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Being Helped and Being Harmed: A Theoretical Study of Employee Self-Concept and Receipt of Help

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Abstract Employee self-concept has long been recognized as a critical factor determining employee performance-related outcomes. As such, a considerable amount of research attention has been paid to exploring employee self-concept. However, relatively little is known about how an employee's self-concept may be affected when the employee is the recipient of help-giving behavior exhibited by other organizational members. Consequently, we attempt to develop a theoretical model describing how an employee's self-concept, in the forms of task-specific self-efficacy (TSSE) and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), is affected by receipt of help. Additionally, we investigate the moderating roles of locus of control (LOC) and individualism–collectivism. In particular, we propose that higher levels of help received result in lower levels of TSSE and OBSE perceived. Moreover, we posit that internal LOC strengthens the negative impact of receiving help on TSSE and OBSE. Furthermore, we argue that individualistic tendencies strengthen the negative relationship between receiving help and TSSE and OBSE. Consequently, our theoretical model provides important insights into understanding employee self-concept in the organization.

Keywords Self-concept · Task-specific self-efficacy · Organization-based self-esteem · Receipt of help · Locus of control · Individualism–collectivism

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1 Introduction

Self-concept has long been recognized as one of the important factors determining individual happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being (Chui and Wong 2016; Locke 2006). Generally speaking, the term self-concept describes the totality of inferences that an individual has made about him- or herself in a social context (Baumeister 1997). While self-concept reflects individuals' general attitudes and beliefs about themselves, evidence from prior research has consistently shown that maintaining positive and desirable self-concept is critical to individual mental and physical health (e.g. Taylor and Brown 1988; Taylor et al. 2003).

Even though the impact of self-concept on individual satisfaction and well-being has been largely demonstrated in the social context, self-concept has also been found to be predictive of work motivation, task performance, job satisfaction, and well-being in the organizational context (e.g. Chen et al. 2004; Pugh et al. 2011). As such, perhaps one of the most essential issues faced by managers is how employees develop their self-concept at work. In particular, because the process of an individual's formation of work motivation is typically affected by the individual's inferences and assessments about his or her bottom-line capability and commitment to perform (Judge et al. 1998), self-concept appears to be predictive of job performance. Indeed, there is ample evidence suggesting the link between self-concept and performance (e.g. Judge et al. 1998; Reinhard and Dickhauser 2011). Given the strong relationship between employee self-concept and performance, it becomes crucial to understand what self-concept encompasses. While self-concept is considered a multifaceted construct that broadly includes an individual's image of him- or herself, perceived individual ability, interests, and aspirations (Hall 1976; Super 1980), Super (1990) particularly emphasizes the importance of general self-efficacy and global self-esteem in the process of self-concept formation and implementation. Unsurprisingly, empirical evidence from prior studies has demonstrated that general self-efficacy and global self-esteem are predictive of individual performance (e.g. Chen et al. 2000; Judge et al. 1997).

Even though a large body of research has provided strong evidence that general self-efficacy and global self-esteem are relevant to a variety of individual and organizational outcomes, self-efficacy and self-esteem seem to predict organizational-based outcomes more consistently when they are measured in specific situational and organizational contexts (Pierce et al. 1993; Scholz et al. 2002). Consequently, task-specific self-efficacy (TSSE) and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) have emerged in the literature because they have stronger predictive power for organizational outcomes compared to general self-efficacy and global self-esteem (Pierce et al. 1993; Scholz et al. 2002). In general, TSSE describes an employee's belief in his or her ability to perform a given organizational task (Bandura 1977); OBSE refers to an employee's self-perceived value as an organizational member acting within an organizational context (Pierce et al. 1989). Given that TSSE and OBSE are domain specific, scholars have demonstrated that TSSE and OBSE predict various outcomes in the organization such as task performance and voluntary learning behavior (e.g. Kim et al. 2015; Liu et al. 2013; Smith et al. 2006).

Despite the increase in scholarly attention devoted to understanding employee self-concept in the forms of TSSE and OBSE, the current body of knowledge can be advanced in the three major ways. First, since its emergence in the literature, help-giving behavior, defined as taking voluntary actions to help coworkers who have work-related problems and issues (Mossholder et al. 2011), has been shown to enhance various facets of employee

self-concept such as perceived job efficacy (e.g. Organ 1988) and positive self-evaluations (e.g. Somech and Drach-Zahavy 2000). Although the inclusion of help-giving behavior in the analysis of employee self-concept provides critical insights into understanding how employees perceive themselves when helping others, little is known about the impact of receipt of help on how employees form their self-concept, particularly their TSSE and OBSE.

