

## Hierarchical Dependence of Antecedents of Employee's Continuance Commitment

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### Abstract

Employees' turnover due to the internal and external organizational environment has become a challenge for executives of organizations in general, and human resources administrators in particular. It is known that continuance commitment is based on the individual's recognition of the costs linked to leaving from and the benefits associated with staying in an organization. Therefore, employers could benefit from hierarchical classification of the antecedents of continuously committed manpower because they could perceive the motives of an employee's commitment and adopt, for example, appropriate leadership behaviour in order to improve the level of continuance commitment and, in turn, the levels of job satisfaction and job performance. Scientific problem is unexplored hierarchical dependence of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment. The aim of the research is by applying the *Decision trees* to identify hierarchical dependence of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment. To verify the research, general methods of scientific research, such as scientific literature analysis and synthesis, were used. Empirical research was grounded on quantitative data processing methods. Multidimensional statistical methods, such as exploratory and confirmatory analysis (*Decision trees* module, *Chaid* method), were used, descriptive statistics were applied. In this article outlined concentrated interactions among the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment explain job-related behaviours of individuals, thus they may be applied in human resource management practice when searching for the optimal managerial strategy stimulating employees' continuance commitment to an organization.

**Keywords:** organizational commitment, continuance commitment, decision trees, human resource management.

### Introduction

**Research relevance.** An employee's commitment to an organization is a significant research topic having both practical and theoretical implications. The changing nature of the practice in terms of increased competition as well as declining staff productivity caused primarily by training costs has forced organizations to rethink the traditional model of organization staffing in general.

Thus, organizational commitment is critical to retaining and attracting well-qualified personnel (Joolideh, Yeshodhara, 2009).

Organizations are interested in having more highly committed workforce, because the research results show that organizational commitment leads to important outcomes such as decreased turnover, higher motivation, higher organization citizenship behaviour and organizational support (Kwon, Banks, 2004). Furthermore, valuable and skilled employees are regarded as essential to an organization's performance and success, and therefore retention of these employees is extremely important to employers. The turnover is always costly to the organizations in all sectors given the large investment made in the selection, training, and development of personnel (Stalworth, 2004). The problem is especially important in such developing Eastern European countries as Lithuania.

Despite a wealth of empirical work on organizational commitment, there are still huge gaps in our knowledge as to its dimensions and the antecedents initiating their expression.

Previous research revealed that employee's commitment levels to a specific focus have significant influence on their attitudes and behaviours related to this specific focus (Snape et al., 2006).

Since the three types of commitment are not mutually exclusive, each employee can simultaneously experience all three types of commitment (Mayer, Allen, 1991).

Antecedents of continuance commitment include employee perceptions of organization-relevant investments and the labour market. In continuously committed workforce approach, organizations tend offer *side bets* in the form of pension, old age benefits (Farooq, 2011) and other binding individuals to them.

For the effectiveness of organizations, administrators should analyze and determine the most important focuses that are worth for them to be committed and know how employees' commitment focuses

are related to which variables; they should manage it effectively for the sake of organizational objectives and they should take it into consideration when determining their policies and strategies.

**Research problem:** unexplored hierarchical dependence of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment.

**Research aim:** by applying the *Decision trees* to identify hierarchical dependence of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment.

To achieve the above-mentioned aim, the following **objectives** have been set for the research:

1. To conceptualize the construct of an employee's continuance commitment to an organization.
2. To present the antecedents initiating the expression of an employee's continuance commitment.
3. To ascertain hierarchical dependence of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment.

### **Aspect of employee's continuance commitment to organization**

Becker (1960) introduced the concept of *organizational commitment*. While following it, individuals tend to surrender some of the benefits when moving from one organization to another. Employees can enjoy benefits if they continue their relations to the same organization. In this case commitment means continuance of service in the same organization in order to enjoy different benefits of being a member of it (Farooq, 2011).

