

Rondović Lazar¹

Milaš Nemanja

Lemajić Lana

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS AS PREDICTORS OF COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATION AND CAREER

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the contribution of workplace characteristics (perceived external prestige and perceived supervisor support) and basic psychological needs in the variance of organizational and career commitment defined through Klein's target-free model. The sample consisted of 287 participants. The results of multiple hierarchical regression, after controlling for the variable "position in the organization" showed that perceived characteristics of the work environment significantly contribute to the explanation of variance. A total of 15% of the variance in career commitment was explained, with basic psychological needs not significantly contributing to the model. These findings highlight the importance of fostering an open, democratic organizational culture to increase employee commitment to the organization and career.

KEYWORDS: commitment, organization, career, basic psychological needs, perceived external prestige, perceived supervisor support

¹MSc, Faculty of Law and Business Studies DR Lazar Vrkatic, ORCID: 0009-0006-5204-7080

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and career commitment according to Klein et al.'s (2012) model, in relation to predictors such as characteristics of the work environment (perceived external prestige and perceived supervisor support) and basic psychological needs. The secondary aim was to bring greater clarity to the pervasive contradiction in commitment constructs, using Klein's model (Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, 2012), which has the potential to unify theories.

In this research, the control variable was represented by the organizational position, considering that it is expected that non-managerial roles have a lower level of commitment to both the organization and their careers compared to those in managerial positions (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008). The study used the variable of basic psychological needs derived from the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Additionally, variables of career commitment and organizational commitment were used in relation to Klein et al.'s (2012) one-dimensional commitment model. The construct of perceived external prestige was operationalized according to Herrbach et al.'s (2004) definition. Finally, regarding the variable of perceived supervisor support, we referred to Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) definition.

1.1 Perceived External Prestige

The way an employee perceives how individuals in their external environment view their organization, and consequently, how they are perceived as members of that organization, defines the concept of perceived external prestige (PEP) (Smidts et al., 2001). A high level of PEP positively impacts employee job satisfaction and reduces the attractiveness of the same job in other organizations (Herrbach et al., 2004). Carmeli's results (2005) suggest that external prestige significantly contributed to explaining the variance in affective organizational commitment by 11%, while PEP was negatively related to continuance commitment (Casper et al., 2011). Data from Podnar's study (2011) indicated that the degree of PEP does not necessarily correlate with the level of employees'

organizational commitment. Finally, other findings (Kang et al., 2011) suggested that PEP was a predictor of organizational commitment but not career commitment.

1.2 Perceived Supervisor Support

Perceived supervisor support is defined as “the general belief regarding the extent to which supervisors value managers’ contributions and care about their well-being” (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 565). If managers receive support from their supervisors, it will result in enriching their careers (Baird & Kram, 1983; Greenhouse et al., 1990). Results have shown that perceived supervisor support has a positive effect on affective commitment (Casper et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2014; Stan & Virga, 2021). Stan and Virga (2021) found a positive effect of perceived supervisor support on normative commitment to the organization in a sample of educational staff. In another study, statistically significant predictive factors of perceived supervisor support were found to explain the variance in organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) (Wang, 2014).

1.3 Basic Psychological Needs

Basic Psychological Needs (BPN) are constructs within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), including the need for competence, the need for relatedness, and the need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT defines the need for autonomy as an individual’s need to act and behave with a sense of control over their own actions, accompanied by a sense of psychological freedom (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The need for relatedness is satisfied when individuals perceive themselves as members of a group, experiencing a sense of belonging and developing close relationships with others (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Lastly, the need for competence is defined as the “need for a sense of mastery over the environment and the need for skill development” (Van den Broeck et al., 2016, p. 4).

The study by Stan & Virga (2021) shows that BPN for relatedness and autonomy significantly explain the variance in affective commitment, while only the basic psychological need for relatedness signifi-

cantly predicts normative commitment to the organization in a sample of educational staff. Results from Onishi et al. (2019) indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and career commitment among nurses. Results from another study showed that the need for competence is negatively correlated with affective commitment to the organization (Fugate et al., 2004; Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

1.4 One-dimensional model of commitment by Klein and colleagues

Klein and colleagues (Klein et al., 2012) aimed to create a more precise model to establish a “unified and relevant construct for understanding and managing organizational behaviour” (Klein et al., 2012, p. 131). Accordingly, they define commitment as “a voluntary psychological bond that reflects dedication and responsibility towards a specific goal” (Klein et al., 2012, p. 137).

1.5 Organizational Commitment

Broadly speaking, “organizational commitment is the psychological bond of an employee to the organization that employs them” (Klein & Park, 2015, p. 334). Porter and colleagues state that organizational commitment can be characterized by three factors: (1) belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization, (2) willingness to invest significant efforts for the benefit of the organization, and (3) a desire to maintain membership in the organization (Porter et al., 1974). Numerous studies also indicate a positive correlation between organizational commitment and job performance (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006). High levels of organizational commitment can also have a positive impact on employees’ work behaviour (Cohen, 2007).