Second, because self-efficacy and self-esteem reflect cognitive judgements about personal capabilities and own worth, respectively (Laguna 2013), it is theoretically reasonable to expect that an individual's control beliefs, such as action control, mastery, causal attributions, and vicarious control (i.e. an individual's belief of his or her ability to perform an activity resulting from observing a performance of the activity) (Skinner 1996), will have an influence on the individual's assessments of personal capabilities and self-worth in the achievement setting. Accordingly, the formation of TSSE and OBSE may be partly affected by an employee's locus of control (LOC) that reinforces the individual's belief of having or lacking control over the external environment and personal fate (Rotter 1966). Unfortunately, there still lacks scholarly investigations on the effect of an employee's LOC on the relationship between the employee's receipt of help and his or her TSSE and OBSE formation.

Third, it has been proposed that individuals' tendencies toward the individual and group are useful for understanding how individuals' self-concepts are formed and regulated (Epstein 1973; Rokeach 1973). Specifically, scholars (e.g. Hofstede 1991; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961; Triandis 1989) have suggested that individuals with individualistic tendencies understand themselves (e.g. who they are and how they perform) by looking at their actions. In contrast, individuals with collectivistic tendencies pay attention to the reactions of others when developing self-understanding. Given the differences between individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, it can be expected that individualism/collectivism plays a salient role in affecting one's cognitive estimate of personal capability and self-worth when one is the recipient of help-giving behavior. To date, however, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to exploring the impact of individualism/collectivism on the relationship between the employee's receipt of help and his or her TSSE and OBSE.

Given this aforementioned gaps in the literature, the purpose of this article is two-fold. First, we theoretically analyze the effect of receipt of help on employees' TSSE and OBSE. Second, we theoretically explore the moderating roles of LOC and individualism–collectivism on the relationship between receipt of help and TSSE, and between receipt of help and OBSE. Our proposed theoretical model is shown in Fig. 1.
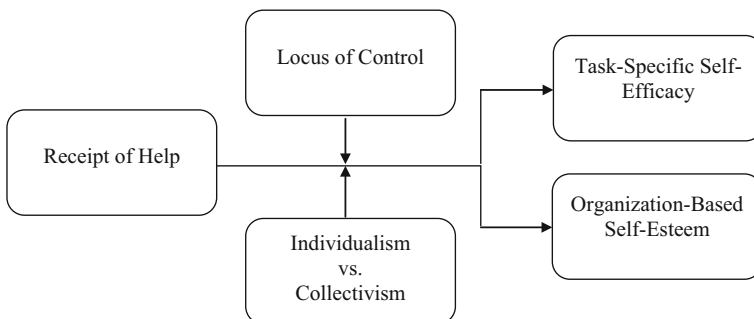

Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical model

The remainder of this article unfolds as follows. In the second section, a brief review on the self-concept research with emphasis placed upon TSSE and OBSE is provided. Additionally, we review the literature of helping behavior. Next, we provide our theoretical arguments and formulate research propositions. This is followed by our discussion on theoretical and managerial implications, as well as future research directions. The final section concludes this article with a brief summary.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Self-Concept

It has long been recognized that self-concept plays a pivotal role in an individual's life (Nurius 1993). Because self-concept reflects the totality of inferences that an individual has made about him- or herself (Baumeister 1997), an individual's self-concept broadly includes self-image developed by the individual's thoughts and feelings about him- or herself. When it first emerged in the literature, self-concept was treated as a relatively stable view of self (Noguti and Bokeyar 2014). Later, self-concept was considered dynamic and ever-changing given that individuals form their self-image through various pools of selves (Markus and Nurius 1986).

Although information about self that triggers self-concept comes from various contexts, an individual's self-concept is essentially a dual focus of self and situation (Super 1990). That is, self-concept is "a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes, neural and endocrine make-up, opportunity to play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of superior and fellows" (Super 1953, p. 189). Based upon Super's (1953) conceptualization of self-concept, it can be inferred that an individual's self-concept is primarily drawn upon his or her assessments of self-efficacy and self-worth in a given context. Indeed, scholars have noted that self-concept incorporates individuals' views and images of their self-efficacy and self-esteem (e.g. Goldsmith et al. 1999; Korman 1970; Super 1990).

Given that self-efficacy and self-esteem largely determine an individual's self-concept formation, we concur that an employee's self-concept at work is largely shaped by the employee's achievement experience and interactions with other organizational members. As such, an employee's TSSE and OBSE, presumably, are crucial to the understanding of the employee's workplace self-concept. Because TSSE is an employee's belief of his or her ability to perform specific tasks (Bandura 1977) that are critical to overall organizational performance, a number of prior studies have explored determinants of TSSE. For instance, Schwoerer et al. (2005) revealed that an individual's training experience is predictive of his or her TSSE. Additionally, it was shown in Lin et al.'s (2014) study that an individual's proactive personality is a significant predictor of TSSE. While proactive personality has been linked to TSSE, autotelic personality, defined as individual tendency to do things for their own sake rather than to achieve some external goals (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 2000), is also relevant to TSSE. In particular, because antotelic individuals have strong desire to seek high challenging tasks and sufficient personal skills (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), these individuals enjoy growth-enhancing state of mind through cultivating meaningful life challenges (Asakawa 2004, 2009; Delle Fave and Massimini 1992), which, in turn, may enhance antotelic individuals' TSSE in various performance contexts. Finally, Smith et al. (2006) uncovered that the occurrence of failure is a determinant of TSSE.

