

What Make Employees Committed? Exploring the Relationships Between
Perceptions of Justice, Organizational Commitment, and Personality

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INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that employees with high levels of commitment to an organization bestow a wide range of benefits to the company including higher performance, lower turnover, and employees being more likely to go “above and beyond” in their role (Hafiz, 2017). This study explores some factors that may affect organizational commitment in employees. When employees are treated fairly by an organization, are they more committed to the organization? Does this effect of organizational commitment as a function of fairness change between individuals with varying levels of personality traits? The present study seeks to investigate the relationship between perceptions of justice and organizational commitment while exploring if personality plays a role in this relationship. Specifically, this study focuses on organizational commitment through a three part framework of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Personality was studied using the widely accepted Big Five model of personality traits (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Employee perceptions of fairness, or justice, were measured using an overall model of justice (Ambrose & Schminke 2009). This study was conducted by surveying individuals who were currently or previously employed full-time or part-time.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey was sent out to family or acquaintances, 137 people initially completed the survey; however, after data cleaning – removing incomplete responses – the final number of respondents was 104. Post data cleaning, the final sample was 47% female, 50% male, and 3% identified as neither female nor male with a median age of 25 – 34. The highest level of education completed for the final sample respondents was 27% high school, 56% bachelor degrees, 13% master’s degrees, and 3% doctorate degrees. The ethnicity of the final sample respondents was 42% White, 8% Hispanic, 45% Asian, and 5% Black. Figure 1 below provides an overview of respondent demographics.

