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Affective organizational commitment in global strategic partnerships: The role of individual-level microfoundations and social change

Abstract

The roles and commitment of employees within global strategic partnerships are imperative to their success. Whilst previous studies have addressed certain individual-level microfoundations and social change in an interpretivist manner, this study first proposes a theoretical framework consists of individual-level microfoundations, social change and affective organizational commitment—interlinked with social identity theory. We then validate the 16-item scale for individual-level microfoundations and the 24-item scale for social change based on data collected from global strategic partnerships. For testing of our conceptualization, path modeling finally confirms significant relationships between the constructs. Our findings further present the partial mediating role of social change between individual-level microfoundations and affective organizational commitment. Therefore, the study provides a new pathway in advancing our understanding of global strategic partnerships. It also validates two new constructs directly relevant to managing global strategic partnerships. We discuss theoretical and practical implications of these linkages and contributions, and conclude by providing suggestions for future research.

Keywords: individual-level micro-foundations; social change; affective organizational commitment; global strategic partnership; construct validation

1. Introduction

Global strategic partnerships strengthen relationships among business partners, facilitating better products and services across multiple territories through inter-firm collaboration. The rise of such partnerships has demonstrated a multitude of benefits that can accrue from such collaborations. Some partnerships have specifically focused on generating mutual growths in innovation, through for instance sharing research and development platforms, such as in the strategic partnership between Brazil and the European Union (Saraiva, 2017) or between the Manmohan Memorial Institute of Health Sciences (MMIHS) in Nepal with Bournemouth and Liverpool John Moores Universities (Van Teijlingen, Marahatta, Simkhada, McIver, & Sharma, 2018). The strategic partnership between Indian IT vendors and Western clients has benefitted from expansions in inter-organisational and boundary spanning activities (Søderberg & Romani, 2017). Market and product share expansion remains a popular mutual benefit, evident in the strategic partnership between Huawei and the Synnex Group (Haveman & Vochteloo, 2016) and subsequently between Huawei with Intel (Huawei, 2014). Fu et al (2018) also note the benefits in improving learning and knowledge acquisition, again between Huawei but with ZTE (Fu, Sun, & Ghauri, 2018). Liang (2006) reports on the strategic partnership between Fox and Apple, and through integrating production networks, how both firms benefited from enhanced value chain processes. Multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships can also generate mutual gains such as in AEG's partnership with the National Basketball Association in China to foster trust with the local government in Shangai and other local partners (Yao, & Schwarz, 2017). Given the variety of mutual benefits possible, Bamford, Gomes-Casseres & Robinson (2003) concluded strategic partnerships can fuel the success of a wide range of organisations—global strategic partnerships thus play a vital role in the modern era of inter-firm collaborations.

However, strategic partnerships are relatively complex, especially in terms of managing the perspectives of each other to ensure macro and micro-level commitment is sustained for optimal mutual gains (Saraiva, 2017). This complexity has been documented in numerous qualitative and largely theoretical studies focusing on strategic partnerships, global and non-global (e.g., Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011; Shakeri & Radfar, 2017; Wang, Nguyen, Le, & Hsueh, 2018). Despite this recognition and complexity, the role of individual-

level microfoundations (ILMF) in global strategic partnerships is burgeoning (Abell, Felin, & Foss 2008; Felin, Foss, & Ployhart, 2015; Felin, Foss, Heimeriks, & Madsen, 2012) and yet as Elg, Ghauri, Child & Collinson (2017) argue ILMFs are integral to the strategies of global multinational enterprises (MNEs). The literature on microfoundations has its own bias towards an exclusive focus on individual level or psychology-based explanations as micro-foundational dynamics, without recognising its aggregate transference to the collective level (Barney & Felin, 2013). Gond, El Akremi, Swaen & Babu (2017) for instance in exploring microfoundations in CSR, categorise them on the basis of individual level drivers of CSR engagement, individual level processes of CSR evaluations and individual level reactions to CSR initiatives. In a similar vein, Soleiman, Singh & Holt (2019, in press) conceptualized microfoundations of corporate entrepreneurship in family firms as comprising solely "individual-level cognitions, attitudes and beliefs. A key methodological imperative, and one lacking in the general body of micro-foundation studies (Barney & Felin, 2013) is to recognise that any analysis should be fundamentally concerned with how the linkages work together and individual-level factors aggregate at the collective level (Barney & Felin, 2013; Cooper, Stokes, Liu, & Tarba, 2017). This projection of the self to collective identity has substantial support from inter-group studies (e.g. Baumgartner and Mahoney, 2008; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca, 1988. We advance the study on microfoundations by quantitatively testing its dynamics – whilst accepting Jick's (1979) position that quantitative and qualitative approaches should be viewed as complimentary - and adopting Barney and Felin's (2013) recommended aggregative approach to investigating micro-foundations. We also extend existing accounts on global strategic partnerships by including social change (SC) as a key outcome of firm organisational commitment, along developing the underlying constructs.

According to Burdge (2003), SC can be both anticipated and unanticipated (planned versus unplanned) but any kind of inter-organisational partnership should ideally bring about social change (Googins & Rochlin, 2000). SC processes require interactions, deliberation, and actions by members of the social system (Papa, Singhal, Law, Pant, Sood, Rogers & Shefner-Rogers, 2000) and therefore collective efficacy is central to its implementation. Collective efficiency concerns the confidence of members in their joint capabilities to

