

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AS DETERMINANTS OF THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION RELATIONSHIP. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES IN POLAND ¹

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Abstract

The paper presents empirical evidence of the research on the relationship (fit) between employees and organizations in contemporary companies. The purpose of this study is to diagnose the dominant type of person-organization relationship and the link between the socio-demographic characteristics of employees and their types of relationship with organizations. The subject of the analysis is the correlation between the type of relationship and the following socio-demographic characteristics: gender, age, tenure, and job position. The results show that the contemporary type of relationship is the dominant one, and socio-demographic characteristics are directly linked with the type of employee-organization relationship.

Key words: employee-organization relationship, employment relations, socio-demographic characteristics, organizational behavior

Introduction

Nowadays, the role of organizations in the everyday life of every human being is greater than ever before. We are customers and members of organizations from the moment we are born until we die (Giddens, 2004). It is man (the employee) with his respective responsibilities, ambitions and emotions, who is the most sensitive and the most conscious part of the organization. The employee is the subject of organizational influence, and at the same time he shapes it through his work. Employee-organization relationships regularly undergo changes. They have transformed from people performing almost slave labor (Whyte, 1956) to being highly qualified and well-paid professionals. People have become more than “hands” or “temporary role occupants”. They increasingly represent valuable “intellectual property” (Handy, 1996). As the role of human capital changes (grows) and organizations operate in a different environment than 50 or 60 years ago, it becomes necessary to change not only management methods (Dolan, Garcia, 2002) but the employee-organization relationship as well. Most papers and research findings on person-organization fit concentrate on variables which determine organizational behavior, like commitment, intention to stay, or job satisfaction (Guan et al., 2010; Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009; Leng & Chin, 2016).

They do not deal with the problem of the character of the relationship or the characteristics of the employees. Additionally, most of them are based on research which was conducted in the USA or other highly developed countries. Therefore, to overcome the limitations of previous studies, the present study aims to investigate the types of person-organization relationship and their correlation with socio-demographic characteristics of employees. It is important to underline

that Poland’s economy and business and management culture have been developing for quite a short time, since the collapse of the communist regime. The free market started to be developed in 1989 with great success (Faris, 2013).

The Employee-Organization Relationship

The employee-organization relationship is the subject of research from different perspectives using different models to analyze this phenomenon. Tsui et al. constructed a two-factor EOR framework comprising contributions that employees make and the inducements offered to employees. Using these exchange rules and resources, one can conceptualize employee-organization exchange relationships (Tsui et al, 1997). Along these two dimensions, but from the viewpoint of employees, employee resources can be categorized as specific, narrow, and often short-term contributions versus broadly defined and open-ended contributions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This seems to be a popular model among researchers but it is not the only one. Shore et al. examined the relationships as social and economic exchanges, finding that reciprocation wariness moderated the relations that social exchange had with commitment, turnover intentions, and trust, and the relations that economic exchange had with turnover intentions (Shore et al., 2009). Hattori uses a narrow attitude to employee-organization relationships and underlines long-term employment as a core element of it (Hattori, 2007). Although the employee-organization relationship gained popularity in large part due to changes in the organization environment, it is rarely analyzed from the perspective of different types of EOR.

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Research Background

In the research, three dominant types of relationship were defined: traditional contemporary and future. They were identified on the basis of the following criteria:

- perception of the nature of the employer-employee relationship (win-win or win-lose),
- the nature of employee employment in the organization (employed only in this company or also employed in another firm – multi-employment)
- the basics of building an employee’s identity (what does the employee identify with: company, job, competences?),
- the employee’s willingness for long-term employment (how long does he plan to stay in the company?),
- the employee’s tolerance of uncertainty (certainty or uncertainty oriented)

Using the above listed criteria, three model types of employee-organization relationship can be described.

Traditional Relationships

Traditional relationships have their roots in scientific management and reflect the main assumption of this theory. They are characterized by a strong intensity of the relationship between the employee and the organization. People feel they not only work in the organization, but they belong to it (they are part of it). They are employed only in one company and are not interested in multi-employment. The value and identity of employees is determined by the organization and by belonging to it. Employees see themselves through the prism of the space occupied in the organization and their professional identity built on the basis of being employed in the company, for example: "I'm a computer scientist at ZX." Employees feel that they are employed in order to achieve the objectives set by the company. The power of both sides of the relationship is unequal and it has a win-lose character. Employees realize they are a weaker part but they accept it. Employees are aware that if they fulfill the conditions set by the company, and if they are loyal to the company, they will stay with the same employer for many years. They are strongly interested in long-term employment. Because employees are certainty oriented they have a strong need for security.

