

Gender and work ethics culture as predictors of employees' organisational commitment

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Abstract

This article investigates the predictive value which gender and work ethics culture have for organisational commitment, which has taken centre stage due to disruptions posed by global economic hardship, the proliferation of new legislation regarding corporate governance, and unrelenting organisational change. This turbulence has resulted in high levels of employee anxiety, mistrust in leadership, and a steep decline in employee loyalty and commitment.

To investigate the relationship between gender, work ethics culture and employees' commitment, a purposive sample (n = 839; females = 32%) was used from employees permanently employed in a public railway entity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Data were collected by means of a biographical and demographic questionnaire, including the Ethical Corporate Virtue model and the Organisation Commitment Scale. The researchers analysed the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

The results indicate that only work ethics culture acted as a predictor of the affective, continuance and normative commitment variables. These findings could guide management practitioners, human resource and other stakeholders who rely on the engagement and commitment of employees, to consciously and creatively use these leverages to compete more effectively for particularly the affective commitment of employees in organisations.

Key phrases

affective commitment; gender; normative commitment; organisational efficiency; predicting effect; work ethics culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Moral deficiency, which is evident in society and in organisations worldwide, influences organisational leadership in general and employee commitment in particular. An appropriate leadership response may be necessary to address the escalating employee commitment crisis, which also has an effect on their job satisfaction and wellbeing (Gardner & Schermerhorn 2008:271; Jin & Drozdenko 2010:343). Further ramifications include a growing shift on the part of stakeholders who do not want to be seen to do business with organisations with questionable ethical standards. Ethics has thus become an important issue, and organisations are starting to commit themselves to weaving ethical principles and practices into their daily operations (Chun, Shin, Choi & Kim 2013:861).

Scholars and practitioners have always been curious about the role of demographic variables, such as gender, within the work context (Huang, You & Tsai 2012:515; Huhtala, Feldt, Hyvönen & Muano 2013:241; Salami 2008:35–36) and perhaps how such demographics are relevant to outcomes such as organisational commitment.

Both ethical climate (Victor & Cullen 1988:103–104) and ethical culture (Treviño 1990:607) refer to specific characteristics of the organisation that either support or undermine ethics-related attitudes and behaviours (Brown & Treviño 2006:596–597). Work ethics culture specifically is generally defined as a subset or portion of the organisation's overall culture that can moderate the relationship between an individual's level of moral reasoning and ethical/unethical behaviour (Brown & Treviño 2006:596; Treviño 1990:606). It has been suggested that an ethical working environment seems to not only enhance employees' moral reasoning ability (Valentine, Godkin & Lucero 2002:351), but also to positively influence the way in which individuals respond when confronted with morally questionable work situations (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers 2015:243).

Within this context organisational commitment could be the outcome, since employees would feel a strong connection to the ethical values, principles and practices of their organisation (Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman & Kidwell 2011:355). Organisational commitment has also been associated with enhanced satisfaction, optimal performance, organisational adaptability, decreased absenteeism and employee turnover (Giacalone & Promislo 2014:85–87; Valentine *et al.* 2002:356).

The literature suggests that there are limited yet contradicting studies regarding the collective predictive relationship between gender, work ethics culture and organisational

commitment, in particular within non-western organisational work settings (Mitonga-Monga, Flotman & Cilliers 2016:326). This article seeks to investigate what the predicting effect of gender and work ethics culture could be on the level of organisational commitment of permanent employees within a public railway organisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The aim of the article is therefore twofold:

- First, to contribute to the literature on organisational commitment, by studying the predictive value of gender and workplace ethics culture.
- Second, to deepen our conception of the role gender and work ethics culture play in nurturing organisational commitment. If there is a need to identify ways of fostering employees' organisational commitment, then this study can provide guidelines on how to use these two factors as leveraging devices to enhance employees' affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organisation.

