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Marco Zimmer / Christian Rüttgers (Hrsg.)

## Work-life Balance Measures, Work-life Balance, and Organisational Commitment – A Structural Analysis

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der FOM University of Applied Sciences

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**Preface**

The labour market has changed in recent years. Low birth rates, technological advances and other factors led to a shortage of qualified personnel. Thus, it became more important for employers to retain well performing staff members than just to recruit new talents – employee retention, and therewith organisational commitment as its necessary precondition, is one of the most important success factors. In this context, it is worth noting that organisational commitment is not only associated with employee retention but also with job satisfaction, work performance, and other aspects which are beneficial for both the employer and the employee. Thus, it is not surprising that organisational commitment enjoyed increasing attention in research and practice.

Another concept that gained popularity in recent years is work-life balance. In its beginnings, the discussion about work-life balance only focused on satisfactorily combining the work life and private life of employees. Nowadays, work-life balance emphasises developing a balance between all domains of life with the aim of living a fulfilled life. Thus, work-life balance can be seen as a central aspect in the lives of many people. The importance of this concept might even grow, as some researchers claim its subjective relevance for the younger generations is growing. From a corporate perspective, there are several means to enhance the work-life balance of its employees, like working time arrangements, corporate health management etc.

Against this backdrop, the authors of this publication examine which measures impact work-life balance and to what extent work-life balance leads to organisational commitment. Based on two studies and using structural equation modelling, the authors show that a good working time arrangement is the essential corporate measure in order to increase work-life balance. Furthermore, the studies show that a solid work-life balance is especially beneficial for the affective commitment of employees. In this context, it is also shown that other factors, like the leadership behaviour and the working atmosphere, are more important than work-life balance. In comparison to well-established working conditions, the authors of this publication give a comprehensive overview of the relationships of organisational commitment, work-life balance, and corresponding corporate measures.

This means on the one hand that practitioners find a good framework for improving work-life balance and organisational commitment, and on the other hand, that scholars are provided with several insights for advancing research in the examined field.

Essen, March 2022

Prof. Dr. Marco Zimmer

Director of the ipo – Institut für Personal- und Organisationsforschung at FOM

**Abstract**

**Purpose**

Our research aims to determine the impact of work-life balance on the components of organisational commitment in comparison to other key determinants and the influence of work-life balance measures on work-life balance.

**Methodology**

We conducted two studies with 760 and 389 participants each. Our model, consisting of work-life balance measures, work-life balance, other working conditions, and organisational commitment is tested by structural equation modelling.

**Findings**

Work-life balance positively influences the affective and normative component of organisational commitment. This influence, however, is weaker than the impact of other working conditions, like perceived leadership behaviour and the working climate. The only measure that has a significant impact on work-life balance is flexible working time.

**Practical implications**

Our results imply that it is beneficial for organisations to improve their employees' work-life balance. Employers should, however, focus primarily on other working conditions when aiming to improve the organisational commitment of their employees. When launching work-life balance initiatives, organisations should focus on flexible working time arrangements.

**Originality**

So far, it has not been sufficiently examined how a strong work-life balance impacts organisational commitment in comparison to other key determinants. Furthermore, most studies investigate the correlation between work-life balance measures and organisational commitment. We, on the other hand, propose a model in which work life-balance plays a mediating role between organisational measures and commitment and is analysed in comparison to other "regular" working conditions.

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## 1    Introduction

For a few years now, companies have not only focused on recruiting new talents but have also aimed to strengthen the commitment of their employees. This shift of perspectives is necessary for employers because, against the background of a transparent job market and the demographic change, it became more costly to recruit new employees than to retain the current ones. One aspect that might impact the organisational commitment is work-life balance, a construct that gained popularity in the recent decades. In this context, employers have different measures at their disposal to improve the work-life balance of their employees.

To the best of our knowledge, a comprehensive research project that examines the influence of company work-life balance measures on work-life balance and its impact on organisational commitment has not been conducted so far. Therefore, this research project aims to examine the effectiveness of the main company measures for work-life balance and the relevance work-life balance has for organisational commitment in comparison to other factors at work, such as leadership behaviour, working climate or salary.

To this end, we will develop a hypothesised model (Section 3) that incorporates work-life balance measures, work-life balance, other working conditions, and organisational commitment and is based on a literature review (Section 2). At the core of our research are two empirical studies, which are presented in Sections 4 and 5. Based on our empirical findings, we will discuss the relationships between organisational commitment, work-life balance and the corresponding company measures, and their implications for practice in Section 6.

## 2    Theoretical Background and State of Research

In the following sub-sections, we will introduce organisational commitment, key determinants of organisational commitment, work-life balance, and work-life balance measures.

## 2.1    Organisational Commitment

Against the background of rapid technological advancements, a shortage of qualified personnel, and an intensified competition of employers for talents (Supeala 2018), employers started to focus more on staff retention. This shift of perspectives also makes sense regarding the costs, which, when including opportunity costs like lower productivity of a new employee, the risk of losing revenues, customers etc., can be multiple times higher than an annual salary.

The precondition of the retention of employees is their willingness to stay with their employer; the employees must be committed to their organisation. However, empirical studies also show that organisational commitment is not only linked to the willingness of employees to stay with their organisation but also correlates with their job satisfaction, work attendance, performance etc. (e.g. Cohen and Hudecek 1993; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005; Jaramillo et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002; Tett and Meyer 1993).

