

Organizational commitment and the well-being of temporary agency workers

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Organisational commitment is of high relevance for organizations and individuals

- Organizational commitment is assumed to influence almost any behavior that is beneficial to the organization such as performance, attendance, and staying with the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Randall, 1990).
- Workers want to belong. Being part of an organization. Organizational commitment satisfies the need of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Rousseau, 1998).
 - Organizational commitment can be considered as a resource in coping with organizational stress (Kobasa, 1982)
 - related to reduced occupational strain (Begley & Cazjka, 1993; Teo & Waters, 2002) and higher well-being (e.g. Wiener, Muczyk, & Gable, 1987).



Weak bonds and a high degree of instability: Organizational commitment at risk

- Temporary agency workers as outsiders are not part of the core employees (Baron & Pfeffer, 1988).
- Organisational commitment decreases if the social contract of long-term employment in return of loyalty is broken (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).
- It has been questioned in how far temporary workers may form commitment towards the involved organizations, which do not provide secure and unlimited employment (Kalleberg & Rognes, 2000).
- There is some evidence that temporary agency workers might be less committed to the client organization in comparison with core workers (Millward & Hopkins, 1998).



Determinants of organizational Commitment in TAW

- Connelly et al. (2007) found that voluntary temporary workers show high affective commitment to their agency.
- Agencies' supportiveness is related to workers' continuance and affective commitment towards their agencies (Van Breugel, Van Olffen, & Olie, 2005; Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003) as well as towards the client (spill-over).
- Temporary workers may be evaluating their temporary agencies on the basis of the quality of their experiences with their client organizations.



Double bind: Commitment as a risk factor for individuals

- The agency: organizational home but far away.
- The clients seek for workers without obligation.
- In a transitory environment high commitment may be dysfunctional...
- Commitment makes vulnerable:
 - Perceived job-insecurity is more adverse for highly committed employees and leads to higher levels of distress (Probst, 2000).
 - High commitment to an organization leads to stronger negative outcomes when employees feel that they have been treated unfairly (Brockner, Tyler & Cooper-Schneider, 1992).
 - Work-related overcommitment found that health complaints resulting from a lack of balance between efforts put into one's job and rewards received are stronger (Aust, Peter & Siegrist, 1997; Joksimovic, Siegrist, Meyer-Hammer, Peter, Klimek & Heintzen, 1999).



Commitment and well-being of temporary agency workers

- In contrast to recent research we do not want to examine determinants of organizational commitment but investigate the effects of organizational commitment on workers well-being.
- We assume that it may be reasonable for temporary agency workers to refrain from committing to a client organization knowing that they will soon be reassigned to another organization.
- Commitment to the agency may be „more healthy“.
- It may be a strategy of self-protection to „keep the distance“ to a client organization.



- Focus of the here presented study:
The effects of commitment on
individuals' well-being.



Method

Sample and Procedure

Time 1

first eight weeks of
employment in TAW

$N = 151$

Clerical workers (109
women, Age = 30.71)

