

EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND EFFORT PROPENSITY: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

Purpose – The present study investigates the relationships of employees organizational commitment and effort propensity depending on a sector of organization (public and private sector).

Design/methodology/approach – A survey was conducted using questionnaire made up of Organizational commitment questionnaire (Allen, Meyer, 1990), Effort propensity questionnaire (Schnake, 2007), and sociodemographic questions. The respondents were 248 Lithuanian employees working in different public and private organizations.

Findings – It was found significant differences among the private and public sector employees for types of organizational commitment and effort propensity. Employees in the private sector are more affectively and normatively committed than employees in public sector. Besides, employees in the public sector withhold efforts much more than employees in the private sector. Whereas, there were no differences for extra-role performance, in-role performance, withdrawal, and propensity to turnover among the private and public sector of organization. Also analysis revealed significant differences in connections between organizational commitment and various aspects of effort propensity depending on a sector of organization. The conclusion has been made that there is a significant difference between private and public sector employee's organizational commitment and effort propensity.

Research limitations/implications – The sample was not selected randomly and, therefore, may not represent all population of Lithuanian employees. In addition, questions asking employees quite a sensitive and possibly discreet aspects related to their propensity to withhold effort at work may cause social desirability effect. The future research will need to determine whether organizational commitment could predict different forms of effort propensity, and to expand the current model of commitment's implications.

Practical implications – The findings may give some references and be useful for managers and HR consultants seeking employees who tend to offer an extra effort and less withdraw from work in various ways.

Originality/Value – This is the first study to examine the relationship between organizational commitment and effort propensity in Lithuania.

Keywords: effort propensity, employee, organizational commitment, private and public sector.

Research type: research paper.

Introduction

Over the years, considerable research has been devoted to the different withdrawal behaviors, such as lateness (Berry et al., 2012; Joelle et al., 2008; Koslowsky et al., 1997), absenteeism (Consiglio et al., 2013; Gellatly, 1995; Hausknecht, et al., 2008;) and turnover (Gautam et al., 2001; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Ng & Butt, 2009; Soonhee, 2012. Wang et al., 2012). Not only the physical but also a mental absence can be a real challenge for the productivity of any organization. Unfortunately, the withholding effort or, contrary, offering various levels of efforts is equally newsworthy but lesser explorative element of withdrawal from work (Birati, Tziner, 1996; Kidwell et al, 1993; Schnake, 2007). Evidently, withholding behavior at work disrupt ordinary processes in the organization (Birati, Tziner, 1996). The organization meets with various loss of employees who withhold effort (Sagie, Birati, 2002). Sagie and others (2002) noted that generally employees waste 5 per cent of total work hours due to withholding effort at work. It means that employer pays salary for a job not ineffectively done. Thus a large company has heavy expenses if having huge amount of employees which withhold their effort. Withholding behavior affects the effectiveness of organization not only directly but also indirectly. According to Kidwell and Bennett (1993), the withholding behavior and mentally absent employee may set off squandering time in other employees in the organization or, even worse, may cause some moral issue, weaken motivation or commitment for those who fairly fulfill their duties.

According to Kidwell and Bennet (1993), withholding effort might be defined as the likelihood that an employee will give less than full effort in fulfilling obligations. Later Schnake (2007) suggested to employ a new construct investigating withholding effort. It is a propensity to withhold effort or effort propensity. As Schnake (2007) stated, a tendency to behavior in particular way instead of an actual behavior may be more informative because can be applied across different tasks and settings and is useful for avoiding difficulties with measuring an actual effort and behavior. Consequently, this paper refers to Schnake (2007) integrative model of effort propensity on a continuum ranging from withdrawal to offer an extra effort. Five levels of effort propensity are included in this model: propensity to turnover, propensity to withdrawal, propensity to withhold effort, propensity to offer expected level of effort (in-role performance), and propensity to offer an extra effort (extra-role performance). While turnover and withdrawal from work is in the focus of researchers attention, some scientists and practitioners encourage investigate not only the negative side of effort propensity but also turn attention to the propensity to effort in various levels (e.g., Schnake, 2007).

For years, research has focused on the factors that motivate employees to offer effort that would benefit themselves and their organizations (e.g., Maslow, 1948; Vroom, 1966; Locke, 1978; et al.). Recently the rapidly changing environment stimulates managers to search for new ways to increase the level of effort propensity. Some researchers agree that organizational commitment as a desirable and powerful tool for most managers to

bind employees to the organization and enhance its productivity in some way may reduce a likelihood of withholding efforts (Kidwell, Robbie, 2003; Schnake, 2007). Especially this remark should bring to managers' or HR specialists' notice in Lithuanian organizations in public sector where employees generally remain in the organization because they need to. Their commitment mostly refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Additionally, results from different countries demonstrate that public sector employees are less committed to an organization than in private sector (Lyons et al., 2006; Markovits et al., 2007). Also it seems likely that employees frequently withhold their effort in the public sector. Thus investigating the relationship between organizational commitment and effort propensity in private and public organizations in Lithuania may serve in understanding and moderating withdrawal behavior and withholding efforts.