Thus, a more differentiated conceptualisation of organisational commitment that entails more than just the intention of staying with an employer is required. In this context, the arguably most wide-spread conceptualisation of organisational commitment is the Three-Component Model of Allen and Meyer (1990). This model consists of an affective, normative and continuance component, which can be translated into common language as "want to stay", "should stay" and "must stay". Solinger et al. (2008) point out conceptual and empirical inconsistencies of the Three-Component Model and propose the use of Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) Composite Attitude-Behaviour Model, which explains (an attitude towards a) behaviour (in the case of commitment the evaluation of staying in the organisation or leaving) through habits, attitudes towards the target (in the case of commitment the employer), utilitarian, and normative and self-identity outcomes of a certain behaviour (in the case of commitment the evaluation of staying in the organisation or leaving). The model proposed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) has its roots in the "classical" social psychological theory that, in the widest sense, defines attitudes

as consisting of an affective, cognitive, and behavioural component (e.g. Rosenberg and Hovland 1960). Furthermore, Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) Composite Attitude-Behaviour Model shows similarities to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). In the context of employee retention and work intentions, the Theory of Reasoned Action and its enhancement, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1985, 1988, 1991), could be applied in several empirical studies (e.g. Arnold et al. 2006; Prestholdt et al. 1987).

Against this backdrop, Gansser and Godbersen (2017) conceptualised and empirically confirmed a four-component model of organisational commitment that can be understood as an integration of the Three-Component Model of Allen and Meyer (1990) and the attitudinal approach, proposed by Solinger et al. (2008). Thus, the Gansser-Godbersen Model consists of four components of organisational commitment: affective, normative, cognitive, and contractual commitment.

The **affective component** should be understood as an emotional attachment of employees towards their employer and their work colleagues. Accordingly, employees with a high emotional commitment can identify themselves with their company and its products, experience a personal attachment to their employer, recognise the relevance of their interpersonal relationships at work, and experience work as being pleasant. This commitment component resembles the affective component of the Three-Component Model by Allen and Meyer (1990) and the attitude towards the target of the Composite Attitude-Behaviour Model by Eagly and Chaiken (1993). Generally, the affective component is regarded as the most reliable form of commitment to an organisation (Carmeli 2005). Cooper-Hakim et al. (2005) and Meyer et al. (2002) confirmed in meta-analyses that the affective commitment correlates stronger with the job satisfaction and performance of employees as well as their intention to change employers than other components.

The **normative component** of organisational commitment correlates relatively highly with the affective component (Meyer et al. 2002). The normative commitment should be understood as a perceived obligation towards the employer based on moral and ethical thoughts and feelings. It does not only describe a general sense of fairness and obligation but also an attachment to the employer because of the length and quality of the relationship and the perceived efforts of the employer with regard to the employee. This definition of normative commitment corresponds with the definition of the normative component of the Three-Component Model (Allen and Meyer 1990), the normative outcomes and self-identity outcomes of the Composite Attitude-Behaviour Model (Eagly and

Chaiken 1993) and the subjective norm of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). The normative commitment normally shows the second highest correlation with job satisfaction, job performance, and the intention to leave the company, which is only superseded by the affective component (Cooper-Hakim et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002).

The **cognitive component** does not, or only weakly, correspond with the two afore-described components (Meyer et al. 2002). It shows similarities to the continuance component of the Three-Component Model (Allen and Meyer 1990) and the utilitarian outcomes of the Composite Attitude-Behaviour Model (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). The cognitive component refers to the rather rational decision to stay with or leave an employer by weighing the alternatives. It can be assumed that employees evaluate the effort that they invested in their relationship with the employer and the costs that are required for a change of jobs. Furthermore, a rational comparison of the current employer and possible alternatives is plausible. Even though a strong cognitive commitment leads to a lower intention to leave an employer (Cooper-Hakim et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002), the cognitive commitment negatively correlates with job satisfaction (Meyer et al. 2002) and work performance (Cooper-Hakim et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002).

All of the afore-mentioned theories focus on psychological states of commitment. Neither of them include a "purely" formal bond between the employees and their employer in the form of a written contract. We follow the model of Gansser and Godbersen (2017) and add a **contractual component** to the overall model of organisational commitment.

## 2.2   Key Determinants of Organisational Commitment

Every aspect of an organisation, an employee, and the employee-organisation relationship can have an impact on organisational commitment. In a meta-analysis, Kooij et al. (2010) found that virtually every commonly used internal personnel marketing measure correlates with affective commitment. The internal promotion, participation, rewards, and job enrichment show the highest correlations. A further meta-analysis by Jackson et al. (2013) confirmed the correlation between leadership styles and organisational commitment. Several other studies show a correlation between organisational commitment and the working climate (e.g. Liou and Cheng 2010; McMurray et al. 2004). This means it is barely feasible to include all of the possible factors influencing organisational commitment in a comprehensive model. In our research we therefore only aim to compare the impact

of work-life balance on organisational commitment to the impact of selected and well-established key factors. Thus, we decided to include the following determinants of organisational commitment in our model, which have also been proposed by Knoblauch (2004):

- Working climate,
- Leadership
- Variety of tasks
- Salary

**Working climate** can be understood as the "members' collective perceptions about their organization with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness..." (Moran and Volkwein 1992, 20). This definition implies that the perception of work or organisational climate is the result of a socialisation process within an organisation and derives from the interaction of its members (Falcione and Wilson 1988; Pritchard and Karasick 1973). This also means that the working climate is predominately experienced through the interaction of its members. It can be assumed that the working climate has an influence on organisational outcomes, such as job performance and job satisfaction (Pritchard and Karasick, 1973). As mentioned above, Liou and Cheng (2010) and McMurray et al. (2004) could establish a correlation between working climate and organisational commitment.

The afore-mentioned meta-analysis of Jackson et al. (2013) revealed that several studies confirmed a correlation between **leadership** styles and organisational commitment. In our study, however, we do not aim to compare different leadership styles but to determine the overall impact leadership has on organisational commitment (for comparison with the influence of work-life balance). This means that we need to conceptualise the employees' perception of leadership independently from the leadership style. As with the working climate, leadership, perceived by the employees, manifests itself in their social interactions with their superior or supervisor. In this context, Walter and Kanning (2003) could show that the social competencies of supervisors can explain a large amount of the job satisfaction of employees. Such social competencies are related to the concept of consideration, which can be defined as the degree to which leaders respect their followers, support them, care about their well-being, and express their appreciation (Bass, 1990). A meta-analysis of Judge et al. (2004) reveals that the consideration of superiors correlates with the job satisfaction and motivation of employees moderately to strongly. Therefore, we assume that the degree to which superiors or supervisors support their subordinates, enable and encourage

their participation, and give constructive feedbacks determines how employees evaluate the quality of the leadership in their organisation.

