

The Political Organization of Human Resource Management Practices and the Engagement of Employees at Work

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Abstract

The main problem addressed in this study is the role of the organizational policy of Human Resource Management in increasing employees' commitment at work. The acceptance criteria for this study include a considerable number of reviewed meta-analytic studies that focus on employee engagement in the workplace and its relationship with several organizational policy variables managed by the human resources team. Mainly, the focus has been on reviews of meta-analytic studies from the 1990s to the progress of analytical reviews of commitment and organizational policies of recent studies. Despite including the results of studies conducted out of context, this study will not address specific ways and cross-cultural issues arising from these researches. The random effects model was used as a meta-analysis method, focusing on many meta-analytic reviews and new approaches for conceptualizing and measuring organizational commitment in relation to other variables. Various studies reported moderate correlations between organizational policy variables and employee work engagement. In conclusion, it can be noted that there is a lot of documented evidence that speaks about the importance of organizational policies and their effect on employee engagement. The recommended implications of this study for future research and practices suggest the creation of practices on the engagement of employees in the workplace, such as the preliminary identification of professional skills concerning the position of their engagement.

Keywords: political organization of human resource management practices, employee engagement at work, organizational justice, socialization and training, employee promotion

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1. Introduction

In order to include the need to resolve any inconsistencies from the results of past work and in order to expand the scope of the theoretical aspect, the article in question aims to, through studies from the literature review, include synthesizing and meta-analyses of research already published that aim to talk about the role of the organizational policy of Human Resource Management (HRM) in the engagement of employees at work.

Literature reviews include syntheses and meta-analyses of research. These studies are critical evaluations of material that has already been published. The random effects model was used as a meta-analysis method using quantitative procedures to statistically combine the results of studies by different authors from the 1990s to the present day.

In today's competitive business environment, many organizations are looking for new ways to increase the performance of their human resources (Przytuła, Strzelec, & Krysińska-Kościańska, 2020). According to Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019), one of the strategies to increase the performance of employees in the workplace is to raise their voluntary commitment.

Organizational commitment is a sense of trust and shared values with those of the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Although existing literature proposes three dimensions of employee engagement, for example, Shuck, Adelson and Reio (2017) argued that the concept of 'employee engagement' is used to describe employees who are cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally involved in the workplace, this paper emphasizes a "global" or unidimensional conception of organizational commitment rather than an approach based on its sub-facets.

The dynamic changes that occur in the environment of an organization and that are reflected in the labour market are the result of the intra-organizational context of human resource management and the strategic, structural and cultural way that shapes the organizational policy and practice of this sector (Pocztowski, 2019). Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Nowack (2006) have stated that employees' commitment is often caused by how HR leads organizational policy. The political organization of human resource management practices has always been an important factor in employee engagement.

This article focuses on the four practical HRM policies: organizational justice, socialization and training, and the benefits of employee promotion and their role in employee engagement.

The importance of practical/managerial implication of this article is that it provides some guidelines that organizations should follow to fully utilize the power of employee engagement by applying effective HRM practices.

2. Literature review

2.1 Development of organizational commitment

Employees' organizational commitment is considered a crucial point in the workplace, which has been studied by many authors during the last decades. Several theoretical explanations have been offered as to why organizational commitment occurs, and many constructs have been examined as its antecedents. Previous research has shown that commitment can be explained by a wide range of factors, such as motivational factors, individual factors, organizational HR management policy, status in the organization, tenure of employment, leadership, clarity of purpose and performance appraisal systems (Dick, 2011; Moldogaziev and Silvia, 2015; Moon, 2000). All these explanatory elements of organizational commitment studied again highlight its importance in the workplace.

According to Fiorito et al. (2007), organizational commitment can be characterized by three related factors: 1) strong belief in the goals and values of the organization, 2) willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf and 3) strong desire to maintain membership.

Although the existing literature has included important debates or alternative perspectives on some critical issues on the focus and conceptualization of organizational commitment, some critics have argued that research on organizational commitment lacks a solid theoretical foundation (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Morris & Sherman, 1981).

Despite some arguments for lacking a solid theoretical base on organizational commitment, at least some theoretical streams are still applicable. First, based on social exchange theory, employees seek favourable outcomes concerning their inputs (Cook et al., 1993). Then, consistent with social exchange theory, perceived organizational support addresses the organization's commitment to its employees. Specifically, this theory refers to how employees perceive that employers and organizational policy approaches value employees' contributions and care about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Finally, the psychological contract theory refers to the implied mutual rights and obligations that individuals perceive within work relationships (Rousseau, 1995), and this theory also includes organizational commitment (Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni, 1995).

Each theoretical perspective suggests that perceived tradeoffs condition commitment. More favourable exchanges should strengthen employees' attraction to labour relations and increase commitment. As a result, we can emphasize that, within each theory, employees hold expectations about what employers should offer (e.g., a fair organizational approach to employees, socialization and training, as well as benefits from worker promotion, support expectations, and psychological contract expectations).