Organizational commitment is quite new and little investigated subject of research in Lithuania, although it is one of the most important and explorative construct in organizational psychology and has unquestionable positive consequences to employees and organization. Due to a lively interest in organizational commitment there are many attempts to define the construct of organizational commitment and suggest different models of it (Allen, Meyer, 1990; O'Reilly, Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974). Recently the most dominant model of organizational commitment in organizational commitment research arguably is the three-component organizational commitment, proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) (Ertosun, Erdil, 2012; Gill et al., 2011; Neyer et al., 2012; etc). The model has been applicable across different countries (e.g., Gill, 2011; Hsiao, Chen, 2012; Nasr, 2012; Wasti, 2002), including Lithuania (Labatmediene et al., 2007; Kavaliauskiene, 2012).

Allen and Meyer (1990) defined organizational commitment as "a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization" and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization (Allen, Meyer, 1990, p. 4). According to the three-component model of organizational commitment, it can take multiple forms, each characterized by a different psychological state (Allen, Meyer, 1990; Meyer, Allen, 1991). The authors of the model stated that affective commitment is experienced as emotional attachment to and desire to remain with the organization. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of possible costs associated with leaving the organization. Finally, normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to remain in the organization (Allen, Meyer, 1990; Meyer, Allen, 1991). As Meyer and others (2002) stated in meta-analysis all three components of commitment bind employee to the organization and decrease the likelihood of turnover. Also there is an evidence in many research that implications of different forms of commitment for employees and organization can differ (Meyer et al., 2002; Park, Rainey, 2007; Wasti, 2002).

As we know employee committed only because of the costs related with leaving the organization may perform below his or her capabilities or even withhold effort. Unfortunately, current research do not bring us a clear answer of how organizational commitment is related to the effort propensity. Only several investigations have been

made to assess the connections between organizational commitment and withholding effort excluding the various levels of offering effort (Kidwell, Robbie, 2003). Also literature suggests indirect evidences in predicting connections between commitment and effort propensity. Withholding effort was found to be negatively related to job satisfaction (Kidwell, Valentine, 2009) which is mostly found to be positively related to organizational commitment (Qamar, 2012; Wasti, 2002). Additionally, many authors have identified a connection between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior which is closely related to extra-role performance in effort propensity model (Qamar, 2012; Wasti, 2002). Besides, it is well known that organizational commitment especially affective component is significantly positively related to performance and productivity (Meyer et al., 2002). Moreover, there is no doubt about the negative relationship between commitment and withdrawal behavior which is a part of effort propensity. For example, Koslowsky et al. (1997) demonstrated that lateness at work significantly correlates with low organizational commitment. Wasti (2002) found that affective and continuance commitment were negatively correlated with work withdrawal. Also there are many evidences that the more employees are committed to organization, the less they intent to leave the organization (Hallberg, Schaufeli, 2006; Labatmediene et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2002; Wasti, 2002).

Based on this evidence it is obviously that present studies on organizational commitment and even more on effort propensity do not give us a clear and comprehensive explanation of how different components of organizational commitment correlate with different levels of effort propensity. However, several direct and indirect attempts to determine the relations between organizational commitment and effort propensity enable to hypothesize that organizational commitment will be positively related to propensity to offer expected and extra effort and, contrary, it will be negatively correlated with propensity to withdrawal and withhold effort. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationships of employees' organizational commitment using Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational commitment and effort propensity depending on a sector of organization (public and private sector) in Lithuanian sample.

Method

Participants

The research involved 248 Lithuanian employees working in different public (N=104, 41,9 %) and private (N=144, 58,1 %) organizations. There were 74 (30%) males and 174 (70%) females. Participants' age ranged from 22 to 66 years (M = 39,53, SD = 11,43). The majority of respondents have had a Bachelor's degree (N=177, 71,4 %). 154 employees (62,1%) have been working for more than 10 years. About a half of respondents (N=116, 46,8 %) have been working in the current organization for 5 years of less, the rest of respondents (N=131, 52,8 %) have been working over 5 years in the current organization.

Instruments

Employees' organizational commitment was assessed using the 18-item revised Organizational commitment scale (Meyer et al., 1993). Affective, Continuance and Normative commitment were each represented by six items. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale was translated into Lithuanian language using a two-way translation. A sample item from the AC scale was 'I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.' A sample item from the NC scale was 'I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer'. A sample item from the CC scale was 'I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organization'. Cronbach's a coefficients of reliability in this investigation respectively were 0.84, 0.72 and 0.79.