Contemporary Relations

Contemporary relations result from changes which occur both in the companies’ environment and within employees. This type of employee-organization relationship is differentiated. One can observe on the market both win-win or win-lose relationships. It is the consequence of the higher level of employees’ education and changes on the job market. An employee chooses where he is employed and looks for a place where he will feel good due to the current company’s values. The employee is aware that he can work for another company and does not have to work in the company. It makes people more uncertainty oriented and feel more independent and demanding. The employee identifies with the profession, not with the organization, and builds his identity on the basis of his occupation, for example: "I'm a computer scientist!" (It does not matter in which company.) Long-term employment is no longer the employee’s goal.

Future Relationships

Future relationships do not refer to the future. They can be observed in operating companies. The name underlines the fact that this type of relationship will become popular in the future, when economic and social changes become common. This type of relationship is win-win. Employees look for an organization with a specific value system and become a temporary member. Additionally, multi-employment is also connected with the relationship being too transitional (temporary) in nature. Employees are willing and able to work for more than one company at the same time. The company’s goals are treated as a means of achieving their own personal goals. The value and identity of employees are defined by themselves, for example: "I am a specialist in solving problems." It does not refer to the company or profession. It is connected with the employee himself. The high level of education and variety of systematically developed competences

allow employees to frequently change employer, making them highly tolerant to uncertainty. Employees look for challenges and opportunities and often change roles performed in the company.

In addition to the three model types of relationship, there is also in research a fourth type, called mixed. This category consists of relationships that include elements belonging to other categories, but none of these categories is dominant enough to categorize it as traditional, contemporary or future.

It is important to verify whether there is a correlation between the type of person-organization relationship and the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees.

Socio-demographic characteristics

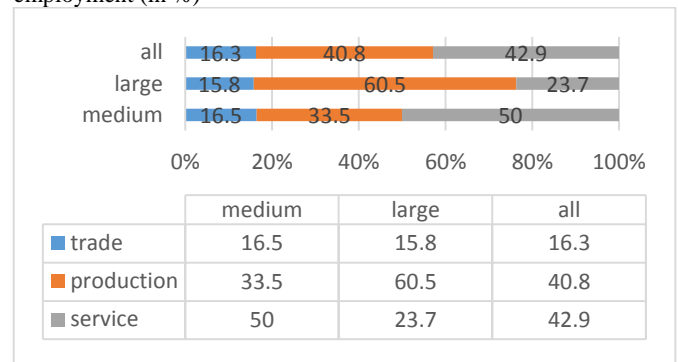
The socio-demographic characteristics considered in the research were: gender, age, tenure (seniority) and organizational position. Gender was measured as 0 = male and 1 = female. Age was measured as actual age at last birthday and grouped into five categories (less than 25, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 and more). Tenure was measured as actual length of service in the company and grouped into five categories (less than 12 months, 1-2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, more than 10 years). Organizational position was measured as 0 = managerial and 1 = non-managerial.

Method

The research was conducted in 2015 using the quantitative research method on the basis of data from 2,274 employees from 40 businesses operating on the Polish market (trade, production, service). Sampling at the enterprise level was sufficient. To qualify the company for the sample, completed questionnaires from a minimum of 20% of the company’s employees had to be received. The questionnaires were completed using one of two methods: an online survey or a paper-and-pencil survey. Prior to this process, the questionnaire was validated by an expert in the field of organizational behavior and a pilot testing stage took place. The results present the employees’ perspective i.e. how they perceive the relationships. The data was obtained from organizations of various sizes, divided into two groups: 1) Medium-size (50-249 employees) and 2) large companies (250 employees and more). See Table 1.

Final correlation and regression analysis was conducted to validate the results via SPSS.

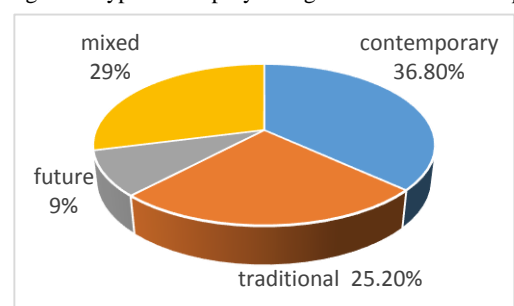
Table 1. The research sample characteristic according to branch and employment (in %)



Results

The dominant type of person-organization relationship is contemporary (36.8%), followed by mixed (29%), traditional (25.2%) and, least often, the future type of relationship (9%). See Figure 1.