accomplish set goals but also to withstand opposition and setbacks (Bandura, 1995). Although, the SC phenomena has been discussed widely in organizational studies, the understanding of it emerging from global strategic partnership commitment remains lacking. Moreover, the majority of studies (e.g., Bies, Bartunek, Fort, & Zald, 2007; Blumer, 2018) adopt theoretical and interpretivist perspectives, limiting our understanding on mapping the effects of commitment in partnerships to generating SC Adding to our theoretical contribution further, we examine affective organisational commitment (AOC), or the positive emotional attachment of employees to the organisation (Chordiya, Sabharwal, & Goodman, 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Given the intrinsic role of employees on organisational performance, AOC is considered a critical and "desired" component of the organisational commitment philosophy (Chordiya, Sabharwal, & Goodman, 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Our study essentially validates the previously unexplored relationship between AOC, ILMF and SC, and additionally within a global strategic partnership context. We therefore respond to calls by Aguinis and Molina-Azorín (2015) for mixed method approaches to investigating micro-foundations. As Molina-Azorin (2012) suggest, theory building and testing in microfoundations would benefit from approaches that enable the integration of processes and outcomes and central to achieve this is mixed method designs. Specifically, we adopt a nested approach with a dominant quantitative component (Aguinis and Molina-Azorin, 2015). Notwithstanding the contribution of qualitative and conceptual micro-foundation studies, the need to empirically validate the relationship between AOC, ILMF and SC demands quantitative analysis. However, given the lack of construct validation in the literature, we also employ a basic qualitative phase to add to the face validity of our proposed constructs.

As King, Keohane and Verba (1994) note neither qualitative and quantitative approaches are superior to each other. Whilst, qualitative methods enhance the interpretivist-based generation of ideas and theories from derivation of words, quantitative methods enable the testing of inter-relationships between variables or constructs (de Vries, Weijts, Dijkstra and Kok, 1992). However, given the greater generalisability of findings from quantitative applications (Barbour, 1999), it can allow questions related to assessing validating

relationships to be answered with greater precision. Given the primary purpose of this investigation is to validate such relationships, a nested approach dominated by the quantitative perspective forms the basis of our mixed methods approach.

In doing so, we also address calls (Barney & Felin, 2013; Greve, 2013) to more robustly aggregate individual unit analysis to situational and collective levels. We summarise our contributions as follows: First, and in contrast to the majority of the ILMF body of studies that adopts a conceptual or interpretivist approach, this study quantitatively validates the role of ILMF in global strategic partnerships as an antecedent of AOC and SC, and second, in doing so, also validate the ILMF construct. We develop and validate the ILMF construct based on three categories: 1) individuals (IN), 2) processes and interactions (PI), and 3) organizational structure and design (ST). Third, and again departing from largely interpretivist and conceptual accounts of SC, we empirically validate the role of SC as integral as an antecedent of commitment in global strategic partnerships, and fourth, in doing so also validate the SC construct. We establish and validate the SC construct based on four categories: 1) core values of an organization (CV), 2) local culture of an organization (LC), 3) motivational aspects of an organization (MO), and 4) communication of an organization (CO). Fifth, we confirm the inter-relationship between ILMF, SC and AOC, a new testing of a necessary pathway in global strategic partnerships, thus providing better insights into the dynamics of such global alliances.

The structure of the present study is as follows: In Section 2, the underpinning theory and hypotheses development is presented along with supporting review of the extant literature. Section 3 describes the content, validity, and reliability of the newly proposed constructs. The methodology part includes a description of the research design, validity and reliability tests of the model. Our findings from the path modeling and investigated constructs are discussed in Section 4. Finally, in Section 5, we summarize and draw conclusions from the key results, explaining managerial and policy-making implications, and concluding with directions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Underpinning theory:

This study adopts social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) as its theoretical underpinning since it can account for how individuals develop group identity and is consistent in explaining the formation of organisational identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). . SIT stipulates that individuals want to be part of groups that allow them to share in-group identities that provide value to their self-identity, i.e. higher self-esteem and pride, and often by demarcating the self from out-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Welbourne, Rolf & Schlachter, 2017). Tajfel (1974) argued that the world is divided into "them" and "us" based on a process of social categorization. SIT creates clear distinctions between an individual's behaviour toward the in-group, but substantially more categorisation effects from out-groups (Zeugner-Roth, Žabkar & Diamantopoulos, 2015). This phenomenon may arise from a sense of shared commonality, aspirations, worldviews, and can exist with or without regular social contact with a referent in-group (e.g. Miller, Le Breton-Miller & Lester, 2011). Tajfel & Turner (1979) further argued that to sustain in-group identity, the in-group might become predisposed to differentiating from out-groups, in order to enhance their own self-image. Individuals' identification with a particular community and the positive or negative feelings they derive from belonging to an in-group, can also account for their relationships with the organization as organisational identification (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).As such, this account is consistent with calls for an individual additive effect at the collective level (Barney and Felin, 2013).

Global strategic partnerships constitute dynamic environments for and within organizations, operating differently from traditional modes of organisational culture. Partnership organizations typically have to embed and implement transformed measures, processes and systems in daily routine operations due to inter-firm involvement and engagement. Hence, we developed two constructs for this context proposing that global strategic partnerships that could be a positive motivation for individuals of organizations (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Joint knowledge and resource exchange may add to homophily effects or the tendency for similar individuals to self-select to engage and interact with each other (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).

2.2. Individual-level microfoundations and affective organizational commitment

Individuals create an aggregate effect in organizations (Barney and Felin, 2013). Indeed, Hodgson (2012) posited that without individuals, businesses would not be able to formalise and consequently prosper. Given the natural relation between individual and the organisation, any analysis requires some consideration of social structures, as well as analysis of individual level accounts. Felin and Foss (2009) paid special attention to the negligence of individuals in organisational accounts, arguing that individuals represent the elementary foundation and 'truth' inherent in organizations, an observation often lost in strategic organizational research applications. They endorsed the term "methodological individualism," elaborating, "*while using the term 'organizational' may serve as helpful shorthand for discussion purposes and for reduced-form empirical analysis, truly explaining (beyond correlations) the organization (e.g., existence, decline, capability, or performance), or any collective for that matter, requires starting with the individual as the central actor*" (p. 441). The term micro-foundation however refers to the underlying individual-level and group level actions that shape strategy, organization, and, more broadly, dynamic capabilities, that lead to the emergence of superior organization-level performance (Eisenhardt, Furr, & Bingham, 2010). Individuals or organizations can act outside the confines of their immediate institutional environments but not without each other as they are intrinsically bound to each other's identity structures (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012).