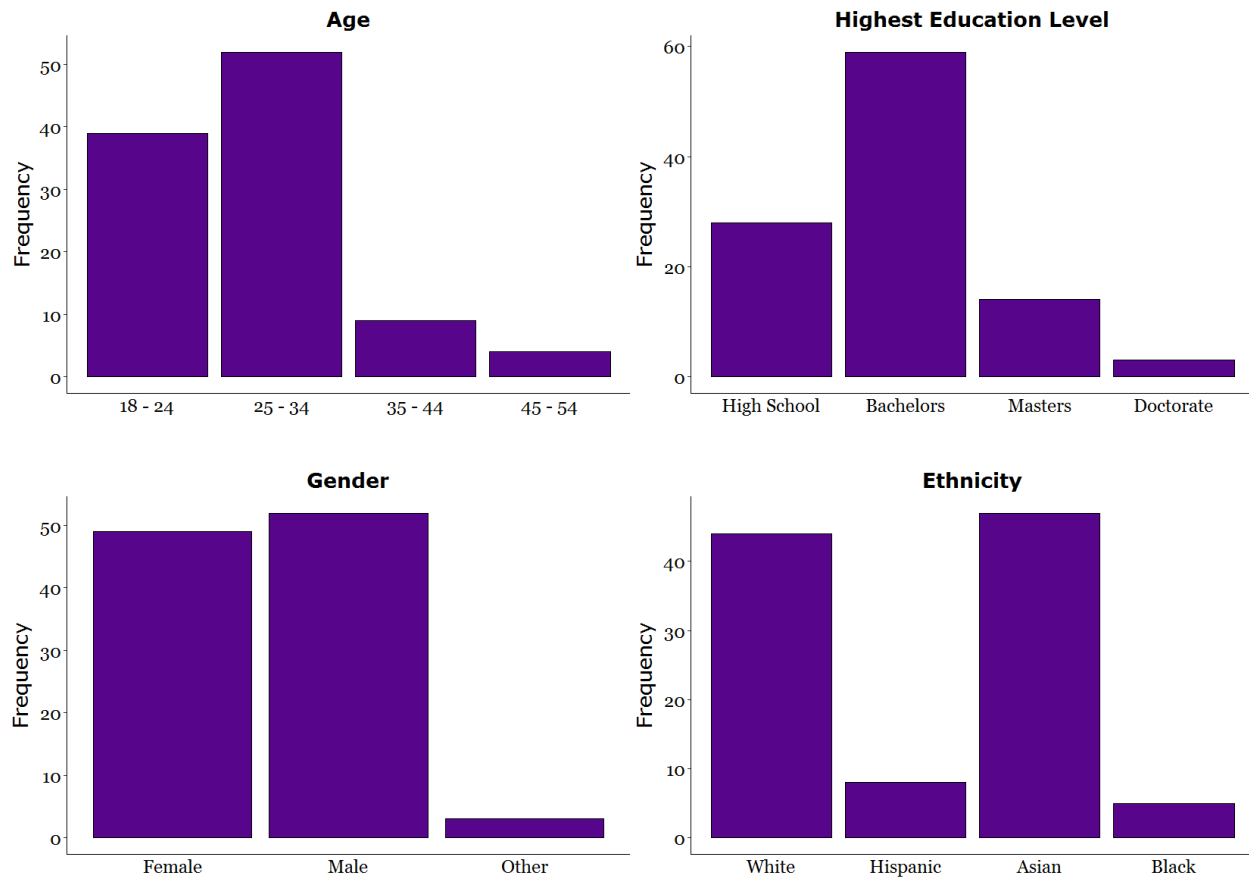


Figure 1. Demographic data of survey respondents

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: OVERALL JUSTICE

In order to assess respondents' perceptions of fair treatment by their organization, the Overall Justice scale developed by Ambrose & Schminke (2009) was utilized. This scale was developed to capture an overall meaning of justice encompassing different theories of organizational justice such as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). It includes three items which identifies respondent's personal experiences of overall justice such as, "Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization" (See Appendix 1 for a complete list of items). The scale also included three items which seeks to identify the fairness of the organization generally such as, "For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly." The items on this scale were rated by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) with higher values indicating stronger employee perceptions of fair treatment by their respective

organization. The scores from the items in the scale were averaged together to form a score of Overall Justice. The average Overall Justice score within the sample was 3.33 ($SD = 1.05$). Research by Ambrose & Schminke (2009) for the Overall Justice scale found a reliability of .93. The present study found a reliability coefficient of .96 for the Overall Justice scale calculated using Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. An overview of these descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

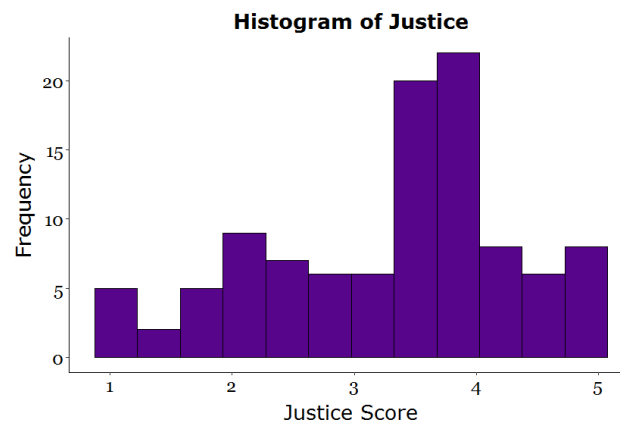


Figure 2. Histogram of Overall Justice Score

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT, CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT, & NORMATIVE COMMITMENT

In order to assess respondents' levels of organizational commitment, adapted versions of the scales for organizational commitment by Allen & Meyer (1990) were utilized. Allen & Meyer utilized a three-component model of organizational commitment which separated organizational commitment into affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Allen & Meyer's original scale for each component of organizational commitment consisted of six items. To maintain survey brevity and reduce respondent fatigue, the top three items with the highest factor loadings for each component were chosen for this study. The scale for affective commitment, an employee's emotional attachment to an organization, consisted of three items such as, "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization" (See Appendix 1 for a complete list of items). The scale for continuance commitment, an employee's perceived costs associated with leaving an organization, consisted of three items such as, "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to." The scale for normative commitment, an employee's sense of duty or obligation to an organization, consisted of three

items such as, “This organization deserves my loyalty.” The items on this scale were rated by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) with higher values indicating higher levels of organizational commitment. Item scores from each scale were averaged together to form an overall score for that scale. The average Affective Commitment score within the sample was 2.88 ($SD = 1.06$). The average Continuance Commitment score within the sample was 2.93 ($SD = 0.95$). The average Normative Commitment score within the sample was 2.73 ($SD = .92$). Research by Allen & Meyer (1990) for the overall justice scale found a reliability of .86 for the Affective Commitment scale, a reliability of .82 for the Continuance Commitment scale, and a reliability of .73 for the Normative Commitment scale. The present study found a reliability of .88 for the Affective Commitment scale, a reliability of .67 for the Continuance Commitment scale, and a reliability of .68 for the Normative Commitment scale using Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of internal consistency. An overview of these descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

