

Antecedents and Outcomes Associated with Employees' Psychological Ownership of Convenience Stores in Bangkok

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Abstract

Employees' psychological ownership has been proposed as a key characteristic that motivates them to make a strong commitment to their organizations. However, research on the antecedents and outcomes of employees' psychological ownership in the convenience store sector is a topic that has been under-explored. Thus, the primary objective of this research was to investigate the effects of psychological ownership on the organizational commitment and organizational identification of employees who work at convenience stores located in Bangkok. Moreover, the influence of supervisor support and organizational trust was assessed on employees' psychological ownership. Survey data were collected randomly from 347 employees who worked at convenience stores located in seven districts in Bangkok. Partial least square structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. The results obtained offered significant support for the proposition that psychological ownership exerts positive effects on employees' organizational commitment and identification. Moreover, the analysis showed that supervisor support and organizational trust affected employees' psychological ownership positively and significantly.

Keywords: *Employee commitment, human resource management, psychological ownership*

Introduction

Convenience stores, which constitute a small retail sector, are widespread in Bangkok and urban regions. They have demonstrated the highest growth rate among all types of current trade outlets and gained an exceptional market share from traditional retailers. According to data from Krungsri Research (2019), there are 15,694 convenience stores nationwide in Thailand, an increase from 14,552 in 2017, or 7.8% year on year. Although convenience stores are growing and expanding, they face problems with employee retention and turnover. Voluntary turnover has an adverse effect on employees' attitudes, company growth, productivity, and organizational revenue (Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). According to evidence from previous research (Berisha & Lajci, 2020; Ikatrinasaria et al., 2018), retail is one of the industries with the highest turnover rates. Thus, it is important to examine the factors that lead employees who work in this business sector to feel involved with their jobs.

Research in organizational behavior has shown that one important characteristic of employees that can motivate them to make a strong commitment to their organizations is psychological ownership (PO) (Dawkins et al., 2017). Generally, PO is employees' feeling that a certain object, place, or idea belongs to them (Pierce & Furo, 1990). In the work context, when employees feel that their organization belongs to them, it motivates them to contribute to the organization tremendously (O'Driscoll et al., 2006). Given the significance of PO as a factor that could enhance employees' contributions, the aim of this research was to examine whether it could also be beneficial for employees who work at convenience stores.

Although the topic of PO has been investigated widely in various research contexts, especially among full-time employees (Fan et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017), a limited number of studies have been conducted on its benefits among employees in the convenience store business context, who are primarily part-time employees. In particular, whether PO is actually relevant to part-time employees constitutes a knowledge research gap that requires support from empirical evidence. Although many employers may have some doubt about part-time employees' commitment, evidence from previous research has shown that part-time employees tended to show high levels of work commitment when they received favorable treatment from their supervisors and organizations (Johanson & Cho, 2009;

Lee & Johnson, 1991). For example, Lee and Johnson's (1991) study showed that part-time workers' degree of organizational commitment did not differ from that of permanent full-time workers. The evidence from Johanson and Cho's (2009) study in the service sector showed that part-time employees even tended to demonstrate a higher level of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior than did full-time employees. Particularly in the retail business, Ikatrinasaria et al. (2018) showed that favorable work conditions could promote employee commitment. Thus, it can be postulated that part-time employees may develop a sense of attachment and show high commitment to their organizations if they have a positive attitude toward their supervisors and organizations.

The objectives of this research were as follows. First, the aim of the study was to examine whether convenience store employees' psychological ownership affected their organizational commitment and organizational identification. Moreover, an attempt was made to investigate certain antecedent factors that may promote employees' psychological ownership. The antecedents investigated included supervisor support and organizational trust. The findings were expected to provide important implications for businesses in the convenience store sector to help them motivate their workforces more effectively, which is a key ingredient in their business success.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership is defined as "the psychologically experienced phenomenon [during] which an employee develops possessive feelings for the target" (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004, p. 439). According to Brown et al. (2014, p. 319), "The core of psychological ownership is the feeling of possessiveness and being psychologically tied to an object, as those objects become part of the extended self." The concept of PO has received considerable attention from scholars and has been applied in various business sectors, such as manufacturing and service (Dawkins et al., 2017), and the positive outcomes derived from employees' PO has been explored widely in previous research (Dawkins et al., 2017; Fan et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017). For example, Fan et al. (2019) found that PO promoted job satisfaction among workers in spa businesses. Lu et al. (2017) found that the PO of employees in automobile manufacturing companies reduced their turnover intentions. Hameed et al. (2019) demonstrated that the PO of employees in multinational corporations encouraged knowledge sharing in their organizations. In a retail industry context, Potdar et al. (2018) found that employees' PO helped stores reduce shoplifting. Potdar et al.'s (2021) study also supported the proposition that PO encouraged guardianship behavior on the part of frontline service employees in supermarkets.

