less commitment than those with lower education within the same organization. Therefore, according to them, as job opportunities decrease, continuance commitment increases (Meyer & Allen, 1988).

2.10.3.Coercive (Normative) Commitment:

According to Allen and Meyer, although it is not widely accepted, it is a type of commitment that should not be overlooked and in which the individual thinks that he has obligations towards the organization. Based on Wiener's definition of "the sum of internalized moral pressures aimed at achieving the goals of the organization" (Wiener, 1982), they agree with the definition of behaviors that "the individual believes and performs to be morally right". They also emphasize that the scale used by Wiener and Vardi, which questions the loyalty of the individual, what he gives up for the sake of the organization, and his lack of critical behavior, is the only valid scale. Referring to Wiener (1982) at this point, Allen and Meyer state that it is a type of commitment that is preceded by the individual's family and cultural values and that develops during the socialization phase of the organization, which emerges from the moment of entry into the company.

These theoretical approaches show how the sense of belonging is shaped at different stages of an individual's life and how it interacts with social dynamics. These basic structures on which the theory of belonging is based allow us to understand in depth how the individual acquires a position in the social context and the effects of this position on individual and collective identity.

3.Types of belonging

Belongingness plays a critical role in individuals' social and psychological worlds. Humans are social beings by nature and need to connect with groups or communities. However, the meaning and expression of belonging may vary from individual to individual, culture to culture, and situation to situation. Therefore, understanding the various forms and dimensions of belonging allows us to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' social experiences and relationships.

Many academic studies have revealed that belonging can occur in many different forms. These forms relate to an individual's commitment to family, group of friends, ethnic or cultural groups, organizations, faith communities, or even nations. Additionally, the source of the sense of belonging may differ based on how the individual includes himself/herself in these groups and the nature of his/her interactions with these groups. Primary affiliation refers to connections that are usually inherent and experienced within the family, close relatives, or ethnic/cultural community. This type of belonging is often automatic and has a deep and lasting impact on the individual. Secondary affiliation, on the other hand, relates to commitment to communities that emerge as a result of an individual's choices and experiences, such as a university, a workplace, a group that shares a hobby, or a social organization. This type of belonging is often more flexible and can change throughout the individual's life.

It is known that the sense of belonging meets the psychological needs of the individual and plays a critical role in the formation of individual identity. However, this emotion can also shape the individual's interactions with his or her social environment and social dynamics. Therefore, examining various forms of belonging is a fundamental step in understanding individuals' social worlds and social experiences.

3.1.Individual Belonging

The roots of individuals' need to belong are based on deep psychological and social structure. The need to belong is shaped by individuals' past social experiences, how they interact, and how the social environment responds. Gardner et al. (2000) showed how different the consequences of individuals' experiences of social exclusion - especially experiences that lead to social starvation - can be compared to positive social experiences, such as experiences of social acceptance and approval free of prejudices. Social exclusion can cause an individual to feel worthless, rejected, and lonely. This emphasizes how important social acceptance is for an individual to feel valued and belonging. Thus, an individual's social experiences and background play a critical role in the ways they make sense of and meet their sense of belonging.

When we go back to prehistoric times, we can see that belonging has an evolutionary importance. People recognized how vital it was to have a settled system, protect food sources, provide shelter, protect against predators, and counter potential threats from individuals in other communities. Levett-Jones et al. (2007) note that being in a community where individuals work cooperatively and harmoniously greatly increases their capacity to perform these vital activities. Being in a group not only provides physical safety but also psychological relief and social

support. This creates strong social bonds between individuals, resulting in increased control within the group and intrinsic motivation for individuals to fulfill their roles within the group more effectively.

In summary, the individual's need for belonging is based on evolutionary, psychological, and social foundations. This need is critical to an individual's physical and psychological well-being, and further research is needed on how an individual's social experiences and historical context shape and meet this need.

3.2.Group Belonging

The basic function of belonging to the individual can be defined as a deep emotional attachment that strengthens the tendency to integrate the individual into a certain group. In this context, the feeling of belonging is the individual's sense of belonging within the group; It allows people to fulfill important social functions such as coming together, understanding each other's values, gathering around a common goal, and meeting collective needs (Duru, 2007).

An in-depth examination of belonging is closely related to the individual's need to define himself as "a part" of the group. The depth of psychological satisfaction obtained through group membership reveals how strong the individual's need to feel belonging is. In particular, individuals who are deprived of a sense of belonging and who desire to integrate into a community around them often make extreme efforts to meet these needs (Şerif & Şerif, 1996). This confirms that group belonging is critical for individual well-being and psychological balance.