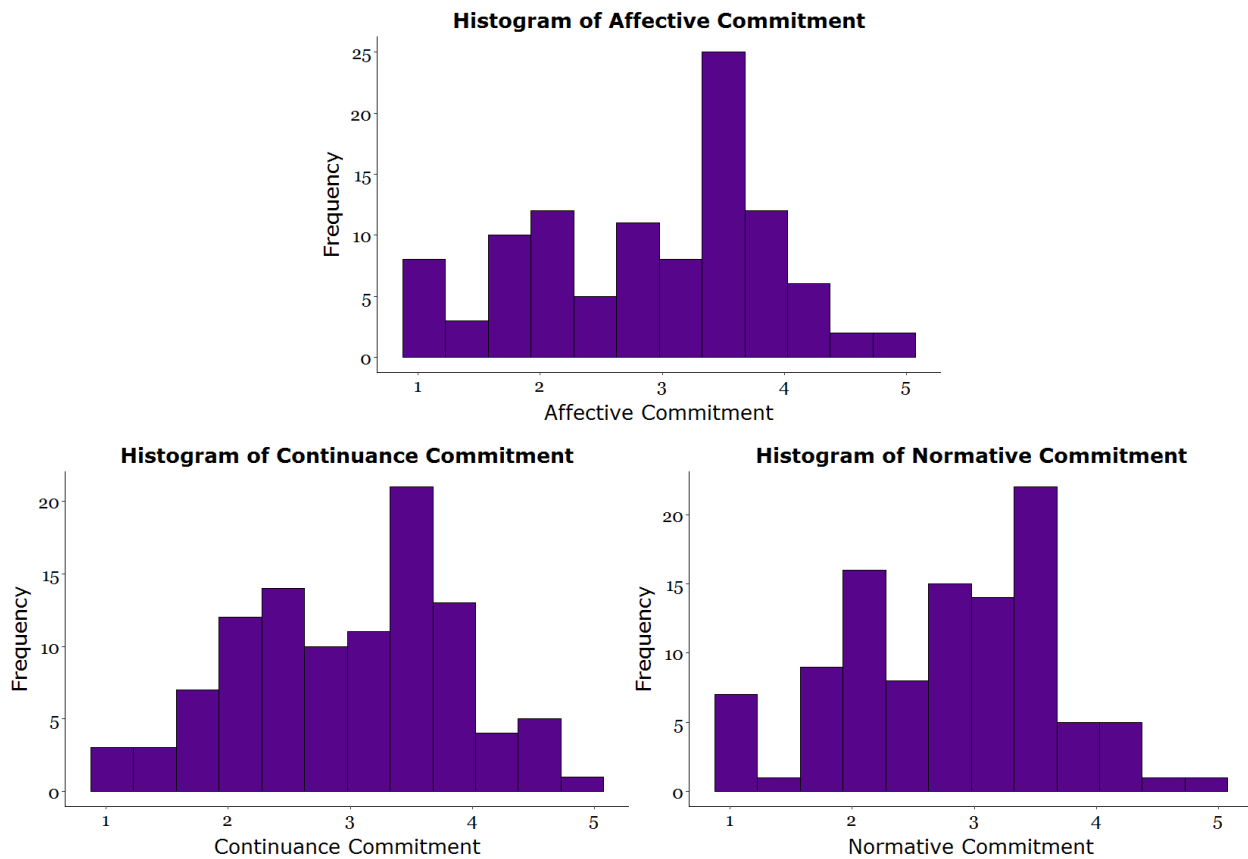


Figure 3. Histograms for the three types of organizational commitment

MODERATING VARIABLES: OPENNESS, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, EXTRAVERSION, AGREEABLENESS, & NEUROTICISM

While this study intends to explore the relationship between Overall Justice and organizational commitment, personality may play a role in affecting this relationship. Specifically, this study focuses on whether the presence of low or high levels of Big Five personality traits may weaken or strengthen the relationship between Overall Justice and organizational commitment.