Unlike TSSE that focuses on perceived self-competence, OBSE represents an employee's perceived self-value as an organizational member within an organizational context (Pierce et al. 1989). That is, OBSE is formed predominantly based upon an employee's self assessment of his or her personal adequacy in fulfilling organizational roles (Chan et al. 2013). As OBSE reinforces positive work attitudes and behaviors, OBSE has been found to be associated with various organizational-related phenomena, such as improved task performance (e.g. Liu et al. 2013), enhanced job satisfaction (e.g. Bowling et al. 2010), and increased affective commitment (e.g. Lee and Peccei 2007). Given that OBSE is highly relevant to positive individual and organizational consequences, there is a growing interest in understanding antecedents of OBSE. For example, in a study conducted by Lee (2003), it was shown that support from coworkers enhances an employee's OBSE. Moreover, Chan et al.'s (2013) study uncovered that authoritarian leadership reduces an employee's OBSE. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that higher quality of leader–member exchange results in higher levels of OBSE experienced by an employee (Liu et al. 2013).

In sum, our careful review of the literature reveals that TSSE and OBSE are central to an employee's self-concept at work. More importantly, TSSE and OBSE are greatly determined by an employee's interactions with others in the organization (McAllister and Bigley 2002). In line with this theorizing, we propose that an employee's TSSE and OBSE may be affected by the employee's receipt of help. Thus, we briefly review the helping literature next.

2.2 Helping Behavior in Organizations

In 1938, Barnard noted that an individual's willingness to cooperate and contribute is indispensable to the organization. More importantly, Barnard emphasized that willingness to cooperate and contribute is not motivated by a contractual obligation but by a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Accordingly, Barnard suggested that formal authority is less strained if necessary contributions are secured spontaneously from an individual's willingness to contribute.

Building upon Barnard's (1938) concept of willingness to cooperate and contribute, the concept of help-giving emerged in the literature. Conceptually speaking, help-giving describes an employee's voluntary actions aimed at helping another coworker with task-related issues (Mossholder et al. 2011). As help-giving essentially represents organizational members' willingness to cooperate and contribute without seeking formal rewards, employee help-giving has been found to be a strong predictor of overall organizational performance (Podsakoff et al. 2000; Whiting et al. 2008). Given this, there is a growing interesting in understanding determinants of help-giving at the individual, group, and organizational level. As this article primarily focuses on exploring help-giving at the individual level, our review of the literature focuses mainly on prior studies of help-giving at the individual level. For instance, using the social exchange perspective, Deckop et al. (2003) showed that an employee's help-giving is determined by how much help the employee has received from co-workers. Similar finding was also demonstrated in later studies conducted by Bhatnagar and Manchanda (2013) and Tsai et al. (2007). Another commonly applied theoretical perspective in the analysis of antecedents of help-giving is leader–member exchange theory (e.g. Graen and Scandura 1987; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). In particular, prior studies have found that an employee's help-giving is affected by the quality of social exchange between the supervisor and employee (e.g. Deluga 1994; Wang et al. 2005). Other theoretical perspectives that have been applied to the investigation of antecedents of help-giving include equity theory (e.g. Niehoff and Moorman

1993; Spitzmüller et al. 2006), social network theory (e.g. Bowler and Brass 2006; Venkataramani and Dalal 2007), social learning theory (e.g. Bommer et al. 2003; Zagenczyk et al. 2008), and transactional leadership theory (e.g. Boerner et al. 2007; Walumbwa et al. 2008).

While help-giving has been commonly linked with effective organizational functioning, it has also been found to have a positive impact on individual job performance (e.g. Hu and Liden 2011). Additionally, empirical evidence from prior studies has uncovered that employees who provide help receive favorable instrumental outcomes, such as higher performance ratings (Barksdale and Werner, 2001), better reward recommendations (e.g. Rosopa et al. 2013), and higher advancement ratings (e.g. Rosopa et al. 2013). While engaging in helping may allow employees to obtain instrumental outcomes, a number of previous studies have revealed that providing help leads to the attainment of intrinsic outcomes, such as job satisfaction (e.g. Chou and Pearson 2012), positive mood (e.g. Glomb et al. 2011), increased feelings of efficacy (e.g. Tang and Ibrahim 1998), and enhanced self-perceptions (e.g. Somech and Drach-Zahavy 2000). Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that some scholars have emphasized that providing help might interfere with one's in-role requirements, which, in turn, could result in one's experience of role over-load, job stress, and work-related strain (Bolino and Turnley 2005; Somech and Drach-Zahavy 2013).