In the context of group dynamics, it has been noted that individuals' behavior within a group may differ markedly from their behavior. This effect of the group on the individual is also supported by studies in the social psychology literature on group norms and expectations and the individual's adaptation process (Kağıtçıbaşı & Üskül, 1999). This highlights an important observation about how group affiliation can shape an individual's social behavior and attitudes.

3.3.Social Belonging

Social belonging plays a central role in understanding an individual's social-emotional life. Individuals' social-emotional perceptions depend on cognitive factors, their knowledge of social situations, how they interpret events, what they have learned from previous experiences, and how they participate in society. In addition, how individuals make inferences about what others think and the rules they internalize in society also affect these perceptions (McManus et al., 1998).

In-depth examination of social consciousness and emotions has been an important area for many researchers. By emphasizing the basis of social emotions, Adler emphasized the importance of the individual's innate social elements and historical background (Adler & Gundersen, 2001). Individuals are equipped with a social memory that is passed on from generation to generation, thanks to their innate social values and history. This reflects not only the historical traces of today's social actions but also how individuals are positioned in social life. These social traces reflect the cultural identity of a society throughout history, as well as individuals' sense of social belonging.

It is also possible to examine different aspects of social belonging by classifying them. This classification is as follows:

- a) National Belonging: It expresses the individual's loyalty to the nation-state and how he identifies with this nation-state.
- b) Ethnic Belonging: It defines the sense of belonging that the individual feels regarding his ethnic or cultural origin.
- c) Religious Belonging: It reflects the individual's religious beliefs and his relationship with these beliefs.
- d) Organizational Belonging: It refers to the individual's connection with a particular organization or institution.
- e) Spatial Belonging: It is the individual's attachment to a geographical or physical place. This may reflect an individual's emotional connection to their place of birth, place of residence, or a special place.

3.4.Corporate Belonging

Organizations are more than physical structures, they are social systems formed by individuals who come together to achieve certain goals. In another definition, it is expressed as a system of division of labor and coordination in which individuals come together to achieve goals that they cannot achieve on their own, with their collective knowledge, skills, and efforts (Koçel, 2010). It can also be defined as structures formed by the combination of production factors such as raw materials, machinery, people, and organization (Ataman, 2009; Eren, 2012) .

In this structure we call organization, people and human relations are among the primary elements that affect all processes. When we express the person's belonging to the organization, the concept of corporate belonging appears. The basis of corporate belonging is the employee's commitment and participation in the institution. Corporate belonging can be defined as the degree of employee identification with the organization (Newstrom, 2007), commitment to the organization in response to internalized normative pressures (Wiener, 1982), commitment to corporate goals and values, and the efforts made for this purpose (Buchanan, 1974). Other definitions are stated as employees' participation in corporate processes (Mowday, 1998), their approach to work behavior (Silverthorne, 2004), and the harmony of individual goals with corporate values (Durna & Veysel, 2005).

From an individual perspective, an organization may best represent an individual's values. In this context, the individual is happy to mobilize all his energy and emotional power for the success of his organization. This can be considered not only as a means of defining the individual's own identity but also as a method of glorifying the institution. In the long term, an individual who maintains this commitment attitude prefers to stay in his current institution without evaluating or comparing other potential opportunities (Ertürk, 2011). This shows that organizational belonging is critical to maintaining organizational commitment and employee overall satisfaction.

4. Belonging in Businesses

Belonging in businesses means that employees feel a strong commitment to the organization, adopt the organizational culture, and develop a sense of identity-related to their work. A strong sense of belonging can contribute to organizations gaining several advantages. It examines the effects of employees' feelings of belonging to an organization on job performance, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty. This approach addresses how employees' experiences at work affect their overall job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

Although there are many studies on the subject in the business universe, organizational belonging has generally been examined at the level of its sub-dimensions. In this context, there are studies that employees' sense of belonging can increase their motivation, productivity, and general satisfaction levels at work. Relationships have also been revealed between corporate culture (Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021), leadership (Kurniawan et al., 2022), employee engagement, and organizational commitment (Bilginoğlu & Yozgat, 2023). Within these relationships, many studies are showing that increasing employees' sense of belonging increases job satisfaction and performance. Employees with a high sense of belonging generally show higher motivation and productivity. Based on the scientific research conducted on the subject, the main factors related to belonging to enterprises are presented below.

