The Relationship between Teleworking, Employee Loyalty and Organizational Commitment from the Perspective of Medical Experts of Golestan Province

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ABSTRACT: Teleworking is choosing a method for performing a task which allows the employees to perform the whole or a part of their tasks outside the workplace. Considering goals such as increasing efficiency, flexible working, reducing the employees’ commuting and avoiding transportation costs and reducing air pollution, teleworking will result in increase of job satisfaction and loyalty and commitment in employees. Increase of employees’ self-awareness makes the organizations to seek for different work patterns and create appropriate infrastructures and design a new structure for accomplishing their mission, thus the current research aims to survey the relationship between teleworking, employee loyalty and organizational commitment from the perspective of experts and managers of Golestan University of Medical Sciences. The current research method is descriptive-correlative survey, and the population includes all of the staff and managers of Gorgan Province University of Medical Sciences. The number of staff and managers was 1000 individuals among which 278 individuals were chosen based on the Morgan Table and by the use of stratified random sampling. The 9-item teleworking questionnaire of Soleymanzadeh (2011), 7-item employee loyalty questionnaire of Mostafazadeh (2007) and 24-item organizational commitment of Allen and Meyer (1990) were used for measuring the research hypotheses, and after ensuring about the above mentioned questionnaires’ validity and reliability and distributing them among the statistical sample and collecting them, the information were then analyzed. The research hypotheses were tested by the use of statistical techniques and SPSS19 software and Pearson correlation test and Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test. Data analysis results showed that a correlation exists between the teleworking, employee loyalty and organizational commitment, and also a correlation exists between the components of loyalty and organizational commitment with employees’ teleworking.

Keywords: Teleworking, Employee Loyalty, Organizational Commitment.

INTRODUCTION

In the information age (the 3rd wave) the information and communication technology rapidly takes over the world and it has influenced most of the dimensions of human life such as methods for performing tasks. One of the achievements of development of information and communication technology is performing some tasks without any geographical boundaries and away from the workplace (teleworking). Within this method by the help of networks and telecommunications individual could use a computer for doing his/her job away from his/her workplace, and electronically transfer his/her output (Esmaeili, 2011). This method of performing tasks is a type of using information technology and computer for doing tasks instead of going to the workplace or the central office. Teleworking is choosing a method for performing tasks which allows the employees to perform the whole or a part of their tasks outside the workplace, which means using computer or telecommunication in order to change the geographical location of workplace and performing job duties. Teleworking or working from home seeks for several goals such as increasing efficiency, flexible working time, reducing the employees’ commuting and avoiding costs caused by it such as...
transportation costs and the monetary value of time wasted, also the time inevitably wasted for daily commuting to workplace, and reducing air pollution which ultimately results in having clean air and environment. It must be noted that appropriate transportation facilities have been provided in the University of Medical Sciences for morning and afternoon shifts, and also several restaurants provide food for the organizational staff in a 2-hour interval and the food is distributed among them. According to the conducted researches the proved and basic theorem is that the employee loyalty is affected by the employees’ satisfaction level. Considerable amount of conducted researches in U.S.A. shows that the employee satisfaction has a positive correlation with their loyalty in their organizations and also it has a negative correlation with their intention to leave their work. A low level of satisfied staff intention of leaving work is caused by this fact that compared to unsatisfied staff the satisfied staff believe that they achieve more benefits from staying at the organization (Alvani & Seyyed Naghavi, 2001), thus they have more tendencies toward showing higher levels of loyalty and commitment toward their organizations and it is almost impossible for them to leave their jobs and based on the current research findings a positive and very strong correlation exists between the staff competition and their loyalty (Amiran, 2003).

The managers’ method of dealing with organization teleworkers is one of the issues which considerably help improving this correlation, thus it is vital to conduct such researches in order to neutralize and improve shortcomings and receiving the correlation between teleworking, loyalty and organizational commitment of staff. On the other hand, if the culture of commitment within the organization institutionalize in teleworking staff we will observe that teleworking staff show more responsibility and they will have more fixation in performing commitments, because these commitments are a part of teleworking regulations and the individual feels more security toward his/her job or organization (Zamani, 2010). On the other hand, the current age is considered as the age of fundamental changes and developments and organizations could encourage their staff toward teleworking in order to have efficient change-oriented managers and leaders with long-term visions (Yee et al., 2009). Since the concerted, committed effort of each nation along with work ethics is the necessity of that nation’s progress, the gap in this area is very tangible in our country. By motivating individuals’ work ethics we can expect more and better works for reaching our goals and the organizational goals, and in order to improve work ethics, broad cultural efforts should be made toward employee teleworking (Ranjbarian, 1999). One of the roots of this problem is cultural deficit, thus it could be confessed that we must reinforce the culture of commitment and work ethics in Iranian organizations such as University of Medical Sciences of Gorgan Province. Several strategies for reinforcing the employee loyalty, organizational commitment and improving its relationship with teleworking are mentioned here: Increasing organizational efficiency, reducing the financial costs and transportation costs, contributing to the stability of families, and in fact stabilizing the families’ foundation, critical attention to nurturing future generations in order to promote the transcendent community and increasing the staff motivation (Workman, 2000).

