Original Article

Three dimensions of organizational commitment of sports school employees

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Abstract:

In the 21st century, human capital became an extremely valuable resource. Organizations are not just concerned about employees performing their duties properly. The employee's emotional bond with the organization, their attachment, loyalty and attitude are becoming increasingly important. Organizations want to have employees committed. The article addresses the issue of organizational commitment, understood as employee identification with the organization. Organizational commitment has been the subject of research for decades. However, the issue of sports school staff commitment is rarely addressed. It is this group of teachers that is guided by motivation and passion. Are they really more committed than the other teachers? This article is answered by this question. The purpose of the publication is to identify and assess the level of organizational commitment of sports school employees. The empirical research was conducted in November 2019. The sample was composed of 182 employees of two sports schools in one of Polish cities. Three dimensions of organizational commitment were assessed - affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. The Polish version of the Meyer and Allen scale was used in the study. The respondents rated their level of commitment on a 5-point scale. The research results have indicated that employees teaching sports-related subjects display a higher level of organizational commitment. Importantly, their level of affective commitment is higher. They are therefore emotionally connected to their workplace and identify with their school more than others do. Furthermore, a statistically significant dependence was observed between normative commitment and the type of subject being taught.

KeyWords: Organizational Commitment, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment, Sports School

Introduction

Nowadays, employees do not treat their workplace exclusively as a source of income. They also expect it to satisfy other needs, such as self-development or, for example, sense of acceptance (Lindgren, 2012). Therefore, the task of the organization is to create such working conditions that the needs of employees can be met and, on the other hand, that it is also possible to create extremely engaged and loyal staff. These are committed employees that can be the key to the success of any organization. Commitment is treated differently than motivation or job satisfaction. It determines behaviour regardless of other, often conflicting motives or attitudes.

Organizational commitment (OC) is defined as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization' (Mowday, Steers, Porter, 1979, p. 226). It can be assumed that a committed employee identifies with the organization's goals and mission. According to Lewicka, commitment is the readiness to make independent decisions, as well as identification with the company, which is also manifested in the responsibility undertaken for its actions (Lewicka, 2014, p. 224).

According to Cohen (2007), a committed employee is one who has a strong desire to remain a member of an organization, willing to make a considerable effort towards it and who believes in its goals and values.

The subject literature considers Becker, an American sociologist, to be a precursor of research in the area of organizational commitment. However, this researcher looked at the concept through the prism of the economic exchange relationship between an employee and the organization (Becker, 1960). These were only later studies that included the emotional aspect of organizational commitment (Mowday, Steers, Porter, 1979). Ch. A. O'Reilly and J. A. Chatman (1986) believe that organizational commitment is an employee's internal attachment to the organization which is manifested in his attitudes towards the organization. The model of commitment to the organization by Meyer and Allen has been extremely popular since the 1990s (Meyer, Allen, 1991). These authors treat organizational commitment as an employee's identification with an organization and present it in three dimensions: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment.

Affective commitment (AC) is the employee's emotional attachment to the organization. Sen, Bhattacharya, Korschun (2006, s. 86) believe that it depends on the employee's personal choice. Importantly, strong affective

commitment means working of own will, not coercion (Waddock, Parallel, 2004). It is even considered that an employee stays in the organization because he desires it (Marzec, 2014).

Another dimension of commitment is continuance commitment. This type is associated with the employee's belief that leaving work is too expensive.

An employee feels a compulsion to remain in the organization. He believes that he must work in it, because the costs of leaving are too high, he has invested too much in it or he cannot find another job. (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, Braig, 2004). It reflects the degree to which a person feels the need to be in an organization (Łachnicka, 2015). An employee with a high level of this dimension of commitment performs their duties worse and has worse contact with colleagues.

The third and last type of commitment is normative commitment. According to Meyer and Allen, it depends on social norms that determine the dedication of an organization. Normative commitment results from a sense of moral obligation to remain in it. The employee remains in the organization because he perceives this course of action as the most appropriate and morally justified (Łaguna, Mielniczuk, Zaliński, Wałachowska, 2015). The NC level may be influenced by the rules an individual accepts and the reciprocal relationship between an organization and its employees (Albdour, Altarawneh, 2012). The authors of the model assume that the employee's relationship with an organization may be determined simultaneously by several dimensions of commitment. Strong affective commitment can also be associated with a sense of duty to stay in the organization. The same employee may also think that the costs related to leaving his job would be too high for him (Meyer, Allen, 1991). Researchers around the world have recognized the relationship between the dimensions of organizational commitment and employee behavior. The higher the organizational commitment, the lower the tendency to leave the job. The strongest negative correlation in this case occurs in affective commitment (Freeman, 2004; Li, Minor, Wang, Yu, 2018; Mathieu, Zajac, 1990). Affectively committed employees achieve better work results, work more and in a more effective way (Nouri, Parker, 1996).