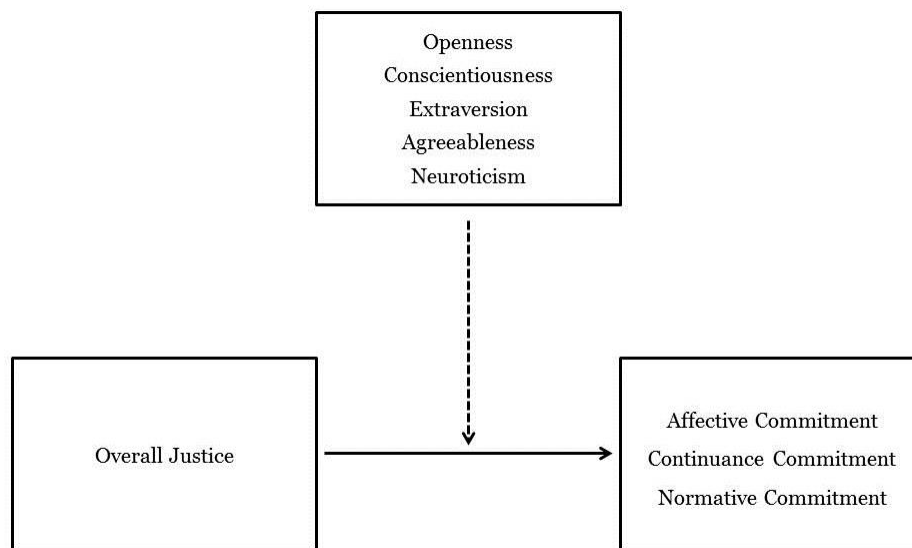


Figure 4. Organizational commitment as a function of Overall Justice moderated by the Big Five Personality traits.

In order to assess respondents' personality traits, the Big Five Inventory - Short Form (BFI-S) was utilized. The BFI-S contained scales consisting of three items for each of the five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Openness, which is characterized by strong imagination and insight, included three items such as, "I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas" (See Appendix 1 for a complete list of items). Conscientiousness, which is characterized by good impulse control and goal-directed behaviors, included three items such as, "I see myself as someone who does a

thorough job.” Extraversion, which is characterized by a strong desire to engage in social situations, included three items such as, “I see myself as someone who is talkative.”

Agreeableness, which is characterized by trust and kindness, included three items such as, “I see myself as someone who is considerate and kind to almost everyone.” Neuroticism, which is characterized by emotional instability and moodiness, included three items such as, “I see myself as someone who worries a lot.” The items on this scale were rated by respondents on a 5 point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) with higher numbers indicating higher levels of the personality trait. Item scores from each scale were averaged together to form an overall score for that scale. The average Openness score within the sample was 3.83 ($SD = .86$). The average Conscientiousness score within the sample was 3.54 ($SD = .67$). The average Extraversion score within the sample was 2.83 ($SD = .95$). The average Agreeableness score within the sample was 3.66 ($SD = .73$). The average Neuroticism score within the sample was 3.29 ($SD = .90$). Research by Hahn, Gottschling, and Spinath (2012) on the BFI-S found a reliability of .58 for the Openness scale, a reliability of .60 for the Conscientiousness scale, a reliability of .76 for the Extraversion scale, a reliability of .44 for the Agreeableness scale, and a reliability of .66 for the Neuroticism scale. The present study found a reliability coefficient of .70 for the Openness scale, a reliability coefficient of .48 for the Conscientiousness scale, a reliability coefficient of .77 for Extraversion scale, a reliability coefficient of .51 for the Agreeableness scale, and a reliability coefficient of .78 for the Neuroticism scale calculated using Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of internal consistency. An overview of these descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale Descriptives ($N = 104$)

Survey scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	Original scale α
Overall Justice	3.33	1.05	.96	.93
Affective Commitment	2.88	1.06	.88	.86
Continuance Commitment	2.93	.95	.67	.82
Normative Commitment	2.73	.92	.68	.73
BFI-S Openness	3.83	.86	.70	.58
BFI-S Conscientiousness	3.54	.67	.48	.60
BFI-S Extraversion	2.83	.95	.77	.76
BFI-S Agreeableness	3.66	.73	.51	.44
BFI-S Neuroticism	3.29	.90	.78	.66

Note. A 5-point Likert scale (1 - 5) was used in all survey scales with higher values indicating higher levels of the measure. Original scale α displays reliabilities of the original scales adapted for this study.