Next, the research context, theoretical framework, methodological aspects and results of the study are discussed.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

This research study was conducted within a railway organisation in the DRC, a central-African country which has been plagued by conflict for a number of complex reasons, including disputes over basic resources such as water, access to and control of rich mineral and other resources, as well as opposing political agendas, corruption and mismanagement (Shah 2010:81).

In the DRC, which remains one of Africa's poorest countries (Gilpin & Boor 2012:12), the railway caters for the transportation needs of the majority of the inhabitants (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers 2015:243).

It was hypothesised that the unstable political and economic situation could influence employees' psychological engagement and retention (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers 2015:243). Arguably, an established work ethics context could contribute to the social and economic recovery of this slowly emerging democracy. Thus, the collective predictive value which gender (in this male-dominated society) and work ethics culture have for the organisational commitment of employees in the railway industry, needed to be explored.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This article investigates the predictive value of gender and workplace ethics culture in relation to employees' perceived level of organisational commitment. It also proposes guidelines on how gender and workplace ethics culture could serve to leverage employees' commitment to the organisation. Research findings on the abovementioned constructs are contradictory and the collective predictive relationship of the variables is limited.

Next, theoretical perspectives on the variables of the study – gender, workplace ethics culture and organisational commitment – are discussed, followed by a theoretically integrated account of related studies.

3.1 Gender and work ethics culture in relation to organisational commitment

Scholars always seem to be curious about the impact of demographic variables on the research context. Particularly in terms of gender, there has been an increasingly stronger call for women to play a more strategic role in organisations, which would make a compelling statement that they are not only valued (Fredricks, Tilley & Pauknerova 2014:127–128), but also that a more gender diverse leadership would result in improved ethical decision making and enhanced financial performance (Curtis, Schmid & Struber 2012:12; Ordway 2012:43). Research studies seem to be inconclusive regarding gender differences when it comes to ethical decision making. A number of studies have reported little difference between the genders (Loo 2003:170; Radtke 2000:300; Steele, Branson & Martin 2011:40).

In a variety of other related studies, however, women recorded higher personal business ethics scores than men (Mujtaba, Cavico & Sungkhawan 2011:20), seem to value the ethical profile of future employers more, exhibit enhanced ethical judgement capacity (Lund 2000:333) and seem to have not only higher ethical awareness compared to males (Eweje & Brunton 2010:96), but also appear to be more ethically oriented (McInerney, Mader & Mader 2010:39).

It has been proposed that these perceived discrepancies in terms of gender may not be attributable to gender *per se*, rather, the impact on ethical decision making could be a result of “how gendered social expectations are felt, lived and enacted in different respondents' thinking and behavior in different situations and contexts” (Fredricks *et al.* 2014:128). This caution regarding the significance of context is particularly relevant, given the socio-political volatility and developing nature of the DRC research context.

In addition to gender, perceived organisational culture plays a role in how employees conduct themselves in the workplace, as reflected in recent studies (Apriliani, Anggraini & Answer 2014:228; Huhtala, Kanges, Lämsä & Feldt 2013:270). For example, Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers (2015:247) found that unethical leadership conduct is arguably a reflection of an organisation's (unethical) culture and could undermine the commitment of employees.

Ethical culture as a subset of organisational culture is conceptualised by Treviño and Nelson (2010:228) in terms of the formal and informal behavioural control systems (e.g., leadership, authority structures, reward systems, codes and policies, decision-making processes, ethical norms and peer behaviour) that can support either ethical or unethical behaviour in an organisation. Workplace ethics culture, in turn (and as applied in this article), is perceived as the informal control system of an organisation which encompasses the experiences, assumptions and expectations of managers/leaders and employees, in respect of how the organisation prevents them from behaving unethically and encourages them to behave ethically (Kaptein 2009:266).

