



Effects of management communication, opportunity for learning, and work schedule flexibility on organizational commitment [☆]

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Abstract

In the current career climate characterized by change and turbulence, employees may demonstrate limited organizational commitment to their employers. Rousseau (1998) suggests that two key ways to elicit loyalty from employees today are to reinforce perceptions of organizational membership and demonstrate organizational care and support for employees. Based on her conceptual framework, we examined the separate and synergistic effects of three valued aspects of the work environment—management communication, opportunity for learning, and work schedule flexibility—on organizational commitment. With 1770 full-time and 273 part-time workers of a large national retailer, we found that all three variables had positive main effects on organizational commitment. Also, they three-way interacted to affect part-time workers' organizational commitment. The implications of these findings for research on organizational commitment and on comparisons of full-time and part-time workers are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Organizational commitment has been extensively studied over the past few decades because of its status as a core job attitude governing how employees attitudinally and behaviorally approach their work careers (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). However, Rousseau (1998) observes that since careers in recent years are characterized by change rather than stability, employees are unlikely to strongly identify with their employers. From an organization's perspective, this trend is disturbing because weak organizational commitment may mean that employees' productivity is less than optimal (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989), and that they are working with an eye toward leaving sooner rather than later. Unfortunately, the organizational commitment literature has not accommodated this changed psychological contract.

Rousseau (1998), however, has suggested two means through which organizations may strengthen employees' organizational commitment today. First, organizations can enhance employees' perceptions of organizational membership. Second, organizations can demonstrate to employees that they are cared for and valued by their employers. To date, Rousseau's (1998) assertions have not been empirically examined. Doing so is important for theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically speaking, it may help re-vitalize research on organizational commitment, and particularly, its role within the changed employee–employer relationship. Practically speaking, it is paramount because organizations in recent years have been struggling to find effective ways to enhance employees' organizational commitment (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001; Rousseau, 2004). Thus, the goal of this study is to investigate three features of the work environment that may accomplish the two means of enhancing organizational commitment highlighted by Rousseau (1998)—management communication, opportunity for learning, and work schedule flexibility. Management communication of organization-related information facilitates a stronger perception of organizational membership. Opportunity for learning at work and work schedule flexibility demonstrate organizational care and support for employees.

An ancillary outcome of the changes in the employee–employer relationship is the growing trend of people working part-time (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Feldman, 1990). The proliferation of part-time workers requires organizations to pay more attention to the management of this group (Rotchford & Roberts, 1982). It is possible that Rousseau's (1998) premises regarding strengthening employees' commitment mentioned earlier may vary as a function of the employment status of the employees. Thus, we surveyed both full-time and part-time workers to separately examine the aforementioned three antecedents of organizational commitment. However, we do not propose differential effects because the reviews of the literature have been inconclusive as to uncovering interpretable differences in job attitudes between the two groups (Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; Rotchford & Roberts, 1982; Thorsteinson, 2003).

2. Theoretical background

Organizational commitment is a psychological stabilizing or obliging force that binds an individual to courses of action relevant to the target of that force—the organization (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Florence, 2005; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Rousseau (1998) suggests that because careers are increasingly characterized by change rather than stability, employees are unlikely to have strong commitment to their employers. For instance,

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