Our review reveals that the helping literature focuses much on exploring instrumental attainments (e.g. formal rewards) and intrinsic outcomes (e.g. self-concept) that an employee may experience as the helper. Nonetheless, how receipt of help affects an employee's self-concept remains under studied. Thus, in the next section we provide theoretical arguments for how TSSE and OBSE of an employee may be affected by the employee's receipt of help.

3 Theoretical Framework and Research Propositions

3.1 Receipt of Help and Task-Specific Self-Efficacy (TSSE)

It has been noted that employees' subjective perceptions of their ability to perform organizationally relevant jobs (i.e. TSSE) are highly relevant to their job performance and goal attainment (Smith et al. 2006). That is, TSSE enhances job performance because it allows employees to not only make greater use of adaptive behaviors (Raghuram et al. 2003), but also exercise control over difficult job situations (Schaubroeck et al. 2000). Not surprisingly, evidence from prior research has consistently indicated a positive association between TSSE and job-related performance (e.g. Smith et al. 2006).

Given the relevance of TSSE to employee work outcomes, it has been further noted that personal attainment serves as an important source of TSSE formation (Potosky and Ramakrishna 2002). Put simply, employees develop TSSE by analyzing and making judgments about why a particular past job performance level and experience occurred (Gist and Mitchell 1992). As such, it can be expected that an employee's TSSE may decrease when he or she is unable to resolve job-related issues independently in a performance setting. Meanwhile, because receipt of help represents accepting assistance from others, we contend that help receiving informs an employee about his or her lack of capability and competence. As a consequence of this feedback process, it is plausible to expect that receiving help can reduce the employee's TSSE. Our view is supported by Lee (1997), who

notes that receiving help implies incompetence and dependence of the recipient. Similarly, Bachrach et al. (2006) state that receiving help may be interpreted as feedback implying one's poor performance or ability to perform independently. More importantly, as suggested by self-consistency theory (e.g. Korman 1970, 1976), individuals tend to maintain a consistent self-concept even if the self-concept is negative (Swann 1990). Taken together, we anticipate that higher levels of help received by an employee will lead to lower levels of TSSE experienced by the employee. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1 *The more help that an employee receives, the less task-specific self-efficacy that the employee perceives.*

3.2 Receipt of Help and Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE)

As defined previously, OBSE refers to the perceived self-value that an employee has of him- or herself as an organizational member within an organizational context (Pierce et al. 1989). Because OBSE represents employees' self-concept and self-evaluation of themselves in an organization-specific setting, OBSE often reflects employees' beliefs of their importance, effectiveness, contribution, competence, and worthiness within their organization (Chan et al. 2013). Indeed, there is ample evidence suggesting that employees with high levels of OBSE perceive that they are important, meaningful and worthwhile within the organization (e.g. Dipboye et al. 1979; Pierce et al. 1989).

While OBSE is considered a product of self-evaluation, the formation of OBSE can be affected by external cues that an employee receives from his or her work environment. Specifically, as pointed out by Pierce and Gardner (2004), an employee's OBSE can be affected by the amount of successful work performance that he or she has had. As such, one can except that an employee's OBSE is weakened when the employee receives job-related help from others. Accordingly, we suspect that receipt of help may subsequently serve as an important external cue indicating to an employee about his or her lack of effectiveness and competence, thereby reducing the employee's OBSE.

When investigating OBSE, scholars (e.g. Baumeister 1999; Korman 1970; Pierce and Gardner 2004) have noted that employees' OBSE may be shaped by their interactions with other organizational members. That is, other organizational members' behaviors directed to an employee may be used by the employee as a view of his or her worthiness and adequacy as an organizational member. Given that help-giving is generally directed to a specific organizational member who is unable to resolve his or her task-related issues (Mossholder et al. 2011), we expect that receiving high levels of help can result in an employee's perceived personal inadequacy in task completion and work role achievement. This negative self-view reinforced by self-consistency, therefore, can result in reduced OBSE. Indeed, it has been noted that receipt of help can undermine the recipient's feelings of inferiority and reduced self-esteem because of the acknowledgement of dependence incompetence, and the need for others' contributions (Lee 1997, 2002), which can then threaten the recipient's public impressions in an organizational setting (Argyris 1993; Tedeschi and Melberg 1984). Together, the above discussion leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 2 *The more help that an employee receives, the less organization-based self-esteem that the employee experiences.*