All pursuing TAW

Time 2

five months later

$n = 110$

**48 workers had experienced
reassignment**

Time 3

15 months later

$n = 101$

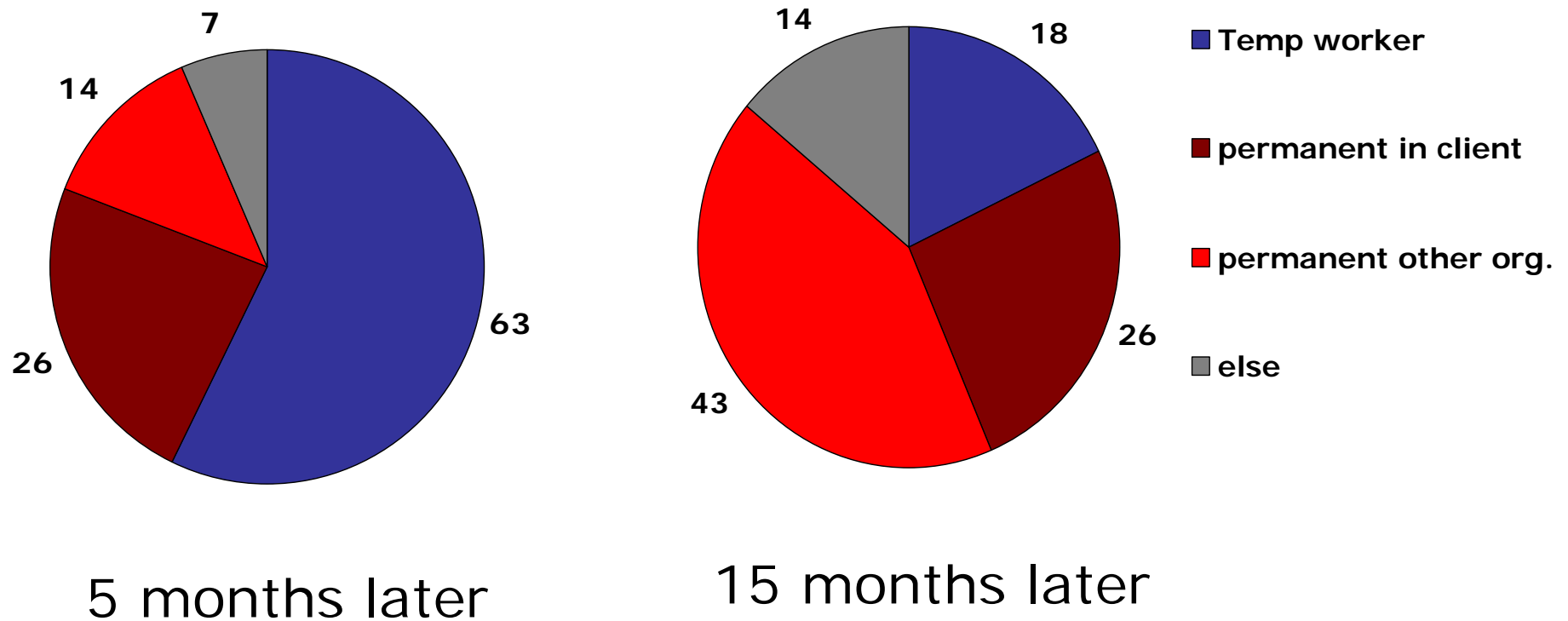
**62 workers had experienced
reassignment**



*80 persons participated in all of the three
waves.



Work Status at Time 2 and Time 3



Measures

- Organizational Commitment to the Client Organization (T1).
 - German version of OCQ (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) adapted for the context of TAW (11 items). Cronbachs $\alpha = .76$ (n = 146). “I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization” and “I feel very little loyalty to the client organization” (recoded).
- Organizational Commitment to the Agency (T1).
 - “I have a strong feeling of belonging to the temporary employment agency”, “I think that I could feel similarly committed to another agency” (recoded), “I do not feel emotionally attached to the temporary employment agency” (recoded). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree), Cronbachs $\alpha = .65$ (n = 104).
- Well-Being (T1, T2, T3).
 - 14-item scale (Mohr, 1986). “I feel dizzy”, “My neck hurts”, “I often feel tired and powerless during the day”, “It is difficult for me to relax after work”. Cronbachs $\alpha = .87$ (T1), .88 (T2), .82 (T3).
- Experience of Assignment-Transition (T2, T3)
 - Have you experienced an assignment transition while your were working as a temporary agency worker? (yes or no)



Results: Correlation Analysis

	Psychosomatic Complaints				
	(T1)	(T2)	(T3)	(T2 – T1)	(T3 – T1)
Commitment to the Client (T1)	-.22**	-.20*	.12	.16	.34**
Commitment to the Agency (T1)	.13	.17	.12	.10	.15
Reassignment (T2)	.20*	.14	.18	-.03	-.04
Reassignment (T3)	.10	-.04	.03	-.22 ⁺	-.06