Apart from the organisational climate and the leadership, the content of work intuitively springs to mind when it comes to the subjective evaluation of work and the resulting organisational commitment. One main aspect of the subjectively perceived attractiveness of the work content is the **variety of tasks** or skills, which can be defined as "the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the person" (Hackman and Oldman 1976, 257). Hackman and Oldman (1976) empirically showed that the skill variety correlates with both the work motivation and job satisfaction. The correlation between the variety of skills and job satisfaction could be confirmed by a meta-analysis of Loher et al. (1985). Furthermore, a positive correlation between job enrichment, widening the tasks on a vertical level, and organisational commitment could be found (Putri and Setianan 2019).

The **salary** is an essential part of the employee-employer relationship as it compensates the employees for the time they invest into working for an organisation. It is generally assumed that the satisfaction with one's salary depends on the difference between the expectations of the pay level and the actually received pay (Williams et al., 2006).  This form of pay satisfaction strongly depends on a comparison with comparable others, which means that employees use co-workers or friends as references (Dyer and Theriault 1976; Lawler 1971; Miceli and Lane 1991; Rice et al. 1990; Williams et al. 2006). The meta-analysis of Williams et al. (2006) could establish a correlation between pay level satisfaction, turnover intentions, and job performance, which, however, has to be classified as rather weak. Furthermore, the findings of Kooij et al. (2010) support the relevance of pay satisfaction for organisational commitment, as a correlation between rewards and affective commitment could be found.


### 2.3    Work-life Balance

Over the recent decades the term work-life balance gained popularity in the academic and business sector. However, a unified conceptualisation could, to this day, not be agreed upon, as work-life balance is the subject of different disciplines such as business administration, psychology, and sociology (Mohe et al. 2010).

Earlier approaches to work-life balance are based on the role theory which states that human beings fulfil different roles in different domains of their lives (Barnett

and Gareis 2006; Duxbury and Higgins 2001). One of the main focusses of this research direction is the possible or assumingly likely inter-role conflict between work and family life (Byron 2005; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Williams and Allinger 1994). This implies that separating the domains of work and private or family life will reduce the risk of inter-role conflicts. To a certain extent, this approach can be found in the Border Theory of Clark (2000) and the Work and Personal Life Boundary Management approach of Bulger et al. (2007). It is, however, also plausible that work life and the private life do not only lead to conflicts but also interact in a complementary and synergetic way (e.g. Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Grzywacz et al. 2007). Through crossover or spill-over effects, experiences in one domain of life positively (or negatively) influence the activities and experiences in another domain of life (Grzywacz and Marks 2000), e.g. administration skills, acquired at work, make it easier to organise one's household.

In order to integrate the conflict-oriented and synergetic perspective, we define work-life balance as a relatively stable state of a person in which he or she experiences satisfaction and a low conflict intensity with regard to his or her roles in his or her work life and private life.

So far and in contrast to our approach, past research did not primarily examine the impact of work-life balance itself on constructs like productivity or organisational commitment, but focused on work-life balance measures. Amongst other findings, empirical research could show that organisational commitment or related constructs are positively correlated with flexible working hours (e.g. Baltes et al. 1999), flexible working arrangement like home office (e.g. Eaton 2003), corporate health management (e.g. Gansser and Godbersen 2017) and corporate social benefits in form of work-family practices (e.g. Haar and Spell 2004). The afore-mentioned work-life balance measures will be described in the following section.

## 2.4    Work-life Balance Measures

In the previous section, it was pointed out that work-life balance incorporates two sides, the work life and the private life of employees. Thus, the work-life balance can be strengthened either by organisational measures regarding the conditions of work or by changes in the private lives of employees. It is hardly possible, or even acceptable, for employers to directly intervene in the private lives of their employees. Therefore, employers must focus on measures that are linked to the

organisation and/or the working conditions, which, however, can have an indirect effect on the private lives of employees.

This means that virtually every aspect of work can be understood as a factor influencing the work-life balance. To narrow down initiatives with a (possibly) substantial effect on work-life balance, we refer to Mohe et al. (2010) who distinguish between primary work-life balance measures, which are directly related to the working conditions of employees, and secondary work-life balance measures, which financially and socially support the employees. Some of the most widespread measures within these categories are:

- Working time (primary measure)
- Place of work (primary measure)
- Corporate health management (secondary measure)
- Company social benefits and further training (secondary measure)

With regards to work-life balance, especially the compatibility of family and work, and also organisational commitment, flexible working hours are considered to be highly important (Eaton, 2003). The **working time** conditions in an organisation can range from fixed working hours with an inflexibly defined start and end time of work to more flexible arrangements like flexitime, in which employees can individually decide on their start and end time around core working hours, or compressed work weeks, during which the working hours are distributed over lesser days of the week (Baltes et al. 1999). Baltes et al. (1999) empirically showed that flexible working hours improve the organisational commitment. As flexible working hours have an effect on both the work and private life, we assume that the work-life balance plays a mediating role in the relationship between working hours and organisational commitment.

Apart from the working hours, a flexible **place of work** is a working condition that has an impact on organisational commitment (Eaton 2003). Apart from working in the employer's office or a factory, many jobs allow distant working in the form of home office or a virtual office. In this context, Hill et al. (2003) found that working in a traditional office at the location of the employer has mostly negative impacts on aspects of the private and work life of employees, whilst working in home office positively influences these aspects. Thus, we argue that the work-life balance mediates the relationship between the place of work and organisational commitment.