3.3 Moderating Role of Locus of Control

An individual's LOC describes the extent to which the individual believes that he or she has control over his or her personal fate, which can be classified into external LOC and internal LOC (Rotter 1966). In general, employees with high levels of internal LOC believe that their work-related outcomes are primarily determined by personal effort and ability, whereas employees with high external LOC believe that their personal outcomes are mainly influenced by external factors such as other people and luck. Given that LOC reflects differences in individuals' beliefs about individual controllability of life events (Smith and Iskra-Golec 2003), LOC has been applied to the study of workplace behaviors (O'Brien 1984). In particular, it has been reported that employees with high internal LOC are more achievement oriented (Renn and Vandenberg 1991), perceive greater levels of personal control over their work environments (Smith and Iskra-Golec 2003), and believe that they have more ability to influence their tasks (Wang et al. 2013a) than employees with high external LOC.

Given the differences between employees with internal and external LOC in explaining their work-related outcomes, it can be expected that when receiving help, internal LOC employees may experience loss of control over their tasks, which can subsequently deteriorate the employees' confidence and determination in performing their tasks. Moreover, because internal LOC individuals have strong needs for achievement (Phares 1976), it is plausible that internal LOC employees attribute receipt of help to reduced personal worth and value. In contrast, because external LOC individuals often take a passive role in their environment (Ng et al. 2006), we anticipate that employees with high levels of external LOC are likely to attribute receipt of help to external factors (e.g. managerial decision) or personal luck, which, in turn, can mitigate the negative impact of receipt of help on TSSE, and OBSE. Taken together, we expect that an employee's LOC will moderate the negative relationship between receipt of help and TSSE, and between receipt of help and OBSE. Accordingly, we propose the following:

Proposition 3a   *The relationship between receipt of help and an employee's task-specific self-efficacy will be moderated by his or her locus of control, such that the negative relationship is stronger (weaker) when the employee has higher levels of internal (external) locus of control.*

Proposition 3b   *The relationship between receipt of help and an employee's organization-based self-esteem will be moderated by his or her locus of control, such that the negative relationship is stronger (weaker) when the employee has higher levels of internal (external) locus of control.*

3.4 Moderating Role of Individualism–Collectivism

Since its emergence in the literature, the concept of individualism–collectivism has been commonly used to describe individuals who focus more on pursuing personal goals and satisfying self-interests and individuals who place more emphasis on attaining group goals and interests (Earley 1989). Moreover, individuals with high levels of individualistic tendencies are more self-reliant and have greater tendencies to separate, isolate, and alienate the self than individuals with higher levels of collectivistic tendencies (Hofstede 2001; Triandis 1995). That is, individualists define the self as autonomous, whereas

collectivists focus on how connected they are to other members in the group (Marcus and Le 2013).

Given that individualism–collectivism reflects much of individuals' personal or group orientation, individualism–collectivism may explain employee helping at work. Indeed, it is well documented that employees with high levels of collectivistic tendencies are more likely to provide help than employees with high levels of individualistic tendencies at work (e.g. Farh et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2013b). While the extent to which help-giving behavior is exhibited by employees with the individualistic and collectivistic tendencies has been vastly explored, it has been noted that individualists and collectivists may perceive help-giving behavior differently. For example, Bachrach et al.'s (2007) findings show that cooperative behaviors, such as help-giving, are generally expected to be demonstrated at higher levels in collectivistic contexts than in individualistic contexts. Similarly, Wang et al. (2013b) suggest that employees with collectivistic tendencies view help-giving as a means to benefit in-group members rather than as a self-determined work behavior commonly expressed by employees with individualistic tendencies.

Drawing upon the salient behavioral distinctions between individualism–collectivism, we anticipate that employees who possess high levels of collectivistic tendencies are likely to view receipt of help, as a needed element that facilitates the attainment of common goals. This particular perspective held by collectivist employees can then reinforce their beliefs that receipt of help signifies the presence of positive social and task interdependence, eliminates collective performance barriers, and allows the group and/or organization to accomplish overall goals. Consequently, it can be expected that collectivistic tendencies mitigate the negative effect of receipt of help on TSSE and OBSE.

On the contrary, because individualists place high emphasis on individual accountability and personal success in the organizational setting (Gelfand and Realo 1999), it is expected that employees with high levels of individualistic tendencies are likely to perceive receipt of help as task-related incompetency and personal inadequacy in the performance setting. As such, we suspect that individualistic tendencies strengthen the negative effect of receipt of help on TSSE and OBSE. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the impact of globalization has resulted in the phenomenon of expatriation (Harvey et al. 2010). Consequently, it becomes possible that, for instance, employees with individualistic (or collectivistic) tendencies work with collectivistic (or individualistic) individuals who view receipt of help less (or more) unfavorably. That is, employees with individualistic and collectivistic tendencies working together may reshape these employees' attitudes and behaviors partly. Nonetheless, drawing from self-consistency theory that self-concept is an internal evaluation process where individuals form their self-image based upon their social experiences (Korman 1970, 1976), we argue that individuals, regardless of coworkers' individualistic or collectivistic tendencies, are likely to maintain attitudes and engage in actions that are consistent with their overall view of themselves. In other words, on the basis of self-consistency theory, it can be expected that employees' TSSE and OBSE are likely to be mainly affected by their own view of receiving help shaped by their individualistic or collectivistic tendencies rather than shaped by interacting with others possessing different tendencies in the workplace. Taken together, we propose the following:

