

The Impact of Trust and Job Involvement on Organisational Commitment

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Abstract: All companies rely on committed and loyal employees to reach their goals.

Thus far, we know little about the specific effects of the mechanisms of leadership influence on the organisational commitment of employees. This paper focuses on the specific effect of the use of the “trust” mechanism of leadership influence on organisational commitment in environments with both low and high job involvement.

The paper focuses on two interrelated research questions. First, how high is the impact of the variables of trust and job involvement on the expression of the dependent variable of organisational commitment? Second, how do the variables of trust and job involvement interact to influence the expression of organisational commitment?

Using a comprehensive dataset of 218 survey participants, we found significant positive effects of the use of “trust” on organisational commitment, and we found a moderating effect of “job involvement” in the effect of trust on organisational commitment at certain values.

This paper extends the post-heroic theory of lateral leadership to its practical usability and shows the specific effect of the use of the “trust” mechanism of leadership influence in environments with “job involvement”.

Key words: leadership; leadership influence mechanism; trust; job involvement; organisational commitment; job engagement

JEL codes: J28, M54

1 Introduction

When looking at the multitude of challenges faced by companies, it is easy to see that any given company relies on meeting its specific challenges with employees that are as committed and loyal as possible. Committed and loyal employees who are willing to perform at a maximum level in their company are at the core of optimised performance creation. Especially in increasingly tight markets and against the background of the increasingly rapid change in modern value chains due to digital transformation, no company can allow itself to employ only average or moderately committed employees or to accept high turnover due to constantly high staff exchanges. The organisational commitment of employees can thus be identified as a significant success factor of any enterprise.

Organizational commitment has been defined by Porter et al. (1974) as “the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”.

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The goal of each management measure must, therefore, be to establish, maintain and expand this positive and performance-enhancing state to achieve the goals of the organisation as efficiently as possible.

Becker describes leadership as influencing the direction of goals (Stöwe & Keromosemito, 2013).

At its core, however, leadership not only concerns external control per se, but it is also recognisable that leadership is increasingly recognised as a framework formation for the self-organisation of employees. Leadership thus sets the prescribed framework for providing employees with the maximum possible level of self-organisation through the use of mechanisms of leadership influence.

Schreyögg describes in this context that leadership in the traditional sense is understood as the external control of employees. In the modern sense, however, leadership is seen as a contribution to the self-organisation of employees and their willingness to organise themselves (Schreyögg & Lührmann, 2006).

It can also be noted that organisational concepts based on hierarchy and authority are increasingly being called into question, be it through the targeted introduction of flatter, the widespread abolition of hierarchies in organisations, the outsourcing of entire business functions to external service providers or working in project teams without clear hierarchy.

Kühl (2017), an organisational sociologist at the University of Bielefeld, notes that modern value chains increasingly consist of collaborations, permanent or temporary ones, in which usually no power of direction exists.

In the context of these value chains, influence mechanisms beyond authority and hierarchy are often used to achieve the desired effect.

This paper addresses the impact of the “trust” mechanism of leadership influence and the variable of job involvement on the dependent variable of organisational commitment. The study is based on a survey of 231 participants conducted online in October 2018.

The study examines a partial aspect of the concept of lateral leadership introduced by Stefan Kühl for its direct impact on organisational commitment.

For this purpose, the methods of descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In detail, this research shows the correlations and regression equations and analyses and interprets the interactions between the underlying variables.

Thus, the present study moves in an area beyond any consideration of a certain management style or form of management, which at its core is only an expression of a favoured or desirable course of action by a leader or an organisation. It can be considered that the prevailing management style can be described as a summary of the most used influence mechanisms. The main point of the present study is, therefore, to show what impact the use of the mechanisms of leadership influence has on employees. In other words, the question is one of how the leadership influence factor trust directly influences the organisational commitment of employees.