4.1. Sense of Belonging and Work Performance

The relationship between belonging and job performance is a subject that has been extensively studied in the fields of organizational psychology and management. Belonging means that an individual feels that he/she belongs to an organization, adopts the values of the organization, and feels loyalty to the organization. Job performance, on the other hand, is the degree to which an individual fulfills his/her job duties effectively (Waller, 2021). Of course, there are many criteria for determining performance in businesses. However, one of the most prominent factors is employee performance. Factors such as the selection of employees in enterprises, their continuity, and giving them a sense of organizational belonging are among the factors that primarily affect performance. After a meritorious recruitment process, the continuity of this merit in organizational processes starts to create an organizational commitment in employees. This bond positively affects the performance of the employee and he/she does not refrain from making efforts to create benefits for the organization. In addition, the employee keeps his/her performance high in line with his/her interests to ensure continuity in such a business environment and not lose his/her job (Hurst et al., 2017).

In many studies, it has been revealed that employees with a high sense of belonging show higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction, which positively affects their job performance. It is also seen that employees' commitment to the organization reduces turnover rates and increases organizational loyalty (Antonicelli & De Turi, 2020; Ingand, 2018).

The combination of these factors plays an important role in explaining how a sense of belonging affects job performance. By understanding these factors, managers can develop strategies to strengthen belonging within the organization and thus increase employees' job performance.

4.2. Corporate Culture and Sense of Belonging

A good organizational culture provides a basis for employees to develop a sense of belonging. Shared values and norms make it easier for employees to better communicate with each other, collaborate, and focus on a common goal. At the same time, a strong sense of belonging can contribute to maintaining and improving organizational

culture. When employees feel that they belong to the organization, they are more willing to support corporate culture (Azadi & Azadi, 2020).

In the studies focusing on the effect of corporate culture on employees' sense of belonging, it has been revealed in many studies that internal communication, leadership style, and values positively affect employees' commitment to the organization, and open communication channels, transparency, and encouraging employee participation strengthen the sense of belonging (Fallon, 2017; Masyhuri et al., 2023).

Corporate culture and organizational belonging are dynamic elements that strengthen and influence each other. A good corporate culture can give employees a sense of belonging to the organization and this sense of belonging can contribute to the sustainability of corporate culture. By bringing these two factors together, organizations can increase employee engagement, improve business performance and achieve long-term success (Tabatabaee et al., 2016).

4.3. Leadership and Belonging

Leadership styles, another factor, have an impact on employees' motivation and commitment to the organization. Leaders' behaviors such as empathy, open communication, and appreciation contribute to employees feeling more belonging at work (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2019).

In the studies conducted with many dimensions of leadership, it has been observed that leadership affects organizational belonging both directly and indirectly. It has been revealed that moral leadership is effective in psychological empowerment and this empowerment affects organizational belonging (Bahmani et al., 2020).

In the relationship between leadership and belonging, it is stated that there are two mechanisms called role modeling and frame alignment that enable charismatic leaders to interact with their followers (Shamir et al., 1993). Frame alignment refers to the processes in which the values, beliefs, and interests of followers and leaders become compatible and complementary. In this process, the leader's selfless motivation plays an important role and the follower gains a sense of belonging to the community formed by the leader. It is the follower's social identification with the group that leads to a sense of belonging between the leader and the follower (Kark et al., 2003). On the other hand, role modeling leads the follower to personally identify with the leader. Since the early days of charismatic leadership research, personal identification with the leader has been recognized as an important factor in determining whether followers perceive a leader as charismatic. Personal identification is considered a one-to-one relationship in which one individual sees the other as similar and shares a sense of unity (Ashforth et al., 2016). This relationship results in a commitment to the organization through the leader.

Since companies need to make full use of every resource they have to survive, managers are also required to establish deep connections with employees. The problem about how this connection will be established is in search of an answer (Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021).

Finally, the sense of belonging in organizations directly and significantly affects employee engagement. Employees with a high sense of belonging are generally more committed to their jobs and contribute more effectively to the overall success of the company. In this context, it is seen that by involving employees in decision-making processes, their loyalty and sense of belonging to the workplace increases. In addition, participative management styles enable employees to be more effective and motivated at work (Cruz-Vega et al., 2018; Ingand, 2018).

5. Conclusion and Evaluation

This study aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Belonging Theory and its various applications, particularly within the context of businesses. By examining the theoretical foundations and practical implications of belonging, we sought to highlight the critical role that a sense of belonging plays in both individual well-being and organizational success (Antonsich, 2010).