Proposition 4a *The relationship between receipt of help and an employee's task-specific self-efficacy will be moderated by his or her individualistic-collectivistic tendencies, such that the negative relationship is weaker (stronger) when the employee possesses higher levels of collectivistic (individualistic) tendencies.*

Proposition 4b *The relationship between receipt of help and an employee's organization-based self-esteem will be moderated by his or her individualistic-collectivistic tendencies, such that the negative relationship is weaker (stronger) when the employee possesses higher levels of collectivistic (individualistic) tendencies.*

4 Discussion

The main purpose of this article is to explore how employees' TSSE and OBSE may be affected by receipt of help in the organization. Additionally, we analyze the moderating roles of LOC and individualism–collectivism tendencies. By investigating these, this article provides important theoretical and managerial implications that are discussed in the next section.

4.1 Implications for Theory

Our study makes five contributions to the literature. First, although it is well documented in the literature that help-giving behavior exhibited by employees is critical to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, help-giving behavior may not necessary be viewed has helpful (Halabi et al. 2011). In particular, individuals often prefer not to seek help because receiving help implies dependence, weakness, and inability (Nadler 1991; Nadler and Chernyak-Hai 2014). Moreover, receipt of help is usually seen as self-threatening, which, consequently, results in lowered self-esteem and evaluations of oneself (Nadler 1987; Nadler and Fisher 1986). Certainly, ample evidence has shown that receiving help can negatively affect the recipient in the general social setting. Nonetheless, investigations on the impact of receiving help on employees' evaluations of themselves as worthy and valuable members in the organizational context still remain scarce. Accordingly, by discussing how an employee's TSSE and OBSE are affected by receipt of help, this article provides a theoretical basis for future research focusing on domain-specific consequences (e.g., TSSE and OBSE) of receipt of help in the organizational setting.

Second, because of its strong implications on effective organizational functioning, research on help-giving behavior has grown significantly. However, the vast majority of research has focused on examining consequences of providing help (Bamberger 2009; Flynn and Lake 2008). Accordingly, understanding consequence of helping in organizations from the helper's perspective has been the central theme of the literature. The strong focus placed on the helper, therefore, leads to the lack of understanding of how help-giving might affect the recipient affectively and psychologically. In this article, we address this gap by asking "How does receiving helping behavior affect the recipient's self-concept in the forms of TSSE and OBSE?" More importantly, we further specify our research propositions that may be empirically tested by future research.

Third, perhaps one of the most important managerial tasks is to facilitate employees' job performance because it is associated with various individual and organizational outcomes, such as absenteeism (e.g. Bycio 1992), workplace profitability (e.g. Yanadori and Jaarsveld 2014), and turnover intentions (e.g. Caesens et al. 2016). Additionally, there is ample evidence suggesting that job performance plays a critical role in predicting individual job satisfaction and subjective well-being at work (e.g. Heffernan and Dundon 2016; Huang et al. 2016), which, in turn, affect individual life satisfaction (Allen et al. 2015). Given that this article links receipt of help at work with employees' perceived performance capability

and personal value in the organization, it provides important theoretical insights into the study of positive performance management and employee well-being.

Fourth, research on self-concept in organizations has primarily employed self-consistency theory (e.g. Ferris et al. 2009; Korman 1970) as the theoretical base. In particular, self-consistency theory (e.g. Korman 1970, 1976) suggests that individuals desire to maintain a consistent self-concept even if the self-concept is negative (Swann 1990). As employees' social and organizational experiences determine much of their self-concept formation, we extend the theorizing of self-consistency to the analysis of an employee's receipt of help and his or her subsequent self-concept in the forms of TSSE and OBSE. That is, our theoretical model integrates self-consistency theory into the understanding of employees' formation of self-concept when receiving help.

Finally, we theorize how individuals' individualism or collectivism tendencies may strengthen or weaken the effect of receipt of help on TSSE and OBSE. Given that individualism–collectivism is an effective mechanism that captures an individual's perceptions and attitudes toward him- or herself and others in social and organizational contexts (Hofstede 1991; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961; Triandis 1989), this article demonstrates that employees' self-concept affected by receipt of help may be interpreted differently depending on employees' individualistic or collectivistic tendencies. Thus, this article contributes to theorization of employees' self-concept formation affected by how they view interpersonal and social interactions in accordance with their individualistic and collectivistic tendencies.