Effort propensity was measured using Effort propensity scale (Kidwell, Robie, 2003, taken from Schnake, 2007) consisted of 15 items. The scale was made of five subscales (3 items in each scale): extra-role performance, in-role performance, withholding effort, withdrawal, and propensity to turnover. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale was translated into Lithuanian language using a two-way translation. Cronbach's a coefficients of reliability respectively were 0.73, 0.67, 0.59, 0.55, and 0.89.

Results

First of all the analysis of bivariate correlation among organizational commitment and effort propensity was made. The results yielded important associations with three components of organizational commitment and some forms of effort propensity (see Table I).

The extra-role performance was positively related to all three components of organizational commitment. But there was no significant correlation between in-role performance and all three components of organizational commitment. Withholding effort as well as propensity to turnover were found as significantly negatively related to affective, normative and continuance commitment. Finally, withdrawal behavior was negatively correlated with affective and normative commitment. The results showed that all three components of organizational commitment are related to effort propensity except in-role performance.

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for organizational commitment and effort propensity

	Mea n	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Affective commitment	4.84	1.29	1.00							
2 Continuance commitment	4.12	1.23	.71**	1.00						
3 Normative commitment	4.11	1.19	.49**	.61**	1.00					
4 Extra-role performance	68.8 1	18.1 2	.20**	.14*	.15*	1.0 0				
5 In-role performance	72.0 5	7.34	.08	-.00	.09	.17 *	1.00			
6 Withholding effort	28.3 2	10.1 6	-.21**	-.21**	-.24**	-.04	-.28**	1.00		
7 Withdrawal	12.0 4	5.69	-.15*	-.07	-.17**	-.07	-.26**	.59* *	1.00	
8 Propensity to turnover	7.71	4.62	-.53**	-.42**	-.38**	-.10	-.27**	.16*	.19**	1.00

* significant at $p < 0.05$

** significant at $p < 0.01$

Table II. Correlations between demographic variables, organizational commitment, and effort propensity

	Age	Tenure	Tenure in organization
1 Affective commitment	.28**	.27**	.23**
2 Continuance commitment	.21**	.20**	.09
3 Normative commitment	.39**	.42**	.29**
4 Extra-role performance	.15*	.13	.14*
5 In-role performance	.11	.07	.05
6 Withholding effort	-.23**	-.22**	-.09
7 Withdrawal	-.26**	-.24**	-.20**
8 Propensity to turnover	-.33**	-.32**	-.24**

* significant at $p < 0.05$

** significant at $p < 0.01$

The Spearman’s correlations were used in order to assess what demographic and social variables are correlated with organizational commitment and effort propensity. Table II presents these results. The analysis of results revealed that affective, normative, and continuance commitment are positively correlated with age as well as tenure of employees. Besides, affective and normative commitment were positively related to

tenure in current organization, whereas there was no significant correlation between continuance commitment and tenure in current organization.

Also the findings revealed significant differences among the private and public sector employees for types of organizational commitment and effort propensity (see Table III). Employees in the private sector are more affectively ($p < 0.05$) and normatively ($p < 0.01$) committed than employees in public sector. Besides, employees in the public sector withhold efforts ($p < 0.05$) much more than employees in the private sector. Whereas, there were no differences for extra-role performance ($p > 0.05$), in-role performance ($p > 0.05$), withdrawal ($p > 0.05$), and propensity to turnover ($p > 0.05$) among the private and public sector of organization.

Table III. Sector differences in organizational commitment and effort propensity

	Private sector		Public sector		Z	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Affective commitment	4.98	1.25	4.63	1.33	1.944	.04
Continuance commitment	4.12	1.19	4.11	1.20	0.136	.89
Normative commitment	4.37	1.21	3.77	1.19	3.796	.00
Extra-role performance	68.00	19.11	69.90	16.74	-0.961	.34
In-role performance	71.77	7.88	72.43	6.57	-0.639	.52
Withholding effort	26.87	10.30	30.29	9.67	-2.586	.01
Withdrawal	11.69	5.48	12.53	5.96	-1.072	.28
Propensity to turnover	7.62	4.31	7.83	5.03	-0.364	.71

The analysis of present study revealed differences in connections between organizational commitment and various aspects of effort propensity depending on a sector of organization (see Table IV). It was revealed that affective commitment was positively correlated with extra-role performance ($p < 0.01$) and in-role performance ($p < 0.05$) and negatively correlated with withholding effort ($p < 0.01$) as well as propensity to turnover ($p < 0.05$) in private sector. Whereas affective commitment was positively related only to extra-role behavior ($p < 0.01$) and negatively related to withdrawal behavior ($p < 0.01$) as well as propensity to turnover ($p < 0.05$) in public sector. Continuance commitment was found as significantly positively related to in-role behavior ($p < 0.05$) and negatively to withholding effort and propensity to turnover ($p < 0.01$) in private sector and there was found negatively correlated only with propensity to turnover in public sector. Also the findings showed significant positive correlation between normative commitment and extra-role behavior ($p < 0.05$) in private sector. Additionally, normative commitment was negatively related only to propensity to turnover in private sector ($p < 0.01$), whereas there was a significant negative correlation between normative commitment and all three negative sides of withholding effort, that is, withholding effort, withdrawal, and propensity to turnover, in public sector organizations.