The **corporate health management** gained prominence after the perspective on health changed from not only treating illnesses to also comprehensively and individually strengthening health. Accordingly, corporate health management is defined as incorporating all structures and processes that further the health of the employees of an organisation and enabling health-conscious behaviour (DIN SPEC 91020: BGM). Central to the overall corporate health management is a portfolio of corporate health and wellness programmes, which include, amongst other aspects, health screenings and trainings on preventing illnesses and improving the health of employees (Gubler et al. 2017). The organisational objectives of corporate health or wellness programmes are focused on cost saving, especially with regard to health care and absenteeism (Baicker et al., 2010), and increasing the productivity of the workforce (Gubler et al. 2017). Furthermore, Gansser and Godbersen (2017) could empirically determine an influence of corporate health management initiatives on organisational commitment. As well-being and a healthy life style impact both, the work and the private life, it can be assumed that corporate health management initiatives have a positive influence on work-life balance, which, in turn, positively affects organisational commitment.

The last category of measures possibly impacting work-life balance, is **company social benefits and further training**. In the context of work-life balance, social benefits are mostly related to supporting employees with regard to childcare through onsite services, external solutions or with regard to parental leave (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Furthermore, an organisation's support for internal and external further trainings can help employees to develop not only their careers but also their competencies and capabilities in all areas of life in the form of spill-over or crossover effects (e.g. Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Grzywacz et al. 2007; Grzywacz and Marks 2000). As it was assumed for the other categories of work-life balance measures, we hypothesise an influence of the company social benefits and further training on work-life balance, which, in turn, impacts organisational commitment.

### 3    Hypothesised Model and Research Questions

In this section, the hypothesised model und the research questions underlying the empirical analysis will be deduced from the theoretical background, explained in the previous sections.

In section 2.1, it was pointed out that the organisational commitment is one of the most influential constructs in the fields of human resource management and plays an important role for companies in maintaining an effective and efficient work-force. Organisational commitment can be conceptualised in various dimensions. On the basis of the empirical findings of Gansser and Godbersen (2017), we decided to define organisational commitment as a construct with four components – affective, cognitive, normative, and contractual commitment. The organisational commitment serves as the dependent variable in our hypothesised model.

The work-life balance and other key factors influencing the commitment of employees were presented in sections 2.2 and 2.3. Whilst it is widely agreed upon within the scientific community that the other key factors play an important role regarding work satisfaction and organisational commitment, such a relationship could not be established for the work-life balance to the same degree, as work-life balance measures, not work-life balance itself, was the focus of research so far. Therefore, the work-life balance as well as the working climate, the leadership behaviour, the variety of tasks for the employees, and the salary are integrated in our model as independent variables with an assumed influence on organisational commitment.

The concept of work-life balance integrates two fields of life, the work life and the private life. From an employer's perspective, especially the work life is of relevance, as it is here that companies or other organisations can implement measures to enhance the work-life balance of their employees. As shown in section 2.4, the main company measures for improving its employees' work-life balance are related to the working time, the place of work, the corporate health management, and company social benefits and further training. These measures are integrated in our model as influencing factors of the work-life balance itself.

Our hypothesised model is graphically represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:**       Hypothesised model consisting of work-life balance measures (left), work-life balance and other key factors (middle), and organisational commitment (right)
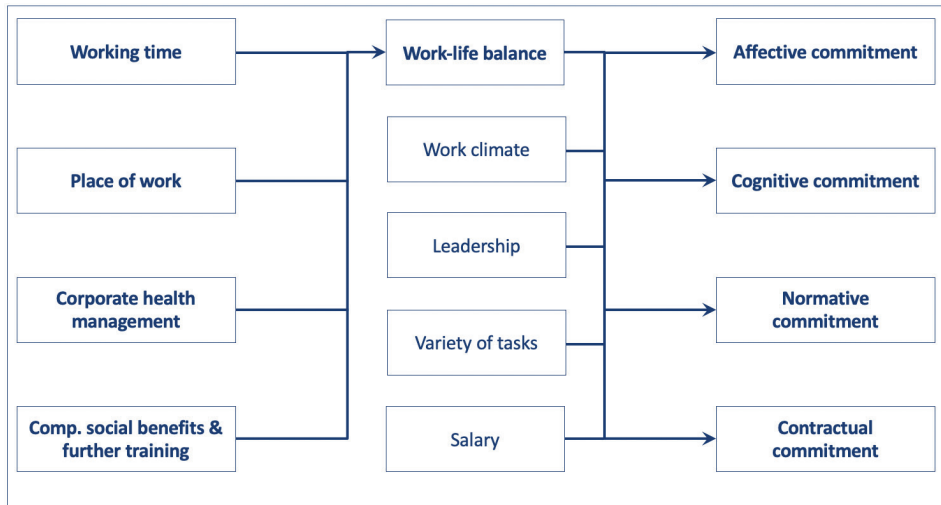


Based on the hypothesised model, two research questions underlie our empirical analysis:

- RQ 1: How does the work-life balance influence the organisational commitment in comparison to other key factors at work? (Study 1)
- RQ 2: How do the work-life balance measures in companies influence the work-life balance of their employees? (Study 2)

## 4    The Influence of Work-life Balance on Organisational Commitment in Comparison to other Working Conditions (Study 1)

The main aim of this section is to examine the influence of work-life balance, working climate, leadership, variety of tasks, and salary on the four dimensions of organisational commitment, as stated in the first research question. After the description of the method in section 4.1, we will present the empirical results in section 4.2.

### 4.1    Method

Firstly, we will describe the sample and, secondly, explain the questionnaire, the statistical analysis, and the statistical adequacy of our model.

#### 4.1.1    Sample

Our online questionnaire was completely answered by 760 persons between 21 December 2018 and 11 January 2019. The average age of the participants is 27.5 years (SD = 6.4 years). The sample consists of 32.6 % men and 65.1 % women who spent 4.1 years in their current company on average (SD = 3.0 years).

#### 4.1.2    Measuring Instruments

To operationalise **organisational commitment**, we used the model of Gansser and Godbersen (2017). The 14 items were measured on a seven-point rating scale from 1 "do not agree at all" ("stimme überhaupt nicht zu") to 7 "fully agree" ("stimme voll und ganz zu").

The concept of **work-life balance** was operationalised by using the Trier Short Scale (Trierer Kurzskala; Syrek et al. 2011), again using a same seven-point rat-ing scale.