The Effect of PO on Organizational Commitment and Organizational Identification

In this research, the author proposed that PO of employees who worked in franchise stores would motivate them to develop organizational commitment to, and identification with, their workplaces. First, organizational commitment is defined as "the individuals' psychological attachment to an organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 492). Moreover, Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organizational commitment as an attitude in which employees want to stay in their organizations. In particular, employees who develop a sense of workplace ownership are willing to commit strongly to work for them because they do not consider themselves employees who simply work day-after-day for a paycheck (Tiamboonprasert & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Rather, they act as if the company is their valuable belonging and, so they cannot work for it passively (Fan et al., 2019). When employees believe they have some ownership in their organizations, they are willing to devote themselves to secure and maximize their benefits (Dawkins et al., 2017). This role of PO in organizational commitment is consistent with agency theory, which posits that "Agents who own shares will automatically alter their behavior and seek to maximize the value of their ownership stake" (Sieger et al., 2013, p. 365). Given all this support from the literature, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relation between convenience store employees' PO and their organizational commitment.

Second, organizational identification is defined as “a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization’s success and failures as one’s own” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). When employees develop PO toward their organizations, they are very likely to identify strongly with their workplace. Specifically, the sense of belonging that employees develop will make them consider themselves a part of their organization; thus, they will care more about others’ perception of its image (Charoensukmongkol, 2017). Consistent with agency theory, employees’ feeling that they own a stake in a company will make them feel that each of its successes or failures reflects their personal performance as well. This effect of PO on organizational identification has also been found in previous research. Given these supporting arguments, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relation between convenience store employees’ PO and organizational identification.

Effect of Supervisor Support and Organizational Trust on PO

In this section, the author proposed two key factors that may predict employees’ PO: supervisor support and organizational trust. First, supervisor support reflects employees’ “... general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contribution and care about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 2002, p. 565). Generally, supervisors tend to be persons who have a strong influence on employees because they are in the position to decide the allocation of rewards or punishments that employees will receive (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsomthorn, 2020). This supervisory role is particularly strong in high power distance cultures, such as Thailand, where subordinates willingly accept their superiors’ authority (Guang & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Studies have found that having a supportive supervisor can increase job satisfaction and lead to various positive work outcomes (Casper et al., 2011; Charoensukmongkol, 2021; Willemse et al., 2012).

In this research it was proposed that the level of support that franchise employees received from their supervisors could affect the level of PO that they developed for their organizations. Theoretically social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which is based on the law of reciprocity, can explain supervisor support effects on employee PO. According to Blau (1964, pp. 91–92), social exchange theory is concerned largely with “the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others.” DeConinck (2010) also argued that “Social exchanges differ from economic exchanges in that social exchanges involve high levels of trust and obligation and go beyond the employment contract.” Based upon the law of reciprocity, when their supervisors treat employees well, they are more likely to realize how important business performance is to them and thus, they are willing to help their supervisors take good care of their businesses as a way to reciprocate (Vaitoonkiat & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). This positive attitude will persuade them to regard the company as their own, and thereby leads them to be devoted strongly to their organization. Research has shown that supervisors tend to have strong influences on employees’ attitudes and behaviors related to PO. For example, Sollitto et al. (2014) showed that part-time workers who received favorable treatment from their supervisors tended to develop attachment to their organizations. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relation between supervisor support and convenience store employees’ PO.