Workplace ethics culture consists of eight virtues, namely (Kaptein 2009:266-267)

- *clarity* – the extent to which an organisation supports ethical decision making by creating concrete and understandable expectations;
- *congruency of management* – the extent to which management decisions and actions are aligned with ethical principles and organisational policies;
- *congruency of supervisor* – the extent to which managers behave unethically, thereby contradicting existing ethical expectations and indicating to employees that unethical behaviour is permissible in the organisation;
- *feasibility* – the opportunity to behave ethically while using organisational resources that are available for ethical actions, for example, finances, equipment, information, personal authority, etc.;
- *supportability* – the extent to which the organisation creates shared commitment to ethical behaviours through fair treatment, a positive working environment and mutual trust;
- *transparency* – the extent to which employee conduct and its consequences are visible to colleagues, supervisors, subordinates and employees;
- *discussability* – the extent to which workers perceive that the organisation creates opportunities to openly discuss ethical and unethical issues and behaviours; and

- *sanctionability* – the extent to which employees are punished for unethical behaviour and rewarded for ethical behaviour.

Thus, the presence of the abovementioned virtues would result in the nurturing of a stronger workplace ethics culture, where virtuousness is encouraged and unethical behaviour is strongly discouraged (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green 2015:8–9; Eisenbeiß & Giessner 2012:10; Kaptein 2010:606–607). It is anticipated that an organisation characterised by ethical sensitivity would foster employee engagement and serve to direct organisational behaviour.

3.2 Organisational commitment (OC)

Scholars and human resources practitioners have become preoccupied with the value of organisational commitment in enhancing organisational performance, and attracting and retaining qualified personnel (Huang *et al.* 2012:520; Salami 2008:35–36). Traditionally, organisational commitment has been characterised by an acceptance of, and a strong belief in, the organisation's goals, priorities and values, the willingness to invest considerable effort and the exhibition of a strong desire to stay with the organisation (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian 1974:270).

It has also been defined as a psychological mind-set which not only binds (identification) an employee to the organisation, but ensures that s/he persists with a specific, organisationally relevant course of action (Valentine *et al.* 2002:356). Strong links have been reported between organisational commitment and positive organisational outcomes (Cullen, Parboteeah & Victor 2003:140; Demirtas & Akdogan 2014:150; Fu & Deshpande 2012:234).

In this article, organisational commitment is defined as employees' state of mind, which reflects their identification with the organisation and their desire to continue their membership of the organisation (Allen & Meyer 1990:3–4). The three-component model of organisational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991:62-63), which is used in this study, distinguishes between the affective, continuance and normative components of commitment.

Affective commitment refers to employees' psychological bond with the organisation because they desire this (Meyer & Allen 1991:63); continuance commitment denotes economic obligation, as reflected in the perceived costs related to leaving the organisation (Allen & Meyer 1990:3), and normative commitment refers to the obligation to remain in the organisation simply because it is the correct and moral thing to do (Allen & Meyer 1990:4). Social identity theory may provide an explanation for the association between perceived work ethics culture and organisational commitment. It has been suggested that employees

will emotionally identify with an organisation that demonstrates the value of ethical practices in relation to its internal and external stakeholders (Valentine *et al.* 2011:356).

Next, a discussion follows on the theoretical integration of research related to the variables of this study.

3.3 Theoretical integration of related research

In a study conducted in public sector organisations, Angle and Perry (1981:10) and Opayemi (2004:255) found a significant relationship between gender and organisational commitment. In particular, women reflected higher levels of organisational commitment than their male counterparts. Similar findings were reported in studies conducted in western industrialised organisations (Ellemers, De Gilder & Heuvel 1998:720; Hunt & Morgan 1994:20). In a non-western context, however, Ahmad and Abubakar (2003:180) reported that the demographic variable of gender had no significant correlation with organisational commitment.

In an earlier western study, Treviño, Butterfield and McCabe (1998:449) reported that ethical climate and cultural dimensions were significantly correlated with, and similarly influenced, employees' organisational commitment. They did, however, find differences with regard to behaviour, for example, in organisations with an ethics code, overall ethical environment (leadership, reward systems and support for ethical behaviour) yielded the largest negative effect on unethical conduct.