The collection of conducted studies about the teleworking and surveying the interviews of experts in the field of teleworking indicate that implementing method of teleworking in each organization depends on specific factors, one part is organizational factors (subject to surveying and performing organizational changes) and another part is individual factors (that should exist in volunteer staff for teleworking) (Davis et al., 2008). In organizational factors first of all the pros and cons of using teleworking must be determined for the organization. After detecting pros and cons the next step is detecting an appropriate teleworking pattern for the organization. For implementing the teleworking method the appropriate teleworking method which is coordinated with the requirements and working conditions of that organization must be determined. After this factor we need a more complete communicational infrastructure. In the part of individual factor one of the effective factors on implementing teleworking is having some individual skills. Communicational skills is considered as one of the other effective individual factors in above mentioned skills, and in contrast to individual skills the communicational skills are transmitted through education (Boiarov, 2011). The same as all other organizations, implementing method of teleworking in IRIB is also depended on surveying factors. In a research named teleworking and interaction with customers through theoretical approach: Emphasizing on the theories of beneficiaries, brokerage, and transaction costs, Amiri et al (2011) concluded that in this article the theory of beneficiaries is at the center of attention and along with this the benefits of teleworking for each of them, their future challenges in teleworking, short-term and long-term consequences of teleworking for them are met. On the other hand, in the interaction of teleworking organizations and employers with teleworkers and also when facing several beneficiaries cooperating in a joint activity we see that each of them try to realize their individual interests, that are sometimes against the interests of others. In order to have beneficiaries who have tendency toward trades and transactions they must be assured about the security of their interests. One of the most important issues is that how the beneficiary could be assured that others do their parts in this joint activity. The theories of brokers and transaction costs
try to answer this question. Nowadays concerns about this issue motivated the employers to design more and more informational and controlling systems that are also very costly to the managers. In another research conducted in Finland in 2012 it has been indicated that 34% of employees prefer teleworking. In the same year the result of another research in Finland indicated that more than half of the Finnish employers were interested in designing teleworking in the form of a secondary contract or mobile work, and more than 70% of them were interested in teleworking because in that way they have more concentration on their work, and this increases their commitment (Madsen, 2012). In a research named teleworking, flexible work force for reducing congestion and environmental degradation which was conducted in Europe, Pyoria (2011) stated that in order to promote teleworking we should schedule to encourage the employees to work flexibly and reduce the commuting in crowded and high-density roads. The research results showed that in this way the rate of environmental degradation and traffics will be minimized and it will help the employers to launch the teleworking project and recognizing the teleworking policy. In 2000 the Center for Women Fund conducted a survey about the Teleworking Prospects in Poland. This survey was conducted on an institute having 50 to 500 employees. The survey findings showed that teleworking in cities with more than 500 thousand population has been increased and most of the individuals performing their tasks relying on their employers’ trust outside the company are located in Warsaw and at the center of provinces. Great interest for teleworking is connected to its benefits for the employer and at the first place it is connected to reducing the costs of work force (Quoted by Ghasemi, 2004).

Ultimately what tools and factors are used for making this plan a success and what obstacles exist in this plan? University of Medical Sciences is one of the organizations having many employees in different departments and parts of the organization. In Iran, after the enforcement of teleworking regulations being adopted in the cabinet, the source regulations were published by the media, but since the government employees did not have any previous information about enforcing this law, several questions were raised in government departments, and most of them are still remained unanswered. Many experts and critics stated issues such as chief-oriented systems in offices, lack of responsibility in some employees, weakness in monitoring systems, government being inexperienced in teleworking law enforcement, and lack of preparation of internet infrastructures in the country as the obstacles in implementing this plan. This is while their critical wave provoked the government employees’ unawareness and this rumor became strong that by implementing this plan the government wants to dismiss its employees (Soleymanzadeh, 2011). Since many employees in this organization were not interested in teleworking and this issue affects their loyalty and commitment, decisions had been made in order to survey this correlation in order to find solutions for improving it and have the employees’ agreement for teleworking, thus the important issue in the current research is the difference between the current situation and the ideal situation in the organization, and how teleworking results in the relationship between loyalty and organizational commitment of the employees, and this relationship takes place when the staff feel more secure about their organization and their workplace at home, and this factor does not create any stress in them and they totally feel that by doing their tasks in any other place than the organization they are considered as a member of that organization and that task belongs to them, and the individual could increase his/her loyalty and organizational commitment through excellent work and understand his/her identity, and enhance this relationship. The current research concern is that what factors and solutions result in this relationship and other related questions and this research tries to offer an appropriate answer to these questions.