Such employees link to and remain in an organization because they *need to do so* (Meyer, Allen, 1997). By making *side bets* employees invest some valuable things (e. g., time, effort, money) that would be lost if they left the organization. Another antecedent of continuance commitment is the perceptions of employment alternatives. Employees' perceptions about the viability and availability of employment alternatives are negatively correlated with continuance commitment. In other words employees who think their alternatives are few develop stronger continuance commitment (Meyer, Allen, 1997; Karakus, Aslan, 2009).

Continuance commitment is related to one's experience and what one has given to an organization. Meyer et al. (1993, p. 539) stated that skills and education are not easily transferred to other organizations, which tends to increase workers' commitment to their current organizations. Those who stay within their organization with a strong continuance commitment are there just because they need it (Allen, Meyer, 1990; Joolideh, Yeshodhara, 2009).

The three components of commitment are considered to be psychological states which employees

experience to differing degrees. Each individual is assumed to experience the components of commitment in varying strengths (Stallworth, 2004). Continuance commitment reflects economic ties to the organization based on the costs associated with leaving the organization (Allen, Meyer, 2000), for example, reduced earnings, pension, benefits or potential deterioration in the terms (Hrebiniak, Alutto, 1972). Therefore, there appear difficulties in leaving an organization, because of unknown "opportunity cost" while having few or no job alternatives. Besides, an employee's employment in another organization may ruin certain social relations, thus psychological damage would increase, because there appears the need to look for new friends and learn to work with new colleagues (Becker, 1964).

However theoretically, continuance commitment should be related to turnover and turnover intentions, but not to behaviours (e.g., citizenship) beyond those required to maintain membership (Bergman, 2006; Meyer, Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002).

In other words, for most employees, perceived costs associated with leaving increase as they get older and increase their organizational tenure because of the accumulation of their investments (retirement money, job security, status, unused vacations etc.) (Allen, Meyer, 1993; Abdulla, Shaw, 1999) and married employees identifying themselves with provider role (as the primary wage earners for their families and children) perceive higher costs of leaving (Mellor et al., 2001).

It should be specified that research into continuance commitment suggests that this component consists of two related subdimensions: personal sacrifice and perceived lack of alternatives (Dunham et al., 1994; Meyer et al., 1990). Both personal sacrifice and perceived lack of employment alternatives increase the costs associated with leaving the organization (Stallworth, 2004).

To generalize, these costs manifest in two distinct ways: (1) as individuals gain tenure in an organization they accrue investments in the form of pension plans, seniority, specialized and untransferable job skills, local affiliations, familial ties (Clugston, 2000), efforts and money (Karakus, Aslan, 2009), which may be sacrificed or damaged by changing jobs; (2) individuals may feel as though they have to remain in their current jobs because they do not have any alternative job prospects (Clugston, 2000).

Thus, according to Meyer and Allen (1991), mutual benefit and lack of work alternatives are the integral parts of continuance commitment, because by making *side bets* employees think that something would be forfeited if they discontinued membership.

## Research methodology and characteristics of research sample

To verify the research there were used general methods of scientific research, such as scientific literature analysis and synthesis. Empirical research was grounded on quantitative data processing methods. There were used multidimensional statistical methods, such as the exploratory and confirmatory analysis (*Decision trees* module, *Chaid* method); applied descriptive statistics. Research data processing was done by using SPSS 18.

Groups for the research were chosen on the principle of quota (Kardelis, 2007), when minimal quota included 30 respondents, representing each group.

General set was presented by all employees of Lithuanian organizations. The study interviewed employees representing organizations of 12 activity spheres (specialists, blue-collar workers, managers of various levels, representatives of management and operating personnel, etc.).

In accordance with the principal conceptual classifier (Kavaliauskiene, 2011) reflecting the interactions among the dimensions of an employee's organizational commitment and their antecedents as well as the results of the research accomplished (N=1804) the dimension of continuance commitment is influenced by these components of the category of personal characteristics antecedents: **age**, **marital status**, and **number of children in a family**.

The category of job-related antecedents conditioning the expression of an employee's continuance commitment involves organizational support constituents perceived as an employee's wellbeing, that is **supervisory support** and **co-worker support**.

The category of relational antecedents having impact on the expression of an employee's continuance commitment consists of: **relational norms**, for instance *side bets*, containing self-investment, that is efforts, time and energy spent and congruence of (ethical) values as well as **job satisfaction**.