In organisations where ethical codes were not in place, the work settings were characterised by self-interest and a strong association with unethical behaviour. Similarly, in a study by Schwepker (2001:42) it was found that the enforcement of ethical rules and practices had a positive relationship with organisational commitment.

Providing further evidence, Cullen *et al.* (2003:130) and Martin and Cullen (2006:295) support the finding that perceived ethical context significantly impacts organisational commitment. Heightened perceptions of company ethics lead to a stronger attachment to the company, and perceptions of conflict and ambiguity have been reported to be lower (Herndon 2001:78).

Thus, from a social learning perspective, it is likely that strong ethical contexts which nurture and facilitate ethicality will subsequently also provide models of ethical leadership and result in the development of emerging ethical leadership and other ethical practices in

organisations (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers 2016:245; Tenbrunsel, Diekmann, Wade-Benzoni & Bazerman 2010:170–171; Warren, Gaspar & Laufer 2014:110).

The authors therefore hypothesise significant differences in terms of gender and workplace ethics culture in relation to the perceived organisational commitment of employees. Research studies are divergent, and little research has been done regarding the collective predictive value which gender and workplace ethics culture has for organisational commitment. The extent to which the abovementioned variables predict organisational commitment has especially not been researched within the volatile, socially nuanced, developing context of this study.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND CONTRIBUTION

The aim of this article is to examine whether gender and work ethics culture predict employees' organisational commitment in a railway public entity in the DRC. The research question underpinning this study is: "What is the predictive contribution of gender and a workplace ethics culture to employees' level of organisational commitment?"

This study makes a theoretical as well as a practical contribution. Theoretically, the study contributes to the body of knowledge in the disciplines of human resources, business management as well as industrial and organisational psychology, as regards the psychometric relationship between the constructs of gender, workplace ethics culture and organisational commitment. Furthermore, from a practical perspective the study makes recommendations for gender, managerial, leadership and other human resource management practices within a developing world setting.

5. METHOD

5.1 Participants and setting

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design (Maree 2016:127), with respondents drawn from permanently employed staff in a public railway organisation in the DRC. A convenience sample (n = 839; females = 32%) was used, reflecting the following characteristics: respondents aged 26–40 years (= 63.1%), single (= 49.1%), education level (66% = bachelor and honours degrees) and tenure (6–10 = 38%). The sample is described in Table 1.

5.2 Measures

The sample completed a biographical and demographic survey as well as the Ethical Corporate Virtue (ECV) model (Kaptein 2008:940) and the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen 1991:65–68).

Workplace ethics culture (independent/predictor) was measured using the Corporate Ethical Virtue Questionnaire (CEVQ) (Kaptein 2008:927–929) consisting of 58 items, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

It measures eight virtues, namely:

- *perception of clarity* (e.g. “My organisation makes it sufficiently clear to me how I should conduct myself appropriately towards others within the organisation”);
- congruency of supervisor (e.g. “My supervisor sets a good example in terms of ethical behaviour”);
- congruency of management (e.g. “The board and senior management would never authorise unethical or illegal conduct to meet business goals”);
- feasibility (e.g. “In my job, I am sometimes put under pressure to break the rules”);
- supportability (e.g. “In my immediate working environment, everyone takes the existing norms and standards seriously”);
- transparency (e.g. “If a colleague does something which is not permitted, my manager will find out about it”);
- discussability (e.g. “In my immediate working environment, reports of unethical conduct are handled with caution”); and
- *sanctionability* (e.g. “In my immediate working environment, employees will be disciplined if they behave unethically”).

Previous research reported internal consistency reliabilities ranging between $\alpha = 0.93$ and 0.96 (Kaptein 2008:940). This study reflects internal consistency of 0.96.

The OCS is also a self-report measure, consisting of 24 items scored on a five-point Likert scale. Acceptable validity and reliability scores have been reported both locally (South Africa) and abroad (Meyer & Allen 1997:121–125). Cronbach's alpha coefficients (internal consistency) ranging from 0.83 to 0.90 were obtained for this study.

