

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE (PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ASPECT)

Tetiana Khraban

Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Heroiv Kruty Military Institute of Telecommunications and
Information Technologies, Ukraine

e-mail: xraban.tatyana@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-5169-5170

Summary

The aim of this article is to study the structure of organizational commitment as well as the psychological and behavioral mechanisms behind it among groups of military and civilian personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Based on the assertion that the army has an authoritarian (directive) style of management characterized by principles of unity of command and high centralization of leadership, in this work with the purpose of getting the sincere answers and reliable results the preference was given to the psycholinguistic method of research, namely, free association experiment. The results of the study proved that there are significant differences in the structure of organizational commitment when it comes to the position of individuals in the military hierarchy, that is, whether they hold a military/civilian position or are just beginning their military career as cadets. Dominant element in the structure of organizational commitment of civilian personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is affective commitment, in relation to servicemen it is continuance commitment, in relation to cadets it is normative commitment.

Key words: psychological and behavioral mechanisms, military forces, free association experiment.

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1. Introduction

The urgent need to provide the successful training and execution of armed forces combat missions has induced increased interest in the phenomenon of emotional intelligence. At present, members of the armed forces “engage with an utterly new array of cultural, intellectual, and practical challenges that did not even exist ten years ago, all requiring high emotional intelligence” (*Aguilar & George, 2019*). Emotional intelligence is becoming a fundamental component of the success and effectiveness of a military force in accomplishing its objective because it involves emotional, personal, social and survival aspects of intelligence that are more important to day-to-day functioning than the more traditional cognitive aspects of intelligence (*Bailey, 2015*). Military tasks that are based on collaborative and interdisciplinary teamwork dictate the need for the emotional intelligence to “effectively synchronize, work together cooperatively to solve conflict problems, and contribute as members of inter-professional teams to provide successful performance outcomes and experience higher positive attitudes in their daily military tasks” (*Valor-Segura et al., 2020*). One of the aspects of emotional intelligence, which people use to achieve success in all areas of life (*Mayfield, 2019*) and which has been given special consideration in the context of military service is organizational commitment (OC). Organizational commitment goes beyond the scope of the organizational loyalty and involves “identification and involvement of an individual in a specific organization” (*Mowday*

et al., 2013), that is, an acceptance and strong belief in organizational values, a willingness to put more effort or do more to accomplish a task than is expected in terms of job descriptions, a high desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday *et al.*, 2013). Organizational commitment is an important determinant of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Brockner, Senior, & Welch, 2014). Research has shown that OC is a key factor to improve performance, build collective cognition and organizational citizenship behavior, reduce absenteeism and turnover rate (Brown, Hillman, & Okun, 2012). Moreover, employees who are motivated to invest their time and effort in furthering the organization's objectives are increasingly seen as the organization's primary asset (Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012).

From a military management perspective, organizational commitment can serve as the basis for developing effective military personnel policies (Tseng & Lee, 2011) aimed at maintaining, strengthening, development and retention of armed forces' human resources due to finding solutions to deter military personnel from applying for a voluntary discharge and to maintain and improve motivation and performance through the use of knowledge about organizational commitment.

2. Background

Theoretical basis of the study. Organizational commitment at work is considered as a psychological state or attitudes that connects people with a course of action related to one or more of the organization's objectives, and a willingness to pursue this course of action (Lee, Tan, & Javalgi, 2010). As such, commitment differs from motivation inasmuch as commitment influences behavior regardless of other motives and attitudes, and can support persistence in a chosen course of action, even if it conflicts with motives (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Meyer *et al.*, 2013). The theoretical basis of this study is a three-component model of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) within the framework of organizational psychology. According to this model, organizational commitment is regarded as a multidimensional construct that includes socio-relational, behavioral, normative dimensions. Thus, it is assumed that OC characterizes any behavior that include 1) affective commitment – the desire of employees to stay in their organization; 2) normative commitment – the employees' self-imposed obligation to stay in their organization, and 3) continuance commitment – the employees' need to stay in their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Shanker & Sayeed, 2015). Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment formed by positive feelings arising as a result of participation in the organization's activities (Mayfield, 2019). Normative commitment is an employee's fundamental attachment based on the loyalty to the organization (Mayfield, 2019). Continuance commitment is an attachment arising as a consequence of employee's calculation of benefits and losses to know what he/she can be entitled to (Mayfield, 2019). It should be noted, that each individual can experience all of these types of commitment simultaneously, only in different degrees (Mustafa, Ismail & Buntat, 2014). Notwithstanding the fact that all three components of OC increase the possibility of retaining a membership in the organization by employees, it is important to distinguish between these components because they can have quite different effects on working behavior (Mustafa, Ismail & Buntat, 2014).