4.2 Implications for Managerial Practice

Even though this article intends to explore how the receipt of help may influence an employee's TSSE and OBSE, we recognize that help-giving behavior is a strong determinant of overall organizational performance (Podsakoff et al. 2000; Whiting et al. 2008) and, consequently, should not be discouraged. As such, we propose the following implications for managerial practice that may help mitigate the negative consequences of receiving help. First, as we have discussed in our review of the literature, one of the most prominent theoretical underpinnings has been social exchange theory (Blau 1964). Research using the social exchange perspective suggests that employees provide help because they have received help from their coworkers (e.g. Deckop et al. 2003; Stamper and Van Dyne 2001). That is, receipt of help can generate a sense of obligation to reciprocate in the near future experienced by the recipient. Extending the core concept of social exchange theory, we advise that managers utilize reciprocity as a means to mitigate the experience of reduced TSSE and OBSE when employees receive help. Specifically, managers need to establish a work environment where employees not only receive help, but also have the opportunity to provide help. This can be done by, for example, increasing task interdependence, which may facilitate employees' exchange of help (Bachrach et al. 2006). The increased opportunity to provide help to others may then minimize the formation of negative self-concept when receiving help.

Second, because helping relations are inherently unequal where the helper is considered the individual with superior resources while the recipient is viewed as the dependent on the helper (Nadler 1991; Nadler and Halabi 2006), receipt of help can undermine the recipient's confidence and motivation to succeed (Fisher et al. 1982). As such, it becomes critical for managers to help eliminate negative perceptions of receiving help without discouraging workplace help-giving behavior. Thus, to prevent the formation of negative self-concept when receiving help, managers can proactively help employees establish formal and

informal social network ties through which employees can not only receive help, but also have the opportunity to reciprocate. Indeed, evidence of prior research has supported this view by revealing that strong social network ties promote help-giving behavior (e.g. Bowler and Brass 2006; Lin 2006). As a result of the presence of social network ties, managers may be able to balance an employee's help-receiving and help-giving behaviors.

In addition to utilizing social network ties, managers may consider enhancing employees' team and organizational identification. In particular, when employees have high levels of team and organizational identification, they tend to define themselves in terms of the identity shared with team and organizational members (Cornelissen et al. 2007; van Knippenberg and van Schie 2000). More importantly, when employees define themselves congruently with the broader team and organizational context, they become not only more willing to influence and be influenced by other members in the same context, but also more motivated to cooperate in order to achieve overall goals (Kramer 1993; Reicher et al. 2005). Drawing upon the literature of team and organizational identification, we suggest that managers can utilize strong team and organizational identification developed through team-building activities and shared vision to reduce the adverse impact of receiving help on how employees define themselves.

Finally, this article highlights the importance of effective career development practices in the organization. In particular, because receipt of help generally signifies that the recipient lacks task-related competency to complete the task. As a result, managers may consider utilizing workplace mentoring as a means to develop employees' organizational competency. Moreover, the use of mentoring facilitates the development of employee social capital through exchanging formal and informal knowledge and engaging in positive discretionary work behaviors such as help-giving behavior (Donaldson et al. 2000; Ghosh et al. 2012). Furthermore, mentoring creates reciprocal support that not only contributes to mutual development between mentors and protégés, but also increases mentors' and protégés' capacity for positive behaviors (Ragins and Verbos 2007). The increased professional development and personal capacity, therefore, may help foster employees' TSSE and OBSE.

5 Directions for Future Research

First and foremost, when attempting to understand the impact of receipt of help on an employee's TSSE and OBSE, we make an implicit assumption that the employee is merely the recipient of helping behavior. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Grodal et al. (2015), help-giving and help-receiving behaviors in the organization can be intertwined and interdependent. Even though our main focus is placed primarily upon the help-receiving aspect, we recognize that recipients of help can also provide help. As such, future research is highly encouraged to address the interdependent nature of helping and explore whether an employee's TSSE and OBSE are affected when he or she not only provides help to, but also receives help from others.

As mentioned previously, one of the most commonly applied theoretical bases in the helping research is social exchange theory (Blau 1964). This research stream draws upon the notion that exchanges in helping between two employees are governed by norms of reciprocity. That is, employees who provide help believe that they will receive help from coworkers in an unspecified future date (Deckop et al. 2003; Stamper and Van Dyne 2001). Thus, the social exchange perspective of helping highlights the importance of capturing not

only the extent of helping behavior that an employee demonstrates, but also how much help that the employee receives. Unfortunately, while several scales for measuring help-giving behavior have been developed (e.g. Taber and Deosthali 2014; Williams and Anderson 1991), there is a lack of scholarly attention paid to identifying what behavioral characteristics constitute receipt of help. Given that the recipient might not always consider the helper to be helpful if the helping actions do not lead to the outcome desired by the recipient, we highly encourage future research to explore behavioral constituents of receipt of help.