To the category of job involvement antecedents having influence over an employee's continuance commitment belong: **organizational parameters** (activity sector, sphere and form), **total work experience**, **work experience in an organization**, **employment status**, **financial security and stability** as well as **social support** (from spouse, parents and friends outside work).

## Justification of used statistical methods and psychometric characteristics

The module of SPSS software package called the *Classification Trees*, also known as the *Decision Trees* enabled classification of the available data according to the groups and forecasting of dependent

variables by the known independent variables. This served as an important tool in the exploratory and confirmatory discriminant analysis. The module of *Classification Trees* enabled to:

- Assign respondents to a particular taxonomic group.
- Compress the data available from a large group of independent variables, leaving only with a statistically significant effect on the outlining of the dependent variable.
- Identify the interactions among the different experimental groups.

Despite the classical statistical criteria (*chi square*, etc.) used in the *Decision Tree* model, the picturesque presentation of the analysis results in the form of *Classification Trees* allowed easier to understand hierarchical dependence of variables and identify specific categories (Pukenas, 2009; Puskorius, 2001).

## Identification of hierarchical dependence of antecedents of employee's continuance commitment

After determination of the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment there was taken the next step to identify the fundamental antecedents initiating the expression of such type of commitment and their hierarchical dependence.

For this purpose, as it was mentioned and described above, there was used the tool of exploratory and confirmatory discriminant analysis, so called *Decision Tree* module that enabled classification of the available data according to the groups (leaving only those independent variables that were statistically significant to the meaning of dependent variable) and provided the picturesque presentation of the analysis results.

As it is evident from Figure 1, the expression of an employee's continuance commitment, fixed as strong among 28% (n = 506), average among 49.4% (n = 892), weak among 22.5% (n = 406) of the interviewed employees of Lithuanian organizations (when n (total) = 1804), mainly depends on their total work experience. In this approach, the tree is divided into four categories defined by the author of the article: I<sup>st</sup> – up to 5 years, II<sup>nd</sup> – from 6 to 16 years, III<sup>rd</sup> – from 17 to 27 years, IV<sup>th</sup> – over 28 years.

Continuance commitment of the respondents belonging to the latter category is characterized as the strongest one (47% (when n = 110, and n (total) = 234). It is mainly influenced by work experience in a particular organization when stronger commitment of such type is found among employees having from 21 to 30 years and over 31 years (58.2%, when n = 46 in comparison to the n (total) = 79) work experience in a particular organization.

According to the intensity of the expression of continuance commitment (31.9%, when  $n = 172$ , and  $n$  (total) = 540), the employees of Lithuanian organizations belonging to the third category, whose total work experience is from 17 to 27 years, should be further analyzed. Their continuance commitment is modelled by their organization form, when the strongest continuance commitment is detected among those working in public institutions, public limited companies and private business (42.3%, when  $n = 90$ , and  $n$  (total) = 213) in comparison to individuals employed in private limited companies, state companies and agricultural organizations (25.1%, when  $n = 82$ , and  $n$  (total) = 327), whose continuance commitment is influenced by size of their organization, and stronger continuance commitment is more common among the individuals working in small (from 10 to 49 people) and micro (from 1 to 9 people) type organizations (35.7%, when  $n = 51$ , and  $n$  (total) = 143).

It appears that continuance commitment of the respondents attributed to the II<sup>nd</sup> category (work experience from 6 to 16 years) is influenced by their work

experience in an employing organization, when the strongest expression of commitment of such type is common among those having up to 5 years and from 6 to 10 years work experience in a concrete organization.

The weakest expression of continuance commitment is found among the respondents attributed to the I<sup>st</sup> category (up to 5 years of work experience in a particular organization). Their corresponding commitment is modelled by their gender. In this aspect, the strongest continuance commitment is detected among male respondents (25.6%, when  $n = 45$ , and  $n$  (total) = 176) not leaving aside their total work experience, when employees for whom the employing organization is the first and the only one are distinguished as especially continuously committed (34.6%, when  $n = 28$ , and  $n$  (total) = 81). Continuance commitment of female respondents is impacted by number of children in the family, when women having one child or two children (26.4%, when  $n = 19$ , and  $n$  (total) = 72) are characterized as stronger continuously committed ones.



