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CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOYALTY AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

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The article aims at conceptualizing the notions of organizational loyalty and organizational commitment, from a psychological perspective. The paper carries out an in-depth analysis of the literature on the two notions, starting from the definitions in dictionaries, as well as from studies dedicated to the subject. Also, various theoretical perspectives on organizational loyalty and commitment, coming from Romanian, Russian and international literature, are presented, highlighting such dimensions as attachment to the organization, identification with its values and the desire to contribute to the achievement of common objectives. Based on the analysis of literature, the article proposes a conceptual delimitation between engagement and loyalty, highlighting both the common elements and the differences between them.

Keywords: *loyalty, organizational commitment, organizational culture, human resources management, personnel retention*.

DELIMITĂRI CONCEPTUALE DINTRE LOIALITATE ȘI ANGAJAMENT ORGANIZAȚIONAL

Articolul vizează conceptualizarea noțiunilor de loialitate organizațională și angajament organizațional, din perspectiva psihologică. Lucrarea realizează o analiză aprofundată a literaturii de specialitate privind cele două noțiuni, pornind de la definițiile din dicționare, precum și din studii consacrate subiectului. De asemenea, sunt prezentate diferite perspective teoretice asupra loialității organizaționale și angajamentului, provenite din literatura română, rusă și internațională, care evidențiază dimensiuni precum atașamentul față de organizație, identificarea cu valorile acesteia și dorința de a contribui la atingerea obiectivelor comune. Pe baza analizei literaturii, articolul propune o delimitare conceptuală între angajament și loialitate, evidențiind atât elementele comune, cât și diferențele dintre acestea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *loialitate, angajament organizațional, cultura organizațională, managementul resurselor umane, retenția de personal*.

Introduction

The labor market in the Republic of Moldova faces challenges both in attracting human resources and in creating a positive attitude toward the workplace, so that the employee is actively involved in achieving the organization's performance. More and more employers are concerned about the loyalty of employees, capitalizing on their potential in order to achieve the institution's goals. This is also due to a massive exodus of the population since 2000, against the backdrop of socio-economic crises in the country [3, p. 60]. Thus, challenges in the field of human resources increase the need for management teams to identify and manage situations related to the loyalty of the employed staff. "In order to meet the demands of the labor market, companies can capitalize on several concepts that guarantee better employee retention: Motivation, involvement, job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, etc [3, p. 60].

Researches (Holtom, Mitchell,Thomas şi Eberly, 2008; Comşa, 2008) indicates that organizational commitment and loyalty correlate positively with performance, staff retention, work involvement, leadership confidence and professional satisfaction, constituting relevant predictors of the intention to leave the organization, even stronger than job satisfaction. Low levels of these variables are associated with absenteeism, psychological distancing, and increased recruitment and training costs [1, 3, 4, 7, 21, apud 10].

In this organizational context marked by high professional mobility and instability, the analysis of commitment and loyalty becomes essential for understanding and supporting organizational sustainability.

To define the phenomenon in the literature, various terms are used, including loyalty, commitment,

devotion and fidelity. Although notions are often used as synonyms and can be replaced by each other, there are small conceptual differences that nuance certain aspects specific to each notion. In this article, we will refer to the conceptual delimitation between “commitment” and “loyalty” in particular, given the most widespread notions used in the literature in the Romanian area when talking about the organizational environment.

Organizational engagement research

Research on organizational engagement has been gaining since the 70s. Among the first studies we can delineate the research conducted by american professors Richard T. Mowday, Richard Steers and Lyman Porter [13] and canadian professors John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen [12]. During this period, the scales for measuring organizational commitment were founded, which became classics in organizational psychology. We can also mention the achievements of sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1961), who makes one of the first classifications of commitment: moral, egoistic, imposed, based on “the criterion of compliance with the directives of the organization to which individuals belong” [apud 10].

According to the researchers who laid the foundation for this concept, we can describe organizational commitment as “loyalty to an organization, identification with an organization, and willingness to engage in an organization” [13].

Delineating the differences is all the more challenging, as translations from literature from other languages also use the terms interchangeably. Thus, in English literature we observe the frequent use of the terms “commitment” and “loyalty”. The associated notions and descriptions, such as the types of commitment: affective, normative and continuity, can be found in some research and in the description of the concept of affective, normative and continuity loyalty [20].