1.6 Career Commitment

Career commitment refers to the “development of personal career goals, attachment to them, identification with them, and involvement in them” (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990, p. 159).

The results of Poon's study (2004) showed that career commitment predicts subjective career success in terms of career satisfaction, as well as objective career success in the form of earning potential. Additionally, Ballout's study (2009) presents data indicating a high correlation between career commitment and career self-efficacy, as well as between career commitment and career satisfaction. In other words, individuals with lower career commitment are more likely to change careers (Poon, 2004).

2. Method

2.1 Sample

A total of 287 participants were tested, out of which 161 were female (56.1%). The age range varied from 18 to 62 years, with work experience ranging from two months to 39 years, and the length of employment in the current organization ranging from one month to 39 years. Regarding the ownership structure of the organization where the participants were employed, 41.8% worked in the public sector, while 58.2% worked in the private sector.

2.2 Research Procedure

The study was conducted in 2020 in the territories of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, using paper-pencil methods and an online questionnaire through the "SoSci Survey" platform. All participants met the criteria for employment and provided personal consent to participate in the study. The questionnaire emphasized the anonymity of all data collected in this research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the purpose of their participation.

2.3 Instruments

Perceived characteristics of the work environment. *Perceived external prestige* was measured using the scale (PEP) ($\alpha = .73$; Herrbach, Mignonac & Gatignon, 2004). *Supervisor support* was assessed using the perceived supervisor support scale (SSS) ($\alpha = .95$; Greenhaus et al., 1990).

Organizational and career commitment. Both constructs were assessed using the KUT scale (Klein et al., 2012). The organizational commitment scale ($\alpha = .92$), as well as the career commitment scale ($\alpha = .95$), demonstrated a satisfactory level of internal consistency.

Satisfaction of basic needs at work. The degree of satisfaction of basic psychological was measured using the Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction scale (W-BNS) (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Subscales showed a satisfactory level of reliability for all three subscales: autonomy ($\alpha = .72$), competence ($\alpha = .78$), and relatedness ($\alpha = .80$).

2.4 Hypotheses

Three alternative hypotheses have been identified:

H1: Perceived characteristics of the work environment and Basic Psychological Needs (BPN) significantly explain the variance in organizational commitment and/or career commitment after controlling for organizational position.

H2: There is a statistically significant independent contribution of perceived characteristics of the work environment in explaining the variability in organizational commitment and/or career commitment.

H3: There is a statistically significant independent contribution of BPN in explaining the variability in organizational commitment and/or career commitment.

2.5 Data processing

All data collected in the questionnaires were entered and processed within the SPSS v26 software. To examine the predictive power of perceived characteristics of the work environment and basic psychological needs in predicting employee commitment to the organization and career, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The variable “organizational position” was converted into a dummy variable, where the position of an employee carried a value of 0, and that of a manager carried a value of 1. The reliability of scales was tested using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The effects of the control variable within the regression anal-

ysis were not taken into account due to potential confounding variables (“nuisance parameters”) (Hünernmund & Beyers, 2020).

3. Results

Table 1 shows the results of bivariate correlation of constructs, together with the reliability of the utilized psychometric scales. Noticeably, the perceived characteristics of the work environment significantly correlate with basic psychological needs.

Table 1: Intercorrelation and internal consistency of used scales^a

	1	2	3	4	5	6	α
1. Organizational Commitment							.92
2. Career Commitment	.308**						.95
3. PEP	.299**	.307**					.73
4. Supervisor Support	.402**	.222**	.372**				.95
5. Relatedness	.535**	.131*	.212**	.454**			.80
6. Competence	.311**	.249**	.265**	.136*	.359**		.78
7. Autonomy	.515**	.271**	.329**	.403**	.507**	.558**	.72

*p < .05; **p < .01; ^an = 269; α – Cronbach’s Coefficient of Internal Consistency

3.1 Characteristics of the work environment and BPN as predictors of organizational commitment

After controlling for the variable “organizational position”, the results of the second block of the first regression model, as shown in Table 2, indicate a significant prediction of organizational commitment, explaining an additional 18% compared to the control variable. Individually, supervisor support, as well as PEP, make a significant positive contribution in explaining the variance, with PEP showing a slightly stronger contribution.

By incorporating BPN in the third block, a statistically significant change in the prediction of organizational commitment is observed, with BPN explaining an additional 19% of the criterion variable's variance. The overall model explains 40% of the total variance in organizational commitment. Predictors Relatedness and autonomy contribute positively to the overall model, while competence did not achieve statistical significance. Components of perceived characteristics of the work environment in the third block did not make a significant contribution.