ANALYSIS

To explore the relationship between Overall Justice and the three types of organizational commitment, a simple linear regression was calculated to predict Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment based on Overall Justice. Based on this analysis, Overall Justice significantly predicted Affective Commitment ($F(1,102) = 32.25$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .24 (See Figure 5). No significant relationship was found for Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment ($F(1,102) = .722$, $p = .398$). Overall Justice significantly predicted Normative Commitment ($F(1,102) = 30.92$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .23 (See Figure 6).

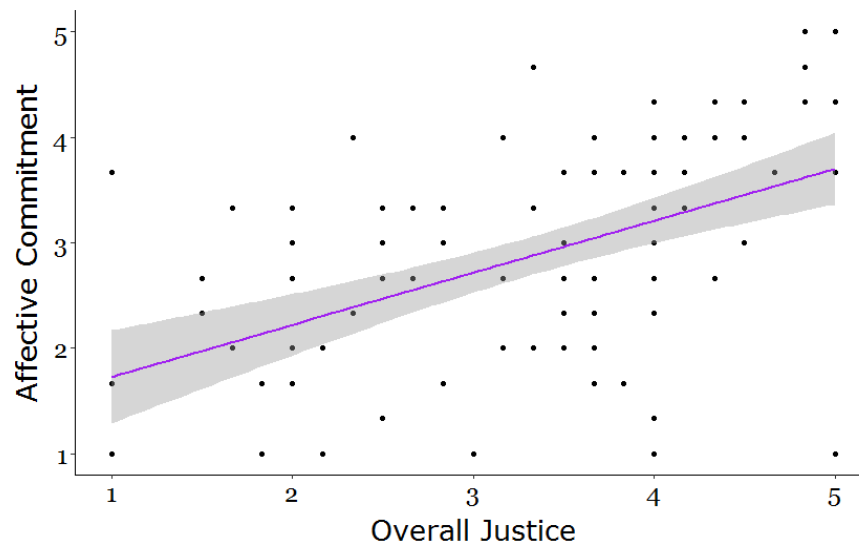


Figure 5. A scatterplot of Affective Commitment and Overall Justice with a regression line predicting Affective Commitment based on Justice Score. Shaded gray area represents the range of error for predictions with a 95% confidence interval.

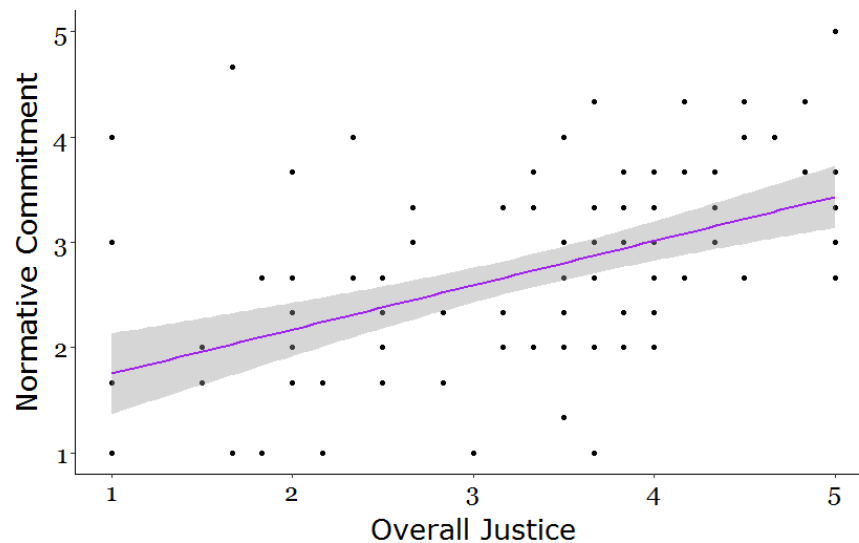


Figure 6. A scatterplot of Normative Commitment and Overall Justice with a regression line predicting Normative Commitment based on Justice Score. Shaded gray area represents the range of error for predictions with a 95% confidence interval.