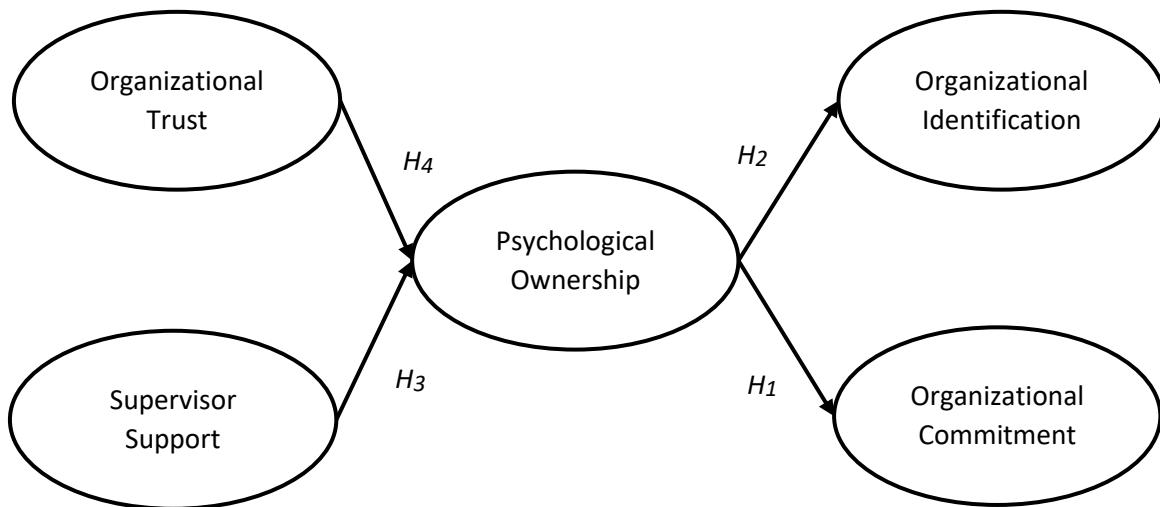
Second, in this research it was proposed that organizational trust promotes employees’ PO. Organizational trust is defined as “employees’ collective perception regarding the trustworthiness of their organization” (Li et al., 2012, p. 372). Trust is considered a key ingredient that enhances the quality of the relationship between parties. It is also regarded as one of the key components in the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Trust is not established easily; it tends to take a considerable amount of time and effort to develop (Ratasuk & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). However, when trust is established, it can yield significant benefits to the trusting parties with respect to caring and cooperative behavior (Seriwatana & Charoensukmongkol, 2020).

Given important roles attributed to trust, the author proposed that the level of organizational trust that franchise employees perceived was a key factor which motivated them to develop PO of their workplaces. When employees perceive that their organization can be trusted, they are assured that it will demonstrate goodwill and protect their best interests. This attitude will cause them to reciprocate by demonstrating a sense of membership in the organization (Koirala & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). In previous research, the role that organizational trust plays in PO has been documented. For example, O'Driscoll et al. (2006) found that a less structured work environment, characterized by high autonomy and personal control, was a factor that led to PO. However, this environment cannot develop without trust between the organization and employees. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relation between organizational trust and convenience store employees' PO.

The conceptual model used in this research is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model



Methods

Samples and Data Collection

The data were collected from employees who worked in chain convenience stores located in seven districts in Bangkok. The cluster sampling method was used to select the samples. First, the seven districts were chosen randomly; then, stores located within these seven districts were visited randomly to collect the data. The store managers were approached directly in person during off-peak times and asked for permission to allow their staff to participate in the survey. After receiving permission, the questionnaires were then distributed to the staff to complete. A total of 135 stores gave permission to collect data, and a total of 347 surveys was distributed. However, 47 staff refused to participate in the study (response rate = 86.5%).

Measurement

Psychological ownership was measured using the scale Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) developed, which consisted of seven items. Organizational commitment was measured using the scale Mowday et al. (1979) developed, which was composed of six items. Organizational identification was measured using a six-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). Supervisor support was measured using the scale Eisenberger et al. (1986) developed, which consists of four items. Organizational trust was measured using four items from the Organizational Trust Inventory scale of Nyhan and Marlowe (1997). All of the items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The final form adopted for the questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.

Control Variables

Four factors that could affect PO, organizational commitment, and organizational identification were included in the analysis as control variables: namely, age, gender, job position, and job tenure. Gender was coded as a dummy variable (male = 1; female = 0). Age was coded as a continuous variable. Job position was coded as a dummy variable (supervisor = 1; non-supervisor = 0). Job tenure was measured in months.

