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*The Impact of Procedural and Distributive Justice upon  
Organization Commitment of Age-Diversified Employees.  
Research Results<sup>1</sup>*

Wpływ poczucia sprawiedliwości proceduralnej i dystrybucyjnej na poziom zaangażowania organizacyjnego pracowników w różnym wieku. Wyniki badań

**Keywords:** distributive justice; procedural justice; organization commitment; HRM

**Slowa kluczowe:** sprawiedliwość dystrybucyjna; sprawiedliwość proceduralna; zaangażowanie pracowników; ZZL

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## Introduction

According to the results of international studies by Aon Hewitt [*Trends in Global Employee Engagement 2015 Report*, pp. 3, 6–7, 14], in 2014, global organization commitment amounted to 62% (a growth by 1 pp in relation to the previous year was observed). Employees in Europe noted the lowest score in organization commitment – 57%, whereas e.g. in Africa, the score amounted to 66%, and in South America to 71%. Highly committed Europeans constitute 19%, passive non-committed – 25%, and active non-committed – 18% of the sample. According to PwC data, 10–15% of

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the global workforce may be considered non-committed to organizations altogether [*The keys to corporate responsibility employee engagement*, PwC, 2014, p. 3]. Due to the fact that definitions of the commitment, and methodologies of studies differ, conclusions based on comparisons ought to be drawn carefully. However, every study indicates the existence of the so-called “commitment gap”. It manifests in a discrepancy between the actual attitude of employees and potential application of human capital [Juchnowicz and Skowron 2014, pp. 333–341].

Factors influencing organization commitment are two-fold: those associated with the features of the individual (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors), and organizational factors, which encompass characteristics of work ensuring individuals feel its sense [Juchnowicz 2010, p. 61ff]. Further organizational factors include: awards and distinctions, organization’s and superior’s support, and procedural and distributive justice [Saks 2006, pp. 600–619]. The objective of the present study is to determine the impact of procedural and distributive justice upon organization commitment of age-diversified employees. Due to the fact that individual aspects of the commitment differ, a premise was made that the impact of organizational justice upon individual aspects of the commitment will vary. In addition, chronological age was introduced as a discriminatory variable.

## 1. Organizational justice

As a theoretical concept, organizational justice was introduced by Greenberg [1987, pp. 55–61]. The author claims that it reflects employees’ perception of attitudes, decisions, and actions of the organization towards employees. According to Cropanzano et al. [2007, pp. 34–47], organizational justice denotes a positive perception of ethical and moral status of the organization’s leaders along with their behavior and practices. The perception translates into attitudes and behaviors of employees [Colquitt et al. 2001, pp. 425–445]. Papers discussing research into organizational justice are dominated by projects based on 4-elements’ classification [Colquitt 2001, pp. 386–400] which encompasses: distributive justice, procedural justice, interactive justice, and informational justice. Distributive justice emerges as a result of the distribution of goods (finances, resources, privileges, etc.) in an organization. Procedural justice refers to the perception of decision-making methods with regard to these goods. Informational justice results from the evaluation of means of disseminating information on decisions associated with the distribution of goods. Interactive justice is associated with the way individuals are treated in an organization (especially by their superiors) [Turek et al. 2014, pp. 113–139].

The feeling of fairness influences work satisfaction, which translates into commitment [Turek et al. 2014, pp. 113–139]. Colquitt [2001, pp. 386–400] observed that the perception of organizational justice leads to employees’ commitment and trust for the organization. Employees who perceive the organization’s internal processes

as fair are more loyal and manifest a greater inclination towards undertaking actions crediting the organization [Cropanzano et al. 2007, pp. 34–47]. Van der Bank et al. [2010, pp. 1–8] claim that unfair treatment, as perceived by employees themselves, results in anger and bitterness, which reduce self-esteem, impact negatively upon the level of commitment, decrease quality, initiative, result in a withdrawal from cooperation, and diffusion of dissatisfaction among co-workers.

## 2. Organization commitment

Despite a multitude and ambiguity of definitions of employees' commitment featured in the literature of the subject, the assessment of the commitment and factors influencing its intensity raise considerable interest among both management theoreticians and practitioners. The present study focuses on organization commitment. Meyer and Allen's concept organization commitment served as the theoretical basis for the study whose results will be discussed at present.

Organization commitment is the most frequently applied concept describing commitment to work in the organization. The psychological bond emerging between the employee and organization served as the basis for the concept [Meyer and Allen 1991, pp. 49–61]. Allen and Meyer's model of organization commitment is composed of three independent elements. The first, affective commitment, denotes employees' emotional attachment to the organization. A high level of affective commitment results in employees' identification with the organization and commitment to affairs associated with it. Continuance commitment has an instrumental character. It results from the belief that costs of leaving the organization would be too high and/or no alternative employment opportunities exist. Normative commitment is associated with the feeling of moral obligation to continue employment, and manifests in loyalty towards the organization. Organization commitment is associated with work satisfaction (reciprocal relationship) and exerts a positive impact upon the level of civil behaviors [Meyer et al. 2002, pp. 33–41].