This article is thus part of a comprehensive investigation into the mechanisms of leadership influence and their impact on job involvement and organisational commitment. Further results, beyond trust, organisational commitment and job involvement, will be covered in detail in subsequent articles.

2 Theoretical Background

Organisational science identifies how the behavioural expectations of others can be enforced as mechanisms of influence. The term goes back to the works of Luhmann (1976).

Luhmann (1994) subsumes that the mechanisms of influence are always and continuously used to achieve and maintain the positive attitudes of others. Luhmann (1994) finds that the processes of power, trust and understanding often latently take place. The processes run in secret, as their visibility would limit or even destroy their effectiveness.

The concept of lateral leadership involves three influencing factors of leadership. Kühl cites the three central mechanisms of influence as understanding, power and trust.

The organisation cannot compel, prohibit or require the use of mechanisms of influence. These mechanisms arise in the shadow of the organisation, but the organisation with its formal structure ensures that they do not surpass the abilities of the organisation.

Communication processes are made more efficient by the organisation, as it determines by its formal structure to whom a person is accountable and to whom he or she is not (Kühl, 2017).

Kühl (2017) subsumed that any leadership is always also lateral, even if there is a hierarchy. Kühl shows that in the actions of many decision-makers, situations arise again and again in which a decision has to be made without being able to fall back on a formal hierarchy.

Lateral leadership is a leadership technique and is part of the trend towards post-heroic management, as a systematically linked approach to the organisation, which only partially draws on personal leadership skills (Kühl 2017).

Useem and Harder (2000) summarise that beyond the formal authority of a manager, where negotiations, persuasion or a binding commitment must be obtained without access to direct authority, lateral leadership begins.

Geramanis and Hermann (2016) subsumes that lateral leadership is concerned with looking at the tactics, practices and manoeuvres of influence against the background of processes in the organisation.

2.1 Definition of Trust

In the Oxford English Dictionary, we find the following definition of the term Trust: “A firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something”.

The word Trust is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, associated with the following synonyms: “confidence, belief, faith, freedom from doubt, freedom from suspicion, sureness, certainty, certitude, assurance, conviction, credence, reliance” (Oxford University 2018)

“In Greek, trust is synonymous with ‘πίστις’ (pistis) (faith), in Latin ‘fiducia’ (self-confidence) or ‘fides’ (faithfulness). Thus, in ancient and medieval usage, trust stands in the field of loyalty and faith (For example, in Democritus, who demands not trusting all, but only the established) For Thomas Aquinas is trust through experience reaffirmed hope for the fulfillment of expected conditions under the premise of trusting in God. Since the beginning of modern times — for example With Thomas Hobbes starting — trust is more and more confidence in one’s abilities (self-confidence)” (Ritter, Gründer & Gabriel, 2017).

“Trust refers to the subjective belief (or sense of or belief in) of the correctness, truth of actions, insights, and statements, or the integrity of persons”. Trust can refer to another or one’s self (self-confidence). Trust also includes the possibility to act and the ability to act, and then one speaks of Confidence, and the opposite is mistrust” (Osterloh & Weibel, 2006).

For this elaboration, the definition of Trust is now as follows and already mentioned above: Trust is the “The firm belief in reliability or truth of someone or something”.

2.2 Definition of Organisational Commitment

On what is the variable of organisational commitment based?

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of the word “commitment” is as follows:

“The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.”.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “involvement” is associated with the following synonyms:

“dedication, devotion, allegiance, loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity, bond, adherence, attentiveness (Oxford University, 2018).”

“Organizational commitment or synonymous organisational commitment describes the extent to which people feel belonging to and connected to their organisation or parts of the organisation (e.g., the department or working group) (van Dick 2003).”

As early as the 1970s, Porter suggested a definition of the term “organisational commitment” as follows:

Organisational commitment has been defined as “the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation” (Porter et al., 1974).

For this elaboration, the definition of organisational commitment in this paper is according to the definition given by Porter:

“Organisational commitment is the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.”

