

Behavioral Patterns and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract—Global HR strategies aim to enhance organizational performance but omit to address individual requirements. Current research examines the impact of work-related behavioural patterns among German and Austrian employees on the organizational commitment. Hundred eighty-two subjects were recruited for the participation in the study. Work-related Behavior and Experience Patterns, developed by Schaarschmidt and Fischer and the German version of the Commitment Scale by Felfe, Schmook, R. and Knorz (COBB) were applied to assess the preferences for the affective, normative and continuous commitment. The results revealed significant impact of the behavioral pattern on the normative and continuous commitment. No such impact was found for the affective commitment.

Keywords—work-related behavior and experience patterns, burnout, affective and continuous commitment

I. INTRODUCTION

In times of globalization and demographic change, human capital remains a key factor to enhance organizational performance and gain organizational success [1], [2]. To reach this goal, companies are looking for new strategies to identify and bind strategic key personnel [3]. The implementation of employer branding, aiming to address recruitment and retention strategies, was found to reduce the intention to leave, thus having positive impact on organizational commitment among employees [4]. However, global strategies are less likely to meet the individual characteristics and particularities of different subjects, which might lead to the waste of resources [2]. Analysis of individual traits and competences, especially those important for performance in organizations gain more attention [5]. Such competences as the ability to work in team, communication, customer orientation, presentation skills and problem-solving abilities are linked with success at working place [6]. At the same time, such trait as high self-expectation is likely to cause stress [19], which evokes such emotional and physiological reactions as exhaustion and back pain [7]. Efficient stress coping strategies serve for better adjustment to stressful situations [8].

Further studies concern the linkage between the personality traits and commitment. Most of the studies address individual differences on the Big-Five-Model [9], including such personality traits as neuroticism, extraversion, openness for experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Such, it was found that extraversion was correlated with normative commitment, and conscientiousness with the affective commitment [10]. These results varied

among the employees with the managerial and non-managerial positions. Further studies addressed such individual variables as the organizational-based self-esteem and work locus of control [11] and organizational citizenship behavior [12]. Current study aims to address personality differences by the Work-related Behavior and Experience Patterns Scale developed by [13] to analyze the preference for the organizational commitment. This approach aims to assign individual aspects in addressing workforce.

II. COMMITMENT

There are different forms of the workplace commitment including organizations, occupations and professions, teams, goals and personal careers [14]. Organizational commitment is an attitude toward remaining in the organization, consisting of three basic components: emotional, informational and behavioral [15] and leading to higher performance. According to the model of workplace commitment, introduced by [14], commitment is the “sense of being bound to a course of action of relevance to a particular target”. [16] further differentiated three dimensions of commitments, including:

- (1) Affective commitment as the form of emotional involvement in the organization, positive attitude to the organization.
- (2) Continuance commitment is due to avoid losses caused by the release of the organization.
- (3) Normative commitment is caused by the expectations of other people due to e.g. reciprocity.

Commitment was found to predict turnover and citizenship behavior, job performance, absenteeism, and tardiness [17]. Furthermore, it was positively associated with job attendance and negatively with the lateness and turnover [18], [19]. Especially affective organizational commitment is associated with the beneficial work-related behavior [14]. This assumption was proven in a meta-analysis conducted by [20], who stresses a strong relationship between the affective commitment and positive work-related behavior. Current studies underline the previous results finding a correlation between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, moderated by rating source, organization type and culture dimension of individualism vs. collectivism [21]. Job satisfaction was also found to contribute to organizational commitment as well as supervisor’s active leadership behavior and organizational culture [21], [22]. Studies assessing the relationship between

the personality traits and commitment are still scarce. Such, higher agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion was linked to higher organizational commitment among fire fighter's [23]. In the study by [10], extraversion was correlated with normative commitment. These results were found only among managers. Non-managerial group has shown strong correlation between conscientiousness and affective commitment. Openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism were found to correlate with organizational commitment in the research conducted with healthcare workers [24]. These results stress the importance of further analyzing individual characteristics to determine their influence on organization commitment.

