

Summary

The Fusion of Individual-based and Group-based Processes: Predicting Tendency to Exhibit Extreme Self-sacrificing Pro-group Behavior

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This study aims to rationalize the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors as sacrificing own life for the sake of group members using identity-based and deprivation-based approaches, namely, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Identity Fusion Theory (Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009; Swann, Jetten, Gomez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012), and Relative Deprivation Theory (e.g., Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966). In accordance to this purpose, the study conducted in a sample of people who identify themselves as Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) supporters, and examined the participants' relationships with other CHP supporters (local in-group), citizens of the Republic of Turkey (extended in-group) and Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) supporters, Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) supporters, Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) supporters (local out-groups) that were represented in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by the November-2015 parliamentary elections. The main view supported by the research is that individual-based and group-based processes (personal identity and social identity; individual-based deprivation and group-based deprivation) may be simultaneously salient, overlapped (fused), and mutually supportive, and strengthen the motivation to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors to save the lives of group members.

Identity-based Approach

Since the late 1970s, in-group identification concept and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) has been used frequently to explain pro-group behaviors. However, the contemporary international articles use a

relatively new approach, namely, Identity Fusion Theory (Swann et al., 2009; 2012) that has not been tested in a Turkish sample to predict extreme pro-group behaviors. Depending on the previously conducted studies (e.g., Buhrmester et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2009; Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann, Gomez et al., 2014; Swann, Gomez, Dovidio, Hart, & Jetten, 2010; Swann, Gomez, Huici, Morales, & Hixon, 2010), there are some differences between in-group identification and identity fusion concepts. Functional antagonism principle and depersonalization hypothesis, discussed in the scope of Social Identity Theory, explains pro-group behaviors with activation of social identity / deactivation of personal identity, and membership-based (category-based) attraction (e.g., Hogg, 1993; Hogg & Hardie, 1991; Levine & Crowther, 2008). On the other hand, principles of identity synergy, relational ties, and agentic personal self, discussed in the scope of Identity Fusion Theory, rationalizes pro-group behaviors with the connectedness and oneness of personal and social identities which are simultaneously salient, functionally equal, permeable, and mutually supportive (rather than conflicting with each other) (e.g., Swann et al., 2009; 2012; Swann, Wenzlaff, & Tafarodi, 1992), and thus strengthens the willingness to exhibit extreme pro-group behaviors.

Relative Deprivation-based Approach

Relative Deprivation Theory (Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) is also used to make sense of the willingness to perform pro-group behavior. Due to the theory, individuals realize their personal disadvantages compared to other people or in-group-based disadvantages compared to other groups through interpersonal and intergroup subjective comparisons. Inter-

personal comparisons and individual-based deprivation are associated with individual-based outcomes as subjective well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem, stress, and depression (e.g., Osborne & Sibley, 2013; Smith & Ortiz, 2002; Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012; Walker, 1999; Walker & Mann, 1987) whereas intergroup comparisons and group-based deprivation are related to group-based issues as collective action, and social change (e.g., Abrams & Grant, 2012; Walker & Mann, 1987) in previously conducted studies.

Researchers mostly highlight the importance of same-level approach (e.g., Smith et al., 2012; Walker & Mann, 1987; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), and present the individual-based and group-based deprivations as unrelated processes. It is frequently suggested that pro-group behaviors can be explained using group-based identity, intergroup comparisons and group-based deprivation (e.g., Smith et al., 2012; Walker, 1999; Walker & Mann, 1987). This reminds the differentiation-based approach mentioned in the articles of Hogg (1987; 1991; 1993), and ignores the effects of personal identity, interpersonal comparisons, and individual-based deprivation on group-based behaviors. However, in the study conducted by Pettigrew et al. (2008), group-based deprivation mediated the relationship between individual-based deprivation and out-group prejudice. Few studies suggest that simultaneous individual-based and group-based deprivations support the willingness to exhibit pro-group behavior, and strengthen the in-group commitment (Foster & Matheson, 1995; Tougas & Beaton, 2002).

Due to the literature findings, the research hypotheses are listed as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Identity fusions with local in-group and extended in-group will positively predict the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors for the sake of these groups. The predictive powers of identification with local in-group and extended in-group on the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors will be lower or insignificant.

Hypothesis 2. Relative deprivation fusion will positively predict the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors for the sake of local in-group and extended in-group. The predictive powers of separate individual-based and group-based relative deprivations on the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors will be lower or insignificant.

Method

Participants

Three hundred twenty people ($N_{female} = 219$; $N_{male} = 101$) who defined themselves as CHP supporter participated in the study. The age of participants ranged from

18 to 37, with a mean age of 24.72 ($SD = 4.86$). Participants had undergraduate ($N = 234$) and graduate ($N = 86$) degrees. The mean of perceived socio-economic status in the sample was found to be 4.24 ($SD = .87$) using a 7-point Likert scale.