**Fig. 1.** Hierarchical dependence of the fundamental antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment to an organization



To sum up, the weakest continuance commitment was found among employees having short (up to 5 years) work experience in an employing organization, and the strongest continuance commitment was detected among employees having significant (from 21 years and over 31 years) work experience in an organization.

### Conclusions:

1. From the theoretical point of view, continuance commitment refers to the awareness of the costs associated with leaving from and of the benefits associated with staying in an organization.

2. To identify hierarchical dependence of antecedents there were used *Decision Trees*, classifying interactions among the antecedents of continuance commitment according to the strongly committed groups of respondents.

3. It was ascertained that in continuance approach the expression of an employee's commitment to an organization mainly depends upon his/her total work experience. The weakest continuance commitment was traced among members of Lithuanian organizations who have short (up to 5 years) work experience in an employing organization, while the strongest expression of commitment of such type was detected among employees having significant (from 21 years and over 31 years) work experience in an organization and working in public institutions, public limited companies and private business.

4. Research results providing the concentrated interactions among the antecedents of an employee's continuance commitment explain job-related behaviours of individuals, deepen our perception about influence of specific social interactions over an employee's continuance commitment, thus may be applied by managers in human resource management, i.e. when searching for an optimal managerial strategy; revaluing employees' roles; seeking for their stronger involvement in organizational performance and decision making processes; strengthening employees' continuance commitment, increasing their satisfaction with wage, organizational policies, providing them with further education opportunities and improving working conditions; valuing employees' contribution to organizational performance as well as caring about their wellbeing, etc.

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## Darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksnų hierarchinė priklausomybė

Santrauka

Siekiant intervencijų probleminėse situacijose iniciavimo, organizacijų administracijai galėtų būti naudingas darbo jėgos tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksnų hierarchinis suklasifikavimas, atskleidžiantis atitinkamus darbuotojo įsipareigojimo organizacijai motyvus ir leidžiantis pritaikyti tinkamą vadovavimo elgseną.

Darbuotojo *tęstinis įsipareigojimas* organizacijai yra ekonominis ir sietinas su tikėtinu naudų ir nuostolių įvertinimu prieš paliekant organizaciją.

**Mokslinė problema** – nenustatyta hierarchinė darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksnų priklausomybė.

**Tyrimo tikslas** – pritaikyti klasifikacinius medžius hierarchinei darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksnų priklausomybei nustatyti. Tyrimui pagrįsti pasitelkti bendrieji mokslinio tyrimo metodai – mokslinės literatūros analizė ir sintezė.

Tyrimo problemai išspręsti ir tikslui pasiekti išsiskelbti šie **uždaviniai**:

1. Konceptualizuoti darbuotojo *tęstinį įsipareigojimą organizacijai*.
2. Pateikti darbuotojo tęstinį įsipareigojimą organizacijai lemiančius veiksnus.
3. Nustatyti hierarchinę darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo raišką nusakančių veiksnų priklausomybę.

Empiriniam tyrimui naudotas daugiatis statistinis metodas – tiriančioji ir patvirtinančioji diskriminantinė analizė (*Decision trees* modulis, *Chaid* metodas), hierarchinei veiksnų priklausomybei nustatyti, susisteminant darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksnų sąveikas (pagal ryškiausiai įsipareigojusius respondentų grupes), taikyta aprašomoji statistika.

SPSS programų paketo *klasifikacinių*, dar vadinamų *sprendimų medžių* (angl. *Decision Trees*), modulis leido klasifikuoti turimus duomenis pagal grupes ir priklausomų kintamųjų prognozavimą pagal žinomus nepriklausomus kintamuosius. Vaizdingas analizės rezultatų pateikimas klasifikacinių medžių pavidalu leido lengvai suvokti hierarchinę kintamųjų priklausomybę ir nustatyti specifines

kategorijas.