ILMF has been widely discussed in the literature related to organizational routines, dynamics and capabilities. ILMF typically has focused on individual intention, choices, motivation, ability, etc. (Felin, & Foss, 2009; Winter, 2013; Barley and Felin, 2013). Felin et al. (2012) argued that the relationship between individual factors and the organization is not simple. Micro-dynamics of organizational activities, that is, individual decision-making (Laureiro-Martínez, Brusoni, Canessa, & Zollo, 2015), individual interaction (Barney & Felin, 2013), and individual aggregation (Forni & Lippi, 1997) could work differently from the individual to the collective level, with intentional and unintentional aspects of attitude and behaviour, and observable to the non-observable dimensions. Managers must therefore emphasize what organizational members have in common, what binds them together with the creation and maintenance of positive affects

connected to what the organizational members have in common (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Zaccaro & McCoy, 1988). Abell et al., (2008) explained that firm-level outcomes, such as routines and capabilities, are directly associated with individual action and coordinated interaction. They added that micro-level behaviour (i.e., individual action and interaction) ultimately replaces the macro-level behaviour. Individual interactions are not simply additive, but can take on complex forms and lead to surprising aggregated and emergent outcomes that are hard to predict based on knowledge of the constituent parts alone (Barney & Felin, 2013). They further extended the debate that microfoundations place emphasis on the need to specifically understand the unique, interactional, and collective effects that are not only additive, but also emergent. Integrating knowledge and learning across national boundaries and between individuals from different backgrounds however raises several challenges within International Joint Ventures (Luo, 2009; Meschi & Riccio, 2008). Haidt (2012) showed that when organizational members perceive the environment differently, they take independent action and generate shared representations of actions and tasks in terms of joint goals. Chwe (2013) described how firm choices and interactions create structure, the behaviour of individuals within structures, and the role of individuals in shaping the evolution of structures over time. Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) hinted that an individual's behaviour could change after their organization becomes involved with another organization for purposes, such as productive collaboration etc. Individuals predict the actions of others and choose actions that respond optimally to this prediction. Organizations place emphasis on what organizational members have in common, what binds them together, along with the creation and maintenance of a positive affect (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Zaccaro & McCoy, 1988). This motivational factor hints at the involvement of employee commitment in the performance of the organization. Becker (2004) proposed that individual-level factors, including matters related to individual action, interaction, and intentionality, are related to organizational performance. Hodgson (2012) posited that all social analysis requires some consideration of social structures and individual motivation.

Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1. Individual-level microfoundations have positive impact on affective organizational commitment in global strategic partnerships.

2.3. Individual-level microfoundations and social change

Businesses cannot get far by considering individuals alone has already been noted. However, for businesses to harness SC, they also have to assess the relation between individual level factors and SC. Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca (2009) for instance observe that acquiring, maintaining, or losing the status of institutions at the social level is a direct the result of the institutional work of individuals. The social phenomena so far encountered involves relations between individuals as well as individual level factors themselves (Arrow, 1994), which both can cause change. Therefore, SC can be initiated by managing positive identity (Burris, Rockmann & Kimmons, 2017) or fostering positive meaning between individuals (Sonenshein, DeCellas, & Dutton, 2014). According to Blumer (2018), industrial processes which evolves around individuals will logically evoke SC. Human factors cause planned and unplanned SC, resulting from proposed policies, plans, programs, and projects (Burdge, 2003). SC requires and relies on individual emancipation by enabling individual to develop new aspirations, tools, and skills through continuously confronting and transforming their goals, beliefs, and personalities (Branzei, 2012).

Cascio (1998) claimed that SC would transform workplaces and organizations within a company, adding that this is due to changes in the social system, which influences other systems. Individuals act very differently in terms of their strategy choice (defect or cooperate), depending on cues in the environment (Foss & Lindenberg, 2013). Therefore, the "dominant mechanism of SC is natural selection, governed by competition and environmental constraints" (Carroll 1984, p. 10). In a similar vein, Ries (2017) not only confirmed that individual actors can shape their environments, but also demonstrated how individual actors are shaped and determined by their environments. An SC agent, that is, an individual, can also use sophisticated tactics to influence and persuade others inside their organization to adopt SC (Piderit & Ashford, 2003). When members of a team perceive the environment differently than those taking independent action, they generate shared representations of actions and tasks (Haidt, 2012), exposing individuals to different

logics, each of which provide actors "with vocabularies of motives and with a sense of self" (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Therefore, SC is an active agent for individuals, which contributes to development by setting goals, selecting environments, and adapting their behaviour in response to changing social ecologies (Elder, 1994; Lechner, Obschonka, & Silbereisen, 2017). Moreover, attitudes toward SC indirectly suggest the change agent's value orientation (Tichy, 1974). Proponents of the developmental approach assume that organizations change structurally over time and that the form of change is shaped by structural pressures and constraints (Carroll, 1984). Changes occur in response to internal and external stimuli. Consistent with an aggregate logic, Hodgson (2012) concluded that all social change analysis requires some consideration of social structures, as well as individuals. Experiences, resources, status, and social skill can strategically leverage individuals' emotional displays to elicit emotional reactions in others (e.g., Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014; Jarvis, 2017). As Thornton et al (2012) explain this should encapsulate the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, assumptions, values and beliefs by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their daily activity".. While stable relationships among logics in a regime are fostered when coexisting institutional communities generally obey display rules with valence congruous feigning, individual change agents, with sufficient motivation derived from institutional contradictions or emotional experiences, resources, status, and social skill, can also strategically leverage their own emotional displays to elicit emotional reactions in others (e.g., Huy et al., 2014; Jarvis, 2017). Modern approaches on organizational routines, however, go significantly beyond these alleged precursors by directly stressing the collective, often nonintentional, tacit, and non-observable aspects of routines, but often by neglecting to build a foundation for routines in individual-level considerations (e.g., Cyert & March, 1963; Simon, 1945). Fig 1 depicts the conceptual framework.

