THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL SAFETY CLIMATE: A QUANTITATIVE CORRELATIONAL STUDY

by

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this non-experimental correlational study was to investigate the extent to which there is a relationship between the variables of affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate (and its constructs). The survey instrument included the TCM Organizational Commitment Survey as well as the NOSACQ-50 and was distributed via SurveyMonkey to employees within the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry. The survey was completed by 235 respondents, however 32 responses were eliminated due to the exclusion criteria, and thus 203 surveys were analyzed. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine relationships among variables. The results found statistically significant positive correlations at the p=0.01 level between the variables of affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate as well as between affective organizational commitment and all of the constructs of organizational safety climate. These correlational relationships ranged from moderate 0.272 for the relationship between affective commitment and workers' safety priority and risk non-acceptance to large 0.476 for the relationship between affective commitment and safety communication, learning, and trust in co-workers safety competence. The implications of this study suggest that there is a correlation between affective commitment and organizational safety climate and strength in one area tends to lend itself to strength in the other. Future research should be performed to further evaluate possible relationships of other types of organizational commitment and to evaluate possible differences due to management or non-management status or due to different segments within the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children Madeline and McKenna. An endeavor such as this is never undertaken alone. Their patience and sacrifice has enabled me to fulfill my dream. I know that you are both destined for greatness and hope that my journey is an example of how you should always follow your dreams.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my parents, Kelton and Linda Farris. Thank you for your unconditional love, support, and occasional kick in the pants (in the form of mandatory working sessions during my visits home). Most of all, thank you for being examples of how hard work, determination, and perseverance can help create the life you want.

Finally, I would like to thank my amazing family and friends for helping me get through this latest adventure. Their support and encouragement over the past three and a half years has been nothing short of miraculous. It really does take a village, and I have one of the best! I am humbled.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

An employee's commitment includes both attitudinal and behavioral components that results in the extent to which an employee wants to remain with a company (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Organizational commitment can be divided into three types: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. These three types of commitment characterize the desire to remain with a company, the need to stay with a company, and the obligation to stay with the company, respectively (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Aspects of affective organizational commitment are affected by organizational components such as trust, leadership style, and equity of rewards (Morrow, 2011). These components have some overlap with components that can affect other organizational factors such as safety climate.

Workplace safety is often one of the major concerns of organizations (Clarke, 2010). Each year, safety incidents result in fatalities, injuries, decreased productivity, and rework. Traditionally, improvements in safety programs have focused on process improvements and engineering controls to minimize safety risk. Recent literature indicates that organizational safety climate plays an important role in the likelihood of safety compliance (Clarke, 2006b). Because of this, organizations are beginning to investigate ways that they can strengthen organizational safety climate within their

organizations and work groups in order to work proactively to minimize the likelihood of safety incidence.

The U.S. Leisure and Hospitality industry is comprised of a number of occupations including food service, hotels and motels, and arts and entertainment (such as amusement parks and theater companies) (Bureau of Labor Statistics., 2013a). Injuries in the leisure and hospitality industry as a whole are approximately the same as general U.S. industry at about 100 injuries per 10,000 FTE (full time employees)(Bureau of Labor Statistics., 2013a). Buchanan, et al (2010) note injuries among hotel workers, a subset of the leisure and hospitality industry which includes hotel housekeepers, cooks/kitchen workers, stewards/dishwashers, and banquet servers, were as high as 5.2 injuries per 100 worker-years. These injury rates among hotel workers are due, in part to the hazards present in the job including awkward postures, the application of forces, and repetitive manual handling (Ware, Subramanian, & Fernandez 2013).

This study investigated the possibility of a correlation between affective organizational commitment and safety climate for employees within the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry, as well as the possibility of a correlation between affective commitment and the seven components of organizational safety climate within this same population.

Background of the Study

An employee's commitment to an organization plays a role in their job performance. Meyer and Allen (1991) assert that organization commitment is a three-part concept that includes an employee's desire to remain with an organization, their need

10

to remain with an organization and their obligation to remain with an organization.

These three concepts are characterized as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment, respectively. Previous research related to affective organizational commitment is based on the assumption that it is a result of satisfying experiences. Meyer and Allen also note several factors play a role in affective commitment including equity in rewards, organizational support, supervisor commitment, fairness of performance-based rewards, and participation in decision making. Additionally, Costa (2003) found a statistically significant positive relationship between attitudinal (affective) commitment to an organization and trust. Continuance commitment is often characterized as a type of cost-benefit analysis where the employee weighs the costs of carrying on with an organization against the costs of leaving. Sub and Kleiner (2010) describe this as a recognition of the economic disadvantages associated with leaving an organization. Contributing factors for normative commitment primarily consist of the feeling of obligation that may exist based on investments made by the organization in an individual (such as training or education) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). One way to measure organizational commitment including affective, continuance, and normative commitment is by using the Three Component Model (TCM) Employee Commitment Survey developed by Meyer and Allen (2004).