If we appeal to the definitions in the Romanian language dictionaries, we will identify the following meanings:

- „**Commitment** - *1. Promise to accomplish something. 2. Employment of someone in a job; (concr.) a contract whereby a person makes his services available to another person or institution and provides for the conditions of employment*” [2].

- „**Commitment** - *1. An obligation taken by someone, on his own initiative, to do something; a solemn promise*” [9].

Brown in 1996 [apud 5] proposes a linguistic analysis of the concept of “**commitment**”. It gives the following meaning to the term: “*A pledge, a promise, or an obligation of a certain type.*” The term is usually used to describe *“the state of a person who has decided with another party in relation to a future event.*” We can say that the commitment functions as a “guarantee” for the organization, thanks to which short-term fluctuations in the attitudes or dispositions of the dedicated person do not lead to sudden changes in his or her behavior related to the conditions for fulfilling the obligations.

In the English explanatory dictionaries, „commitment” is defined as follows:

- *„agreement or promise to do something in the future”, “state of obligation or emotional impulse”* [11];

- *„dedication to a cause or policy”, „obligation limiting freedom of action”* [22];

- *„the desire to devote your time and energy to something you believe in”, „the promise or firm decision to do something”, „something you must do or that requires your time”* [19].

Thus, „**organizational commitment**” represents a *„set of internal obligations assumed by the employee toward his organization, a state of devotion and involvement in the organization's activity”*. Allen and Mayer [12] stated that commitment can be empirically defined as *„a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization”*. In other sources, translated from English into Romanian, we identify that organizational commitment is regarded as:

- *„an obligation taken on its own initiative to carry out something or an agreement on the part of employees regarding the goals and objectives of an organization and the willingness to work toward those goals and objectivesâ”* [21];

- *„organizational commitment is the willingness of the individual to engage consistently and continuously in the activities of the organization”* [18];

- *„the power with which an individual identifies and engages in a particular organization, characterized by three factors such as: belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; willingness to make an effort; a strong desire to remain a member of the organization"* [3].

Organizational engagement studies mention that this phenomenon usually occurs when individuals identify with the organization's goals and values and strive to achieve them [6] the commitment is due to „a combination of work experiences, perceptions of the organization and personal characteristics, leading to positive feelings toward the organization" [13]. Some studies also reveal the causal relationship between the level of engagement and the person's position in the organizational structure, their age and period of working [3].

In addition to the behavioral dimension, some researchers such as Mowday and colab. (1982) have also integrated the attitudinal component. From their perspective, attitudinal and behavioral engagement influence each other, which means that "engaged attitudes lead to engaged behaviors, and to reduce internal inconsistencies between what one says and what one does, engaged behaviors contribute to the formation of engaged attitudes." [3]

Analyzing the literature devoted to organizational commitment, A. Reichers points out that there are three dominant ways of conceptualizing this commitment [apud 1]:

- *„as a function of the rewards and costs associated with the individual's departure from the organization"*;
- *„the connection of the individual with his or her behavior"*;
- *„a dimension that reflects the willingness of the employee to work for the organization and to accept its goals".*

J. Meyer and N. Allen [12] have distinguished themselves by creating a comprehensive classification of organizational commitment, which includes the types: affective, continuous and normative. The affective component „reflects the employee's emotional attachment to the organization, identification with and involvement in it". Organizational commitment to continuity involves staff retention by involving the benefits provided by the organization, which are positively assessed by employees (their forms may vary from one institution to another, such as: opportunities for personal and professional development, career advancement opportunities, performance degrees and other facilities, etc.). As for the normative component, here we refer to „the feeling of obligation that the employee has toward the organization, which is why he will remain loyal" [12].

Organizational loyalty research: Organizational loyalty is one of the fundamental concepts in the field of human resources and organizational behavior. In the literature, this concept has been approached from various perspectives: psychological, managerial, sociological and behavioral, which has led to a diversity of definitions and explanatory models. To build a comprehensive understanding, it is useful to examine the different definitions proposed by researchers. Starting from the explanations given in the Romanian language dictionaries and in the literature, organizational loyalty can be defined in the following ways:

- „***Loyal*** - *the ability to be loyal, honest*" [2].
- „***Loyalty****, loyalty, gratitude, and devotion to an authoritative person, benefactor, institution, or collective; by extension, a way of being open, honest, trustworthy*" [15].
- "***Loyal*** – *who fulfills with honor the obligations assumed; honest, leal*" [2].