III. WORK-RELATED BEHAVIOR AND EXPERIENCE PATTERNS

Work-related behavior patterns can cause higher level of perceived stress, maladaptive coping strategies as well as loss of control [25]. Work-related Behavior and Experience Patterns Scale, developed by [26] (the German name of this scale is *Arbeitsbezogenes Verhaltens- und Erlebensmuster* and leads to the acronym AVEM, which is used for the further course of this paper), assesses individual patterns in form of reactions to challenging situations at work, including one's attitude toward such situations. The instrument aims to identify individual ways of the problem definition and the way to deal with it [27]. High sensitivity of the instrument as well as the deeper analysis of behavioral patterns at work allow early interventions in case of maladaptive reactions. Such, it was found, that more effective coping patterns reduce stress and burnout [28].

AVEM consists of 44 items, which provide values on the following eleven scales: subjective importance of work, work-related ambition, the willingness to work until exhaustion, striving for perfection, distancing ability, tendency toward resignation, proactive problem-solving, inner calm and balance, the experience of success at work, satisfaction with life, and the experience of social support [13]. Based on the values gained on these scales, four work-related patterns are determined: G (health), S (taking it easy), A (ambitious, risk of driving oneself too hard), and B (risk of resignation and depression) [29]. Pattern G is characterized by high work involvement combined with the proactive problem-solving strategy [13]. Pattern S strives for work-life balance, with low willingness to work scores, combined with the high inner balance and the ability to gain inner distance from work. The two other patterns A and B are considered to be risky in the sense of work-related stress and burnout [27]. Pattern A (ambitious) is characterized by high work orientation, putting a lot of time and effort in their professional development. At the same time, they are more likely to resign due to inability to keep distance from work during their leisure time. As a result, they are more likely to report low work and life satisfaction. Pattern B (burnout) are the least committed ones, low self-reported balance and poor resilience abilities [13].

The validity of the AVEM was confirmed in studies with different professional groups. Thus, managers scored high on the pattern G and the least on the pattern B in comparison to non-managers and students [13], [30].

Current study aims to analyze the relationship between the work-relevant behavior patterns and commitment among the employees with and without managerial experience. We expect individuals with the G pattern to show stronger preference for the affective commitment in comparison to B, S or A types. Pattern S is likely to be negatively associated with commitment. Pattern B is considered to have stronger preferences for the continuous commitment and normative commitment. Pattern A is most likely to prefer continuous organizational commitment.

IV. METHOD

A. Participants

182 subjects were recruited among managers, full- and part-time employees in Germany and Austria. Participants received no incentives for their participation. They had a possibility to drop out at any time during the survey.

B. Materials: Questionnaires

The survey was conducted online, including demographical data, such as age, gender, nationality, education, professional status and duration of stay in the organization. Demographical questions were followed by the short version of the AVEM [26] with 44 items. The types were determined using the AVEM software by Pearson Assessment & Information GmbH (2015). Organizational commitment was measured by the German Scale by [31]. Both instruments use a five-point Likert scale. The data were collected using the SoSci Survey platform (SoSci Survey GmbH, 2014).

V. RESULTS

A. Participants

Hundred eighty-two participants have completed the survey fully. Most of the participants were from Germany (63.2%), one-third came from Austria (33.5%). In general, more females participated in the study (68.7%) than males (31.3%). The age range lied between 18 and 69 years old, with a mean age of 31 years old ($SD = 12.99$). Almost half of the participants work full-time (45.6%), the rest of them are either part-time workers (39%) or self-employed (7.7%). Some participants reported to be currently unemployed (7.7%). Only 23.1% are currently working at the management position. The mean age of these subjects was higher ($M = 41.8$, $SD = 13.21$) than of the other participants ($M = 27.8$, $SD = 11.08$), this difference being significant at $p < .001$. Eighty participants reported to have graduated from the University (44%), 35% participants had at least Abitur or Matura (German and Austrian Diploma from the secondary school) and 16.9% have vocational education.