METHODOLOGY

From the point of nature and aim this research is an applied research and its methodology is descriptive-correlative survey. The research population includes all of the staff and managers of departments of research, education, food and drugs, health, and department of management and human resource development of Golestan University of Medical Sciences which include 1000 individuals. In the current research regarding the population of 1000 individuals, for determining the sample size the Krejcie and Morgan table has been used and 278 individuals were chosen, among which 27 individuals did not answer the questions and the sheets were not returned, thus the results were achieved from 251 questionnaires. The individuals were chosen by the stratified random sampling. In Gorgan University of Medical Sciences all the staff are divided into five groups of research and education department, 225 individuals, health department, 150 individuals, medical department, 150 individuals, food and drug department, 125 individuals, and department of management and human resource development, 350 individuals and the questionnaires were distributed among them, and totally from this amount of individuals 15 individuals do their tasks for the organization through teleworking. Data collection tools include the researcher’s questionnaire created by Soleymanzadeh (2011), standard loyalty questionnaire of Mostafazadeh (2007), and Allen and Meyer organizational commitment questionnaire (1990). The mentioned questionnaires are designed based on the previous studies, research aim and base of the theoretical
studies. On the other hand, these questionnaires were handed out to the professors and also the experts and from their point of view the validity of questionnaires were accepted. Thus it could be expected that the questionnaires being used in this research have adequate content and face validity. After preparing the questionnaire and before its final implementation, each question and the whole questionnaire were evaluated. In the pre-test level 20 questionnaires were distributed and collected for surveying the questionnaire validity and each question and the whole questionnaire was evaluated through different methods. The reliability measuring technique of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used for surveying the internal reliability of the questions, and the results showed that all of them have coefficients higher than 0.70%. After completing and reviewing the questionnaires they entered the encoding-phase and data entry and they were analyzed. In addition to the descriptive statistics the Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test and Spearman correlation coefficient were used as well.

**RESULTS**

Descriptive analysis of research demographic data showed that from the total number of 251 examinees, 59% were women and 41% were men. The maximum age range belongs to the age range of 31-35 which consists 38% of the examinees. In terms of examinees’ work experience nearly 49% of the examinees had 1-10 years of work experience. More than 46% of the examinees had bachelor degree. In terms of describing the research variables it should be mentioned that the teleworking questionnaire has 9 dimensions of teleworking pattern, teleworking infrastructure, teleworking individual skills, teleworking communication feature, teleworking jobs, teleworking advantages, teleworking disadvantages, teleworking agreement, and the extent of realizing teleworking. Among the dimensions of teleworking questionnaire, the component of individual skills has the highest mean. The component of teleworking jobs has the lowest mean. Also the total score of teleworking among staff and managers of the university was 3.58 out of total score of 5. The loyalty questionnaire had 2 dimensions of job satisfaction and quality of work life. Among dimensions of loyalty questionnaire, the component of quality of work life has higher scores than the component of job satisfaction. Also both components of loyalty had scores higher than the mean and it is possible to evaluate the status of these components among the staff and managers of Gorgan University of Medical Sciences higher than the average amount. Also the total score of loyalty in staff and managers of University of Medical Sciences was 3.40 out of the total score of 5. The questionnaire of organizational commitment has 24 questions and it has 3 dimensions that are mentioned in below table and they are divided by their descriptive statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire components</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional commitment</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>3.4347</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous commitment</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>3.5247</td>
<td>0.798</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>3.5154</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3.5020</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Descriptive diagram of organizational commitment questionnaire.*

As it is observable in table 1 and also in diagram 1, the mean of continuous commitment among the staff and managers of the University has the highest priority, and after that it is normative commitment and ultimately emotional.
commitment. Also the mean of organizational commitment was 3.50 out of the total score of 5. Also all of the dimensions of organizational commitment had means higher than 3 which shows that these variables among the staff are higher than the mean and also it shows the desirability of these components.