Estimating Technique

In this study, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. The method is considered a component-based SEM technique that allows multiple equations to be assessed simultaneously; further, it also allows variables to be measured as reflective or formative latent variables (Chin, 1998). This method can be used to analyze data even when they are not distributed normally (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). Moreover, PLS regression analysis does not require a larger sample size for analysis compared to other SEM techniques (Chin & Newsted, 1999). In this research WarpPLS v. 7.0 was used to analyze the data.

Results

Survey Population Characteristics

The respondents' mean age was 24.65 years ($SD = 5.51$), and 86 were males (29%), while 214 were females (71%). The respondents' mean job tenure was 3.24 months ($SD = 2.75$). A total of 47 held a supervisory position (16%), while 253 were line employees (84%).

Measurement Model

Before analyzing the data, it was important to check the reliability and validity of the factors that were used as reflective latent variables—PO, supervisor support, organizational trust, organizational commitment, and organizational identification. First, the author evaluated the latent variables for convergent validity using factor loadings. Hair et al. (2009) indicated that factor loadings for constructs must be higher than .50 to have good convergent validity. Some items did not meet the minimum requirement, including two items of supervisor support, one of organizational commitment, and one of PO. Therefore, these items were removed from the analysis, after which the results showed that the remaining items had factor loadings higher than .50. Secondly, the author tested the discriminant validity of constructs using the average variance extracted (AVE). The results indicated that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than other correlations involving that construct, which suggested that the level of discriminant validity was satisfactory (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of the AVEs and bivariate correlations among all variables in the model are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Bivariate Correlations and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted

Variable	PO	SUP	TRS	COM	IDF	AGE	POS	TEN	GEN
PO	(.76)	.46**	.46**	.48**	.50**	.23**	.19**	.16**	-.02
SUP		(.87)	.69**	.47**	.40**	.09	.09	.10	-.07
TRS			(.83)	.44**	.39**	.10	.02	.04	-.04
COM				(.75)	.68**	.14*	.12*	.10	.01
IDF					(.79)	.09	.12*	.09	.01
AGE						(1)	.43**	.53**	-.08
POS							(1)	.42**	-.16**
TEN								(1)	-.04
GEN									(1)

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Square root of AVE is presented in parentheses. Abbreviations: PO = psychological ownership, SUP = supervisor support, TRS = organizational trust, COM = organizational commitment, IDF = organizational identification, AGE = age, POS = job position, TEN = job tenure, GEN = gender.

Third, the reliability of the constructs was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient and composite reliability. Table 2 shows that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability were over .70, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended.

Finally, the author checked for multicollinearity among the indicators using full variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. The analysis showed that all full VIFs ranged from 1.04 to 2.12, which were lower than 3.30, according to the specifications of Petter et al. (2007). These results indicated that there were no serious multicollinearity issues with the data.