B. Patterns

Type G was the most frequent one among the subjects (30.8%). Type S was present in 22.5% of the participants, type A by 8.8% and type B by 15.9%. Almost 20.3% have shown simultaneously characteristics of two types (e.g. A and B) and only 3 participants showed no clear classification to a certain coping pattern. The results correspond to the previous findings obtained by [13]. Among managers type G was predominant (40.5%), non-managers were likely to show

high values either on G (28%) or on type S (26.4%), this difference was significant at $p < .001$

Almost all patterns correlate with each other. Such, pattern G correlates with the pattern S ($r(182) = -.431, p < .001$), pattern A ($r(182) = -.19, p < .05$) and Pattern B ($r(182) = -.54, p < .001$). Pattern S correlates also with A ($r(182) = -.45, p < .001$) and B ($r(182) = -.25, p < .001$). No significant correlation was found between the pattern A and the pattern B.

Male participants show preference for the G pattern ($Mdn = 103.3$) than females ($Mdn = 86.1$). Mann-Whitney-U-Test revealed significant difference ($U = 2888.5, z = 1.41, p = .041, d = .307$) between the genders. The opposite trend was found between the preference for the B pattern. Females were more likely to score higher on this pattern ($Mdn = 97.6$) than males ($Mdn = 78.2$), this trend also being significant ($U = 2805, z = 1.25, p = .011, d = .346$). These results are in line with the previous findings of [30]. Different to the previous study, no such correlation was found between the age of participants and the work-related behavior patterns.

C. Commitment

The highest values were obtained on the affective commitment scale (five items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85, M = 3.5, SD = .98$). Although these values were slightly higher for managers ($M = 3.7$) than for non-managers ($M = 3.4$), this difference was not significant. Continuous commitment was rated with the $M = 2.9 (SD = .93, Cronbach's \alpha = .68)$. Normative commitment was least existing among subjects with the $M = 2.7 (SD = .97, Cronbach's \alpha = .79)$. The values on these scales did not vary between managers and non-managers neither. The scales were intercorrelated with the strongest correlation between the continuous and normative ($r(182) = .399, p < .001$), affective and normative ($r(182) = .345, p < .001$), and affective and continuous commitment ($r(182) = .289, p < .001$).

Age of the participants correlated with the continuous commitment ($r(182) = .240, p = .002$) and the values on the affective commitment scale ($r(182) = .202, p = .01$). Continuous commitment was found to have the strongest correlation with the duration of stay in an organization ($r(182) = .242, p = .002$), which was also correlated with the affective commitment ($r(182) = .176, p = .03$). The highest correlation was found between the age and the duration of stay in the organization ($r(182) = .777, p < .001$). No gender differences were found on the commitment scales.

D. Patterns and Commitment

None of the behavioral patterns was correlated with the affective commitment. Type G has shown the strongest preference for the continuous commitment ($r(182) = -.24, p = .001$). The analysis of the type S revealed two negative correlations with the affective ($r(182) = -.15, p = .045$) and normative commitment ($r(182) = -.31, p < .001$). Type A has shown positive correlation for the normative commitment ($r(182) = .24, p = .001$) as well as with the continuous commitment ($r(182) = .162, p = .03$). The same pattern was also found among B type with the continuous ($r(182) = .25, p = .001$) and normative commitment ($r(182) = .29, p < .001$).

Results looked slightly different when comparing the results between managers and non-managers. Such, managers

with the type A revealed additionally a moderate positive correlation with the affective commitment ($r(182) = .39, p = .016$). No preferences were found among the managers with the G and B types. Results of the managers with S type did not significantly differ from the results of the whole group.

Different to the results obtained with the manager group, affective commitment correlated with the G-type among non-managers with $r(182) = .18 (p = .032)$. Negative correlations were found between this behavioral type and the continuous ($r(182) = -.26, p = .002$) and normative commitment ($r(182) = .20, p = .019$). S pattern was negatively correlated with the normative commitment solely ($r(182) = -.27, p = .002$). No correlations were found for the pattern A among the non-managers. Pattern B was correlated with normative ($r(182) = .42, p < .001$) and continuous commitment ($r(182) = .28, p = .001$).