2.3 Definition of Job Involvement

Now that the variables of understanding and organisational commitment have been defined, a further definition for the result variable of job involvement is needed. Job involvement is a composite term consisting of the words “job” and “involvement”.

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of the word “job” is as follows:

“A paid position of regular employment.”

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “involvement” is associated with the following synonyms:

“position of employment, position, post, situation, place, appointment, posting, placement, day job (Oxford University, 2018).”

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of the word “involvement” is as follows:

“The fact or condition of being involved with or participating in something.”

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “involvement” is associated with the following synonyms:

“Participation, action, hand (Oxford University, 2018).”

“Participation: the degree of the subjectively perceived importance of behaviour. As involvement increases, the growing intensity of an individual's cognitive and emotional commitment is assumed, for example, in the execution of decision-making processes (Kirchgeorg, 2018).”

Job involvement is the degree to which an employee is engaged in and enthusiastic about performing his or her work (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965).

“Job involvement is defined as a positive, fulfilling the work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006).”

It can, therefore, be stated that job involvement represents the degree of commitment to the provision of a person's service for a professional activity.

2.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions of this study are as follows:

“How great is the impact of the variables of trust and job involvement on the expression of the dependent variable of organisational commitment?”

“How do the variables of trust and job involvement interact to influence the expression of organisational commitment?”

The hypotheses of the investigation are as follows:

H1: “The variables of trust and job involvement have a significant impact ($R^2 > 0.5$) on the expression of the performance variable of organisational commitment.”

H2: “The variable of job involvement has a strong moderating influence ($R^2 > 0.5$) on the variable of trust in forming the variable of organisational commitment.”

3. Material and Methods

The collection of the available data was conducted as part of an online survey via the portal SoSciSurvey. The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire from 04.10.2018 to 27.11.2018. The target group of the survey is people who carry out an activity in which they are led by an executive and are involved in an organisation. The demographic query ensures the inclusion of the target group.

Contact with the subjects was established by the following contact routes: personal networks, LinkedIn, Xing, Poll Pool and Survey Circle.

The survey consists of a landing page, context and demographic issues and eight questions each on the topics of trust, understanding, power use, job involvement and organisational commitment. The questions were validated by a pretest ($N = 45$) and classified as qualified for the underlying question (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.835$).

Construction of the survey: landing page, consent 1 (voluntary) and demographic questions, 8 questions on trust, 8 questions on understanding, 8 questions on power use, 8 questions on job involvement, 8 questions on organisational commitment, consent 2 (approval of data use), notes, last page with organization notes.

Target group respondents: employees who are led by an executive and are involved in an organisation.

The survey was advertised through the personal networks of LinkedIn, Xing, Poll Pool and Survey Circle.

Category of survey: convenience sample — no representativeness and population unknown.

Period of the survey: 04.10.2018 to 27.11.2018.

Question Sources:

Trust: modified from Cook & Wall (1980) and Delahaye (2003)

Understanding: modified from Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Cook & Wall (1980).

Power Use: modified from Zeiger (2007)

Job Involvement modified from Lodahl & Kejner (1965)

Organisational Commitment: modified from Mowday et al. (1979) and Allen & Meyer (1990).

A total of 231 datasets were generated, of which 12 datasets were excluded from further use due to a lack of consent to use data and another set of records due to a lack of answers.

Of the remaining records (218), 89 were of women and 189 were of men.

Five questionnaires were answered in English and 213 were answered in German.

The 25- to 29-year-old age group was the largest group in the survey's age structure, accounting for 28.9% (63 datasets), followed by the 20- 24-year-olds, with a 20.2% share (44 datasets) and the 30-34-year-olds, with a 12.8% share (28 datasets).

In terms of company size, respondents belonging to an organisation with more than 250 employees made up the largest group. This group amounted to a share of 42.2% (92 datasets), followed by a group of respondents who belong to an organisation with 11-50 employees, with a 21.4% share (51 datasets).