Table 2: Regression Model - Perceived characteristics of the work environment and BPN at work as predictors of organizational commitment

	Predictors	β	R^2	F	ΔR^2	ΔF
1	Organizational position	.18**	.03	9.49**		
2	Organizational position					
	Supervisory support	.16**	.21	23.51**	.18	29.52**
	PEP	.33**				
	Organizational position					
	Supervisory support	.10				
3	PEP	.11	.40	28.73**	.19	27.02**
	Relatedness	.33**				
	Competence	-.01				
	Autonomy	.26**				

* - $p < .05$; ** - $p < .01$;

3.2 Characteristics of the work environment and BPN as predictors of career commitment

The results of the second regression model presented in Table 2 indicate that supervisor support and PEP significantly predict organizational commitment, explaining 10% of the variance in career commitment after controlling for the organizational position. Predictors differ in the impact they have on the dependent variable – supervisor support

has a statistically significant positive contribution, while PEP does not significantly contribute to the model. Together, according to the findings in Tables 1 and 2, the predictors explain about 12.4% of the variance in commitment. PEP positively and significantly predicts career commitment, while supervisor support does not significantly explain the variance in career commitment. Also, the predictive power of organizational position weakened slightly after introducing the PEP and supervisor support variables. However, PEP does not have a significant individual contribution.

By including BPN in the third block, although the prediction significantly changes, the change itself is not particularly large, only 3%. It is also noted that none of the components of BPN has a significant contribution. Again, only supervisor support has a statistically significant positive contribution. The combined effect of predictor variables in the second regression model is significant and amounts to 15.5%.

Table 3: Regression Model - Perceived characteristics of the work environment and BPN at work as predictors of career commitment

	Predictors	β	R ²	F	ΔR^2	ΔF
1	Organizational position	.16*	.02	6.66*		
	Organizational position					
2	Supervisory support	.25**	.12	12.51**	.10	15.1*
	PEP	.12				
	Organizational position					
	Supervisory support	.20**				
3	PEP	.11	.15	7.98**	.03	3.14*
	Relatedness	-.07				
	Competence	.13				
	Autonomy	.10				

4. Discussion

With this study, we aimed to examine to what extent perceived characteristics of the work environment and BPN explain the variability of commitment to career and organization using the target-free model by Klein et al. (2012). The influence of the organizational position variable was controlled to avoid differences in the level of commitment to the organization and career between managers and executives, as previous findings (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008) showed that individuals in higher positions are more committed to the organization than those at lower levels of the organizational structure.

The variability of the commitment to the organization construct is significantly explained by the variance of PEP, contrary to the findings of Podnar (2011). However, the study by Kang and colleagues (2011) supports these findings, as well as the results of Carmeli (2005). Supervisor support makes a statistically significant positive contribution. Therefore, the findings imply that employees highly value the organization's prestige, and the practical implication is that organizations should continuously improve their performance to retain and further motivate their employees.

The obtained statistical significance between supervisor support and organizational commitment, measured by Klein's target-free model, is consistent with another theoretical approach used by Casper et al. (2011). Furthermore, our findings confirm the results of Stan & Virga (2021) and Wang (2014), but not the findings of Kang et al. (2011) related to career commitment. Findings on perceived supervisor support indicate the importance of nurturing this form of leadership in the organization.

The results suggest that BPN for relatedness and autonomy predict organizational commitment, while BPN for competence is not statistically significant. Accordingly, allowing participation in decision-making, providing choices in task performance, and fostering the development of stable social relationships among employees will result in a greater readiness of employees to commit to the organization and its goals. With this research, we were not able to reproduce the findings of Fugate et al. (2004; Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

Regarding the results of the regression model concerning career commitment, we can conclude that none of the three BPN predict career commitment. Findings on the relationship between BPN and organizational commitment clearly indicate the importance of developing and nurturing organizational culture. However, additional research is necessary before the aforementioned assertion can be implemented in practice. The implications of the significance of autonomy in the overall model of organizational commitment suggest the need to monitor the trend of developing modern, more flexible ways of organizational work that emphasize the freedom of thought and action of employees within their roles in the company.

The absence of a significant contribution of BPN in explaining the variance of career commitment should be considered in the course of candidate or employee appraisal: understanding BPN will not provide insight into how dedicated an individual will be to their job and personal development in that field.

Couple instruments displayed an exceptionally high Cronbach's alpha (.92, .95, and .95), which is a reliable indicator of unnecessary content duplication among items, suggesting redundancy rather than homogeneity (Streiner, 2003). Next, scales used from Klein's model (2015) aren't cross-culturally adapted which raises additional concerns.

Future research can enhance the model by including more control variables and expanding the number of constructs related to perceived characteristics of the work environment.

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