E. Dimensions

In the next step, the impact of the 11 dimensions of the Work-related Behavior and Experience Patterns on commitment was analyzed. 'Subjective importance of work' measures the meaning of work in one's own life. 'Work-related ambition' assesses one's striving for success at work. 'Willing to work until exhausted' aims to analyze the readiness to spend more power and time at work. 'Distancing ability' is crucial during the leisure time, reflecting the potential to resurrect especially after difficult or challenging situations. 'Tendency to resignation in the face of failure' reflects the reaction to failure. 'Proactive problem-solving' corresponds to the stress coping strategy. 'Inner calm and balance' is reflecting the temperament, assessing the ability to experience emotional stability in different situations. 'Experience of success at work' corresponds to the work-related achievements. 'Satisfaction with life' is related to the general attitude and satisfaction with life. 'Experience of social support' reflects the amount of perceived social support. Each of the dimensions consist of 4 items.

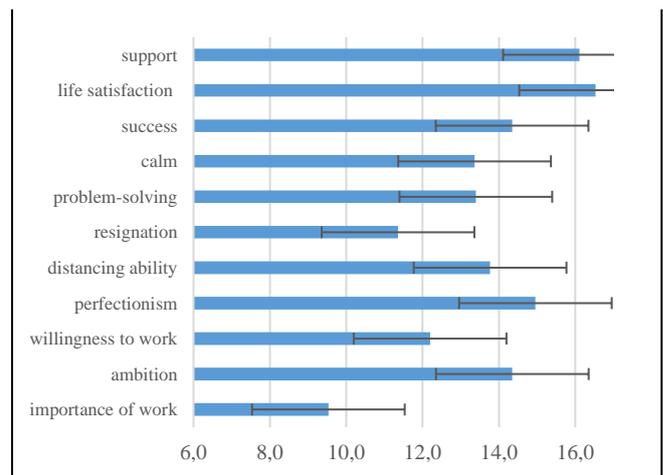


Fig. 1. Means and standard deviations (AVEM Dimensions). (source: authors)

The values on these dimensions ranged between 4 and 20 with Cronbach's from $\alpha = .73$ for the 'Distancing ability' and .88 for the 'Satisfaction with life'. The lowest score was obtained on the scale 'Subjective importance of work' ($M = 9.5, SD = 3.48$), the highest mean was on the scale 'Life

Satisfaction` ($M = 16.5, SD = 3.30$). For means and standard deviations see Fig. 1. Almost all of dimensions correlate with each other, correlation coefficients varied between $r(182) = .027, p > .005$ between the `subjective importance of work` and `resignation and $r(182) = .57, p < .000$ between the `subjective importance of work` and `willingness to work`. Regression analysis was performed to analyze the impact of the 11 AVEM dimensions on the affective, normative and continuous commitment. Multiple regression analysis was calculated to predict affective organizational commitment based on the above-mentioned dimensions. A significant regression model was found ($F(5,176) = 7.378, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .173. The first component `subjective importance of work` did not reach the significance level ($t = 1.732, p > .05, \beta = 0.43$). `Ambition` had a negative impact on the affective commitment ($t = -2.530, p = .012, \beta = -.063$). `Willingness to work` has shown a strong positive effect on the affective commitment ($t = 3.545, p = .001, \beta = .086$). `Life satisfaction` has also shown positive effect on the affective commitment ($t = 2.007, p = .046, \beta = .047$) as well as the `social support` ($t = 2.069, p = .040, \beta = .060$).

Similar predictors were selected for the continuous organizational commitment as well. This regression model was also significant ($F(4,177) = 7.665, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .148. The first component `ambition` was found to have a negative impact on the continuous commitment ($t = -3.258, p = .001, \beta = -.074$). `Willingness to work` appeared to be on the second place ($t = 3.388, p = .001, \beta = .075$). `Striving for perfection` did not reach the significance level ($t = 1.766, p = .012, \beta = .046$). `Social support` had negative effect on the continuous commitment ($t = -1.962, p = .05, \beta = -.050$).