Figure 1 Types of employee-organization relationship



The results of the research referring to the correlation between socio-demographic characteristic and type of employee-organization relationship are presented in Table 2. As the results of the research show **there is a statistically significant relationship** between employees' socio-demographic characteristics and the type of

employee-organization relationship. The results show that there is a significant relationship between gender and the type of relationship ($p < 0.001$ *). The dominant type of relationship is the contemporary one. It dominates among both women (32.7%) and among men (38.6%). Traditional relationships are represented by a similar percentage of respondents

Table 2 Socio-demographic characteristics and types of employee-organization relationship

Socio-demographic characteristic		Types of employee-organization relationship			
		Traditional	Contemporary	Future	Mixed
Gender ($p = 0.001$ *)	Female	25.8	32.7	7.6	34.0
	Male	24.7	38.6	9.9	26.8
Age ($p < 0.001$ *)	Less than 25	21.4	32.7	15.3	30.6
	25-34	16.1	37.3	11.3	35.3
	35-44	20.7	40.0	10.1	29.2
	45-54	27.5	34.4	6.1	32.0
	55 and more	55.2	21.0	5.0	18.8
Tenure ($p < 0.001$ *)	Less than 12 months	21.6	28.8	17.4	32.2
	1-2 years	17.7	35.4	8.1	38.8
	2-5 years	19.7	39.7	11.0	29.6
	5-10 years	23.8	38.7	8.7	28.8
	More than 10 years	34.0	35.4	5.3	25.3
Position ($p < 0.001$ *)	Managerial	21.4	29.8	16.4	32.4
	Non-Managerial	25.2	37.4	7.7	29.7

p - probability in chi-square test; * - relationship statistically significant

(approx. 25% of women and men). Sex only slightly varies the least frequently occurring type of relationship - the future one. Men (9.9%) are slightly more likely than women (7.6%) to manifest this type of relationship. The mixed type is clearly more common among women. The dominant type of relationship is also significantly associated with the employees' age ($p < 0.001$ *). The traditional type dominates among older employees. The younger the employee, the higher the share of future relationships. This is confirmed by comparing both the arithmetic average (42.3 years for traditional to 35.5 years for future) and the median (41 years and 34 years, respectively). The age of employees who have contemporary relationships is similar to that for mixed (average approx. 37 years, median - 35-36 years).

The obtained data also indicate that there is a statistically significant correlation between seniority in the company and the dominant type of employee-organization relationship ($p < 0.001$ *). Regardless of seniority, the dominant type of relationship is the contemporary one. Traditional and mixed are less common, and the rarest in all represented groups are future relationships. The prevalence of the traditional model grows with seniority in the company - the longer an employee is employed, it becomes less likely to change. The exception is the group of workers employed for less than 12 months. One can risk saying that the newcomers are interested in stability at the beginning of the relationship. An inverse relationship can be observed among employees declaring future behavior. In this case, the longer someone works for an employer, the less likely they are to exhibit this kind of behavior.

The last analyzed correlation refers to job position (managerial/non managerial). It is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ *). Regardless of the employee's job position, the most popular relationship is the contemporary one (36.1%) It should be noted that it is most often manifested by employees occupying non-managerial positions (37.4%) than managers (29.8%). On the other hand, the least likely type of relationship - the future one - is far more common among managers (16.4%) than those not occupying such positions (7.7%).

Conclusion

The results of the research let us reach a conclusion about the incremental changes in the employee-organization relationship. They become more partnership like and changing to win-win relations. The parties of the relationships come to have similar powers, which makes the cooperation more satisfying. Employees become aware of their meaning to their companies, yet at the same time more independent. They become more uncertainty-oriented, which helps them to change job and be ready to resign from long-term employment. Empowerment and employability let the employees build their identity on the basis of their competences. The evolution of employee-organization relationships lets the companies be more flexible, which is an important factor in building a competitive advantage.

A special role in shaping relationships is played by managers. Their relationships with the organization are more often of the future type than among non-managerial employees. It can be assumed that their attitudes and behavior will influence their subordinates.

Organizational leaders need to consider how individuals differ in their relationships with the company. Socio-demographic characteristics should be taken into consideration in managing employee-organization relationships.

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