



Dual commitment in the organization: Effects of the interplay of team and organizational commitment on employee citizenship behavior, efficacy beliefs, and turnover intentions

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ABSTRACT

Affective team and organizational commitment are among the most important employee attachments in the workplace. While past research has focused on identifying the differential relationships of these commitments with relevant workplace outcomes, the present study examines their additive and interactive effects based on a multi-foci research framework. Drawing on consistency and optimal distinctiveness theory, we predicted that team and organizational commitment add to and enhance each other's target-specific effects on team- and organization-directed citizenship behavior, efficacy beliefs, and turnover intentions. Furthermore, taking a person-centered perspective, we tested the hypothesis that dually committed employees score higher on the chosen outcomes than employees with unilateral commitments (to the team and the organization). Results from a survey study ($n = 1362$) confirmed our hypotheses for citizenship behavior. With regard to efficacy beliefs and turnover intentions, however, compensatory interactions were observed and dually committed employees scored higher on the team-directed outcome components. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

Affective commitment to the organization and to the team¹ are two desirable and distinct workplace attachments because they are differentially predictive of important workplace outcomes (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Given today's trend in organizations toward more decentralized and team-based structures, commitment scholars have increasingly encouraged the promotion of team commitment because it is more important for group-oriented behavior and team effectiveness (e.g. Galletta, Portoghese, Coppola, Finco, & Campagna, 2014; Ganesh & Gupta, 2015). Most of what is known about team and organizational commitment, however, is based on studies of their relative strength (Riketta & van Dick, 2005) or additive effects (e.g. Redman & Snape, 2005). Little attention has been paid to interactions and commitment profiles. The present study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the behavioral implications of the two commitments by investigating their interplay from both a variable-centered and person-centered perspective. First, using a variable-centered approach, we will show that existing theories result in unclear predictions about how the two commitments interact with regard to

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¹ The term “team” is used in this paper to denote organizational subunits that involve shared group goals and task interdependence among their members. It is important to note that the commitment literature often uses the terms “team commitment” and “workgroup commitment” interchangeably.

team- and organization-directed citizenship behavior, efficacy beliefs, and turnover intentions. Based on social identity and consistency theory (Brewer, 1991; Festinger, 1962; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we will test the proposition that each commitment adds to and reinforces the other's association with its primarily corresponding outcome component, rather than being redundant as suggested by the so called "target similarity principle" (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). By differentiating between team- and organization-directed outcome components, our variable-centered analysis builds on and extends research of direct effects (Riketta & van Dick, 2005) and indirect effects (van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, & Wieseke, 2008). As will be shown, employees sufficiently discriminate between team- and organization-directed outcome components and may thus score high in one direction but not the other. Accordingly, additive and interactive effects may occur at one or both outcome levels. Our analysis will thus allow more robust conclusions about the benefits of any single commitment to be drawn (Meyer, Morin, & Vandenberghe, 2015).

At the same time, we recognize that variable-centered analyses have limitations: they describe how variables function across individuals, but do not take into account the existence of meaningful subgroups that may form based on commitment combinations (Meyer & Morin, 2016; Morin, Morizot, Boudrias, & Madore, 2010). The resulting commitment patterns may have differential performance implications that are not necessarily captured by variable-centered approaches because the latter represent a synthesis or "estimated average" of the observed relationships in a sample (Morin et al., 2010). Recent research has corroborated the usefulness of studying commitment profiles (Meyer & Morin, 2016; Meyer et al., 2015). Our main proposition is that a dual commitment profile (i.e. high team and high organizational commitment) provides added value over unilateral constellations because each commitment adds to and reinforces the other's effect on the investigated outcome components. Thus, in spite of today's tug toward team-based structures, organizations may be well advised to promote both commitments.

2. Multiple foci of commitment and dual commitment

Commitment researchers have long recognized that employees can feel committed to more than one target at a time, and that multiple commitments can operate simultaneously in organizational settings (Becker, 1992; Bishop & Scott, 2000; Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008; Reichers, 1986). For example, in addition to feeling committed to their organization as a whole, employees may feel committed to their more immediate workgroup or team, their supervisor (Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Vandenberghe, 2002), occupation (Vandenberghe, Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Delhaise, 2001), union (Gordon & Ladd, 1990), or customers (Stinglhamber et al., 2002). Moreover, as contingent workers, employees may feel committed toward their agency and the hiring parent company (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; Felfe, Schmook, Six, & Wieland, 2005); or, as expatriates, toward their parent company and the local operation (Nguyen, Felfe, & Fookan, 2015). All these foci may differ with regard to their psychological distance (the team is more proximal while the organization is more distal) and independence (nested or not nested). While supervisor and customers are independent entities or targets, teams are clearly nested within the organization. Such nested commitments are of particular interest. Although they may be assumed to be highly correlated, distinguishing between higher- and lower-order commitments allows the examination of their unique impact, their interplay, and specific profiles resulting from different commitment combinations. The term "dual commitment" is generally used to refer to a simultaneous commitment to two foci. For instance, employees that are committed to both the entire organization and their team or workgroup may be considered to be "dually committed". Similarly, simultaneous commitment to the supervisor and the organization is seen as a form of dual commitment (Meyer et al., 2015), as is expatriates' commitment to their parent company and a foreign subsidiary (Nguyen et al., 2015).

In an attempt to determine the differential effects of multiple commitments on employee outcomes, existing multi-foci research has shown that the strongest relationships exist if the commitment and the outcome variable are directed at the same target. They thus seem to follow the "target similarity principle" (Lavelle et al., 2007) or "compatibility hypothesis" (Snape, Chan, & Redman, 2006). For instance, team commitment has been found to be more strongly related to team performance and team-directed helping behavior, whereas organizational commitment is more strongly related to organizational turnover or compliance with organizational rules (Chan, Tong-qing, Redman, & Snape, 2006; Lavelle, Konovsky, & Brockner, 2005; Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Based on the target similarity principle, commitment to one target is considered to be sufficient to predict outcomes directed at the same target, while commitments to other non-matching targets are largely redundant (in the sense that they are irrelevant for the improvement of outcome predictions). In line with this view, Stinglhamber et al. (2002) found no incremental validity for team commitment over and above organizational commitment when predicting turnover intentions and actual turnover. In their elaboration of the target principle, Lavelle et al. (2009) stated that if interactions are observed at all, they should be compensatory in nature (i.e. the non-matching commitment may partially compensate low levels of the matching or focal commitment). With regard to team and organizational commitment, however, results regarding this redundancy are mixed. While some researchers have found no evidence of additive cross-over effects (Bishop, Scott, Goldsby, & Cropanzano, 2005; Lavelle et al., 2009), van Dick et al. (2008) suggested that team and organizational commitment should interact with each other to enhance their positive effects on employee performance. Drawing on consistency theory (Festinger, 1962), these authors argued that a positive overlap between team and organizational attachment satisfies employees' desire to feel self-conceptually consistent about their workplace memberships, resulting in higher levels of work motivation and well-being. So far, however, the proposed enhancement effect could only be shown for employee citizenship behavior in a single study among bank and tourism employees, and a call for more research in different contexts and on other outcomes has been made to substantiate van Dick et al.'s (2008) findings. Importantly, existing evidence on the enhancement effect does not distinguish between different outcome components (i.e. team- and organization-directed citizenship behavior), thus leaving open the question if the suggested synergistic interaction works in one or both directions (i.e. team and organization). An important aim of the present study is thus to examine the extent to which van Dick et al.'s (2008) findings extend to other relevant workplace outcomes while distinguishing between team and organizational outcome levels. In fact,

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