Subsequently, we assert that:

Hypothesis 2. Individual-level microfoundations have a positive impact on social change in global strategic partnerships.

2.4. Social change and affective organizational commitment

Human capital is a complex, multilevel concept (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011), comprising not only individual-level factors as knowledge, skills, and abilities, but also a host of social factors, such as social capital and organizational culture (Barney & Felin, 2013). Felin and Foss (2009) suggested that the surpassing and suppressing of key individual-level factors need to be carefully understood since institutional change is a fundamental force in SC (Tang, 2017). The expansion of opportunities for lifelong learning may foster the acquisition of new knowledge and competences that are deemed central to adaptive development in times of accelerated SC (Jarvis, 2007). When organizations are involved in collaboration, it works as an agent of SC (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007). The way individuals react to tasks and interpersonal conflicts can affect their job-related behaviours, skills, and results (e.g., Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010; Rahim, 2017; Savary, Kleiman, Hassin, & Dhar, 2015).

Essentially, SC leads to changes in human behaviour and therefore SC can be used as a management tool aimed at producing more efficient organizations (Greenwood & Levin, 2006). Burdge (2003) proposed that SC creates social consequences for human populations and communities of both planned and unplanned results and performances. Hannan & Freeman (1977) concluded that SC is unavoidable when competition and environmental factors change. Winter (2013) suggested that individual-level motivation deserves attention to understand why some organizations arrive at "truces" that support impressive organizational capabilities. Human contact, of course, has a positive aggregate effect, as individuals learn from each other, though long-term interaction and socialization can also lead to collective myopia (March, 1991). From another perspective, social contact can take many forms, leading to both positive (the whole is greater than the sum of the part) and negative (the whole is less than the sum of the part) effects (Schaffer, 2003). Individual contact can therefore also lead to surprising and unintended macro-level outcomes once the emergent contact transfers to the macro level (Barney & Felin, 2013). Consequently, the aggregation of individual-level factors is not necessarily straightforward given that the part-whole relationship between individuals and organizations is not always strictly additive in nature. That is, as individuals interact in organizations, various emergent, collective factors

may result that cannot meaningfully be reduced to individuals (Felin & Foss, 2009). Anand and Khanna (2000) proposed that when individuals are involved in a new type of learning, it extracts into a new collective capacity.

These micro-dynamics might then lead to subsequent collective outcomes related to structure and performance (Felin & Foss, 2009). The economic view of SC is an improvement in productivity (Yapa, 2017; 1996). Organizations use it for different decisions, which constrain and enable action for the SC in a variety of ways, shaping the outcomes of efforts (Aguilera et al., 2007). However, SC can also and ideally should be a beneficial process that can have a positive impact on an organization and the change agent collectively (Sonenshein, 2012). Factors of SC clearly affect organization performance. As Foss and Lindenberg (2013) argue, core values can serve to give a collective identification with firm goals, and help the individual employee by giving direction to his or her own role in realizing the collective goals. However, Tsai (2001) posited that if partnership firms have different organizational cultures, developing absorptive capacity for an individual can become too complex. While stable relationships fostered when coexisting institutional communities generally obey the display rules in a valence congruous direction, individual change agents do so with sufficient motivation derived from institutional contradictions or emotions (Jarvis, 2007). All social change analysis therefore requires some consideration of social structures, as well as individuals and their motivations (Hodgson, 2012). Ludema, Wilmot, and Srivastava (1997) suggested that hopeful images of the future turn SC energies into positive practice.

Consequently, we suggest that:

Hypothesis 3. Social change has a positive impact on affective organizational commitment in global strategic partnerships.

Based on the above literature discussion and if all three hypotheses are true, it is possible that SC mediates the relationship between ILMF and AOC. We thus propose an additional hypothesis, and the hypothesized interactions are depicted in Fig. 1.

Hypothesis 4. Social change mediates the relationship between individual-level microfoundations and affective organizational commitment in global strategic partnerships.
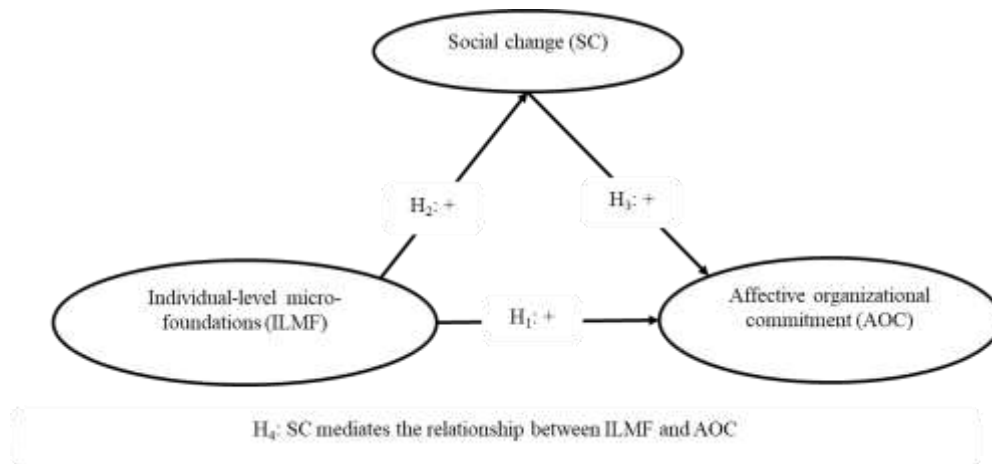
Fig. 1. Interrelationships between underlying constructs

3. Methodology

3.1. Construct building of individual-level microfoundations and social change

3.1.1. Item selection, reliability and content validity

The measures of content validity were adopted and ensured (e.g., Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). In the end, we verified the construct items of ILMF and SC using feedback from one professor and two academic field experts for each construct. The professor helped in face validity of the items in respective constructs. In the next step, an academic field expert of subject global strategic partnership assisted to finalize the items of ILMF construct, and the academic field expert of sociology and social change abetted in confirmation of the items for SC construct.