To show the role of organizational commitment in employees, some other studies based on the side bet theory emphasize that employees engage in work only to maintain the cost of their effort. Becker's theory (1960) regarding worker commitment states that: "commitments come into being when a person, making a side bet, connects external interests with a stable line of activity". According to Meyer and Allen (1984), in order to explain commitment to the organization, the active line of Becker's theory refers to job retention, while the term side bet refers to anything of value that the individual has invested. (e.g., time, effort, money spent), which would be considered a waste or worthless cost if they left the organization.

Regarding this issue, Cohen and Lowenberg (1990), to answer questions about Becker's side bet theory of organizational commitment, analyzed over 50 meta-analytic papers where the correlation data of the studies showed low significance. They found that the correlation with 11 side bet variables (age, tenure, gender) was relatively weak and not found to be significant with organizational commitment. From all this, the researchers concluded that there is little evidence for the whole side bet theory. However, they cautioned that the side bet and engagement measures used in the studies included in their analyses may not be suitable for testing the side bet theory.

According to Cohen and Gattiker (1992), a cross-national study analyzed seven indexes of the side bet theory (age, tenure, education, marital status, salary, gender and job position) to see their impact on the commitment of employees. This study analyzed a sample of 463 subjects in the US and Canada. The results suggest that the correlation previously reported by other researchers between tenure, age and organizational commitment was no longer valid. Although the effects of the side bet indexes differed across Canadian and American participants, commitment levels were similar, suggesting that the side bet indexes accounted for an insignificant amount of variance in organizational commitment. These results open discussions about the implication of the side bet theory, highlighting that future studies should analyze this theory and employee commitment more.

In relation to the findings emphasized above, the theory of human capital can also be mentioned, which suggests that with the increase in the level of education of the individual, his engagement with the organization also decreases. This happens because the opportunity to change the job increases (O'Reilly & Caldwell 1981).

According to some studies, training and job satisfaction can affect employees' organizational commitment. Mathieu (1988), during a revised model on the development process of commitment in a military context, concluded that training characteristics continued to have a substantial direct effect on worker commitment, alongside several other variables that showed indirect effects. In a similar study conducted with a larger sample, Mathieu (1991) found that overall job satisfaction directly affected commitment and that all other variables, except achievement motivation, had only indirect effects. From these findings, we can say that training and, in particular,

job satisfaction can be a predictive factor of work engagement.

Many previous studies regarding organizational commitment and HR organizational policies differ significantly from recent studies (Matheiu and Zajac, 1990; Morrow, 1993). During a meta-analysis study by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), which included 41 preliminary evaluations on employee commitment, only two had to do with "organizational characteristics" and that of training and centralization. None of the previous examinations can be called "practice of human resources". This is interesting and problematic, given that such practices are a significant tool organization use to influence commitment (Guest, 1992).

2.2 *Organizational policy of human resource management*

It has often been argued that employees will be more satisfied with their jobs when there is a good match between what the person wants and what the job offers.

Also, hypotheses to see the employee's adaptation at work have usually included calculating an adaptation index and its connection with a measure of interest.

Following this practice, the study by Meglino et al. (1989), who calculated the correlations between the values of employees and supervisors or the HR team, concluded that there was a correlation between them. Yukl (2001) also suggests that the human resources team is essential because it determines the organization's performance and the employee's commitment.

In a study, O'Reilly et al. (1991) obtained correlations between employees' culture preference ratings and measures of perceived organizational culture. In both studies, these fit indices were positively related to engagement.

An important element of organizational commitment as part of adapting to the workplace is the perception of organizational justice by the employees.

2.2.1 *Organizational justice*

HR considers organizational justice a very important element and a multidimensional construct (Greenberg, 1990). The employees' perception of the fairness of the procedures used by HR in determining the results and their promotion has been seen as a critical dimension of commitment, both for increasing safety at work and for the benefits of promotion. Several studies have examined the relative strength of this justice model on organizational commitment (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). These findings suggest that employees' commitment to the organization may be shaped by their perceptions of how it treats them fairly. One possibility suggested in the justice literature is that organizations increase employee engagement by treating employees fairly (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). From this, it can be emphasized that the effect of the perceptions of justice on the part of the employees serves as a mediation to increase the organization's commitment to the organization.

2.2.2 *Socialization and training*

One way in which organizations can hope to build employees' initial propensity for engagement is through the socialization process. Investigation of the effects of socialization practices on commitment was facilitated by Van Maanen and Schein (1979), who devised a six-dimensional classification scheme, and Jones (1986), who developed a series of measures that could be used to determine how these dimensions of socialization are practised in the organization. Several studies have used these measures, and evidence clearly shows a link between perceived socialization experiences and engagement (Robertson & Cooper, 2001). The dimension consistently found to have the strongest relationship with engagement is worker support versus nonsupport (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). In cases where organizations use positive support tactics towards new employees, engagement tends to be stronger.