5.3 Procedures

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the University of South Africa's (Unisa) Ethics Research Review Committee, the Senate Higher Degrees Research and Innovation Committee and the management of the railway organisation. A covering letter was used to explain the purpose of the study, the measurement procedure, and the researchers' adherence to ethical principles pertaining to voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. The two measurement instruments were translated from English into French, and back into English by a linguistic practitioner. All the research materials were compiled in booklet format and distributed to the entire study population. Ultimately, 839 usable completed questionnaires were returned.

5.4 Data analyses

The researchers analysed the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for Windows software (SPSS 2014). In the first stage, descriptive statistics, correlations and standardised multiple regression were used to analyse the data. First, the descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha coefficients. Then, correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between gender, work ethics culture and organisational commitment. It was decided to set the statistical significance cut-off value at the 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0.005$) (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013:125). Standardised multiple regressions were used to determine whether or not CEVQ (as independent variable) acts as a predictor of employees' organisational commitment (OC) (as dependent variable). An R^2 value larger than 0.26 (large effect) at $p \leq 0.05$ was regarded as practically significant (Cohen 1992:150).

6. RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

The mean, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

In terms of the CEVQ (work ethics culture) variables, *sanctionability* obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 0.63$), followed by *discussability* ($M = 4.07$; $SD = 0.60$), *congruency of management* ($M = 4.05$; $SD = .64$), *supportability* ($M = 4.05$; $SD = 0.67$),

overall ethics culture (M = 4.04; SD = 0.51), transparency (M = 4.02; SD = 0.69), and congruency of supervisor (M = 4.01; SD = 0.69).

TABLE 1a: Means, standard deviations and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Overall CEVS	4.04	0.51	0.96	1								
Clarity	3.63	0.57	0.88	0.86* **	1							
Congruency of supervisor	4.01	0.68	0.84	0.88* **	0.75* **	1						
Congruency of management	4.05	0.64	0.79	0.76* **	0.61* **	0.70* **	1					
Feasibility	3.42	0.83	0.68	0.50* **	0.36* *	0.41* *	0.35* *	1				
Supportability	4.05	0.67	0.83	0.82* **	0.66* **	0.70* **	0.65* **	0.38* *	1			
Transparency	4.02	0.69	0.87	0.88* **	0.76* **	0.73* **	0.61* **	0.41* *	0.74* **	1		
Discussability	4.07	0.60	0.88	0.88* **	0.67* **	0.72* **	0.57* **	0.28* *	0.65* **	0.75* **	1	
Sanctionability	4.10	0.63	0.89	0.86* **	0.62* **	0.64* **	0.56* **	0.27* *	0.56* **	0.61* **	0.66* **	1
Overall OCS	4.09	0.55	0.94	0.79* **	0.63* **	0.74* **	0.65* **	0.30* *	0.65* **	0.68* **	0.71* **	0.66* **
Affective	4.09	0.54	0.86	0.65* **	0.51* **	0.56* **	0.56* **	0.24* *	0.53* **	0.56* **	0.56* **	0.58* **
Continuance	4.04	0.55	0.88	0.66* **	0.54* **	0.65* **	0.49* **	0.24* *	0.58* **	0.53* **	0.58* **	0.60* **
Normative	4.13	0.59	0.88	0.70* **	0.55* **	0.65* **	0.58* **	0.29* *	0.57* **	0.64* **	0.67* **	0.52* **
Gender	0.31	0.46	-	-0.06	-0.05	-0.07	-0.04	-0.08	-0.05	-0.06	-0.03	-0.05