Organizational commitment may be conditioned by subjective factors that result from an employee's individual characteristics and his professional situation, as well as from cultural factors related to social norms or the way of upbringing (Łachnicka 2015). Some authors point out that many individual factors (new job opportunities, professionalism, characteristics and expectations of individuals), institutional factors (such as corporate culture and managerial style) and also external factors have an influence on organizational commitment (Sevinç, Şahin, 2012). Many researchers have evidenced that an employee's personal traits have a significant influence on organizational commitment (Glisson, Durick, 1988; Freeborn, 2001). This article aims to identify and evaluate the level of organizational commitment of sports school teachers. Moreover, the author poses a research hypothesis, stating that employees with specialized sports education have a higher level of affective commitment than employees teaching general subjects.

Material & methods

The empirical research was conducted in November 2019. The sample was composed of 182 employees of two sports schools in one of Polish cities¹. Approximately 55% of the respondents were women. Most respondents were married and aged 26-45. Half of the sample were people with professional experience not exceeding 10 years and the other half were people with longer seniority. From the research perspective, the split of employees between those who teach sports-related subjects (working in the sports school in accordance with their education) and those who teach general subjects (such as, for instance, mathematics, the Polish language, etc.) is essential. Detailed data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

		Number	%
Gender	Women	101	55.5
	Men	81	45.5
Age	18-25	10	5.5
	26-35	65	35.7
	36-45	77	42.3
	46-60	30	16.5
Professional experience (year)	10>	92	50.5
	10≤	90	49.5
Subject taught	Sports-related subject	62	34.1
	General subject	120	65.9

¹ Due to the fact that there are only two sports schools in the city, and the study was to ensure full anonymity to the respondents, the author cannot indicate the name of the city.

To measure organizational commitment, *The Meyer and Allen scale* was used (Meyer, Allen, 1997). This scale is based on the model they proposed. The survey consists of three subscales measuring the affective, continuance and normative dimensions of commitment. The scale related to Affective Commitment contains formulations related to the employee's emotions and feelings towards the organization. The Scale of Continuance Commitment are statements related to the costs of leaving work, while The Scale of Normative Commitment concerns the moral sense of the obligation to remain in the organization. The author used Polish version of Meyer and Allen scale has been used. It was developed by Bańka, Wołoska and Bazińska (2002). Respondents expressed their attitude towards 18 statements (continuance commitment – 6 items, normative commitment – 6 items and effective commitment – 6 items) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant totally disagree, up to 5 meaning totally agree.

Results

The research conducted was supposed to indicate firstly the level of organizational commitment of teachers of the studied sports schools. The data in Table 2 show weighted mean, minimum and maximum levels as well as ranges of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) of the surveyed employees.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on organizational commitment and its sub-scales.

Organizational Commitment		N.	Min.	Max.	Mean
Variables of organizational commitment	Affective commitment	182	2.67	4.83	3.91
	Continuance commitment	182	2.17	4.83	3.44
	Normative commitment	182	2.17	4.67	3.37
Perception of organizational commitment		182	2.34	4.73	3.58

The results indicate that average values of organizational commitment and its subscales are at an average level. Organizational commitment of all surveyed teachers reaches an average level of 3.58. Affective commitment obtained the highest average. It is also worth looking at the commitment of teachers teaching subjects related to physical education and teachers of other subjects. The data are contained in Table 3.

Table 3. Organizational commitment of sports teachers and other teachers

Teachers (type of subject)	Mean			
	Affective commitment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment	Organizational commitment
Physical education teachers (N=62)	4.23	3.47	3.58	3.77
Other teachers (N=120)	3.73	3.43	3.27	3.49

The research results indicate that organizational commitment level is slightly higher for physical education teachers. The biggest difference can be observed with affective commitment. The average is as high as 4.23 and in the case of non-sport subjects it amounts to 3.73.

In order to measure the dependence between the subject taught and affective, normative and continuance behaviours, the chi-square test of independence was done, as well as probit model based on the methodology of structural econometric models (SEM). The use of SEM models made it possible to analyse individual behaviours as factors rather than each question separately. For non-measurable qualitative features, Pearson's correlation coefficients should not be used to assess the dependence of variables.

Before starting the calculations, the results of the survey were recoded, so that in case of physical education teaching by the respondent, the value of 1 was given and 0 otherwise. This allowed the use of probit model to be used in further analysis. The values of the chi-square statistics enabling assessment of the dependence between the subject taught and the answers to individual questions are shown in Table 4. The critical value for the significance level of 0.05 and 4 degrees of flexibility is 9.488. Important values of the chi-square factor are marked with an asterisk.

Table 4. Chi-square statistics values for the dependence between the subject taught and answers to the specific behavioural question.

Chi-square statistics	Affective commitment					
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
Subject	6.252	65.372*	8.013	6.575	72.507*	56.756*
Chi-square statistics	Continuance commitment					
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Subject	115.468*	5.889	134.913*	128.395*	3.216	2.318
Chi-square statistics	Normative commitment					
	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6
Subject	130.477*	6.431	140.100*	119.897*	110.439*	144.380*

Notes: A1, A2... mean the subsequent statements which the respondents referred to in the individual dimensions of engagement. Each dimension was determined by six statements.