The items for measuring the **working climate** from the employee's point of view are taken from the study by Weyer et al. (2014) on the survey of subjective sat-isfaction and stress at work and occupation. As with the afore-mentioned con-structs, we used a seven-point rating scale.

In section 2.2, we pointed out that, from an employee's perspective, **leadership** manifests itself in the interactions with the superior or supervisor. Therefore, we decided against one of the many questionnaires measuring leadership styles and chose instead the scale for measuring verbal leadership behaviour of Mohr et al. (2014). Here again, seven-point rating scales were used.

Our understanding of the **variety of tasks** is based on the model of Hackman and Oldman (1976). In the same tradition, Benninghaus (2014) developed a scale measuring perceived activity characteristics, which we applied in our study using a seven-point scale with varying poles, depending on the particular item.

In order to measure the construct satisfaction with **salary**, we used the items for measuring general job satisfaction, which among other constructs includes the construct salary (Fischer and Lück 2014). The seven-level rating scale ranges from (1) "very dissatisfied" to (7) "very satisfied".

In order to test the adequacy of our hypothesised model and determine the effect of work-life balance, working climate, leadership behaviour, variety of tasks, and salary satisfaction on organisational commitment, we used partial least squares path modelling. The analysis of the collected data was performed with R (R Development Core Team 2017) and in particular with the R package PLSPM (Sanchez 2013).

The values for one-dimensionality, average extracted variances and loadings, presented in Table 1, show that our model and our operationalisation are adequate for measuring the theoretically proposed constructs. The values for Cronbach's alpha and Dillon-Goldstein's rho are at least 0.878 for all of the latent variables. The average variance extracted for all components is more than 0.515. All of the items load on their factors higher than 0.7, except for the items "It is difficult for me to combine work life and private life" (loading: 0.685), "The working atmosphere is rather disturbed by some colleagues." (loading: 0.66), "To what extent does your job require special skills (manual or other)?" (loading: 0.452), "To what extent does your job require you to do the same thing every day?" (loading: 0.543) and "My job is very simple." (loading: 0.664).  However, these five items were not eliminated from further analysis, as their loadings can be considered just satisfactory and the other indicators, as shown above, confirm the appropriateness of the overall model.

**Table 1:** Outer model of the PLS analysis of study 1 (loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Dillon-Goldstein's rho and average variance extracted – AVE) – constructs and items of the organisational commitment and its determinants (n = 760)

| Constructs and Items | Loadings | Cronbach's alpha | Dillon-Goldstein's rho | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constructs and items - determinants of organisational commitment** | | | | |
| **Work life balance** | | 0,890 | 0,920 | 0,695 |
| Iam satisfied with the balance of work and private life. | 0,868 | | | |
| It is difficult for me to combine work life and private life. (invertiert) | 0,685 | | | |
| I can manage the challenges from my private life and the challenges from my work life to the same extent. | 0,888 | | | |
| I succeed in establishing a balance of challenging and relaxing activities in my life. | 0,840 | | | |
| I am satisfied with how my priorities regarding my job and my private life are distributed. | 0,871 | | | |
| **Work climate** | | 0,891 | 0,915 | 0,604 |
| I am very satisfied with the relationship to my colleagues. | 0,799 | | | |
| There is an excellent working atmosphere at my workplace. | 0,843 | | | |
| I can rely on my colleagues in every respect. | 0,748 | | | |
| The working atmosphere is rather disturbed by some colleagues. (inverted) | 0,660 | | | |
| I know quite a few people I would rather work with than with my current colleagues. (inverted) | 0,775 | | | |
| The working atmosphere is not quite as I would like it to be. (inverted) | 0,866 | | | |
| I would not mind if some of my colleagues were replaced by others (inverted) | 0,731 | | | |
| **Leadership** | | 0,908 | 0,929 | 0,685 |
| My supervisor asks for the views of those present. | 0,824 | | | |
| My supervisor asks me to bring in my own concerns. | 0,866 | | | |
| If I provide contributions, my superior will give a precise account of them. | 0,850 | | | |
| My supervisor leaves room for my questions. | 0,857 | | | |
| My supervisor criticises me constructively. | 0,799 | | | |
| When I ask for information, my supervisor willingly explains. | 0,766 | | | |
| **Variety of tasks** | | 0,892 | 0,913 | 0,515 |
| To what extent does your job require in-depth specialist knowledge? | 0,717 | | | |
| To what extent does your job require special skills (manual or other)? | 0,452 | | | |
| To what extent does your job require creative talent and imagination? | 0,663 | | | |
| To what extent does your job require you to constantly learn new things? | 0,775 | | | |
| To what extent does your job require you to find new ways to solve problems? | 0,790 | | | |
| To what extent does your job require you to do the same thing every day? (inverted) | 0,543 | | | |
| How varied is your work? I.e. to what extent does your job require and allow you to do many different things and apply different knowledge or skills? | 0,841 | | | |
| Performing my job requires extensive knowledge and a high level of qualification. | 0,807 | | | |
| My job is very simple. (inverted) | 0,664 | | | |
| My activity is characterized by a great variety of tasks. | 0,817 | | | |
| **Salary** | | 0,878 | 0,925 | 0,804 |
| Are you satisfied with the payment when you compare it with that of your colleagues? | 0,860 | | | |
| Are you satisfied with the payment? | 0,942 | | | |
| Are you satisfied with the payment when you compare it with that of your friends and acquaintances? | 0,886 | | | |
| **Constructs and items - organisational commitment** | | | | |
| **Affective commitment** | | 0,825 | 0,879 | 0,595 |
| It is enjoyable to work for my employer. | 0,848 | | | |
| I feel personally related to my employer. | 0,814 | | | |
| I woul personally regred if the contract with my employer ends. | 0,820 | | | |
| I can identify myself with my employer and the products/services. | 0,784 | | | |
| My personal contacts at work are important to me. | 0,555 | | | |
| **Cognitive commitment** | | 0,732 | 0,833 | 0,531 |
| The required time for changing jobs  bounds me to my employer in a certain way. | 0,776 | | | |
| I depend on my employer because there are no adequate alternatives on the market. | 0,765 | | | |
| I feel bound to my employer because the effort I invested would loose its value if I change jobs. | 0,646 | | | |
| I feel bound to my employer because changing jobs would require switching cost. | 0,719 | | | |
| **Normative commitment** | | 0,791 | 0,865 | 0,611 |
| It would not be fair to terminate the relationship to my employer because my employer cared for me. | 0,793 | | | |
| Becaue of the long relationship with my employer I feel obliged to a certain considerateness. | 0,688 | | | |
| As an employee, I feel obliged to fairness towards my employer. | 0,822 | | | |
| Moral conciderations regarding my employer also play a role for me. | 0,815 | | | |
| **Contractual commitment** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| I am contractally bound to my employer. | 1,000 | | | |