Some similarities were found between the predictors of the normative and affective organizational commitment. Also this regression model was found to be significant ($F(4,177) = 10.779, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .196. `Subjective importance of` had a positive effect on the normative commitment ($t = 2.794, p = .006, \beta = 0.60$). The ability to gain distance had a negative impact on the normative commitment ($t = -2.340, p = .02, \beta = -.054$). `Resignation` was also significant ($t = 2.075, p = .039, \beta = .050$). `Life satisfaction` had a negative impact on the normative commitment ($t = -2.220, p = .028, \beta = -.046$).

VI. DISCUSSION

Current research sets a goal to analyse antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment, including different economic aspects [18; 22; 32] as well as personality traits [10; 33]. Current study aims to analyse the impact of personality traits on commitment. Work-related Behavior and Experience Patterns was applied to assess four work-related patterns (G, S, A and B), as well as eleven dimensions, among them problem-solving ability, importance of work, tendency to resign in critical situations and social support. The study revealed significant impact of the selected personality traits on commitment. Subjective importance of work, low ambition, willingness to work hard to achieve one's goals, life satisfaction and social support were found to influence the affective commitment, explaining 17% of variance. Furthermore, the main difference between the traits affecting the continuance commitment and the normative one laid in the social support. Participants scoring high on continuous commitment, reported lower level of the social support.

Another trait, different to the affective commitment, was striving for perfection. Overall, the selected variables explained 15% of variance.

Quite unexpected results were obtained for the normative commitment. Although, work was still of importance, such problem-solving abilities the ability to gain distance from work and tendency to resign after failure were the main predictors of this type of commitment, explaining 20% of the variance. Additionally, low life satisfaction was another trait, typical for the subjects scoring high on this level of commitment. These findings help to gain an insight about the maladaptive behavioral patterns, which lead to loss of commitment. Such patterns are especially typical for the types A and B, who are of risk regarding their health and work-related behavior [29]. These patterns were also likely to score high on continuous and normative commitment. The preferences for the affective commitment was found only among managers of the A-type. Various results were also obtained for the G-type managers and non-managers. Such, non-managers were likely to score high on the affective commitment, but neither on the continuous nor on the normative. These results come in line with the previous findings, stating that managers show less normative commitment than employees [34]. Overall, S-type correlated negatively with organizational commitment, which corresponds to the general description of this type, as the one striving for work-life balance. Flexible working hours might influence commitment among the representatives of this type [8].

VII. CONCLUSION

Former research revealed personality traits to have an impact on organizational commitment [33], [11], although these factors were found to vary among the managers and non-managers [10] as well as subjects working in the different fields, like banking [11], fire-fighters [23] or in the healthcare industry [24], [35] – [39]. Current survey aimed to deepen the understanding of this issue by analyzing the influence of the work-related patterns on organizational commitment. Based on the results obtained in this survey, we could conclude that individuality does play a role in organizational setting and should not be ignored when addressing the work-force through e.g. incentive programs. The differences do vary among the subjects with or without management function. Analysis on the level of dimensions deepens understanding of the inner mechanisms leading to the development of the affective commitment. Such, lack of social does play a role in the difference between the affective and continuous commitment. And such work-related strategies as the inability to gain distance or the tendency to resign, followed by the low life satisfaction, explain the development of the normative commitment. These findings stress the importance of individual approach at the work setting as well as the development of the various programs promoting such competencies as proactive problem-solving and persistence among employees to reduce stress and burnout.

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Present study focuses on the analysis of behavioral patterns among various groups of employees and managers. Differences between the employees working full- or part-time were not further analyzed. Although the inequality of group

sizes was considered when selecting statistical methods, differences in the personal background and life experience could not be attributed to the status solely. Although, the results of the current study are in line with the previous research, further investigations with a more profound group size of subjects with management experience are needed.

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