a) Individual-level micro foundation

According to Felin et al. (2012), the ILMF of routines and capabilities are clustered into three core or overarching categories: 1) individuals (IN), 2) processes and interactions (PI), and 3) organizational structure and design (ST). However, we adopted Elg et al.'s (2017) supporting micro-foundation aspects of MNEs, which are consistent with the nature of the current study context. We proposed eight items for individuals, six items for processes and interactions, and three for the organizational structure and design. The items are depicted in Table 1.

b) Social change

According to Tomasik and Silbereisen (2009), SC is a comprehensive change in the typical characteristics of an entity. The literature suggests that SC after global strategic partnership occurs in the core values of an organization (CV), in the local culture of an organization (LC), in the motivational aspects of an organization (MO), and in the communication aspects of an organization (CO) (e.g. Nelson & Jenkins, 2006; Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2010; Walton, Cutcher-Gershenfeld, & McKersie, 2000). Therefore, items from these four dimensions were adapted from Jin and Drozdenko (2010), Cyr and Schneider (1996), Dahlgaard-Park (2012), and Van Rekom, Van Riel, and Wierenga (2006). We used 11 items for core values, five for local culture, five for motivation, and five for communication. The details of the items are presented in Table 2.

3.1.2. Scale purification and validation

We followed the suggestions of Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel, (1989), Churchill (1979), and

Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, (2015) for the scale purification and validation. We used the data from 111 employees in two organizations. Participants were purposively sampled with the help of senior management, who also helped to disseminate the questionnaires. We used iterative loadings, reliability, convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (HTMT) of the constructs (e.g., Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). We employed the AOC construct from Chordiya et al. (2017), who followed a study conducted by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). All items were gauged on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

a) Individual-level micro foundation and affective organizational commitment

The relationship between ILMF and AOC was significant (t-value = 8.4604). We treated ILMF as a second order construct with the dimensions of IN, PI, and ST, while, AOC consisted of five items. To check the appropriateness of the ILMF construct, we first checked the item loadings of the dimensions of ILMF with AOC. One item (PI1) was removed from PI due to the low loading. However, all other 16 items were identified as suitable and extracted at particular dimensions as expected and drive from the literature . Reliability (Jöreskog's rho), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminate validity (HTMT) were also found to be

appropriate (see Table 1). Therefore, the 16-item scale of ILMF demonstrates acceptable measurement properties.

Table 1

Individual-level micro-foundation validity and reliability results.

Construct	Brief Item Description for Global Strategic Partnerships	Source	Item Coding	Loading	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	AVE	HTMT
IN	My commitment level to the organization's mission was:	Elg et al. (2017)	IN1	0.933	0.916	0.871	
	My commitment level to the core strategy of the organization was:		IN2	0.921			
	My commitment level to the code of conduct of the organization was:		IN3	0.887			
	I deeply understand the global strategic partners' (GSPs') rules.		IN4	0.953			
	My understanding of the GSPs' norms was:		IN5	0.897			
	My understanding of GSPs' traditions was:		IN6	0.942			
	My experience of GSPs' business culture was:		IN7	0.911			
	Professional interactive abilities of my organization's managers were was:		IN8	0.931			
PI	My organization provided recruitment programs for employees.		PI1	0.212	0.894	0.922	
	My organization provided internal motivational programs for employees.		PI2	0.847			
	My organization provided information about critical stakeholders.		PI3	0.929			
	My organization was involved in value production with GSPs'.		PI4	0.892			
	My organization was involved in problem solving with GSPs'.		PI5	0.799			
	My organization involved in social programs and activities supporting sustainability values with GSPs'.		PI6	0.920			
ST	My organization employees' had personal networks within strategic partner organization.		ST1	0.714	0.899	0.732	
	My organization had flexible decision-making structures.		ST2	0.922			
	There were open communication channels between partner's organization and our organization's managers.		ST3	0.875			
AOC	My organization had an excellent civil service system.	Chordiya, et al., (2017)	AOC1	0.820	0.984	0.911	< 0.85
	My job was well respected in the society.		AOC2	0.744			
	I achieved good results (e.g., got promoted).		AOC3	0.702			
	My workgroup was like a family that took care of most members.		AOC4	0.821			
	I enjoyed working with others in my organization.		AOC5	0.881			

* The item used past tense as data were collected from those experts who already had experience from global strategic partnerships

b) Social change and affective organizational commitment

We treated SC as a second order construct along with the dimensions; CV, LC, MO, and CO, while, AOC consisted of five items. Meanwhile, in the loadings, two items of CV (CV5 and CV8) were dropped due to low loadings. The resulting SC and AOC constructs reveal acceptable measurement results. Reliability (Jöreskog's rho), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminate validity (HTMT) were also found to be appropriate (see Table 2).

Table 2

Social change validity and reliability results.

Construct	Brief Item Description for Global Strategic Partnerships	Source	Item Coding	Loading	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	AVE	HTMT
CV	All rules and procedures existed in my organization were usually in written agreements.	(Jin & Drozdenko, 2010; Cyr & Schneider, 1996)	CV1	0.753	0.791	0.762	
	My organization adequately communicated the code of ethics and ethical guidelines to employees.	(Jin & Drozdenko, 2010)	CV 2	0.702			
	Any major decision that I made, had to have the organization's approval.		CV 3	0.790			
	My work was closely inspected to be ensured that it satisfied organization's standards.		CV 4	0.872			
	Quite small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer.		CV5	0.862			
	Usually, my organization expected me to do things ''by the rule book'.		CV6	0.947			
	My dealings with my organization were subjected to a lot of rules and procedures stated how various aspects of my job were to be done.		CV7	0.972			
	I was watched to be sure that I followed all the rules of doing research for my organization.		CV8	0.729			
	Managers in my organization were committed to organizational mission.		CV9	0.772			
	Non-management professionals in my organization were committed to the organizational mission.		CV10	0.702			
	My organization provided enough training for my job.	Cyr & Schneider, (1996)	CV11	0.291			
LC	Cultural differences were respected in our organization.		LC1	0.943	0.810	0.795	
	My organization provided training to learn relative GSPs' culture.		LC2	0.861			
	My organization provided training to learn relative GSPs' rules.		LC3	0.967			
	My organization provided training to learn relative GSPs' norms.		LC4	0.782			
	My organization provided training to learn relative GSPs' traditions.		LC5	0.876			
MO	My manager motivated me through his/her own efforts.	Dahlgaard-Park, 2012)	MO1	0.919	0.876	0.853	
	In my department, we participated actively in the planning of tasks.		MO2	0.871			
	I continuously tried to utilize all my skills in my job.		MO3	0.730			
	Changes caused by GSP was positive	Cyr & Schneider, (1996)	MO4	0.734			
	I received continues feedback on my performance.		MO5	0.736			