Table 2. Correlation between the variables entering the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation between two variables</th>
<th>Spearman correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and staff loyalty</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and job satisfaction</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and quality of life</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and organizational commitment of the staff</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and emotional commitment of the staff</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and continuous commitment of the staff</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleworking and Normative commitment of the staff</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is observable a positive and significant correlation exists between the teleworking and staff loyalty variables, job satisfaction, quality of life, organizational commitment of the staff, emotional commitment of the staff, continuous commitment of the staff, and normative commitment of the staff (P< 0.01). The strongest correlation is between teleworking and emotional commitment of the staff and the weakest correlation is between teleworking and continuous commitment of the staff.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The current research was conducted in order to survey the correlation between teleworking, employee loyalty and organizational commitment from the perspective of experts and managers. The research population includes the staff of Gorgan University of Medical Sciences, 1000 individuals, and 278 individuals were chosen as the research sample through Morgan table. 28 questionnaires were returned and the rest of the questionnaires were collected. In this research three questionnaires of teleworking, employee loyalty and organizational commitment were used based on the Likert scale. The research results showed that a positive and significant correlation exists between the teleworking and variables of employee loyalty, job satisfaction, quality of life, and organizational commitment of staff, emotional commitment of staff, continuous commitment of staff, emotional commitment of staff, and normative commitment of staff. The strongest correlation belongs to the teleworking and emotional commitment of staff and the weakest one belongs to the teleworking and continuous commitment of staff. The current research results were consistent with the findings of Workman (2000), Soleymanzadeh (2011), and Gharacheh and Aboueian (2011). Along with implementing the teleworking regulations, in 2011, Golestan University of Medical Sciences chose a number of its staff from two departments of research-administration and finance, and 15 of them were sent for teleworking with 6-month contracts. Some of the requirements of teleworking in an organization are detecting jobs and appropriate individuals for teleworking that are conducted under the supervision of teleworking workgroup of the organization. In order to maintain the information security of the organization one of the private virtual networks has been activated on the teleworkers’ computers for connecting to the organization’s network. According to the telecommunication coverage area (teleworking place), the teleworkers choose one of the internet communications via ADSL or WiMAX modems with 512 GB download size. In order to perform administrative tasks the required programs and software and also the mentioned system were installed on the teleworkers’ computers and also a modem for connecting to internet at home were handed out to them. The costs of connecting to internet and its subscription are monthly paid to the teleworkers.

The teleworkers receive the administrative news and events through the internal network of the organization, also for communicating with other university staff they use one of the Microsoft Unified Communications Services which was formerly installed on all of the computers of the organization. Since most of the work of the teleworkers is the continuation of their work at the organization and by the use of the same former software and programs they just passed a short-term training (a few hours) in order to learn how to use the virtual network and connect to the organization network. Due to the managers’ unwillingness and lack of having clear results of evaluation by the beneficiaries (personnel subject to teleworking law) and also the services provided by the University of Medical Sciences (more than 90% of the university personnel are subject to provide services in operational tasks at hospitals and health centers) the pilot and experimental plan of teleworking of staff of University of Medical Sciences did not extend. Only in few special cases and regarding the personal problems of the staff (wife’s or children’s sickness or the employee’s incurable disease) the teleworking with less than 5 personnel were accepted. Surveying the comments of teleworkers of
University of Medical Sciences about the items of teleworking, employee loyalty, and organizational commitment showed that all of the items of teleworking have received a mean higher than (3) and all of the items of loyalty have received a mean higher than (3) and also all of the items of organizational commitment have received a mean higher than (3.5), and the results indicate a significant correlation between the staff teleworking, loyalty and organizational commitment, but they also indicate some problems such as inflexible (floating) working hours, and evidences show that teleworking in most of the countries is somehow floating and they somehow consider teleworking equal to floating hours. Definitely flexible working hours reduce the users’ traffic during office hours and consequently it affects the network speed. Due to this the respondents were willing to have such working hours in order to increase the efficiency, and factors such as increased workload, and excessive working, fatigue caused by that, and increased work stress at home were some of the other factors that led to reduction of loyalty and organizational commitment of staff. Results showed that if all of these factors be eliminated the respondents and teleworkers will be more satisfied.

According to the research findings in order to increase the efficiency of correlation between teleworking and staff job satisfaction it is recommended to improve the dimensions of components of teleworking including communication skills such a technical knowledge and time management and benefits of teleworking such as reducing the administrative costs in order to optimize the staff performance and increase the job satisfaction among them. Also it is recommended to the managers and experts to use a part-time teleworking pattern in order to increase the loyalty and reliability among staff and decrease the administrative costs and increase technical knowledge in order to increase the organizational commitment among staff until it reaches its optimum level.

Regarding the fact that women working at the organization are one of the main beneficiaries of implementing the teleworking method, surveying their attitude toward the teleworking method and their interest rate could be the subject of one of the future researches. In case of running this method for women who have children less than 6 years old, in addition to reducing different costs the costs of preschool for the organization also reduces. Also it is recommended to study the correlation between teleworking, IT and organizational commitment in future studies.

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