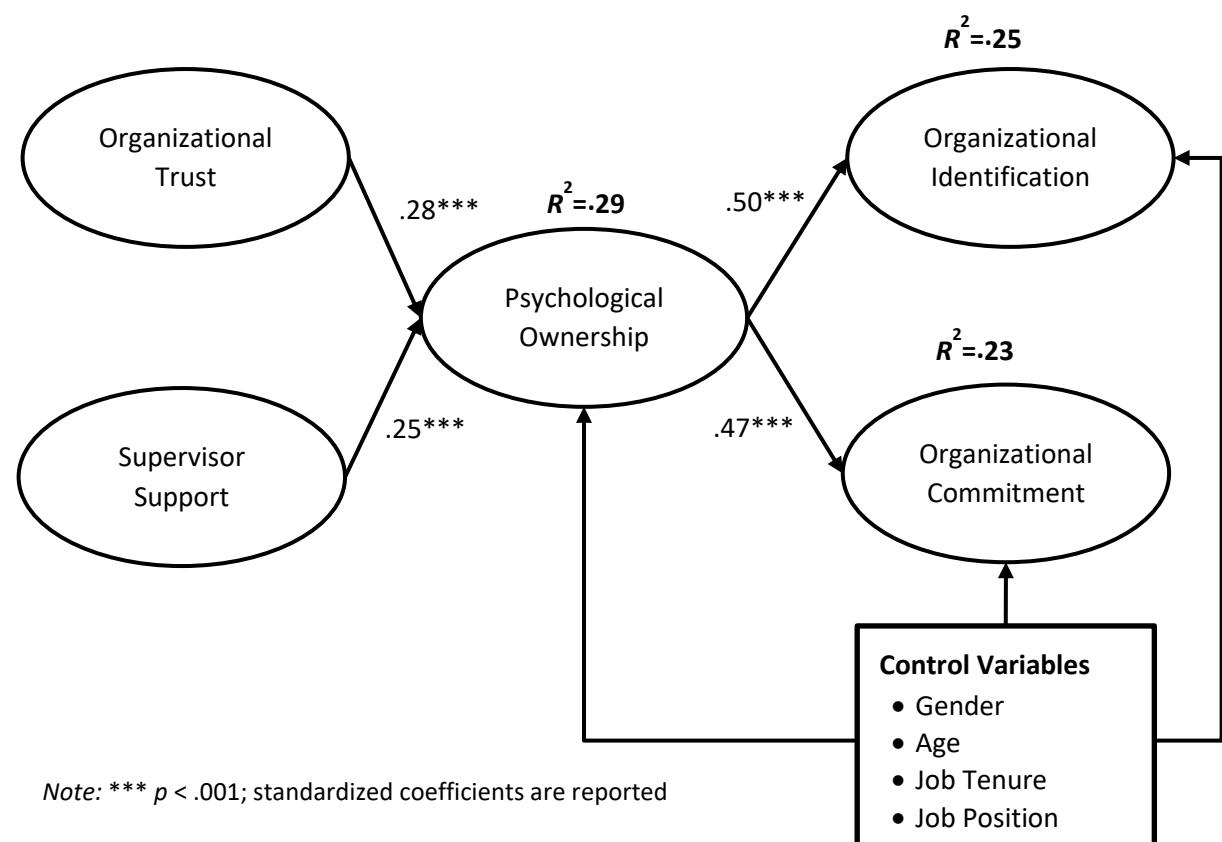
Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and Composite Reliability Coefficient

Variable	Psychological Ownership	Supervisor Support	Organizational Trust	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Identification
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	.85	.83	.84	.74	.88
Composite Reliability Coefficient	.89	.90	.90	.84	.91

Structural Model

The results of the analysis are given in Figure 2. The estimation of the standardized beta coefficients and p -values were performed with the bootstrapping resampling method that used 100 subsamples, as recommended by Efron et al. (2004). The model fit indices of the PLS-SEM analysis was accomplished using Kock's (2019) recommendations. The results were as follows, with the significance level obtained shown: average path coefficient (APC = .124; $p = < .001$), average R^2 (ARS = .257; $p < .001$), average full collinearity (AFVIF = 1.713), Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) = .453, Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR = .813), R^2 contribution ratio (RSCR = .993), and statistical suppression ratio (SSR = 813). All the results proved to be satisfactory.

Figure 2 Results from Hypotheses Testing



In Hypothesis 1 it was proposed that a positive relation existed between employees' PO and organizational commitment. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .47$; $p < .001$), which meant that the results supported the hypothesis. In Hypothesis 2 it was proposed that a positive relationship existed between employees' PO and organizational identification. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .50$; $p < .001$), which indicated the hypothesis was supported. In Hypothesis 3 it was proposed that there was a positive relation between supervisor support and employees' PO. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .25$; $p < .001$), a finding that supported the hypothesis. In Hypothesis 4 it was proposed that a positive relation existed between organizational trust and employees' PO. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .28$; $p < .001$). This finding supported the hypothesis.

The analysis also showed that only a few control variables were statistically significant. In particular, employees' PO was associated positively and significantly with age ($\beta = .13$; $p < .01$) and job position ($\beta = .106$; $p < .01$). However, the other control variables were not associated significantly with employees' PO.

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of the Findings

The objective of this research was to examine the antecedents and results related to convenience stores employees' PO. First, the outcomes indicated that the relationships between employees' PO and the organizational commitment and organizational identification variables were positive and significant. This suggests that convenience stores employees who developed PO tended to demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment and identification. These findings are consistent with the results of earlier studies which showed the positive outcomes derived from employee PO in other occupational contexts (Fan et al., 2019; Hameed et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017). The findings are also consistent with previous studies that supported the benefits of employees' PO in retail businesses (Potdar et al., 2018, 2021). Theoretically, the results of the outcomes of employee PO are consistent with predictions arising from agency theory, which explains why employees, who develop a sense of belonging to their workplaces, make a commitment to, and identify with, their organizations (Sieger et al., 2013). For the antecedent variables of employees' PO (organizational trust and supervisor support), the results illustrated that the relation between these two variables and PO were also positive and significant. This indicates that convenience store employees who developed trusting relationships with their organizations and received good support from their supervisors were more likely to demonstrate PO. From the theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with the predictions coming from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which explains that employees whose organizations and supervisors treat them well are willing to respond in kind with favorable behaviors toward their work and organizations. The results are also consistent with the studies of Sollitto et al. (2014) and Johanson and Cho's (2009), which showed that part-time workers developed a sense of attachment and commitment to their organizations when they received favorable treatment from their supervisors and organizations.