CO	Successful managers in my company had not withhold information that was detrimental to their self-interests.		CO1	0.830	0.893	0.852	
	My organization simplified the information flows.		CO2	0.847			
	Managers listened to employees' ideas.		CO3	0.873			
	I received feedback from my managers and colleagues.		CO4	0.875			
	We kept each other informed about work related matters.	(Van Rekom, Van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006)	CO5	0.831			
AOC	My organization had an excellent civil service system.	Chordiya, et al., (2017)	AOC1	0.822	0.982	0.865	< 0.85
	My job was well respected in society.		AOC2	0.754			
	I achieved good results, (e.g., got promoted).		AOC3	0.703			
	My workgroup was like a family that took care of most members.		AOC4	0.821			
	I enjoyed working with others in my organization.		AOC5	0.882			

3.2. Empirical study

We used the data from 192 experienced employees of two global strategic partnerships (GSPs), headquartered in Malaysia, involved in service operations and business links/branches in multiple countries (e.g. China, Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, UK and others European Countries). The lead researcher met the administrative managers of the Malaysian organizations and defined the purpose of the research, and provided 268 copies of the questionnaires as advised. The participants and organizations agreed on cooperation on two conditions. First, there will be no disclosure of persons or organizations, and second, to share the results with them prior to any public dissemination. All data (collected in 2018) were collected based on the experience of employees at the time of the global strategic partnerships, i.e. was cross-sectional in nature. The response rate was 71.64%, again possibly due to the active involvement of senior management and being able to continue to alert the respondents with the help of middle management. Table 3 displays details of the demographics of the respondents.

Table 3

Demographics.

Category		Numbers	%
Gender	Male	131	68.23
	Female	61	31.77
Age	18-28	6	3.13
	28-38	72	37.5
	38-48	73	38.02
	48-60	31	16.15
	60 and above	10	5.21
Tenure in organization	1-5	8	4.17
	5-15	46	23.96
	15-25	57	29.67
	25 and above	81	42.19

We used a common-method variance test guideline to avoid variations in responses caused by the instrument rather than the respondents' actual predispositions (i.e., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We also used maximum likelihood estimation and a multiple indicator approach guidance to minimize any bias effects (i.e., Anderson & Gerbing, 1982; 1984; 1988).

4. Data Analysis and Results

We utilized partial least squares (PLS) for data analysis. Chin (1998) considers the PLS technique suitable for analysis at a theory's early formulation phase, and our study aimed to reveal employees' AOC perspectives regarding ILMF and SC. The ADANCO 2.0.1 Software suite was used to execute the PLS analysis.

5.1. The validity and reliability of the constructs

First, we employed a construct validity test to determine whether all the constructs were appropriately measured (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991; Happell, Gaskin, & Platania-Phung, 2015). As all of our constructs were measured on a reflective scale, we used convergent validity, with average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity, and with the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000; Henseler et al., 2015). We then used Jöreskog's rho to check reliability, as it reveals the

results' level of consistency when the same measurement tool is used (Henseler, Dijkstra, Sarstedt, Ringle, Diamantopoulos, Straub, Ketchen Hair, Hult, & Calantone, 2014; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The AVE indicates the constructs' unidimensionality, while the HTMT indicates that the constructs have the strongest relationships with their own indicators (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The Jöreskog's rho also illustrates that all constructs are reliable for further analysis. The AVE should be at least 0.5, HTMT at most 0.85, and Jöreskog's rho at least 0.70. Table 4 displays the details of item descriptions for all validity and reliability test results, which significantly surpass the minimum recommended threshold levels (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2016; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Table 5 lists the underlying constructs' descriptive statistics and correlation matrix, and Table 6 depicts reliability and validity results.

Table 4

Validity and reliability results and evaluation of the measurement model.

Construct	Item Coding	Loading	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	AVE	HTMT
IN	IN1	0.926	0.893	0.853	
	IN2	0.897			
	IN3	0.883			
	IN4	0.931			
	IN5	0.892			
	IN6	0.936			
	IN7	0.871			
	IN8	0.921			
PI	PI1	0.897	0.895	0.904	
	PI2	0.835			
	PI3	0.855			
	PI4	0.918			
	PI5	0.943			
ST	ST1	0.709	0.884	0.754	
	ST2	0.832			
	ST3	0.843			
ILMF			0.884	0.821	< 0.85
CV	CV1	0.766	0.787	0.779	
	CV 2	0.711			
	CV 3	0.793			
	CV 4	0.888			
	CV5	0.909			
	CV6	0.982			
	CV7	0.758			
	CV8	0.714			
	CV9	0.784			
LC	LC1	0.867	0.805	0.801	
	LC2	0.822			
	LC3	0.934			
	LC4	0.761			
	LC5	0.892			
MO	MO1	0.920	0.879	0.858	

	MO2	0.855			
	MO3	0.777			
	MO4	0.792			
	MO5	0.749			
CO	CO1	0.821	0.874	0.843	
	CO2	0.844			
	CO3	0.821			
	CO4	0.847			
	CO5	0.883			
SC			0.858	0.738	< 0.85
AOC	AOC1	0.893	0.956	0.876	< 0.85
	AOC2	0.796			
	AOC3	0.763			
	AOC4	0.901			
	AOC5	0.928			

Table 5

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of underlying constructs.