While the concept of helping is commonly defined as helping another coworker with task-related issues voluntarily (Mossholder et al. 2011), prior research has proposed various types of helping. For instance, Nadler (1997, 1998, 2002) suggests that the helper can provide dependency-oriented help (e.g. providing a full solution to a problem) or autonomy-oriented help (e.g. giving tools or instructions that allow the recipient to help him- or herself). Moreover, Schneider et al. (1996) propose that help can be assumptive or non-assumptive where assumptive help is unsolicited assistance without any evidence of the need for help on the recipient. Recently, Spitzmuller and Van Dyne (2013) propose that helping can be further classified into proactive helping and reactive helping. In particular, proactive helping is exhibited as an attempt to satisfy the helper's personal needs, whereas reactive helping is response to the needs of others as well as prior positive treatment provided by others (Spitzmuller and Van Dyne 2013). Even though receiving help may signify the recipient's dependence, weakness, and inability (Nadler 1991; Nadler and Chernyak-Hai 2014), the recipient's psychological reactions and inferences of self when receiving help may be contingent upon the type of help received. For example, Nadler (1997, 1998) show that autonomy-oriented help allows the recipient to partly perceive that he or she can succeed independently. Extending the literature focusing different types of help, we recognize that the predictive power of our theoretical model can be enhanced when various types of help are considered.

When investigating behaviors in teams, scholars have shown that interpersonal dynamics can determine behaviors exhibited by the team members. For instance, Farmer et al. (2015) show that high-quality exchange relationships among team members foster members' feelings of being a valued part of the team. Farmer et al.'s (2015) finding, therefore, implies that an employee with high-quality team-member exchange relationships may consider receipt of help a form of team collaboration and learning rather than a sign of weakness and dependence, thereby mitigating the negative impact of receiving of help on an employee's self-concept. Indeed, Brueller and Carmeli (2011) support this view by demonstrating that high-quality relationships enable team members to express their positive and negative emotions freely, which, in turn, facilitates collaboration and mutual trust. The increase in collaboration and mutual trust can then enhance mutual learning and assistance among team members. In a similar vein, Stephens et al. (2013) show that relationship closeness allows team members to express positive and negative emotions constructively. The constructive expression of emotions fosters interpersonal trust, which may be used as an important mechanism to reduce the negative perceptions of receiving help from team members. Moreover, in their analysis of leadership behaviors, Hirak et al. (2012) demonstrate that leader inclusiveness enhances subordinates' perceived psychological safety, which, in turn, serves as a foundation for interpersonal learning among subordinates. Extending Hirak et al.'s (2012) evidence, it is plausible that an employee's negative perceptions of receiving help may be mitigated when the leader promotes high-quality interpersonal learning and inclusion. Taken together, we suggest that future

research considers the impact of interpersonal dynamics on the relationship between receipt of help and employee self-concept.

Finally, since its emergence in the literature, the concept of helping has been predominantly treated as an individual-level behavior (Podsakoff et al. 2000). Nevertheless, because behaviors in organizations are inherently multilevel (Chan 1998; House et al. 1995), the concept of helping can be viewed as a multilevel phenomenon and, consequently, warrants scholarly investigations at the individual-, interpersonal-, and organizational-level. Indeed, Ng and Van Dyne (2005) show that factors related to interpersonal dynamics, including cooperative norms and task conflict, and group cohesion, predict individual-level helping. Moreover, Choi's (2006) study of helping in organizations reveals that individual-level factors such as perceived fairness and perceived organizational support along with trust among members at the interpersonal level predict how much help employees provides to coworkers. Furthermore, Chen and Kao (2011) demonstrate that employees' help-giving behavior is affected by individual self-efficacy as well as collective group-efficacy. While our proposed model focus primarily on individual-level analysis of receipt of help, factors influencing individual behaviors at multiple levels signifies the potential need for further incorporating cross-level factors. For instance, it would be particularly interesting to examine the interactive effects of individual needs and group processes on an employee's work motivation and self-definition (e.g., Ellemers et al. 2004; Haslam et al. 2000) in the help-receiving context. We also suggest that future researchers incorporate group helping norm, organizational climate, and interpersonal trust into our proposed model.

6 Conclusion

In this article, we have developed a theoretical model that describes how an employee's self-concept, in the forms of TSSE and OBSE, is adversely affected by the employee's receipt of help. Moreover, we theoretically explore the moderating effects of LOC and individualism–collectivism tendencies. By investigating these relationships, this article provides important theoretical insights to the literature. More importantly, this article provides crucial managerial implications concerning managing employees' self-concept positively without discouraging help-giving behavior in the organization.

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