## 3. The impact of organizational justice upon employees' commitment – the study's design

The literature of the subject offers numerous proofs that the feeling of injustice in work environment impacts both employees' well-being [Elovainio et al. 2005, pp. 2501–2512] and their work results [Ambrose et al. 2002, pp. 947–965]. According to Simons and Roberson [2003, p. 432], the assessment of organizations' attitude towards their employees as fair, exerts a positive influence upon their commitment to the organization, and a negative influence upon their intention of leaving the organization. Results of studies associated with the feeling of procedural justice

indicate that positive perception of this type of fairness results in a greater efficiency and commitment [van den Bos 2005; Werker 2016, p. 4]. Meta-analyses of studies by Cohen-Charash and Spector [2001, pp. 278–321] and Colquitt et al. [2001, pp. 425–445] proved that both distributive and procedural justice exert a positive impact upon organization commitment.

Based on relationships indicated above, the relation between distributive and procedural justice, and the following dependent variables: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment, were examined.

Age is among variables impacting employees' commitment. Older employees are more committed than their younger colleagues due to the fact that they bear more responsibility, have more opportunities to satisfy their need for development, and are tasked with more demanding jobs than their younger counterparts, who when entering a position, are tasked with less stimulating and ambitious ones.

Research results into the relationship between organization commitment and employees' age are ambiguous. Rhodes [1983, pp. 323–367] reviewed 21 studies which assessed relations between commitment and age of employees in various professions, sectors of economy, and organizations. 80% of results indicated a positive relationship between chronological age and organization commitment. The remaining ones did not reveal a relationship between the two.

In relation to the above, three hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There exist statistically significant differences in the perception of procedural and distributive justice among age-diversified employees.

H2: There exist statistically significant differences in affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment among age-diversified employees.

H3: There exist differences between the impact of procedural and distributive justice upon the intensity of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment among age-diversified employees.

#### **4. Methodology**

The study encompassed the professionally active, employed in large and medium Polish companies (57 enterprises), serving various functions in the organization. Sampling was purposive. The study encompassed 2,076 respondents. Those below 30 years of age, and those above 50 were selected for evaluation. Ultimately, the sample totaled 1,075. Group I (those up to 30 years of age) totaled 555, 55% of whom consisted of women. Average age in the group amounted to 26.5, and average employment period to 4.6 years. Group II (those above 50 years of age) consisted of 520, 43% of whom were women. Average age in the group amounted to 55, and average employment period to 32 years.

In order to determine organization commitment, a Polish version of Meyer and Allen's scale was adopted. Procedural justice was assessed on the basis of respond-

ents' answers to the following statement: "procedures forming the basis for decisions made in the organization are fair". Distributive justice was assessed on the basis of answers to the following statement: "my salary reflects my work effort".

## 5. Research results

Respondents in each group assessed their feeling of procedural justice as average. In the first group, the average score amounted to 3.19 (SD=0.979). In the second, it totaled 3.39 (SD=0.950). For distributive justice the difference in the average score was slightly greater. In the younger age group, it amounted to  $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=1.111$ , and in the older group,  $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=1.126$ . These differences in average scores are statistically significant as far as both types of justice are concerned (student's t-test for independent samples,  $p<0.05$ ). Average scores for employees' commitment are compiled in the table below.

Table 1. Employees' commitment – average scores

	Group I (up to 30 years of age)				Group II (above 50 years of age)			
	M	SD	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Min.	Max.
<i>affective commitment</i>	6.25	2.102	2.00	10.00	7.40	1.703	2.00	10.00
<i>continuance commitment</i>	2.90	1.255	1.00	5.00	3.71	1.189	1.00	5.00
<i>normative commitment</i>	7.80	1.805	2.00	10.00	8.60	1.444	2.00	10.00

Source: Author's own study.

The comparison of average scores by means of student's t-test for independent samples indicated that differences in the scores of younger and older age groups were statistically significant ( $p<0.05$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Based on research results, a premise was made that Hypothesis I and II were verified. Age constitutes a discriminatory variable both for procedural and distributive justice. There exist statistically significant differences between scores in older and younger age groups as far as the examined types of commitment are concerned. The fact that in each case, scores noted by older employees are higher, is noteworthy. In order to verify Hypothesis III, a multivariate analysis of regression was applied. In case of affective commitment, a statistically significant F value was observed both in the younger ( $F(2.547) = 28.65$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and older age groups ( $F(2.507) = 59.30$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This acknowledges the fact that the model sufficiently explains the intensity of affective commitment with regard to distributive and procedural justice. The adjusted  $R^2$  differs in both groups, which confirms that the perception of procedural and distributive justice is more significant for senior employees (both predictors account for 18.6% of variance with regard to affective commitment).