TABLE 1b: Means, standard deviations and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	α	10	11	12	13	14
Overall CEVS	4.04	0.51	0.96					
Clarity	3.63	0.57	0.88					
Congruency of supervisor	4.01	0.68	0.84					
Congruency of management	4.05	0.64	0.79					
Feasibility	3.42	0.83	0.68					
Supportability	4.05	0.67	0.83					
Transparency	4.02	0.69	0.87					
Discussability	4.07	0.60	0.88					
Sanctionability	4.10	0.63	0.89					
Overall OCS	4.09	0.55	0.94	1				
Affective	4.09	0.54	0.86	0.85***	1			
Continuance	4.04	0.55	0.88	0.81***	0.60***	1		
Normative	4.13	0.59	0.88	0.82***	0.65****	0.59***	1	
Gender	0.31	0.46	-	-0.04	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	1

Notes: N = 839. SD = standard deviations, α = Cronbach alpha coefficient, Correlation values $r \leq 0.29$ are practically significant (small effect). Correlation values $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$ are practically significant (medium effect). Correlation values $r \geq 0.50$ are practically significant (large effect). *** $p \leq 0.001$ – statistically significant. ** $p \leq 0.01$ – statistically significant. * $p \leq 0.05$ – statistically significant.

Source: Survey results

The lowest mean scores were in the *clarity* (M = 3.63; SD = .57) and *feasibility* (M = 3.42; SD = 0.83) variables. In terms of the OCS (*organisational commitment*) variables, the sample scored highest on *normative commitment* (M = 4.13; SD = 0.59), followed by *affective commitment* (M = 4.09; SD = 0.54), *overall organisational commitment* (M = 4.09;

SD = 0.55) and *continuance commitment* (M = 4.04; SD =0.55). All three dimensions indicated a relatively high level of OCS in the sample.

Table 1 shows that the demographic variable of gender was not significantly related to CEVQ and OCS. The results in table 1 also show the significant correlation coefficients identified between the CEVS and OCS variables. The correlations range from $r \geq 0.24$ (small practical effect size) to $r \geq 0.88$ (large practical effect size). These results show that the zero-order correlations are below the threshold level of concern ($r \geq 0.90$) of multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013:125).

Overall, work ethics culture, clarity, congruency of supervisor, congruency of management, feasibility, supportability, transparency, discussability and sanctionability were positively and significantly related to the OCS variables of overall organisational, affective, continuance and normative commitment (the p values ranged between $p \leq 0.001$ and $p \leq 0.005$). Except for gender, the results evidenced that work ethics culture is positively related to OCS variables.

6.2 Standardised multiple regression

Table 2 includes the standardised multiple regression results.

In the **first equation**, the sanctionability, congruency of management, transparency, discussability and sanctionability variables produced a significant regression model ($F_{(9, 815)} = 75.289$) accounting for 45% ($R^2 = 0.45$; $P \leq 0.001$; large practical effect) of the variance in affective commitment OCS. More specifically, sanctionability ($\beta = 0.268$; $p \leq 0.001$), congruency of management ($\beta = 0.218$; $p \leq 0.001$), transparency ($\beta = 0.134$; $p \leq .01$) and discussability ($\beta = 0.097$; $p \leq .01$) contributed significantly towards explaining the proportion of variance in the OCS affective commitment variables.

In the **second equation**, the CEVQ variables of congruency of supervisor, sanctionability, supportability, discussability and transparency produced a statistically significant regression model ($F_{(9, 815)} = 91.994$) accounting for 50% ($R^2 = 0.50$; $p \leq 0.001$) of variance in continuance commitment OCS. More specifically, congruency of supervisor ($\beta = 0.365$; $p \leq 0.000$), sanctionability ($\beta = 0.274$; $p \leq 0.000$), supportability ($\beta = 0.216$; $p \leq 0.000$), discussability ($\beta = 0.123$; $p \leq 0.01$) and transparency ($\beta = -0.110$; $p \leq 0.000$) contributed significantly towards explaining the proportion of variance in the OCS continuance commitment variable.