For all factors analysed, the value of statistics exceeded 0.7, which means high reliability of the scale used. Due to the relatively small number of observations for the needs of SEM modelling, it was decided to limit the list of questions (measurable variables) shaping individual factors so as to ensure high quality of adjusting the model to the data. The value of Alfa-Cronbach statistics for a limited set of variables is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Assessment of scale reliability for the needs of the SEM model

Factor	Questions	Alfa-Cronbach statistics
Affective behaviours	A1, A3, A4, A5	0.809
Continuance behaviours	C2, C3, C5, C6	0.856
Normative behaviours	N1, N2, N3, N6	0.890

Similar to the previous case, the value of all coefficients was above 0.7.

The model hypothesis that allows to examine the dependence between the dimensions of organizational commitment and the subject taught by the teacher is shown in Figure 1.

Fig. 1. SEM model hypothesis

The probit SEM model was estimated in SPSS Amos v.16 using Bayesian methods. The results obtained are contained in Table 6.

Table 6. Estimated SEM model results

Dependence	Coefficient	95% lower confidence limit	95% upper confidence limit
Normative->subject	0.757	0.664	0.860
Affective->subject	-0.065	-0.153	0.017
Continuance->subject	-0.255	-0.349	-0.163
Normative<->Affective	0.180	0.119	0.252
Normative<->Continuance	0.109	0.052	0.175
Continuance<->Affective	0.142	0.076	0.213

The conversion rate for the estimated model is 1.0016, which means that the parameters obtained are stable.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this publication was to determine the level of organizational commitment of sports school teachers. The outcome of the research indicated that the level of this commitment is quite considerable. It reaches an average level of 3.58 (on a five-point scale). However, the result that shows a high degree of commitment in the affective dimension is more satisfactory (3.91).

The assumption of the research was also to check whether physical education teachers show a higher level of engagement than other teachers. The results obtained confirmed this thesis. Although the overall level of commitment varies slightly (3.77 PE teachers, 3.49 others), sports subject teachers in the schools surveyed show a significantly higher affective commitment (4.23 PE teachers, 3.73 others). This proves their powerful emotional attachment to the organization and identification with it. These teachers willingly come to work and perform their duties without a sense of coercion. Such a significant difference in the level of this dimension of commitment may indicate that these teachers, due to working at a sports school, can realize their previous passions and penchants. The subject they teach is closely related to their major education. In their responses, this part of the respondents paid particular attention to the fact that they feel like at home in their school, the workplace has personal meaning, and school problems are also their problems. This confirms the identification with their own organization. G. Łasiński (2017) writes about quality scales in sport, also with regard to teachers. It can be presumed that teacher with higher affective commitment take higher quality activities.

Strongly committed employees can undoubtedly contribute to changing their organisation into a successful one. Companies with a higher level of employee engagement achieve 17% higher productivity and

profits than competitors do. Committed employees are five times less likely to have accidents at work and lose seven times less time in hazardous events when compared to uninvolved employees (Juchnowicz, 2014). Organizational culture plays an extremely important role here, as it should strengthen loyalty and appreciate the committed employees (Górka, Chodorek, Kądziaławski, Sudolska, Łapińska 2019). In an organization like a school, the committed employees certainly perform their duties better. They pass on the necessary knowledge to students with greater dedication and try to share their passion for a given subject with them.

The dependence between the subject taught and the affective, normative and continuance types of commitment was also examined. The SEM model showed that the higher the normative commitment, the more likely it is that physical education teachers exhibit it. This parameter turned out to be statistically significant – the confidence interval estimated for it does not contain the value of 0. Committed employees in the normative dimension are loyal to their organization; they feel obliged to the people they work with. The dependence between continuance commitment and the subject taught was similarly statistically significant. In this case, however, the dependence turned out to be negative. Thus, an increase in continuance commitment reduces the likelihood that it is demonstrated by a sports subject teacher. The dependence between affective commitment and the subject taught turned out to be statistically insignificant. Furthermore, all dimensions of commitment were positively correlated, which means that one type of behaviour is accompanied by the others.

Conclusion

Significant differences that were observed in the affective commitment level mean that sports subject teachers feel that their goals and needs are being met. They can pursue their passion and motivation which is the foundation of this dimension of commitment. An employee displaying strong affective commitment willingly performs his duties, as well as engages in additional tasks and demonstrates attitudes serving other employees and the entire organization. Also, it can be presumed that this group of teachers tends to manifest civic behaviours more often.

However, the statistical analysis performed indicated that a strong affective commitment is also associated with a sense of obligation for these teachers to remain in the organization. Therefore, it can be concluded that the high level of the affective dimension depends on other individual and institutional factors.

The article certainly has some limitations. Firstly, to confirm the findings, a larger random sample should be used in the study. Secondly, qualitative research would allow identifying other factors that could affect the level of teacher commitment. Nonetheless, the results of the research showed some dependencies between the subject taught in sports schools and the dimensions of commitment. This inspires to undertake further and in-depth research to be conducted in a bigger number of schools.

Conflicts of interest - The author declares no conflict of interest

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