Workplace safety has been one of the major concerns of organizations (Clarke, 2010). The U.S. government has enforced laws protecting employees from workplace accidents. Thus, organizations have focused on ensuring the safety of workers during work hours. Although safety programs and compliance are often initiated by

organizations, there is a need to have support and involvement from their employees in order to ensure the overall safety within the workplace. Research has found that both organizational and cultural factors play a role in workplace accidents (Meliá, Mearns, Silva, & Lima, 2008; Seo, Torabi, Blair, & Ellis, 2004). These factors make up the organizational safety climate and can include management safety priority, commitment, and competence; management safety empowerment; management safety justice; workers safety commitment; workers safety priority and risk non-acceptance; safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence; and workers trust in the efficacy of safety systems (Kines et al., 2011). One way to measure organizational safety climate including the constructs previously mentioned is by using the Nordic Safety Climate Questionnaire (NOSACQ-50) developed by Kines, Lappalainen, Mikkelsen, Olsen, Pousette, Tharaldsen, Tomasson, and Torner (2011).

An adequate knowledge of the relationship between affective organizational commitment and safety climate may provide insight into some aspects of accident risk within an organization. Specifically, this study considered the investigation of affective organizational commitment as a correlational factor related to organizational safety climate. Affective organizational commitment was selected due to the influence of the constructs related to trust, empowerment, supervisor commitment and equity of rewards (Costa, 2003; Meyer et al., 1993). Clark (2006a) noted that the more positive the organizational safety climate, the fewer safety incidents that were observed. With knowledge of the possibility of a correlational relationship of organizational commitment and safety climate, changes may be made to improve the support of employees as well as

12

employee involvement and thus have a positive impact on reducing the risk of incidents and improving affective organizational commitment.

The identification of a correlational role between affective organizational commitment and aspects of safety climate can assist in minimizing safety risk by identifying opportunities for improvement, and implementing changes to improve both organizational commitment and minimize the detrimental impact of a negative safety climate while capitalizing on the positive impact of both positive affective commitment and an affirmative safety climate.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between workers' affective organizational commitment and their perception of organizational safety climate as measured by the TCM Employee Commitment scale and the NOSACQ-50 index, respectively, resulting in increased worker turnover and increases in the frequency of safety incidences possibly resulting in OSHA lost time injuries and costs related to cleanup, low quality, and increased rework.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational research study was to evaluate the relationship between the variables of affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate. Organizational commitment considered affective commitment while the organizational safety climate involved seven constructs. The focus of this study was to gather survey responses from employees of the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry to measure employee organizational commitment and perceived

organizational safety climate. The variable related to organizational commitment was affective commitment and was measured by the TCM Employee Commitment Scale. The variable related to safety climate was measured by the NOSACQ-50 includes organizational safety climate, as well as seven constructs which are management safety priority, commitment, and competence; management safety empowerment; management safety justice; workers safety commitment; workers safety priority and risk non-acceptance; safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence; and workers trust in the efficacy of safety systems. The relationship between affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate (and its constructs) was investigated to ensure that leaders and employees alike can identify opportunities to improve workplace safety and affective organizational commitment within their organizations.

Rationale

The study employed a non-experimental quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships between variables of organizational commitment and organizational safety climate (and its constructs). A survey was used to gather responses of participants. One way to gain information related to the opinions and experiences of individuals that represent a larger population is through the use of a survey (Groves et al., 2009). The design of a survey study is suited to answering these research questions since both variables (affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate) and their constructs use individual responses to describe characteristics of a larger, similar population.

The survey study used two instruments, the TCM Employee Commitment Survey developed by Meyer and Allen (2004) and the NOSACQ-50 originally developed by Kines et al. (2011). Both instruments use a survey format that provides a statement where respondents are asked to select a number that represents their level of agreement on a Likert-type scale. Likert-type scales allow responses based on a continuum, these responses can, thus, be considered interval values (Stafford & Robinson-Kurpius, 2005). Therefore, the use of statistical data analysis techniques such as correlation analyses is appropriate (Vogt, 2007) to address the research questions posed in this study.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study aimed to identify the existence of correlations between variables related to affective commitment, safety climate, and the seven constructs of safety climate. Survey respondents worked in the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry for a time period greater than 1 month. The specific research questions in this study are as follows:

RQ1: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate?

RQ2: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and management safety priority, commitment, and competence?

RQ3: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and management safety empowerment?

RQ4: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and management safety justice?

RQ5: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and workers' safety commitment?

RQ6: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and workers' safety priority and risk non-acceptance?

RQ7: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence?

RQ8: To what extent, if any, does a relationship exist between affective organizational commitment and the workers' trust and efficacy of safety systems?

Definitions of the terms used in the research questions are fully defined in the definition of terms section.

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses that were examined in this study:

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and organizational safety climate.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and organizational safety climate.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety priority, commitment, and competence.

16

H_2: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety priority, commitment, and competence.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety empowerment.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety empowerment.

H_{o4}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety justice.

H_4: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and management safety justice.

H_{o5}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' safety commitment.