Tiriamųjų generalinę aibę sudarė visi Lietuvos organizacijose dirbantys asmenys, t. y. 2010 m. Statistikos departamento duomenimis ketvirtąjį 2010 m. ketvirtį šalies ūkyje (be individualių įmonių) iš viso pagal ekonomines veiklos rūšis dirbo 1 mln. 37 tūkst. 375 šalies gyventojai. Tyrimo metu apklausti 12 veiklos sričių organizacijas atstovaujantys Lietuvos organizacijų darbuotojai (specialistai, darbininkai, įvairių lygmenų vadovai, administracijos ir techniniai darbuotojai ir kt.).

Vadovaujantis sukonstruotu principiniu darbuotojo įsipareigojimo organizacijai dimensijų bei veiksnų sąveikų konceptualiuoju klasifikatoriumi (Kavaliauskienė, 2011) ir atlikto kiekybinio tyrimo rezultatais (N = 1804), darbuotojo tęstinį įsipareigojimą sąlygoja šios asmeninių charakteristikų veiksnų kategorijos dedamosios: **amžius, šeimyninė padėtis ir vaikų skaičius šeimoje**.

Darbinių ypatybių veiksnų kategorijai, veikiančiai tęstinio įsipareigojimo raišką, priklauso organizacinės paramos, apimančios darbuotojo gerovę dedamosios, t. y. **vadovo palaikymas ir bendradarbio parama**.

Tęstinį įsipareigojimą lemiančią tarpusavio santykių veiksnų kategoriją sudaro **tarpusavio santykių normos**, pvz., jau minėtos *pusių lažybos*, apimančios asmeninį darbuotojo indėlį, t. y. įdėtas pastangas, laiką bei energiją ir vertybių sutapimas bei **pasitenkinimas**, pvz., darbu.

Tęstinio įsipareigojimo ištraukimo į darbą veiksnų kategorijai priskiriami **organizaciniai parametrai** (veiklos sektorius, sritis ir forma), **bendra darbinė patirtis, darbinė patirtis organizacijoje, įsidarbinimo pobūdis, finansinis saugumas ir stabilumas** bei **artimųjų** (sutuoktinio, tėvų, organizacijoje nedirbančių draugų) **palaikymas**.

Nustatyta, kad darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai raiška labiausiai priklauso nuo bendro darbuotojo darbo stažo. Rasta, jog tęstinio požiūriu silpniausiai yra įsipareigoję darbuotojai, ypač turintys mažą (iki 5 metų) darbo stažą konkrečioje organizacijoje, stipriausiai – didelį darbo stažą (nuo 21 metų ir daugiau nei 31 metų) tu-

rintys darbuotojai, dirbantys viešosiose įstaigose, akcinėse bendrovėse ir individualiose įmonėse.

Su asmens vaidmeniu siejamas darbuotojo įsipareigojimas organizacijai yra nusakomas potencialiai gyvenimiškos prasmės suteikiančiais pozityviais santykiais su samdančia institucija, tikslų ir vertybių sutapimu bei organizacijos–individo ekonominio pobūdžio mainais. Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamas pastarasis koncepto aspektas ir nustatytos koncentruotos darbuotojo tęstinio įsipareigojimo organizacijai veiksmų sąveikos paaiškina su darbu susijusias individų elgsenas organizacijoje, pagilina suvokimą apie specifinį socialinių sąveikų poveikį darbuotojo

tęstiniam įsipareigojimui organizacijai, tad neignorotinos žmoniškųjų išteklių valdyme: pervertinant darbuotojų vaidmenis ir siekiant juos stipriau įtraukti į organizacijos veiklą ir sprendimų priėmimo procesus; stiprinant darbuotojų tęstinį įsipareigojimą, didinant jų pasitenkinimą darbo užmokesčiu, organizacijos politika, suteikiant tobulinimosi / mokymosi galimybes ir gerinant darbo sąlygas; vertinant darbuotojų indėlį į organizacijos veiklą bei rūpinantis jų gerove ir pan.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** darbuotojo įsipareigojimas organizacijai, tęstinis įsipareigojimas, *klasifikaciniai / sprendimų medžiai*.

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