## 4.2    Results

The main results of the partial least squares path modelling for the influence of work-life balance and the other factors on organisational commitment are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:**     PLS model – The Influence of work-life balance on organisational commitment in comparison to other working conditions (n = 760; * p-value < 0.05, ** p-value < 0.01, *** p-value < 0.001)
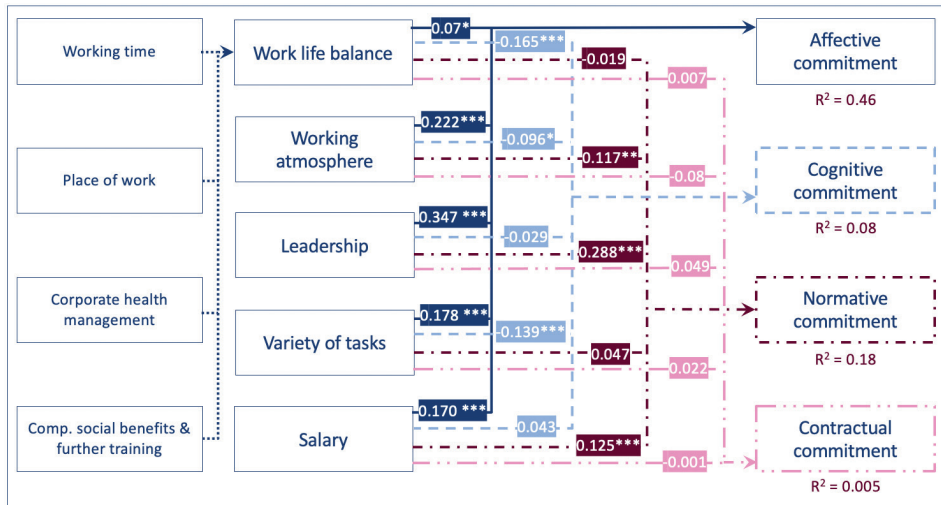


First, we found that with an R squared of 0.46, almost 50 percent of the variance of affective commitment can be explained by the five independent variables. The strongest highly significant influence on affective commitment is the perceived leadership behaviour with a path coefficient of 0.347, followed by the working climate (path coefficient: 0.222), which is also significant. The variety of tasks and salary also have a significant influence on affective commitment (path coefficients: 0.78 and 0.170). The effect of work-life balance on affective commitment is still significant but, with a path coefficient of 0.07, it is substantially lower than the impact of the other variables.

As with the affective commitment, the perceived leadership behaviour shows the strongest impact on the normative commitment. Other determinants with a significant impact on the normative commitment are the working climate (path coefficient: 0,117) and the salary (path coefficient: 0.125). The path coefficients of the work-life balance and the variety of tasks are not significant. An R squared of 0.18 shows that a large proportion of the variance of the normative commitment cannot be explained by the five examined determinants.

An even lower R squared value of 0.08 accounts for the cognitive component of organisational commitment. Here, the work-life balance (path coefficient: -0.165),

working climate (path coefficient: -0.096) and variety of tasks (path coefficient: -0.139) have significant path coefficients, with the work-life balance being the strongest. All of these path coefficients are negative, which means that the cognitive commitment will decrease when the afore-mentioned determinants are perceived as being better and vice versa.

None of the determinants of organisational commitment significantly influence the contractual component.

## 5    The Effectiveness of Work-life Balance Measures (Study 2)

The main aim of this section is to investigate the influence of work-life balance measures of companies on their employees' work-life balance, as stated in the second research question. Furthermore, the influence of work-life balance on the four dimensions of organisational commitment is examined to confirm or disconfirm the findings of Study 1. The empirical results will be presented after the description of the method.

### 5.1    Method

Firstly, we will describe the sample and, secondly, explain the questionnaire, the statistical analysis, and the statistical adequacy of our model.

### 5.1.1    Sample

A written questionnaire was used between 08 February 2019 and 07 May 2019 to examine the work-life balance measures, work-life balance, and organisational commitment. The sample consist of students of the FOM University of Applied Sciences who are extra-occupationally studying while being employed fulltime. Eventually, 389 fully filled-in questionnaires resulted. The average age of the participants is 25.9 years (SD = 4.2 years). The sample consists of 38.3 % men and 61.7 % women who spent 4.6 years in their current company on average (SD = 3.6 years).

### 5.1.2    Measuring Instruments

The basis for operationalising the organisational commitment was the Gansser-Godbersen Model (2017), as it was done in Study 1 of this project. Six-step rating scales from 0 "do not agree at all" ("stimme überhaupt nicht zu") to 5 "fully agree" ("stimme voll und ganz zu") were used to measure the 14 items of the four components.

Also consistent with the questionnaire of the other study of the project, the concept of work-life balance was operationalised by using the Trier Short Scale (Trierer Kurzskala; Syrek et al. 2011). Again, six-step rating scales from 0 "do not agree at all" ("stimme überhaupt nicht zu") to 5 "fully agree" ("stimme voll und ganz zu") were used to measure the five items.

The perceived quality of each of the work-life balance measures – working time, place of work, corporate health management, and company social benefits and further training – was measured by a one-item question. The rating scales ranged from 0 "not good" ("nicht gut") to 5 "very good" ("sehr gut").