H_5: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' safety commitment.

H_{o6}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' safety priority and risk non-acceptance.

H_6: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' safety priority and risk non-acceptance.

H_{o7}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence.

17

H_7: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence.

H_{08}: There is no significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' trust in the efficacy of safety systems.

H_8: There is a significant relationship between the construct of affective commitment and workers' trust in the efficacy of safety systems.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for organizations, specifically for organization leaders and employees, because it further characterized the relationship of affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate through the identification of correlations. Through identifying these relationships between variables, organization leaders could improve on existing policies and programs which could enhance affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate of employees. Additionally, the results of this study add to the body of research through determining whether a specific organizational factor, the affective commitment of employees, relates to the safety climate within the U.S. leisure and hospitality industry. Knowing the existence of these relationships and whether they are positively or negatively correlated can assist researchers in identifying areas for future investigation and can assist leaders in enhancing the safety climate and employee commitment within organizations in the leisure and hospitality industry.

The results of this research are particularly significant to the field of organization and management to the extent that they provide researchers with information related to any relationships that may exist between affective organizational commitment and organizational safety climate. Managers and other leaders may use the results of this research to make decisions related to communication, motivation, and training strategies that will encourage both affective commitment and organizational safety climate.

Definition of terms.

Ten variables and constructs were considered in the context of this study, they are defined as follows:

Affective Commitment "refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Affective commitment is increased when work-related experiences are consistent with an individual's personal beliefs and expectations.

Management safety empowerment is defined as the extent to which managements conveys trust in employees by delegating decision making authority in some aspects of safety to the employee (Kines et al., 2011).

Management safety justice is defined as the level of consistency and fairness between safety procedures, actions, and consequences related to incidences or near-incidences (Kines et al., 2011).

Management safety priority, commitment, and competence is the extent to which employees view the actions of management as demonstrating safety priority, safety commitment, and safety competence (Kines et al., 2011).

19

Organizational Commitment is defined as a psychological state that "can reflect a desire, a need, and/or an obligation to maintain membership in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 62). It is comprised of three aspects. These three aspects consider the extent to which an individual desires to remain in an organization (affective commitment), an evaluation of the costs related to leaving the organization (continuance commitment), and assessment of the obligations to stay in the organization (normative commitment).

Safety Climate is defined by Neal and Griffin (2006) as "individual perceptions of policies, procedures, and practices relating to safety in the workplace" (pp. 946-947). This definition is consistent with previous research by Zohar (1980), Denison (1996), and Clarke (2006a).

Safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence is defined as the two way communication between managers or organizational representatives and employees regarding safety (Kines et al., 2011).

Workers' safety commitment is related to worker safety priority and defined as the extent to which workers are committed to creating and working in a safe environment (Kines et al., 2011).

Workers' safety priority and risk non-acceptance is defined as the priority that a worker puts on safety and the level of risk that they are not willing to accept (Kines et al., 2011).

Workers' trust in the efficacy of safety systems is defined as the extent to which the systems of safety including items such as safety teams, safety inspections and walkthroughs, and safety training are deemed effective (Kines et al., 2011).

Assumptions and Limitations

The following theoretical assumptions were made in the context of this study:

1. This study assumes that safety climate is determined by the following seven constructs management safety priority, commitment, and competence; management safety empowerment; management safety justice; workers safety commitment; workers safety priority and risk non-acceptance; safety communication, learning, and trust in co-worker safety competence; workers trust in the efficacy of safety systems.

2. This study assumes that safety climate is based on individual's perceptions of related constructs in the workplace.

3. This study assumes that safety climate and organizational commitment can be accurately evaluated by individuals who have been employed with an organization longer than 1 month.

4. Based on the contributing factors stated in literature, it is less likely that continuance and normative commitment were correlated to safety climate. As such, it is assumed that there is no correlation between continuance commitment or normative commitment and safety climate or its seven constructs.

The following topical assumptions were made in the context of this study:

1. Improvements in organizational safety climate (and its constructs) can improve the overall safety of an organization.

21

2. Improvements to certain types of organizational commitment (such as affective and normative commitment) can decrease worker turnover.

3. If management is aware of areas of opportunity to improve commitment and safety climate, it is assumed they will try to make decisions that strengthen those areas, and in turn, improve both organizational commitment and organizational safety climate.

The following methodological assumptions were made in the context of this study:

1. Survey participants provided honest feedback to the best of their ability.

2. Survey participants had similar opinions related to organizational commitment and organizational safety climate to those participants who are invited to participate, but did not.

Survey participants are representative of the working population in the U.S. Leisure and Hospitality industry and their opinions related to employee organizational commitment and organizational safety climate.

For the purposes of determining inclusion factors, it was assumed none of the participants had celebrated a birthday in the calendar year prior to taking the survey (e.g. ages were calculated based on a calculation of 2013 minus the year of birth). Additionally, since the wording of the question related to longevity of employment included entries for both years and months, all responses that included 1 month or less of employment were excluded, since there is a chance that individuals may round up to one month after only two weeks of employment.