Cultivating commitment is only one of several objectives organizations try to achieve through socialization. Therefore, a somewhat disturbing finding reported by Jones (1986) was that socialization practices associated with higher levels of commitment tended to be negatively related to employees' self-reported tendency to adopt an innovative orientation. Furthermore, commitment itself was found to be negatively related to innovation orientation. These findings may be of particular concern to organizations that want and plan to foster a high level of commitment and a willingness to innovate in their employees.

More recent research has shown that socialization dimensions impact employee engagement but are not strongly related to innovation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996). However, these findings should sensitize researchers and practitioners to the fact that socialization practices are likely to have multiple effects and that focusing exclusively on anyone may be short-sighted. However, these findings for organizations suggest the importance of generalizing these guiding principles to the design and practice of socialization programs.

Training is often an essential part of the socialization process. Although worker engagement is not necessarily the intended, or at least the most obvious, objective of training, it can nevertheless be affected. Gaertner and Nollen (1989) found that commitment was related to employees' perceptions of organizational efforts to provide them with training but not their actual training experiences. They suggest that actual training experiences did not predict engagement, which may be because the measure did not reflect the frequency or content of the training.

Tannenbaum et al. (1991) also found some evidence that organizational commitment can have reciprocal effects on training success. They reported a strong positive correlation between training, employee engagement

and motivation, where training was presented as a variable that was found to be a significant predictor of employee motivation and engagement. Although more research is needed within the organization regarding these issues, especially in the private sector, existing evidence suggests that training experiences can influence engagement and can, in turn, influence employee motivation for training.

2.2.3 Promotion

Policies and practices related to employee advancement are also expected to impact their commitment to the organization. Geartner and Nollen (1989) found that when employees perceived that the company had a policy of promoting employees within the organization, their commitment was higher. Such a policy can be perceived as an example of the company's commitment to employees and reciprocally.

Robertson, Iles, Gratton, and Sharpley (1991) examined the impact of a large financial services organization's human resource management development program to promote early and mid-career employees. They found that engagement and increased performance were strongly influenced by the outcome of promotions early in their careers and that those who received negative feedback or were not promoted became less committed and more likely to consider leaving the company. However, the reactions to promotions carried out among employees who experienced several years of their careers, particularly those who received negative reactions and were not promoted, did not investigate any lack of effect on their commitment. Thus, depending on the career stage, different strategies may be needed to maintain commitment among those given failure feedback.

Schwarzwald, Koslowsky and Shalit (1992) examined the effect of propositional decisions on the commitment of a group of Israeli employees who had declared their candidacy for promotion. Those who were subsequently promoted were more committed than those who were not promoted. Those who were not promoted also perceived greater inequality and tended to be absent from the workplace more often.

3. Conclusion

Most of the results collected from the literature review based on meta-analyses researched on the study of organizational policies of HRM also see organizational justice, socialization, training and promotion of employees as important and influential practices on the engagement of employees at work.

Research on the development of employee work engagement has progressed beyond attempts to correlate engagement with variables that are assumed to be its antecedents. Structural equation modelling analyses have helped increase our confidence in the causal ordering of variables involved in developing engagement. However, many other issues remain unaddressed for discovering the causal effects of engagement, including cross-sectional or longitudinal projects to examine reciprocal effects on employee engagement (Mathieu, 1991).

From the conclusions of the collected research, it was seen that there is evidence that organizations can intentionally or unintentionally influence the engagement of their employees through their HR practices. No obvious conclusions were drawn regarding the impact of any particular HRM practice. However, it is essential to note that most organizational practices from the research showed a statistically significant correlation with employee engagement, but it should not be overlooked that a correlation between an HRM practice and engagement is difficult to interpret. Organizations are likely to adopt management practices that are consistent with each other and with overall organizational objectives. Consequently, when examined individually a particular practice may be related to employee commitment, not because this practice has a direct impact on commitment, but because it is related to other HR practices or overall business strategies (Huselid, 1995). It is also important to note that HRM practices are often measured using employee surveys, in which case employee perceptions may or may not be accurate.

Also, many researches showed that organizational justice stimulates employee engagement and increases their results (Ahmed et.al, 2019). Even socialization-training and promotion as an organizational policy practice based on many results turned out to be effective, through which process employees learn how to function as a team (Song et.al, 2015).

It is recommended that future research should pay more attention to examining the impact and role of practices on employee engagement in the workplace.

Also, future research should examine the importance of possible mediating or moderating variables between civil service systems and organizational commitment, more specifically to analyze the importance of creating a system on the preliminary identification of the employee's professional skills or to see the lack/increase of alternatives for employment would have brought or not brought strong effects on the commitment of employees.

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