A similar perspective is found in russian literature dictionaries, in which the adjective loyal is attributed the meaning of: *„compassionate, human, welcoming, sincere and benevolent"* [5]. In international resources we find other explanations of the concept "**loyalty**" as:

- *„an individual's perception that both sides of a relationship have met their mutual expectations that denote lasting attachment between two parties. It involves self-sacrifice in the face of alternatives. They are loaded with debt obligations"*;
- *„a member's devotion to the group, lack of criticism of the group's work, and sustained work for the future of their group"*;
- *„adherence to a social unit of which the individual is a part, as well as its purposes, symbols and beliefs"*;
- *„adherence to group rules, fairness, truth in relation to group members"* [6];
- *„showing low interest in personal well-being for the group"*;
- *„the intention or desire of employees to maintain their membership in the organization, to participate enthusiastically and to make a sustained effort to achieve its objectives"* [20];

Below we present examples of definitions of loyalty found in russian literature [5], where:

- *“**Loyalty** shows a positive, benevolent, fair, respectful and honest attitude toward the company, its leaders and colleagues, compliance with existing corporate rules, norms, prescriptions and codes, even in case of disagreement with them; There is devotion in all his thoughts and initiatives”* (Korosteleva, 2004).

- *“**Loyalty** is the kind and respectful attitude of the employee toward both the management of the company and the decisions taken by it, as well as the willingness to comply with the management’s instructions even in the event of disagreement with them”* (Kalabin, 2004).

-*“**Loyalty** presents employee satisfaction with working conditions, reward, development and prospects collectively, as well as protection against external threats”* (Staroverov, 2006) [apud 5].

We can say that loyal people can be characterized as those members of the organization who stay with it even in times of major difficulty, without ignoring or abandoning it in crisis situations. Organizational loyalty is manifested when the employee is willing to contribute to the well-being of the organization and, in certain situations, even subordinate his personal interests in order to strengthen the relationship with it. „Business organizations claim that the optimal form of loyalty is that in which both the company and employees obtain mutual benefits” [4].

Organizational commitment is „an attitude expressed by the employee that determines his desire to remain a member of the organization” [3]. This attitude is often the result of concrete actions and loyalty systems organized within the institution, processes that encourage the creation of an organizational culture oriented toward collegiality and collaboration. „It is cultures that encourage trust in leadership and employee empowerment that create engagement, and cultures that focus solely on profit that tend to reduce engagement” [3]. Speaking of the similarities and differences between the concepts of loyalty and commitment, we can summarize them as follows:

Table 1. Conceptual similarities and differences

Commitment	Common aspects	Loyalty
- a conscious and voluntary attitude of the employee to get involved in the work of the organization - taking on professional responsibilities - making decisions that are oriented toward the good of the organization - it involves a form of internal obligation in the sense that the employee feels responsible for his role and the contribution he makes to the organization - involves active involvement in professional activities and participation in organizational processes	- willingness of the employee to work for the benefit of the team and the organization. - reflects the orientation of the individual toward cooperation, the contribution to achieving the objectives of the organization - a favorable attitude toward the organization persists - openness to harness personal skills and resources for the collective good	- refers to the attachment to the values, principles and identity of the organization. - it involves adherence to institutional values - identification of the employee with the organization and its organizational culture. - the presence of a pronounced affective component - a sense of belonging and a desire to maintain a long-term relationship with the organization persists. - form of loyalty to the organization, in which the employee either resonates intensively or internalizes the values and objectives of the institution

Conclusions

The common aspects between commitment and loyalty are reflected in the employee’s willingness to work for the benefit of the team and the organization. Both commitment and loyalty express the individual’s orientation toward cooperation, contributing to the achievement of common goals and supporting the organization in its activities. However, commitment is more related to taking responsibility, while loyalty is

more associated with affective attachment and identification with organizational values. In both cases, the employee demonstrates a favorable attitude toward the organization and is willing to use their personal skills and resources for the collective good. We can consider organizational commitment and loyalty as two distinct components that are nevertheless closely related in meaning.

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