In terms of the length of cooperation with the manager, respondents who had worked with their manager for less than 1 year made up the largest group, with a 36.7% share (80 datasets), followed by those who had worked with their manager for more than 1 year but less than 3 years, with a 33% share (73 datasets).

The analysis of the data concerning correlation, regression, and interaction was executed with 218 records. For missing values, the variable values were -1 = I cannot say and 9 = no answer, which were excluded from the analysis.

Datasets in Total: N = 231

Excluded Datasets:

- No Consent 1: N = 1

- No Consent 2: N = 11

- Reason: No Answers Given Whatsoever N = 1

Values -1 and -9 for any variable are automatically considered missing values.

Intensive verification of the datasets for anomalies (e.g., low length of stay, missing answers, and minus points for too quick filling) showed no further need to exclude datasets.

Remaining data for analysis: N = 218.

To analyse the data, the software IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was used. The survey data is publicly available at Harvard Dataverse (Klein, 2018).

To answer the research questions at hand, a correlation analysis, a regression analysis and an interaction analysis of the available data was performed.

4. Results

The empirical examination of the records received and validated was divided into three sections: the correlation analysis, the calculation of the regression equation and the analysis of the interaction of the variables within the framework of a moderation model.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 1 Overview of Pearson R Correlation Coefficients for Variables

	Job Involvement	Organisational Commitment
Trust	0.531 (p = 0.0000) N = 218	0.636 (p = 0.0000) N = 215
Job Involvement		0.706 (p = 0.0000) N = 215

The correlation analysis of the variables of job involvement, organisational commitment and trust shows an evident interdependence of the variables. Each of the three variables correlates strongly with the other variables.

Table 1 displays the correlation coefficients of the variables, the level of statistical significance and the number of analysed data sets in detail. Since the correlation coefficients are $> .50$, the correlations of the given variables can be classified as strong, according to Cohen (2013).

The consistently high correlation coefficients indicate an interdependent network structure of the variables. The network structure was examined in more detail by the subsequent regression analysis to be able to show in more detail what the interdependencies are.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment
Independent Variables: Trust and Job Involvement
Regression Method: Hierarchical Linear Enter

Table 2 Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.636 ^a	.405	.402	.66730	
2	.774 ^b	.599	.596	.54866	1.776
a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Job Involvement					
c. Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment					

Table 2 displays the found R, R Square, Adjusted R Square, Standard Error of the Estimate and the result Durbin Watson test of the two analysed regression models in detail.

The effect-size regression model (f^2) according to (Cohen 2013) is as follows:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2}{1 - R^2}$$

→ Effect-size model 1 $f^2 = 0.680$

→ Effect-size model 2 $f^2 = 1.493$

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict Organizational Commitment based on Trust and Job Involvement. A significant regression equation was found ($F(2, 212) = 158.569, p < 0.000$), with an R^2 of .0599. Predicted Job Involvement is equal to $0.372 + 0.328(\text{Trust}) + 0.555(\text{JI})$, where Trust is measured in units, and JI is measured in units. OC increased 0.328 units for each unit of Trust and 0.555 units for each unit of JI. Both Trust and Job Involvement were significant predictors of Organisational Commitment.

Regression Equation: $y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_kx_k$

$$\text{OC} = 0.372 + 0.328 T + 0.555 \text{JI}$$

Table 3 displays the B, Beta and statistical significance value (p) of the performed regression analysis of the variables trust and job involvement.

Table 3 Summary Table of Regression Analysis

	B [95% CI]	Beta	p
Constant	0.372 [0.017, 0.727]		0.0400
Trust	0.328 [0.239, 0.416]	0.371	0.0000
Job Involvement	0.555 [0.447, 0.662]	0.515	0.0000

4.3 Interaction Analysis — Moderation

The interaction analysis with organizational commitment as a dependent variable and the independent variable trust, moderated by the variable Job Involvement, is significant and shows with $R^2 = 0.6002$ a high model quality.