To explore whether personality plays a role in the relationship between Overall Justice and the three types of organizational commitment, a multiple regression was run. The model had Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, or Normative Commitment as the dependent variable and Overall Justice, one personality trait (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, or Neuroticism), and the interaction between Overall Justice and the personality trait as independent variables. Based on this analysis, Overall Justice and Openness along with the interaction variable significantly predicted Continuance Commitment ($F(3,100) = 3.09$, $p = .003$), with an R^2 of .08. The interaction term was significant ($t = 2.80$, $p < .01$), so a simple slopes analysis was used to determine potential moderating effects of Openness on Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment. Based on this simple slopes analysis, high Openness was found to significantly moderate Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment, $t = 2.58$, $p = .01$ (See Figure 7). No significant moderating effect was found for low Openness on Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment.

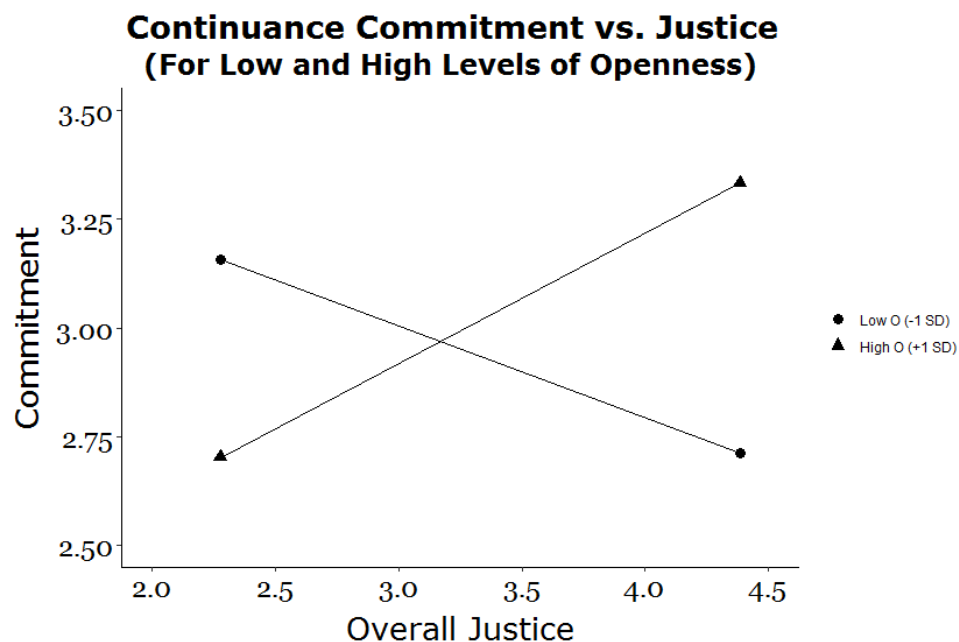


Figure 7. High openness was found to significantly moderate the effect of Overall Justice on Continuance Commitment. No significant moderating effect was found for low Openness.

A multiple regression analysis with Overall Justice and Neuroticism along with the interaction variable significantly predicted Normative Commitment ($F(3,100) = 12.42, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .27. The interaction term was significant ($t = 2.30, p = .02$), so a simple slopes analysis was used to determine potential moderating effects of Neuroticism on Overall Justice and Normative Commitment. Based on this simple slopes analysis, low Neuroticism was found to significantly moderate Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment, $t = 2.53, p = .01$. High Neuroticism was also found to significantly moderate Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment, $t = 5.73, p < .001$ (See Figure 8).