TABLE 2: Standardised multiple regressions for gender and CEVQ as a predictor of OCS

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	P	R	R ²	ΔR ²	F (9;815)	ΔF
Model1 (constant)	10.76	0.94		11.460	0.000	0.454	0.448 +++	0.454	75.289 ***	75.289
Congruency of management	0.311	0.066	0.218	5.647	0.000					
Transparency	0.105	0.040	0.134	2.660	0.008					
Discussability	0.060	0.027	0.097	2.169	0.030					
Sanctionability	0.197	0.027	0.268	7.184	0.000					
Model 2 (Constant)	1.870	0.714		2.619	0.000	0.504	0.498	0.504	91.994 ***	91.944
Congruency of supervisor	0.264	0.034	0.365	7.763	0.000					
Supportability	0.163	0.030	0.218	5.376	0.000					
Transparency	-0.069	0.30	-.110	-2.285	0.023					
Discussability	0.061	0.021	0.123	2.902	0.004					
Sanctionability	0.161	0.021	0.274	7.704	0.000					
Model 3 (constant)	5.017	0.685		5.666	0.000	0.536	0.531 +++	0.536	104.491 ***	104.491
Congruency supervisor	0.194	0.042	0.209	4.607	0.000					
Congruency management	0.245	0.052	0.167	4.709	0.000					
Transparency	0.141	0.037	0.175	3.771	0.000					
Discussability	0.208	0.026	0.330	8.035	0.000					

Notes: N = 839. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$

+ ++ $R^2 \geq 0.26$ (large practical effect size)

Source: Survey results

In the **third equation**, discussability, congruency of supervisor, transparency and congruency of management produced a statistically significant regression model ($F_{(9, 815)} = 104.491$) accounting for 53% ($R^2 = 0.53$; $p \leq 0.001$) of variance in normative commitment

OCS. More specifically, discussability ($\beta = 0.330$; $p \leq 0.000$), congruency of supervisor ($\beta = 0.209$; $p \leq 0.000$), transparency ($\beta = 0.175$; $p \leq 0.000$) and congruency of management ($\beta = 0.167$; $p \leq 0.001$) contributed significantly towards explaining the proportion of variance in the OCS normative commitment variable.

7. DISCUSSION

The objective of the study reported in this article was to examine whether gender and work ethics culture influence employees' organisational commitment in a railway organisation in the DRC. The results indicate that work ethics culture acted as a predictor of the affective, continuance and normative commitment variables. Discrepancies in the outcomes regarding the role of gender can be explained in terms of job and gender perspectives (De Valus & McAllister 1991:80; Loscocco 1990:160). Job perspectives explain differences in organisational commitment by referring to the various kinds of jobs that women and men do. Jobs designated for men often differ from those designated for women (despite progress that has been made) in terms of prestige, income and promotion. This discrepancy could have an impact on employees' level of commitment in the workplace. Such differences could be the result of a complex combination of factors, but, more importantly, can be explained by the context (social, cultural and organisational) within which employees find themselves in terms of their careers, family demands and role (position) expectations.

Previous research established the connection between work ethics culture and organisational commitment (Huhtala & Feldt 2016:9). It is likely that employees will remain attached to, and identify with, the organisation if they perceive it to have clear ethical standards and leaders who act with integrity, and if the organisation is seen to provide resources that enable ethical action. They will also remain involved in, and enjoy their membership of, the organisation if they perceive their leaders to be committed to common, firm values, and to enforce ethical behaviour by rewarding ethical doing and punishing wrongdoing.

The results of this study can be linked to that of Cullen *et al.* (2003:130) as well as Martin and Cullen (2006:300), who found that perceived ethical context related significantly to employees' organisational commitment. Thus, employees who perceive their ethical working environment as positive and favourable are likely to stay in the organisation because they want, need and ought to.

The findings of this study indicate that work ethics culture positively predicted employees' organisational commitment components of the affective, continuance and normative commitment variables. This suggests that employees who want their organisation to implement moral values and actions are likely to be emotionally attached to the organisation (indicative of a high level of commitment).

Similarly, the findings suggest that employees who perceive their organisation's role expectations to be congruent with their preferred self-image, and as having a positive code of conduct, are likely to be psychologically and emotionally attached to the organisation. These results are similar to those of previous studies (Huhtala & Feldt 2016:10; Mayer 2014:210; Schwepker 2001:45).