Construct	Mean	SD	ILMF	SC	AOC
ILMF	3.94	1.90	1.000		
SC	2.33	2.23	0.450	1.000	
AOC	3.93	2.01	0.374	0.460	1.000

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 6

Validity and reliability results and evaluation of the measurement model.

Effect	Cohen's f2	Direct Effect			Indirect Effect			Total Effect		
		B	Mean	*t*-value	β	Mean	*t*-value	β	Mean	*t*-value
ILMF -> AOC	0.247	0.210	0.207	4.035	0.164	0.166	6.1050	0.365	0.372	8.367
ILMF -> SC	0.253	0.450	0.462	10.994	-	-	-	0.450	0.462	10.994
SC -> AOC	0.141	0.305	0.308	6.905	-	-	-	0.305	0.308	6.905

*All effects tested on the saturated model

5.2 Results

We used a path analysis with a bootstrap option to test the hypothesized model's statistical significance and observed the explanatory power of our study's structural model, the amount of variance explained by the independent variable over the dependent variable, and the magnitude and strength of its paths. Fig. 1 depicts the relevant model results, and Table 6 displays the effect size (i.e., Cohen's f2) and each relationship's direct and indirect effects.

Hypothesis 1 proposes that the ILMF positively relates to AOC. This hypothesis is supported at a *t*-value > 1.96, with β = 0.210 (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013; Hair, Black,

Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Hypothesis 2, predicting that ILMF positively relates to SC, and Hypothesis 3, suggesting that SC positively relates to AOC, are also supported at t-value > 1.96, with β = 0.450 and β = 0.305, respectively.

Hypothesis 4 (SC mediates the relationship between ILMF and AOC) is supported, with a small effect size at t-value > 1.96, β = 0.365, and Cohen's f2 = 0.247 (Cohen, 1992). The result indicates that the ILMF remains significant with AOC after including SC as a mediator. However, the ILMF value of 0.449 (0.164/0.365) and its effect on AOC is explained through the SC mediator. Thus, a partial mediation relationship is verified (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). Additionally, the note to Fig. 2 provides the fit indices, with adjusted R^2 values ranging from 20.02% and 24.21% for AOC and SC, supporting the final model (Hosmer, Lemeshow, & Sturdivant, 2013).
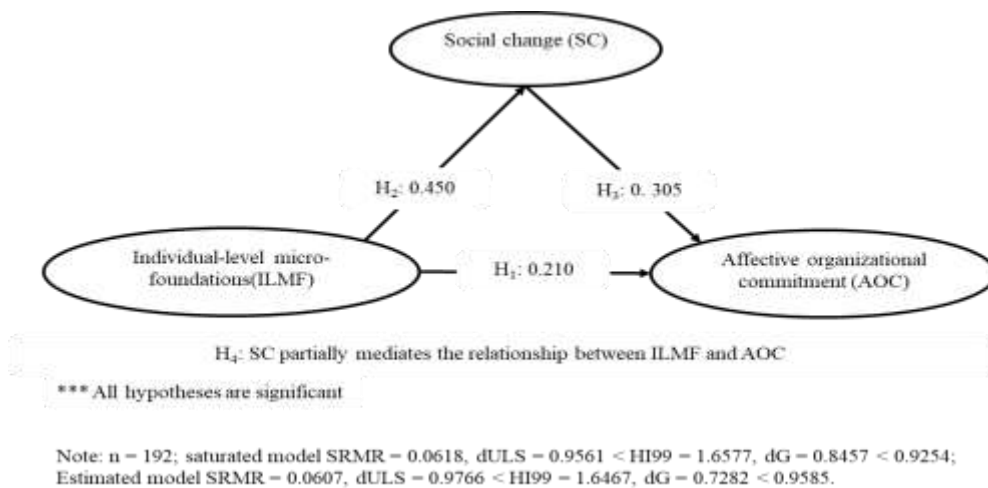

Note: n = 192; saturated model SRMR = 0.0618, dULS = 0.9561 < HI99 = 1.6577, dG = 0.8457 < 0.9254; Estimated model SRMR = 0.0607, dULS = 0.9766 < HI99 = 1.6467, dG = 0.7282 < 0.9585.

Fig. 2. Results for the underlying hypotheses and relative statistics

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Summary

This study proposed and validated two constructs, individual-level microfoundations and social change. Our proposed 16-item scale for individual-level microfoundations and 24-item scale for social change offer the flexibility to measure respective constructs independently from their source, and thus present universal

measures for tapping into this burgeoning field of research. Furthermore, this study provides empirical support for Felin et al's (2015) contentions, concerning whether intentions, beliefs, aspirations, and other factors aggregate into collective wholes (or not), and how collective intentions might take on a life of their own. Thus, also supporting Winter (2013) who proposed mapping the complex interplay of habit and deliberation, as it is shaped by impulse/emotion at all levels, and work by Greve (2013) who suggested that "anticipatory strategies" involve predicting the actions of others and choosing actions that respond optimally to this prediction.

The present study's primary aim was validating the relationship between individual-level micro-foundations, social change, and affective organizational commitment from the perspective of employees within global strategic partnerships. We found that individual-level microfoundations are positively related to both social change and affective organizational commitment, while social change was positively associated with affective organizational commitment. Moreover, social change partially mediates the path between individual-level microfoundations and affective organizational commitment. These results support our underpinning theory and theoretical framework by confirming the study hypotheses.

