

PREJUDICE AND EMOTIONAL SENSEMAKING IN POST-ACQUISITION INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE ACQUISITIONS IN THE UK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many mergers and acquisitions (M&As) fail, and an emerging body of literature highlights the role of prejudice in derailing the M&A process. While prejudice is frequently observed in M&As, strategies to mitigate these biases remain underexplored. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, this study focuses on Chinese acquisitions in the UK and examines how managers from both the acquired and acquiring organizations navigate prejudice through emotional sensemaking. The findings demonstrate that emotional sensemaking plays a critical role in shaping the post-acquisition integration (PAI) process and its outcomes. Specifically, sensemaking supported by emotional intelligence facilitates the accommodation or reduction of prejudice, while emotionally unintelligent sensemaking tends to reinforce it. By focusing on the dynamic, interactive emotional exchanges between managers at the micro level, this study offers a fresh lens on the integration process beyond traditional strategic or structural explanations. The study contributes to the literature by advancing the understanding of micro-level emotional sensemaking in the PAI, emphasizing the dynamic, interactive nature of emotional sensemaking between acquirer and acquiree managers, and its impact on the integration process and outcomes.



KEYWORDS

- Acquisition
- Chinese mergers and acquisitions
- Emotional sensemaking
- Post-acquisition integration
- Prejudice

RESEARCH RELEVANCE

- Examines how prejudice undermines mergers and acquisitions, focusing on post-acquisition integration in Chinese acquisitions of UK firms.
- Highlights emotional sensemaking as a key micro-level process through which managers interpret, respond to, and potentially mitigate prejudice.
- Shows that emotionally intelligent sensemaking helps reduce or accommodate prejudice, whereas emotionally unintelligent sensemaking reinforces it.
- Shifts attention beyond structural and strategic factors by emphasising the dynamic, interactive emotional exchanges between acquirer and acquiree managers during integration.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

He, S., Khan, Z., Wood, G., Tarba, S., Conroy, K., & Akhtar, P. (2026). Prejudice and Emotional Sensemaking in Post-Acquisition Integration: A Case Study of Chinese Acquisitions in the UK. *Management and Organization Review*, 1-40.
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“Emotional sensemaking shapes whether prejudice is mitigated or reinforced during post-acquisition integration.”