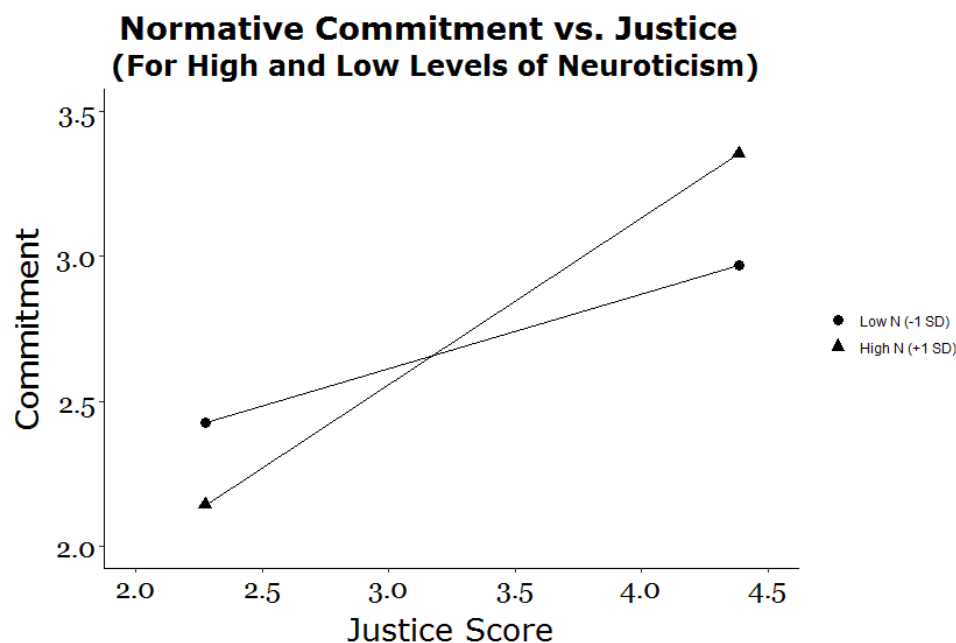


Figure 8. High and low Neuroticism was found to significantly moderate the effect of Overall Justice on Continuance Commitment.

No significant effect of moderation was found for other combinations of dependent and independent variables using multiple regression analysis.

CONCLUSION

What is the relationship between perceptions of justice and organizational commitment? Does personality play a role in affecting this relationship? To answer these questions, the present study operationalized justice using an Overall Justice model. Organizational commitment was assessed using a three component framework which separated organizational commitment into

Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment. Personality was measured using the Big Five personality traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Through regression analysis, perceptions of justice were found to be significantly related to Affective Commitment and Normative Commitment but not Continuance Commitment. This appears reasonable as perceived unfair treatment by employees may not necessarily affect the individual's "costs" for leaving an organization, i.e., continuance commitment, but perceived unfair treatment may impact the employee's emotional connection and feelings of obligation towards the organization, i.e., affective commitment and normative commitment respectively. In exploring the effects of personality, high Openness was found to have a significant moderating effect on Overall Justice and Continuance Commitment. This suggests that whether or not perceptions of justice have an effect on continuance commitment depends on whether employees are high in the openness trait. High and low Neuroticism was found to have a significant moderating effect on Overall Justice and Normative Commitment. This suggests that whether or not perceptions of justice have an effect on normative commitment depends on the level of the employee's neuroticism. Further research is needed to explore these effects.

References

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Appendix 1: Variable Make Up

Note: All scales were 5-point agreement scales (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

Overall Justice

- Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization.
- In general, I can count on this organization to be fair.
- In general, the treatment that I receive around here is fair.
- Usually, the ways things work in this organization are fair.
- For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly.
- Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly.

Affective Commitment

- I feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization.
- I feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
- This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Continuance Commitment

- It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
- Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.
- I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.

Normative Commitment

- This organization deserves my loyalty.
- I owe a great deal to my organization.
- I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.

Big Five Openness

I see myself as someone who...

- is original, comes up with new ideas

- values artistic, aesthetic experiences
- has an active imagination

Big Five Conscientiousness

I see myself as someone who...

- does a thorough job
- tends to be lazy
- does things efficiently

Big Five Extraversion

I see myself as someone who...

- is talkative
- is outgoing, sociable
- is reserved

Big Five Agreeableness

I see myself as someone who...

- is sometimes rude to others
- has a forgiving nature
- is considerate and kind to almost everyone

Big Five Neuroticism

I see myself as someone who...

- worries a lot
- gets nervous easily
- remains calm in tense situations