Research Contribution

Overall, the results of this study extended prior PO research that did not identify the antecedents and outcomes associated with PO clearly in the context of convenience store employees. First, it was clarified that PO can be a beneficial factor in that it encourages part-time employees in this business sector to develop positive attitudes toward their work and organizations. This aspect of the results broadens our knowledge about the applicability of PO in the context of part-time employees, which had not previously received sufficient support in the literature. In particular, in this study it was shown that part-time employees also benefit from PO, as do full-time employees in large corporations. Second, this research contributes to the body of knowledge by revealing particular work-related factors that could lead convenience store employees to develop PO. In particular, the results indicated that supervisor support and trust in the organization were key antecedents of PO. This increases our

understanding of why some employees in this business sector are more likely to demonstrate PO than are others. Although some employers may think that part-time employees have little motivation to develop a sense of belonging and commitment toward their organizations, our research findings indicated that a positive attitude toward their supervisor and organization could encourage them to demonstrate these positive behaviors.

Practical Contributions

Given that the results obtained supported the benefits of PO in employees' work attitudes, developing their PO is recommended as a practice that needs to be implemented to motivate employees to make a stronger commitment to their organization. Given that supervisor support and organizational trust were key factors that enhanced PO, the management practice of promoting employees' PO may need to focus on policies that encourage supervisors to care for their employees well and motivate them to develop trust in the organization. First, the management may need to create a supportive work environment that promotes building relationships between supervisors and their employees. The favorable treatment that employees receive from their supervisor may encourage them to reciprocate by developing PO of the organization. Moreover, to promote the quality of trust in the organization that contributes to employees' PO, the management needs to treat employees with care and respect. They also need to show integrity and be honest with them. These practices could make employees feel that their employers value them, and thereby encourage them to place trust in the organization (Mayer et al., 1995). When employees feel that their supervisor and organization are considerate and attentive to their values and wellbeing, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging to the organization, which is conducive to the development of PO.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the data were obtained from a small sample of convenience store employees in the Bangkok area. This small sample could limit the degree to which the results can be generalized to the entire population. Future research is required to expand the sample size and scope of the data collected to increase the ability to generalize the results. Second, the use of self-reported measures for data collection may include some subjective bias on the respondents' part. Third, certain other confounding variables may have affected PO in addition to those that were used in this research. Hence, future research may need to incorporate other unexplored variables that could potentially influence PO in order to gain a better understanding of the way employees develop it.

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Appendix: Scales

Psychological Ownership (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- This is my organization.
- I sense that this organization is our company.
- I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization.
- I sense that this is my company.
- This is our company.
- Most of the people that work for this organization feel as though they own the company.
- It is hard for me to think about this organization as mine. (reversed)

Organizational Trust (1: *very low* – 5: *very high*)

- My level of confident that this organization will treat me fairly.
- The level of trust between supervisors and workers in this organization is.....
- The level of trust among the people I work with on a regular basis is.....
- The degree to which we can depend on each other in this organization is.....

Supervisor Support (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- My work supervisor really cares about my wellbeing.
- My supervisor cares about my opinions.
- My supervisor shows very little concern for me.
- My supervisor strongly considers my goals and value.

Organizational Commitment (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organization succeed.
- I feel very little loyalty to this organization (reverse coded).
- I would take almost any job to keep working for this organization.
- I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.
- I am proud to be working for this organization.
- I would turn down another job for more pay in order to stay with this organization.

Organizational Identification (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- When someone criticizes the company I work for, it feels like a personal insult.
- I am very interested in what others think about the company I work for.
- When I talk about the company I work for, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.
- This company's successes are my successes.
- When someone praises the company I work for, it feels like a personal compliment.
- If a story in the media criticized the company I work for, I would feel embarrassed.