Belonging Theory is deeply rooted in psychological and social theories that emphasize the innate human need to form connections and identify with groups. From Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which underscores the importance of early relationships in shaping an individual's ability to form bonds (Bretherton, 1992), to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which places belonging as a fundamental human need (Güleç, 2002), the theory is supported by a robust theoretical framework. These foundational theories highlight that the need for belonging is not just a social construct but an essential element of human existence, crucial for survival, psychological well-being, and social integration.

Furthermore, various forms of belonging, such as individual, group, social, and corporate belonging, illustrate the multifaceted nature of this concept. Each form of belonging carries unique implications for how individuals interact with their environments, make decisions, and perceive their roles within a larger social context. The

integration of different theories, such as Identity Theory, Behavioral Engagement, and Attitudinal Commitment, provides a nuanced understanding of how belonging can be nurtured, challenged, and transformed throughout an individual's life (Bilgin, 2011).

In the business world, the application of Belonging Theory reveals several key insights. A strong sense of belonging among employees is linked to higher job satisfaction, increased motivation, improved performance, and reduced turnover. These outcomes are vital for the long-term success of any organization (McIntyre et al., 2002). The research shows that employees who feel a strong connection to their organization are more likely to align their personal goals with the organization's objectives, leading to a more cohesive and productive work environment (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992).

Corporate culture plays a pivotal role in fostering a sense of belonging. A culture that promotes inclusivity, open communication, and shared values can significantly enhance employees' attachment to the organization. Leadership, too, is a critical factor. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, provide regular feedback, and involve employees in decision-making processes can cultivate a deeper sense of belonging, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance (Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021).

While the benefits of fostering a sense of belonging are clear, it is also important to recognize the potential negative consequences. A strong sense of belonging can sometimes lead to groupthink, where the desire for harmony and conformity within a group results in irrational or dysfunctional decision-making (Georgeac, 2020). Additionally, excessive belonging might suppress individual creativity and innovation, as employees may feel pressured to conform to the prevailing norms and values of the group (Bryer, 2020).

Moreover, in environments where belonging is overly emphasized, there may be an increased risk of exclusion or discrimination against those who do not fit the mold. This can lead to the marginalization of minority groups and a lack of diversity in thought and perspective, ultimately harming the organization's ability to adapt to changing environments and innovate (Leach, 2017).

To maximize the positive effects of belonging while mitigating its potential downsides, organizations should adopt a balanced approach. This includes:

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion: Organizations should actively promote diversity and create an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and respected. This involves not just hiring diverse talent but also fostering an organizational culture that celebrates different perspectives and experiences (Bryer, 2020).

Encouraging Open Communication: Leaders should establish open communication channels where employees feel safe to express their opinions, share their ideas, and raise concerns. Regular feedback sessions and transparent decision-making processes can help build trust and reinforce a sense of belonging (Gampetro et al., 2022).

Providing Development Opportunities: Offering continuous learning and development opportunities can help employees feel that they are growing with the organization. This not only enhances their skills and knowledge but also strengthens their commitment to the organization (Cohen, 2022).

Recognizing and Rewarding Contributions: Recognition programs that acknowledge employees' efforts and achievements can significantly boost their sense of belonging. Whether through formal awards or informal praise, recognition helps employees feel appreciated and connected to the organization's success (Bishop, 1987).

Balancing Belonging with Individuality: While fostering belonging is important, organizations must also respect and encourage individuality. This can be achieved by allowing employees to pursue their unique interests and goals within the organization, thus creating a more dynamic and innovative workplace (Marshall & Foster, 2002).

The current research highlights the importance of belonging in both individual and organizational contexts, yet there are still areas that warrant further exploration. Future studies could focus on the long-term impact of belonging on employee well-being and organizational performance, particularly in the context of remote work and virtual teams (Georgeac, 2020). Additionally, more research is needed to understand how belonging intersects with other organizational factors, such as power dynamics, leadership styles, and corporate social responsibility (Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021).

Moreover, empirical studies could investigate the varying impacts of belonging across different cultural and organizational settings. Such research would provide valuable insights into how belonging can be effectively cultivated in diverse work environments, thereby contributing to more inclusive and resilient organizations (Bilginoğlu & Yozgat, 2023).

In conclusion, Belonging Theory offers a profound understanding of human behavior and organizational dynamics. By recognizing and addressing the need for belonging, organizations can create more supportive, productive, and inclusive work environments. However, it is crucial to approach the cultivation of belonging with an awareness of

its potential pitfalls and to implement strategies that balance the benefits of belonging with the need for diversity, innovation, and individual expression. As organizations continue to evolve in an increasingly complex and globalized world, the insights provided by Belonging Theory will be instrumental in shaping the future of work and society at large (Ashforth et al., 2016).

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