5.2. Contributions and implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on the importance of individual-level microfoundations and social change in global strategic partnerships in five important ways. First, the findings echo the utility of social identity theory in explaining aggregate level accounts for individual-level micro-foundations, social change, and affective organizational commitment from the perspective of employees within global strategic partnerships. Several studies have gauged employees' commitment in the areas of change leadership (Allen, Attoh, & Gong, 2017), job satisfaction (Chordiya et al., 2017), motivation (Wombacher & Felfe, 2017), professional activity and work behaviour (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), turnover rate (Jang & Kandampully, 2018), and the ways of earning commitment (Dessler, 1999). Studies on strategic partnerships and employee commitment have also been tested in contexts of knowledge interchange (Eckert, Frølund, & Riedel, 2018), knowledge transfer (Wood, Dibben, & Meira, 2016), and innovation (Frølund, Murray, & Riedel, 2018).

However, a paucity of research exists examining the impact of individual-level microfoundations and social change on affective organizational commitment in GSPs, as the links to social identity theory and no study to date within global strategic partnerships. Thus, we examined employees' affective organizational commitment levels to understand the single and cumulative impact of individual-level microfoundations and social change within the global partner organizations. Therefore, this study contributes to new theory generation on individual-level microfoundations and social change in global strategic partnership scenarios by providing specific, deeper insights on the role of affective organizational commitment.

Although, several studies used social identity theory to explain employee or organizational commitment (Korschun, 2015; Nason, Bacq, & Gras, 2018; Welbourne et al., 2017), few have linked social identity theory within the context of individual-level microfoundations (e.g., Gond et al., 2017; Tasselli, Kilduff, & Menges, 2015) and the social change perspective (e.g., Haslam, Van Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2014; Lyons et al., 2017). That the social identity theory literature has not yet investigated the themes of individual-level micro-foundations, social change, and affective organizational commitment further adds credence to the utility of the current investigation in explaining the dynamics of global strategic partnerships from an employee perspective in the service domain. We suggest that global strategic partnerships provide context for changing "we" and "them" behaviours to "us" behaviours, which in turn offers mutual benefits for all involved parties. This further suggests that potentially involvement, knowledge and other resource sharing processes with partner organizations enables employees to build their "self-image" as at an aggregating level. This view is again consistent with social identity theory and individual aggregation effects within micro-foundational dynamics. Specifically, and therefore this study demonstrates that social identity underpinnings realize the collective individual-level microfoundations with social change attributes and its impact on affective organizational commitment.

Second, this study proposed and validated the construct of individual-level micro-foundations, thus bridging an important theoretical gap (e.g., Felin et al., 2015; Tasselli et al., 2015; Winter, 2013). It focused on three sub-dimensions of micro-foundations: 1) individuals 2) processes and interactions, and 3)

organizational structure and design. As mentioned at the outset, the empirical validation of the individual-level micro-foundation construct remained limited, hindering theoretical and practical advancement in the literature and yet individual-level microfoundations are critical in our current understanding of how firms operate. This validated construct should now provide the foundation to further gauge the level of individual-level microfoundations in global MNEs and within global strategic partnerships. Third, this study also proposed and validated the construct of social change, thus bridging another important theoretical gap (Felin et al., 2015; Tasselli et al., 2015). Again, noted at the onset, there is currently no relative construct available for adequately capturing social change, stalling theoretical and practical development of this important domain. The social change construct consists of four sub-dimensions: 1) core values of the organization, 2) the local culture of the organization, 3) motivational aspects of the organization, and 4) communications. This construct should now enable future studies to measure social change levels in global MNEs and global strategic partnerships. Fourth, we advanced the affective organizational commitment literature by subsequently testing against individual-level microfoundations and social change. The results provide evidence that individual-level microfoundations and social change are the separate and collective antecedents of affective organizational commitment. Finally, this article provides pivotal insights into the causal mechanisms through which individual-level microfoundations impact affective organizational commitment by proposing social change as a mediating construct, which also provides an important basis for future studies.

Our findings have important implications for managers and policy-makers involved in managing global strategic partnerships. Central to this implication is a better understanding of how employees can be managed to generate mutually beneficial gains from the partnerships. Employees' perceptions and expectations typically vary according to organizational practices and expectations. As global strategic partnerships require organizations to involve and engage in modified processes, routines and structures, it urges them to incorporate the social change process to manage employees' perceptions and expectations better from both sides of the partnership. Meanwhile, in this process of social change, both organizations should have strong individual boundaries, processes, and structures, which do not overlap with partner organization,

and support to sustain the self-image of employees. Additionally, whilst it is important for individual boundaries to be established at the organisational level, partnerships with other organisations also demand some alignment with policies related to social change for instance for optimising mutual benefits. Global strategic partnerships are long-term projects and therefore should be built on common interests taking precedence over differences (Reiterer, 2013). Micro-foundational knowledge and social change goals provide an important source of collaborative mutual goals to actualize this collaboration.

Policy makers should therefore pay greater attention to the importance of aligning social change and microfoundations for maximising affective commitment. Ensuring that global strategic partnerships remain sustainable and beneficial for all stakeholders, especially employees will require an aggregate level assessment of micro-foundational and social change processes. If one partner is committed and the other is not, this may infringe on optimizing mutual gains. Training of managers to more effectively knowledge and best practice in both culture is therefore instrumental in harnessing the benefits of the pathway proposed in our study. In addition, policy makers may wish to explore how individual-level microfoundations and social change levels vary in different combinations of global strategic partnerships, that is between public to private, private to public, or public to public. Organisational sizes, sector differences and organisational nuances may all add to the multi-dimensional complexity of managing global strategic partnerships. More complex forms of global strategic partnerships, involving multiple stakeholders would further enhance the complexity of alignment.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Despite its important theoretical and practical contributions and implications, this research has several limitations, which provide important opportunities for future research. First, a proposed 16-item scale of individual-level microfoundations and a 24-item scale of social change would be easy to administer within existing available and relative constructs. As a valid and reliable tool, the scale can therefore create a basis for future studies on microfoundations and social change in global strategic partnerships and multinational enterprises. Additionally, future studies could use our proposed framework with other dependent variables, such as continuance commitment and normative commitment. Furthermore, a comparative study on involved

and non-involved employees' affective commitment levels using the same framework could offer additional

insightful results for top-level management.

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