Based on the works in the field of OC (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Stazyk, Pandey, & Wright, 2011; Khalili, 2011; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Meyer *et al.*, 2013) and in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the phenomenon of

organizational commitment and the employees' psychological state/attitudes, the characteristics of the three components of OC were summarized in a comparative table 1.

Table 1

Comparative table of components of organizational commitment

Components of organizational commitment		
Affective	Normative	Continuance
1. Preference for cognitive or affective aspects of decision making		
predominance of affective (emotional) processes	predominance of cognitive (intellectual) processes	predominance of cognitive (intellectual) processes
2. Intrinsic motivation		
strong belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization; a confidence in reliability of the organization itself and one's position in it; a conviction in one's own individuality and exclusivity engendered by a sense of belonging to a community	inclination to be in accordance with the expectations and norms of society	eagerness to retain its membership in the organization, based on the rational requirements of the situation
3. Extrinsic motivation		
positive work experience, absence of stressful situations in the workplace	social pressure and obligations to the organization, for example, when signing a contract	taking into account the external factors or "side bets", such as social, material benefits and guarantees, additional incentives
4. Behavioral manifestations		
clear positioning and self-identification in the structure of professional identity	civic organizational behavior, a willingness to make significant efforts on behalf of the organization	environmental adaptation

Literature review. During the measurement of organizational commitment among military personnel the researchers of the socio-psychological aspects of military forces (Karrasch (2003), Gade, Tiggler, Schumm (Gade, Tiggler & Schumm, 2003; Gade, 2003), Allen (2003), Langkamer, Ervin (2008) and others) were guided by the usefulness and practical application of the findings from a military perspective, while contributing to the development of theory of organizational commitment. For example, results from a sample survey of officers conducted by Langkamer and Ervin (2008) indicate that officers' perceptions of psychological climate have a direct and indirect effect on their intentions to leave the Army through affective commitment and morale and that affective and continuance commitment interact to predict intent to leave the Army. Bourgo and Segal's (1999) study focuses on practices that can increase military personal' organizational commitment through support of families. Researchers argue that perceptions of the supportiveness of both formal policies and informal practices have significant independent effects on the organizational commitment of soldiers. In addition, family support also has a significant positive indirect effect on commitment through reduced Army-family conflict. Gade, Tiggler, and Schumm (2003) examined and tested the relationship of affective and continued organizational commitment to critical organizational outcomes.

The focus of researchers' attention also included relations between affective and continuance commitment combinations and soldier-reported retention intentions, morale, and readiness. Research conducted by Inderjit et al (2018) produced some interesting results in identifying the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) in the combat support corps. The research also determined that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitments with job performance. Nevertheless, there is no mediating role played by organizational commitment for the effect of leadership style on job performance. The important results of the work in this direction are the conclusions about the importance of the OC in solving the problem of maintenance and development of armed forces' human resource potential, evolving the strategies to retain qualified personnel in armed forces, and improvement of performance due to knowledge about organizational commitment. However, Gade (2003) notes that a major shortcoming of such studies that affects the accuracy and validity of the results is that they are conducted on a one-off basis, and preference are given to creating new items and scales of measurement rather than using well-established measures that have strong theoretical underpinnings. Therefore, according to the scholar, this trend needs to be reversed by bringing military organizational commitment research into the scientific mainstream.

The **aim** of this article is to study the structure of organizational commitment as well as the psychological and behavioral mechanisms behind it among groups of military and civilian personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Research Method and Design.

Based on the assertion that the army has an authoritarian (directive) style of management characterized by principles of unity of command and high centralization of leadership, in this work with the purpose of getting the sincere answers and reliable results the preference was given to the psycholinguistic method of research, namely, free association experiment. In this work association is regarded as a firm regular connection between two contents of consciousness (sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, etc.) arising in an individual's experience, and this connection is evident in the fact that arising in consciousness of one of the contents entails the arising of the other (Mescheryakov & Zinchenko, 2003). We assume that the methodology of psycholinguistic research methods allows the respondents to avoid fear to express their opinion in public, fear of ridicule, mockery and condemnation if others find out about the respondent's feelings and thoughts. In addition, the results obtained during the association experiment correspond most closely to the respondent's real thoughts and feelings. Kurganova (2019) notes that the association approach has great potential for the study of both the living word and its meaning. This knowledge is incomprehensible to the respondent, but it is structured, and this fact "enables to speak of the identification of a stable core, which is a set of the most typical and regularly reproduced strategies, schemes and cognitive operations that guide the individual's meaning-making activity" (Kurganova, 2019).