Partial least squares path modelling was used to test the adequacy of the theoretically developed model and to determine the effects company work-life balance measures have on work-life balance and work-life balance has on the four components of organisational commitment. The analysis of the collected data was conducted with R (R Development Core Team 2017) and, more specifically, with the R package PLSPM (Sanchez 2013).

The values for one-dimensionality, average extracted variances, and loadings, which are presented in Table 2, indicate that our model and operationalisation are adequate for measuring the theoretically proposed constructs. The values for Cronbach's alpha and Dillon-Goldstein's rho are at least 0.730 for all of the latent variables. The average variance extracted for all of the components is more than 0.547. All of the items load on their factors higher than 0.7 with the exception of the items "The required time for changing jobs bounds me to my employer in a certain way." (loading: 0.524) and "My personal contacts at work are important to me." (loading: 0.486). The loading of the former item might be regarded as unproblematic from a statistical perspective whilst the loading of the latter has to be seen as critical. However, both items were not eliminated from the further analysis, as their loadings can be seen as just satisfactory and the other indicators, as shown above, confirm the adequacy of the overall model.

**Table 2:**          Outer model of the PLS analysis of study 2 (loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Dillon-Goldstein's rho and average variance extracted - AVE) – constructs and items of work-life balance measures, work-life balance and organisational commitment (n = 389)

| Constructs and Items | Loadings | Cronbach's alpha | Dillon-Goldstein's rho | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constructs and items - work-life balance measures** | | | | |
| **Working time** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| In your company, how good are the measures regarding the working time in general? | 1,000 | | | |
| **Place of work** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| In your company, how good are the measures regarding the palce of work in general? | 1,000 | | | |
| **Corporate health management** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| In your company, how good are the measures regarding the corporate health management in general? | 1,000 | | | |
| **Company social benefits and further training** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| In your company, how good are the measures regarding the company social benefits and further training in general? | 1,000 | | | |
| **Construct and items - work-life balance** | | | | |
| **Work life balance** | | 0,862 | 0,901 | 0,645 |
| I am satisfied with the balance of work and private life. | 0,874 | | | |
| It is difficult for me to combine work life and private life. (inverted) | 0,704 | | | |
| I can manage the challenges from my private life and the challenges from my work life to the same extent. | 0,815 | | | |
| I succeed in establishing a balance of challenging and relaxing activities in my life. | 0,806 | | | |
| I am satisfied with how my priorities regarding my job and my private life are distributed. | 0,807 | | | |
| **Constructs and items - organisational commitment** | | | | |
| **Affective commitment** | | 0,845 | 0,892 | 0,626 |
| It is enjoyable to work for my employer. | 0,907 | | | |
| I feel personally related to my employer. | 0,836 | | | |
| I woul personally regred if the contract with my employer ends. | 0,856 | | | |
| I can identify myself with my employer and the products/services. | 0,799 | | | |
| My personal contacts at work are important to me. | 0,486 | | | |
| **Cognitive commitment** | | 0,730 | 0,832 | 0,547 |
| The required time for changing jobs  bounds me to my employer in a certain way. | 0,524 | | | |
| I depend on my employer because there are no adequate alternatives on the market. | 0,741 | | | |
| I feel bound to my employer because the effort I invested would loose its value if I change jobs. | 0,842 | | | |
| I feel bound to my employer because changing jobs would require switching cost. | 0,808 | | | |
| **Normative commitment** | | 0,821 | 0,882 | 0,642 |
| It would not be fair to terminate the relationship to my employer because my employer cared for me. | 0,832 | | | |
| Becaue of the long relationship with my employer I feel obliged to a certain considerateness. | 0,748 | | | |
| As an employee, I feel obliged to fairness towards my employer. | 0,870 | | | |
| Moral conciderations regarding my employer also play a role for me. | 0,748 | | | |
| **Contractual commitment** | | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| I am contractually bound to my employer. | 1,000 | | | |

## 5.2    Results

Before the influence of the company work-life balance measures on work-life balance will be investigated, the impact of work-life balance on the four dimensions of organisational commitment is examined.

The main results of the partial least squares path modelling are represented in Figure 3. The strongest influence of work-life balance is on the affective organisational commitment with a path coefficient of 0.376, followed by the impact on the normative commitment (path coefficient: 0.221). The influence of work-life balance on cognitive commitment ("having to stay") is negative (path coefficient: -0.180). All of the three coefficients are statistically significant. No significant influence of work-life balance on contractual commitment could be found. The R squared values for all of the four components of organisational commitment are

relatively low and range between 0.0003 (contractual commitment) and 0.1433 (affective commitment) which indicates that there must be other factors than the work-life balance influencing the organisational commitment. These results are consistent with the findings in Section 4.2, with the exception that we could determine a significant influence of work-life balance on the normative commitment of employees in Study 2, presented in this section.

Figure 3:       PLS model – influence of the work-life balance measures on work-life balance and work-life balance on organisational commitment (n = 389; * p-value < 0.05, ** p-value < 0.01, *** p-value < 0.001)
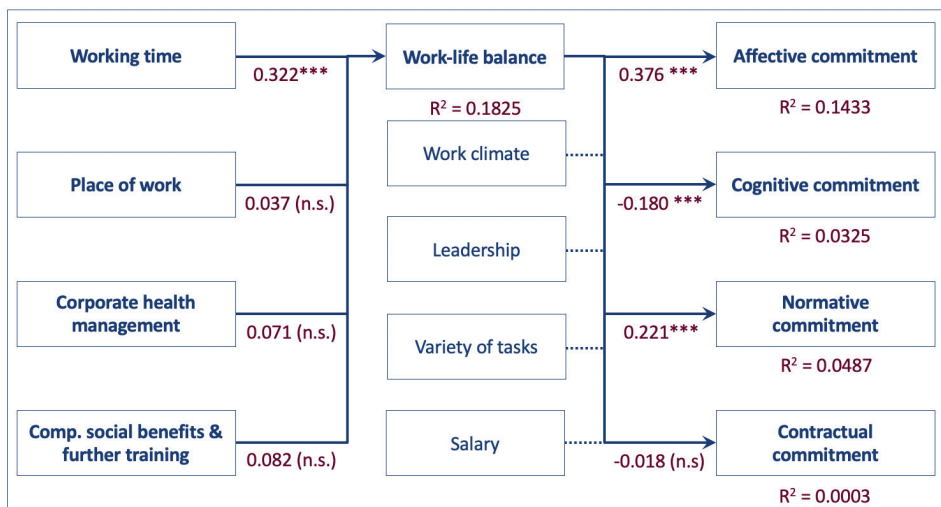