Measures

Vignettes. Vignettes, tested the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors to save local in-group, extended in-group, and local out-group members, developed by Swann et al. (Swann, Gomez et al., 2014; Swann, Gomez, Dovidio et al., 2010). The six vignettes adapted into Turkish in this research (see Table 1). In the first-two vignettes, social identity and personal identity activations were provided, respectively, and the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behavior (sacrificing own life) to save the lives of local in-group members (CHP supporters) was tested. The third vignette tested the extreme self-sacrificing behavior tendency to save the lives of five extended in-group members (the Republic of Turkey citizens) versus the life of a local in-group member (CHP supporters). Lastly, the fourth, fifth, and sixth vignettes measured the extreme self-sacrificing behavior tendency to save the lives of five extended in-group members (the Republic of Turkey citizens) versus five local out-group members (AKP, HDP, and MHP supporters).

Measure of Group Identification. The 6-item scale was developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992; $\alpha = .83$) to measure the group identification. In this study, the scale adapted into Turkish (see Appendix Table 1), and participants filled out the measure to indicate what extent they identify themselves with CHP supporters and the Republic of Turkey citizens ($\alpha = .86$, $\alpha = .88$, respectively). Higher scores indicate stronger identification with the social group.

Identity Fusion Scale. The 7-item scale was developed by Gomez et al. (2011; $\alpha = .83$) to test the individual's identity fusion with a social group. In this study, the scale adapted into Turkish (see Appendix Table 1), and participants filled out the measure to indicate what extent they feel fused with CHP supporters and the Republic of Turkey citizens ($\alpha = .92$, $\alpha = .92$, respectively). Higher scores show stronger identity fusion with the social group.

Individual-based and Group-based Relative Deprivation Scale. The 5-item egoistic relative deprivation scale was developed by Özdemir, Tekeş, and Öner-Özkan (2019; $\alpha = .71$) to test individual-based deprivation depending on the interpersonal comparisons. The 2-factor individual-based and group-based relative deprivation scale (see Appendix Table 1) was derived from the scale of Özdemir and colleagues (2019). Par-

ticipants compared themselves and their local in-group (CHP supporters) with other Republic of Turkey citizens using interpersonal and intergroup comparisons, and indicated what extent they perceive individual-based and group-based deprivations depending on the possessed socio-political conditions ($\alpha = .85$, $\alpha = .87$, respectively). Higher scores indicate greater individual-based and/or group-based deprivations.

Relative Deprivation Fusion Scale. The 7-item scale ($\alpha = .94$) was developed in this research to test the connectedness and oneness of individual-based and group-based deprivations (see Appendix Table 1), considering Identity Fusion Scale (Gomez et al., 2011). Before the scale items, the participants read the definitions of individual-based and group-based relative deprivations. Higher scores mean stronger relative deprivation fusion which individual-based perceived disadvantage becomes relevant with local in-group-based perceived disadvantage, and people indicate relative deprivation in both individual and group levels.

Procedure

After the approval by the ethical review board of Middle East Technical University, the research data were collected using the *QUALTRICS* software. The research announcements were shared through social media channels and posted to e-mail addresses of CHP branches. The data collection process was finalized 1 day before the constitutional referendum in 2017.

Results and Discussion

Considering the descriptive findings (see Table 2), there was a strong positive association between identification and identity fusion with local in-group (CHP supporters). The similar association was found between the variables of identification and identity fusion with extended in-group (the Republic of Turkey citizens). Also, local in-group-based identity variables were positively related to extended in-group-based identity variables. When identity and relative deprivation variables were considered, identity variables indicated stronger positive associations with relative deprivation fusion compared to separate individual-based and group-based relative deprivations.

The view of “individual-based and group-based processes (personal identity and social identity; individual-based deprivation and group-based deprivation) may be simultaneously salient, overlapped (fused), and mutually supportive, and strengthen the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behavior” and hypotheses were supported by the research findings (see Table 2; Table 3; Table 4). Identity fusion with local

in-group (CHP supporters), and extended in-group (the Republic of Turkey citizens) positively predicted the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors for the sake of these groups, respectively. However, identification variables could not predict extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors (*Hypothesis 1*). Also, relative deprivation fusion positively predicted the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing behaviors to save the lives of local in-group (CHP supporters) and extended in-group (the Republic of Turkey citizens) whereas separate individual-based and group-based relative deprivations could not predict extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors (*Hypothesis 2*).

Pro-group behaviors have been investigated with various approaches in the literature, but the motivation behind extreme pro-group behaviors as sacrificing own life for the sake of group members has not been clarified yet. In-group identification and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which are frequently used to explain pro-group behaviors, could not predict the willingness to perform extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors in this study. This finding shows that the literature on pro-group behaviors needs new approaches. Identity Fusion Theory (Swann et al., 2009; 2012) is a relatively new approach that is suggested to compensate the weak aspects of Social Identity Theory.

Relative Deprivation Theory (Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) explains group-based behaviors with intergroup comparisons and group-based deprivation (e.g., Smith et al., 2012; Walker & Mann, 1987). However, the findings of this study indicated that the fusion of simultaneously salient and interrelated individual-based and group-based deprivations strongly predicted the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors.

In sum, the research focuses on an important issue as the tendency to exhibit extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behaviors (sacrificing own life to save group members), and suggests that individual-based and group-based processes may be simultaneously salient, interrelated, and mutually supportive in extreme self-sacrificing pro-group behavior tendency. In spite of its limitations (e.g., correlation-based methodology), the study contributes to the literature, and provides a useful source for individuals interested in extreme pro-group behaviors (including terrorist activities), identity and deprivation processes, and socio-political environment in Turkey.