The findings are likely explained by the fact that work ethics culture is characterised by shared values, norms and beliefs that can stimulate employees' ethical behaviour, which in turn would contribute to a decrease in turnover intention (Huhtala & Feldt 2016:9; Valentine *et al.* 2011:360). These findings guide human resources and other practitioners (who rely on the commitment of employees) to consciously and creatively compete for such commitment by leveraging a work ethics culture in the organisation.

7.1 Implication of the results

The results of this study have theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, organisations with high levels of employee commitment seem to attract employees who would be willing to stay for a long time and contribute to the performance of the organisation, thus giving it a competitive advantage to survive in a turbulent business environment.

Furthermore, employees' positive perceptions of comprehensive ethical standards, positive ethical conditions and values, visibility, possibility to discuss ethical issues, reinforcement of ethical behaviour and sanctionability, would experience ethical organisational commitment. With the ever-present emphasis on short-term organisational performance and success comes the escalating pressure "to get the job done", often regardless of the consequences.

In recent times, however, the emphasis has started to shift to "how the job gets done". Herein lies a strong message to leaders, managers and other human resource practitioners. Thus, from a practical perspective, ethical principles need to be consistently applied to govern and address moral challenges in the business environment. An ethics work context is an important issue to address, since previous studies have confirmed the predictive value of

work ethics culture on work engagement (Huhtala *et al.* 2011:241) and employees' intention to stay with the organisation (Zehir, Müceldili & Zehir 2012:738).

Human resources practitioners, as the custodians of training in organisations, should not underestimate the impact of formal ethics training. In a recent study, Warren *et al.* (2014:101) confirmed (two years after a single ethics training) sustained, positive effects on identified indicators of ethical organisational culture in the form of observed unethical behaviour, intentions to behave ethically, perceptions of organisational efficacy in managing ethical behaviour and normative structures. Leaders, managers and practitioners must also be "seen" to behave ethically and consistently, and to firmly address unethical behaviour in the workplace.

7.2 Limitations and future research

There were certain limitations in the research conducted. First, as a cross-sectional study design, information was only provided about goals at a specific point in time. Method bias may also have existed, as self-report measures were used for the predictor and outcome variables. Social desirability bias may have occurred. Second, the sample consisted of employees working in a single organisation, therefore the results cannot be generalised to other organisations. Future studies therefore need to investigate the contributing and mediating role of other influencing variables and to establish the causal relationship between the variables. Qualitative studies could also be conducted to explore and possibly explain divergent results regarding the role of gender within developing and more western cultural settings.

8. CONCLUSION

This article explored the predictive value of gender and work ethics culture on employees' affective, continuance and normative commitment amongst permanently employed staff in a railway organisation in the DRC. In pursuit of the competitive edge, insight is required into the psychological and emotional dynamics of employee commitment, in order to translate these phenomena into leveraging devices.

Work ethics culture has the potential to become a critical, positive organisational resource in the hands of managers and practitioners. It is likely that congruence between the values and morals of the organisation and its employees could result in greater employee affiliation with

their work, increased wellbeing, and a deeper sense of meaning, pride and engagement in their work. Under these circumstances, enhanced organisational performance and competitiveness could flow from this positive organisational atmosphere.

From a practitioner's perspective, emphasis should be placed on the deliberate nurturing of a positive workplace ethics culture. This study contributes to the literature on organisational commitment by confirming the predictive value of work ethics culture on organisational commitment within the context of a developing economy such as the DRC. It also deepens our understanding of the role work ethics culture could play in nurturing employees' affective, continuance and normative commitment. To remain competitive in a global world economy, organisations must continue fostering and exploring the value of work ethics culture. An appropriate leadership response to the escalating employee commitment crisis is for leaders to commit themselves to the development of ethicality and to deliberately identify this positive organisational resource as a strategic objective in the postmodern world of work.

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