The interaction analysis shows that the expression of OC heavily depends on the existing level JI. The Interaction is not significant, because in both cases (low and high JI) the slope of the Regression equation is equally steep.

If the level is high, the equation develops just as steeply as with low JI, but never reaches the same values as with high JI.

The interaction equation is:

$$OC = 0.0669 + 0.4338 T + 0.6474 JI - 0.0309 (T*JI)$$

Table 4 displays the B value and statistical significance of the moderation analysis in detail.

Table 4 Summary Table of Moderation Analysis

	B [95% CI]	p
Constant	0.0669 [-0.9070, 1.0408]	0.8924
Trust	0.4338 [0.1055, 0.7622]	0.0099
Job Involvement	0.6474 [0.3513, 0.9436]	0.0000
Interaction (Moderation)	-0.0309 [-0.1228, 0.0611]	0.0508

5 Discussion and Limitations

5.1 Discussion

Refer to the formulated hypotheses:

H1: “The variables of trust and job involvement have a strong significant impact ($R^2 > 0.5$) on the expression of the performance variable of organisational commitment.”

H2: “The variable of job involvement has a strong moderating influence ($R^2 > 0.5$) on the variable of trust in forming the variable of organisational commitment.”

The following can be stated:

Hypothesis H1 can be considered confirmed. The empirical analysis proves that the null hypothesis must be discarded, as the variables of trust and job involvement have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable of organisational commitment. The strength and outline of influence are represented as a result of the regression analysis by the regression equation as follows:

$$\text{Organisational Commitment} = 0.372 + 0.328 \text{ Trust} + 0.555 \text{ Job Involvement}$$

Similarly, hypothesis H2 can be considered confirmed. The null hypothesis must also be rejected here based on the empirical analysis, as a interaction equation has been found. The strength and outline of this influence is represented by the interaction equation as follows:

$$\text{Organisational Commitment} = 0.0669 + 0.4338 \text{ Trust} + 0.6474 \text{ Job Involvement} - 0.0309 (T*JI)$$

It can, therefore, be established that the present research questions could be answered by the confirmation of hypotheses H1 and H2.

The variables of trust and job involvement variables form the basis for the expression of the dependent

variable of organisational commitment. In the context of this elaboration, it can be established that the named variables are an interdependent network.

In particular, the interaction analysis, as displayed in Figure 1, shows the underlying contexts of action among the variables.

The results of the presented research allow for the following management conclusions to be drawn, as graphically illustrated in Figure 2:

An investment in Trust has at each level of Job Involvement an equally positive effect on Organisational Commitment.

An investment in Trust does not compensate for the minor effect of missing Job Involvement.

The study shows that trust is not the only basis of organizational commitment but is dependent on the prevailing level of job involvement.

How Job Involvement is created is not part of this study and will be explored in further studies. However, this study shows that it makes sense for an executive not only to take confidence-building measures and to expect that this will have an equally positive impact on the organisational commitment of employees in any case. This study shows that it is advisable for a manager to be aware of the present level of job involvement and, if necessary, to take steps to promote job involvement at the same time as trust-building measures, as this means that the expected impact of confidence-building measures on the Organisational Commitment can be considered to be much higher.

5.2 Limitations

This study had to make do with limited research resources. The datasets were collected without the influence of the study leader on the selection of the subjects and inference to a representative population via online portals as part of a convenience survey.

The observed effects and found connections must be considered meaningful and, due to this fact, are also generally generalisable.

However, it must be clearly stated that a conclusion to a population and thus to the unrestricted generalisability of the results cannot be assumed because of the arbitrary achievement of the datasets. In contrast, it is only based on the clarity of the results that the results can be assumed to be limited in generalisability.

The number of evaluable datasets ($N = 218$) is characterised as satisfactory and sufficiently high to answer the present research questions. However, it is desirable that, in the context of a more extensive follow-up study, the results, being based on a representative population and an even broader data situation, be confirmed once again.

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