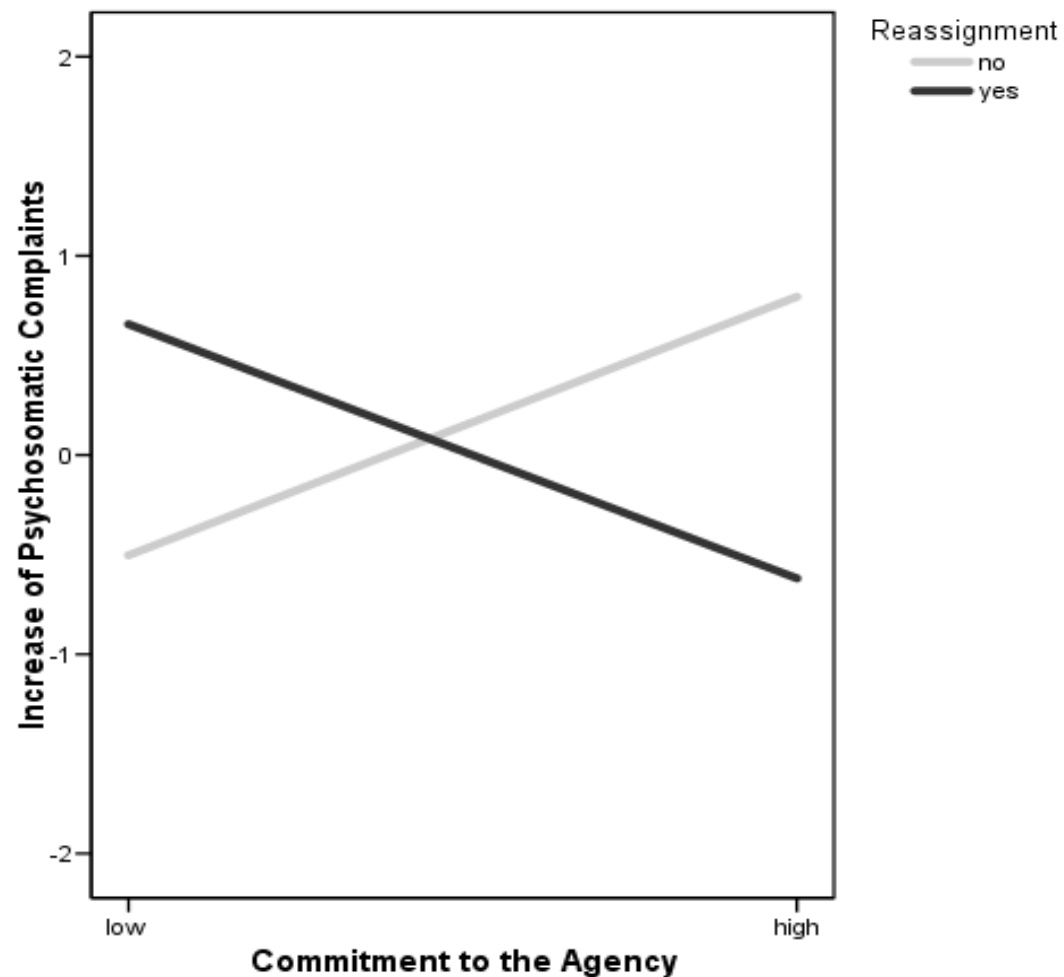
Note: **p<.01, *p < .05. High values in different scores reveal an increase in psychosomatic complaints over time.



Effects of reassignment and commitment to the client on well-being



Effects of reassignment and commitment to the agency on well-being



Summary and Conclusion

- Organizational commitment to the client but not to the agency had positive effects on well-being cross-sectional.
- Positive effects of commitment to the client are foiled when transition occurs and when workers have to separate from the client.
- Commitment to the agency reverses negative effects of transition on well-being.
- In the context of TAW organizational commitment has to be considered as being a two-edged-sword.