In addition, the model sufficiently explains the variability of continuance commitment in both age groups (F statistically significant in both cases). The adjusted

$R^2$  indicates that procedural and distributive justice are responsible for 39.5% of continuance commitment variance in the younger age group, and for 34% in the older group.

The feeling of procedural and distributive justice influences the intensity of normative commitment in both groups. The feeling of procedural and distributive justice is responsible for 17.2% of normative commitment variance in the younger age group. Analogically, 11.1% of normative commitment variance in the older age group is associated with the feeling of fairness. The relationship between predictors and dependent variables in each of the groups is positive. This allows for an observation that changes in the perception of procedural justice in each of the groups will result in the increase of affective commitment (younger age group –  $\beta=0.5$ ; older age group –  $\beta=0.7$ ), to be made. The intensification of continuance commitment emerges along with the change in the perception of distributive justice (younger employees –  $\beta=0.6$ ; older employees –  $\beta=0.5$ ). In case of normative commitment,  $\beta$  value indicates that with regard to younger employees, the perception of procedural justice is significant ( $\beta=0.6$ ). In case of the older age group,  $\beta$  value was lower ( $\beta=0.3$  for procedural and distributive justice). This means that positive changes in the perception of both types of justice in this age group will have considerably less influence upon normative commitment.

## Conclusions

The objective of the present study was to determine the impact of procedural and distributive justice upon organization commitment of age-diversified employees. Results of the study proved that both types of justice exert a positive impact upon each type of commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) regardless of respondents' age. Therefore, a claim can be made that changes in the perception of organizational justice will translate into changes in the intensity of employees' commitment. A boost in the level of commitment motivated by the feeling of organizational justice is ascribed to the intention of reciprocating for being treated properly [Saks 2006, pp. 600–619].

Affective commitment is primarily influenced by the feeling of procedural justice, i.e. a subjective perception of decision-making methods in the organization. As indicated by Folger and Konovsky [1989, pp. 115–130], people attach considerable significance to organizational procedures. This is manifested in the long-term perspective of organization commitment and trust for people managing the organization. Procedures stabilize employees' operations and offer security. Their perception as just decreases the feeling of insecurity as far as the integrity of practices applied by the organization is concerned, and improves the positive assessment of employee-organization relationships which will be made in the future. The need for a fair division of organizational goods, and the feeling of fairness in remuneration, impacts

continuance commitment. This is true for both age groups. However, a greater impact is to be expected with regard to younger employees.

The present study constitutes a further confirmation of the role the perception plays in employees' functioning (which has been highlighted on several occasions in literature). Organizational justice does not exist objectively. It emerges from individual assessments of a situation. The management may attempt to rationalize the perception by procedures, their existence in the organization, dissemination of information on these, and means of their application. Paré and Tremblay [2007, pp. 326–357] observed that HRM practices play a decisive role in the development of the feeling of fairness. Results of several studies are available which confirm the relationship between HRM practices and the perception of organizational justice, especially of the procedural type. This ought to constitute a signal for the management sending the message that if they want to develop employees' commitment, they ought to ensure the quality of procedures.

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### **The Impact of Procedural and Distributive Justice upon Organization Commitment of Age-Diversified Employees. Research Results**

The objective of the paper was to determine the impact of procedural and distributive justice upon organization commitment of age-diversified employees. The objective was achieved in the course of a study encompassing two employees' age groups: the first, consisting of people aged below 30 (N=555), the second, encompassing those aged above 50 (N=520). Respondents were employed in large and medium Polish companies. Results of the study allow to conclude that regardless of respondents' age, the change in the perception of organizational justice will exert a positive impact upon organization commitment. The intensity of affective commitment is influenced primarily by procedural justice (in both age groups). Regardless of employees' age, continuance commitment depends upon the perception of distributive justice.

### **Wpływ poczucia sprawiedliwości proceduralnej i dystrybucyjnej na poziom zaangażowania organizacyjnego pracowników w różnym wieku. Wyniki badań**

Celem artykułu było określenie wpływu poczucia sprawiedliwości proceduralnej i dystrybucyjnej na poziom zaangażowania (*organization commitment*) pracowników w różnym wieku. Do realizacji tak postawionego celu przeprowadzono badania w dwóch grupach pracowników: do 30 roku życia (N=555) i powyżej 50 roku życia (N=520), zatrudnionych w 57 dużych i średnich polskich przedsiębiorstwach. Wyniki badań pozwalają na stwierdzenie, że niezależnie od wieku badanych, zmiana postrzegania sprawiedliwości organizacyjnej wpłynie na pozytywne zmiany w poziomie *organization commitment*. Na poziom *affective commitment* wpływa przede wszystkim poczucie sprawiedliwości proceduralnej (w obu badanych grupach wiekowych). Niezależnie od wieku badanych, poziom *continuance commitment* uzależniony jest od postrzegania sprawiedliwości dystrybucyjnej.