At the beginning of free association experiment the respondents were instructed: "Look at the stimulus word 'army' and quickly, without a second thought write down on the answer sheet any word that first came to mind. The time for the association experiment is limited to one minute". The association experiment was conducted as part of a pilot study in October 2022. The study was based on the following ethical principles: confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained to the participants. All respondents gave informed consent before participation. Forty-five people who serve, work or study at the Military Institute of Telecommunications and Information Technologies participated in the experiment. Among them were 15 servicemen officer holding the rank from lieutenant

to colonel (age 25–49 years (M = 39.8), including 5 female), 15 civilian personnel (age 34–75 years (M = 47.7), including 11 female), 15 cadets of 1–2 courses (age 17–25 years (M = 18.6), including 3 female).

The results of the association experiment were subjected to cognitive interpretation, which “enables to make presumptive conclusions about the way of thinking of the people or a particular group of people, to describe native speakers’ mental processes manifesting and revealing in association experiments” (Sternin, 2020).

Limitations. The present study has several limitations. Thus, it cannot be assumed that the findings are applicable to all types of military units or organizations since collective habits setting the total pattern of behavior and adopted by all members of the collective contrast significantly in different types of military formations, as well as in different structural units of the armed forces (military command bodies, formations, units and divisions). The next limitation is related to the soft spot of the association experiment as a research method. We emphasize that “any interpretation, including the interpretation of the psycholinguistic experiment results, undoubtedly always has a subjective nature and can differ, for example, demonstrate inconsistent results depending on different scientific approaches and independent researchers even though they analyze the same material, and even the same researcher can have contrasting results at different period of reflection” (Sternin, 2020).

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the association experiment have been summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparative table of associations to the word-stimulus “army”

Reactions to the word-stimulus “army” among different groups of respondents		
Cadets	Military personnel	Civilian personnel of the armed forces
knowledge and skills (1), security and defense of Ukraine (1), organization (1), elite (2), career (5), war (7), steady income (7), patriotism (7), benefits (1), adventure (1), psychological stability (1), statute (2), insignia (1), easy money (1), prestige (2), honor (7), lack of funding (2), barracks (2), lack of privacy (1), window dressing (1), guns (5), competition (2), parade (2), training (2), objective (1), training ground (2), education (5), uniform (7), professional growth (2),	benefits (3), steady income (4), risk (3), war (5), contract (7), war decorations (2), stress (4), career (2), system (1), honor (5), great opportunities (2), cash compensation (1), long working hours (1), service apartment (1), job (2), statute (2), lack of balance between personal and working time (1), survive together (1), lack of personal life (1), orders (2), long-service allowance (1), overtime (1), work on weekends and holidays (1), bureaucracy (1), report (2), performance (1), NATO (3), enemy (2), combatant (2),	level of responsibility (1), education (4), orders (1), personnel management (1), common cause (1), Cossacks (1), family (1), favorite job (1), stability (3), importance (1), banner (1), war (2), weapons (6), uniform (6), parade (2), communication (1), struggle for independence (1), free medical care (1), prestige (3), honor (2), volunteer work (1), historical event (1), attention (1), contact (1), charisma (1), enthusiasm (1), confidence (1), well-coordinated teamwork (1), honor (1),

Table 2 (continuance)