A significant influence of company work-life balance measures on work-life balance can only be found for the working time. The path coefficient has a value of 0.322 and is significant. All of the other work-life balance measures – place of work, corporate health management, and company social benefits and further training – do not significantly influence the work-life balance. This means that, within the framework of company measures, only the working time is relevant for the employees when it comes to work-life balance. However, there must be other factors influencing work-life balance, as R squared with a value of 0.1825 is relatively low, which will be discussed in the next section.

## 6      Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the results of both studies with regards to their managerial and research implications.


### 6.1  Managerial Implications

Our studies revealed that work-life balance positively influences the affective (in Study 1 and 2) and normative (only in Study 2) commitment of employees. This means that employers can benefit from strengthening the work-life balance of their employees, as the affective and normative components of organisational commitment are not only positively correlated with job satisfaction but also with constructs like the intention to stay with an organisation and work performance (Cooper-Hakim et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002).

However, Study 1 showed that work-life balance has the lowest impact on the affective commitment, compared with the other examined determinants, and does not have a significant influence on the normative commitment. In a descending order, the perceived leadership behaviour, the working climate and, on a similar level (with regards to affective commitment), the salary and the variety of tasks are of higher relevance. This indicates that employers should not primarily focus on increasing the work-life balance to improve the organisational commitment of their employees. With regard to organisational commitment and other organisational objectives, such as job satisfaction, staff retention, work performance, and productivity, the conditions of the daily work, especially the leadership behaviour and the working climate, should be improved. After having these "regular" working conditions secured on a high-quality level, increasing the work-life balance of employees can be used as an additional measure by employers.

Even though the effect of an improved work-life balance on organisational commitment is relatively low, it is the "right" effect for employers. The positive influence of the work-life balance on affective commitment, which is normally regarded as the strongest form of commitment, means that the employees' willingness to stay with the organisation can be increased. The positive effect on the normative commitment (Study 2) means that the work-life balance can strengthen the employees' feeling to stay with an organisation because of moral or fairness reasons. Furthermore, an organisation benefits from these relationships because the affective and normative components of organisational commitment are positively linked to organisational objectives like work performance and productivity,

as mentioned above. In this context, the negative influence of the work-life balance on cognitive commitment is of advantage to employers, as the cognitive component is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and work performance (Cooper-Hakim et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2002). This inverse relationship of work-life balance and cognitive commitment also indicates that employees with a good work-life balance feel less forced to stay with an employer and, therewith, do not look for employment alternatives and weigh them against their current employer.

Study 2 revealed that the working time is the only examined work-life balance measure that significantly impacts the perceived work-life balance. This implies that employers should consider flexible working hours, trust-based working hours, part-time models or other instruments when aiming to improve the work-life balance of their employees.

The analysis also showed that only 18.25 % of the variance of work-life balance could be explained by the work-life balance measures, which means that there must be other factors influencing work-life balance. This leads to two possibilities. Firstly, it can be assumed that the general working conditions, like leadership, tasks, career prospects etc., and not the measures directly targeting work-life balance, are of higher relevance. For an employer, this would imply that the focus should be first and foremost on the working conditions when aiming to strengthen its employees' work-life balance. Secondly, it could imply that determinants outside of work might be more or equally important for the work-life balance. This becomes plausible by just looking at the term work-life balance, which combines the work life and the private life. This would mean that employers could offer their employees non-work-related support in their private lives to improve their work-life balance. However, these two aspects need further research, as will be shown in the next section.

## 6.2    Research Implications, Limitations and Outlook

As mentioned at the end of the previous subsection, work-life balance consists of (at least) two life domains, work and private life. Thus, it might be fruitful to integrate the private life more in future research. This would also allow to examine spill-over effects from one life domain to another and to discover more options to improve people's work-life balance. Such research should then probably include other constructs as dependent variables of work-life balance, such as life satisfaction, to allow a more comprehensive and humanistic approach. Furthermore,

this direction of research could clarify the possibilities and restrictions of employers to improve their employees' work-life balance.

We pointed out in the previous subsection that the explanatory power of the work-life balance measures for work-life balance is rather low and that it can be assumed that the "regular" working conditions have a larger impact on the work-life balance. As we only examined selected working conditions, we cannot reliably deduce if this is the case. Thus, future research should investigate our assumption. This would require a rather comprehensive model of working conditions in which work-life balance and measures which do not directly target work-life balance are integrated.

Furthermore, our research raises a more fundamental question regarding work-life balance. Other research showed that the introduction of work life-balance measures can have an impact on organisational commitment, productivity etc. (e.g. Baltes et al. 1999; Gansser and Godbersen 2017; Haar and Spell 2004). We, however, could only determine a relatively weak mediating role of work-life balance. Firstly, this could mean that people are not too much concerned with work-life balance but regard other psychological and behavioural states as being of higher relevance to their lives. Secondly, it could mean that work-life balance is not sufficiently conceptualised. This aspect would correspond with approaches to work-life balance that entail more domains of life than just the work life and the private life. Thirdly, our results might indicate that the effects of organisational measures, which were understood as being directly linked to work-life balance, in fact target other constructs like job satisfaction. Against this backdrop of the three afore-mentioned aspects, we suggest improving the conceptualisation of work-life balance, possibly through a more differentiated understanding and in relation to psychological constructs like life satisfaction, and then integrating this new concept in a wider model of private life and work life for empirical testing.

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