Table IV. Connections between organizational commitment and effort propensity in private and public sector

	Private sector			Public sector		
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Affective	Continuance	Normative
Extra-role performance	.22**	.11	.17*	.20*	.18	.14
In-role performance	.18*	.18*	.12	-.03	-.04	-.14
Withholding effort	-.22**	-.33**	-.16	-.17	-.12	-.22*
Withdrawal	-.07	-.16	.04	-.26**	-.18	-.23*
Propensity to turnover	-.48**	-.31**	-.47**	-.60**	-.48**	-.43**

* significant at $p < 0.05$

** significant at $p < 0.01$

Discussions and conclusions

The present study has investigated the relationships of employees organizational commitment and effort propensity. The focus of attention was pointed to sector of organization (private vs. public) because of many evidences that employees in the public sector are less committed to an organization than in private sector (Lyons et al., 2006; Markovits et al., 2007). Furthermore, practitioners argue that employees in public sector in Lithuania withhold effort at higher level as compared with employees in private sector.

The findings revealed some important links and differences. First of all, the results indicated significant differences among the private and public sector employees in Lithuania for types of organizational commitment and effort propensity. Employees in the private sector are more affectively and normatively committed than employees in public sector. These findings supported previous research (Lyons et al., 2006; Markovits et al., 2007). Besides, as it was expected, employees withhold effort much more in the public sector than employees in the private sector. These results lead to consider practical issues related to public sector organizations in Lithuania. As we know many interventions are turn on finance and other resources which additionally depend on governmental policies. Consequently, managers or HR specialists working in public sector should bring their attention to create and develop organizational environment and job itself to motive employees to offer an extra effort at work and to feel attached to their organization. Empowering employees, working in team, sharing and delegating of control, improving communication, involving in decision making process, etc. may be very effective methods seeking commitment and effort (Ugboro, Obeng, 2001; Lyons et al., 2006; Markovits et al., 2007).

According to the findings, there were no differences for extra-role performance, in-role performance, withdrawal, and propensity to turnover among the private and public sector of organization although some authors noticed that public sector employees

demonstrate higher degree of organizational citizenship behavior (parallel to extra-effort performance) as compared to private sector (Sharma et al., 2011).

Also this study showed that all three components of organizational commitment are related to effort propensity except in-role performance. As was found by some recent studies (e. g. Qamar, 2012; Wasti, 2002) extra-role performance which is closely related to OCB was positively correlated to all three components of organizational commitment. Whereas, withholding effort as well as propensity to turnover were found as significantly negatively related to affective, normative and continuance commitment. Such result supported some previous ideas (Hallberg, Schaufeli, 2006; Kiddwell, Valentine, 2009; Labatmediene et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2002; Wasti, 2002) that the more employees are committed to the organization and satisfied with job, the less they tend to withhold effort and leave the organization. Besides, many authors agree that high level of organizational commitment decreases the likelihood of withdrawal behavior which is a part of effort propensity (e. g. Koslowsky et al., 1997). The analysis of this investigation revealed that withdrawal behavior was negatively correlated with affective and normative commitment. Only there was no relationship between continuance commitment and employees' withdrawal in this investigation.

Finally, the results of the present study confirm that there is a significant difference in connections between private and public sector employee's organizational commitment and effort propensity. In summary, different components of organizational commitment are more related to effort propensity in private sector organizations as compared to public sector organizations. Besides, organizational commitment was found as more significantly related to positive aspects of effort propensity (extra-role and in-role performance) in private sector, while it was more correlated with negative forms of effort propensity (withholding effort, withdrawal and propensity to turnover) in public sector.

This study has certain limitations. The sample was not selected randomly and, therefore, may not represent all population of Lithuanian employees in private and public sectors. In addition, questions asking employees quite sensitive and possibly discreet aspects related to their propensity to withhold effort at work may cause social desirability effects and thus affect the reliability of results related to effort propensity.

To conclude, the result of this study will hopefully serve for better understanding the relationship between organizational commitment and effort propensity not only in private and public sectors in Lithuania but also in other settings and cultures. From a practical point of view, the findings of this investigation may give some references and be useful for managers and HR consultants seeking employees who tend to offer an extra effort and less withdraw from work in various ways. The future research will need to determine whether organizational commitment could predict different forms of effort propensity, and to expand the current model of implications of organizational commitment.

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