Reactions to the word-stimulus “army” among different groups of respondents		
Cadets	Military personnel	Civilian personnel of the armed forces
recognition (2), duty (4), money (14), chores (1), helpful for the country (1), gain combat experience (1), respect (1), trust (1), altruism (1), efficiency (1), operations officer (1), officer (9), girls (1), green (1), victory (3), native language (1), example for others (1), formation (2), brave (1), AFV (1), self-development (1), satisfaction (1), dynasty (2), oath of enlistment (5), discipline (5), progress (1), opportunities (1), financial stability (1), hope (3), modern profession (1), common idea (1), promotion (3), heroic feat (1), selflessness (1), personal growth (2), vertical (1), cohesion (2), brotherhood (1), territorial integrity (1), payments (2), common values (1)	commission (1), lessons (1), commanding officer (2), frontline (2), status (1), instruction (1), back up (1), financial support (2), combat experience (1), participation in combat operations (2), pension provision (3), far from family (1), lords of easy money (1), military benefits and entitlements (1), nuclear weapons (3), Alliance (1), death of friends (1), loss (4), acceptance of the situation (1), change (1), constant hustle and bustle (1), fatigue (3), emotional stress (1), oath of enlistment (3), control (1), adaptation (1), military operations (1), corporate values (1), norms and duties (3), mobility (1), reward (1), way (2), war veteran (1), fraternity (3), blitzkrieg (1), maneuverability (1), doctrine (1), martial law (2), unforeseen circumstances (1), leadership (1)	comfort zone (1), inspection (1), empathy (1), vision impairment (1), automaticity (1), potential (1), friends (1), conservatism (1), memories (1), victory (2), dynasty (3), homeland (2), composure (1), peace (1), traditions (1), military tradition (1), rating (1), involvement (1), acceptance (1), gratitude (2), creative work (1), concentration (1), nervous tension (1), lifestyle (1), common purpose (1), workload (1), support (3), nation (1), chronic pharyngitis (1), friendship (1), leadership (1), continuity of generations (1), power (2), discipline (3), merits (1), unity (2), benefits (2), pride (1), comfort (1), independence (1), balance (1), sovereignty (1), state (1), pride of Ukrainian nation (1), admiration (1), colleagues (1)

Normative commitment is a dominant component of cadets' OC. This fact is confirmed by 67% of associations indicating 1) predominance in cadets' consciousness of cognitive (intellectual) processes including concept formation based on the perception and assessment of the situation, for example, the formation of the concept of military (*profession, discipline, oath of enlistment, barracks, statute, insignia*), imagination (*adventures, girls*), logic (education > training > progress > professional growth > financial stability); 2) inclination to be in accordance with the expectations and norms of society (territorial integrity, patriotism, brave); 3) social pressure and obligations to the organization, which are greatly facilitated by strongly developed psychological sense of community in the army, i.e. the perception of similarity to others, the recognized interdependence manifested in the readiness to support this interdependence by providing to others or doing for them what is expected, and the feeling that each individual is a part of a larger reliable and stable structure (*Sarason, 1974*) (*cohesion, fraternity, recognition*); 4) civic organizational behavior, a willingness to make significant efforts on behalf of the organization (*altruism, selflessness, heroic feat*).

Continuance commitment is a dominant component of military personnel's OC. A considerable part of the associations (41%) is evidence for 1) predominance of cognitive (intellectual) processes including conceptual change as a result of responding to new challenges (*maneuverability, leadership, blitzkrieg, NATO, Alliance, nuclear weapons*); 2) eagerness to retain its membership in the organization, based on the rational requirements of the situation (*martial*

law, risk, war); 3) taking into account the external factors or “side bets”, such as social, material benefits and guarantees, additional incentives (*cash compensation, long-service allowance, military benefits and entitlements*); 4) environmental adaptation (*mobility, survive together, change, acceptance of the situation*). Even in a situation where the proportion of associations indicating the traceability of continuance commitment does not exceed 50% we can speak of its dominance among other components of OC since most of the remaining associations indicate not so much the presence of such components as affective and normative commitment as their absence (*hustle and bustle, fatigue, work on weekends and holidays, bureaucracy*).

Affective commitment is a dominant component of civilian personnel’s OC. The important characteristics of civilian personnel’s associations are 1) predominance of affective (emotional) processes that is distinct in the lexical means of emotionality and expressiveness (*pride, comfort, balance, enthusiasm, confidence, comfort zone*); 2) strong belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization; a confidence in reliability of the organization itself and one’s position in it; a conviction in one’s own individuality and exclusivity engendered by a sense of belonging to a community (*sovereignty, traditions, parade, honor*); 3) positive work experience, absence of stressful situations in the workplace (*involvement, favorite job, creative work*); 4) clear positioning and self-identification in the structure of professional identity (*volunteer work, dynasty, continuity of generations*).

4. Conclusion

Our study revealed at the linguistic level that psychological mechanisms such as the correlation of cognitive and affective aspects of decision-making, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and behavioral mechanisms have the significant impact on structure of organizational commitment of different groups of personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The results of the study proved that there are significant differences in the structure of organizational commitment when it comes to the position of individuals in the military hierarchy, that is, whether they hold a military/civilian position or are just beginning their military career as cadets. Dominant element in the structure of organizational commitment of civilian personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is affective commitment, in relation to servicemen it is continuance commitment, in relation to cadets it is normative commitment.

In the future, it may be of interest to repeat the study in a different organizational context such as combat military unit or other structural units.

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