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Zielinska, Katarzyna, Dehe, Benjamin and Papalexi, Marina

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Orientation to work: comparison between the British workforce and Polish migrant workers

Katarzyna Zielinska
The University of Huddersfield

Benjamin Dehe, b.dehe@hud.ac.uk
The University of Huddersfield

Marina Papalexi
The University of Huddersfield

Summary Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the differences between Polish migrant workers and British labour in relation to their orientation to work. Using a sample of 128 employees in the industrial sector in the UK, we examined the orientation to work among the workforce. The results show a difference in orientation towards employment between the employees in the industrial sector, in the UK. Polish workers reveal characteristics of intrinsic orientation to work, while British employees reveal characteristics of instrumental orientation to work. Unexpectedly, the results suggest that individuals with intrinsic orientation to work expose higher need for recuperation.

Keywords: Organisational Behaviour, Orientation to work, Manufacturing setting

Introduction

The European Union has grown rapidly and in 2004, introduced 10 new members. The enlargement brought new opportunities and new cultural challenges for businesses (Martin and Cristescu-Martin, 2004). As manufacturing businesses are globalised and dynamics, there is a need, for leaders and operations managers, who are leading transformation programmes such as Lean implementation, to appreciate how the employees' working values and preferences can be considered to optimise change within organisations (Harris, 2002).

Lean implementations are often described as being both a technical and a social programme (Gino and Pisano, 2008). Therefore, knowledge about staff and their orientation to work can be essential to achieve satisfactory outcome during a transformation such as a

Lean, TQM or any other operational excellence implementation. This goes towards Angelis *et al.*, (2011) who studied and reviewed relationship between Lean practices and workforce commitment.

Polish is the most common non-British nationality in the UK, representing 14.4% of whole UK migrant population (National Statistic Office, 2012). The labour from Central Eastern Europe (CEE) have different attitude towards work (Blanchflower, 2007). Eastern European workers have a specific set of working values, which can be explained, to a certain extent, by a leftover of the ruthless Soviet tradition. It is, therefore, useful to study the perception of Polish migrant workers in the Western European country, such as the UK.

Goldthorpe *et al.*, (1968) published a paper in which they identified three main orientations to work: instrumental or extrinsic, bureaucratic or intrinsic and solidaristic. Research revealed that there is a direct correlation between one's orientation to work and their motivation (Taris and Feij, 2004). Greater level of motivation and commitment is associated with characteristics of intrinsic orientation to work. Motivated and committed individuals work more effectively and enthusiastically and are more adaptable to change. However, there has been a little discussion, in the literature, about orientation to work of CEE labour and uncertainty still exists about the differences between CEE migrants and British labour. After more than a decade of EU enlargement, this study aims to compare the attitude towards work between those two groups in a manufacturing setting. We believe this is important knowledge for operations managers to understand their workforce further when driving cultural change programme (Paulson *et al.*, 2002).

Literature review

As businesses are globalised and dynamics, there is a need, for leaders and managers, to appreciate how the employees' working values and preferences enable building synergies and can be considered to create harmony in an organisation (Harris, 2002). This underlines the importance of Human Resources Management (HRM) practices and their direct influence onto an organisation capabilities and performances (Theriou and Chatzoglou, 2008).

There has been a little discussion, in the literature, about orientation to work of CEE labour and uncertainty still exists about the differences between CEE and British labour (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2014). Recent developments in cross cultural and migration study have amplified the need for understanding new migration groups in host countries. Cultural background, attitude towards work and length of employment influence the employee's commitment towards an organisation, as underlined by D'Amato and Herzfeldt's (2008). The main issues addressed in this paper are, firstly, to establish whether there is a difference in the work orientation towards employment between Polish and British labour; and secondly, to establish the level of need for recovery after work. To structure and focus the paper four hypotheses have been established following a central question about the Polish labour orientation to work in the industrial sector and the work's attitudes differences between them and the host labour force.

H1. There are differences in orientation towards employment between British labour and the Polish migrant labour.

H2. Polish labour demonstrates characteristic of intrinsic orientation towards employment.

H3. British labour demonstrates characteristics of instrumental (extrinsic) orientation towards employment.

H4. British labour demonstrates a greater level of need for recovery in opposition to the Polish migrant labour.

Orientation to work

The first substantial discussions of orientation to work emerged during the end of 1960s with Affluent Worker studies conducted by Goldthorpe *et al.*, (1968), which were associated with the employee's attitude towards work, motivation, commitment and cultural life.

Orientation to work can be defined and described as "*the meaning attached by individuals to their work which predisposes them both to think and act in particular ways with regard to that work*" (Watson, 2012, p.61). Simplifying the definition, orientation to work is a set of attitudes towards work, which result in employee's particular behaviour towards work and perception on non-work time. The research and knowledge development of Affluent Worker studies recognised three main types of orientation towards work: instrumental, bureaucratic and solidaristic. The increasing amount of literature on work orientations indicates that there are several factors that influence it, such as education, social class, economic situation, culture or organisational encouragement (Matheson, 2012).

In this study, the solidaristic orientation towards employment is not considered, as solidaristically orientated individual undertakes the employment to obtain social rewards such as respect among peers. Solidaristic orientated employees are mostly found in profession such as: doctors, attorney, layers or academics (Watson, 2012) and this study is based on industrial workers.

Instrumental or Extrinsic orientation

The term instrumental orientation to work is used interchangeably with extrinsic orientation towards work. The interpretation of employment for instrumentally orientated individuals is to work with a clear end; the employment is a labouring activity, which finishes with the end of the working day (Grint, 2005). Employees do not obtain fulfilment and self-satisfaction from the job nor social belongings through the employment. It is therefore necessary to be able to fulfil time after work, and the boundaries between work and non-work time to be clear (Grint, 2005; Watson, 2012). Extrinsic orientation is characterised by seeking material rewards after fulfilling safety and security needs (Matheson, 2012). The remuneration is a reason why the individual performs the job duties. The involvement in employment starts and finishes at the workplace. The research shows that employees with extrinsic orientation to work demonstrate negative outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, low job satisfaction and low level of work engagement (Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2007). Due to higher level of exhaustion, instrumentally orientated individuals reveal greater need for recovery after work (Demerouti *et al.*, 2012).

Intrinsic or Bureaucratic orientation

The term bureaucratic orientation to work is used alternatively with intrinsic orientation towards employment. Perception of the work differs in opposition to extrinsically orientated

employees. The employment is seen as providing the service for the organisation through high level of engagement in return obtaining career progress (Watson, 2012). Employees obtain fulfilment and job satisfaction through work. It is characterised by moral responsibility towards the organisation. Employees, with bureaucratic orientation to work, value and appreciate the intellectual fulfilment, which is obtained from employment (Demerouti *et al.*, 2012). It is important to underline that intrinsically orientated individual perceive their work as interesting, which is one of the source of motivation at work along financial benefits and security (Wilpert, 1997). Although, the amount of workload seems to be greater than in case of extrinsically orientated employees, the need for recovery is not reciprocal with an intrinsic orientation towards employment (Demerouti *et al.*, 2012). Intrinsic orientation towards employment arises when individual has an opportunity to obtain intrinsic rewards (Reed, 1997).

Need for recovery

Need for recovery refers to the time needed to recuperate from work and the induced exertion put into it (Van Veldhoven and Broersen, 2003). The term need for recovery is characterised by temporary exhaustion, lack of energy and effort and diminished performance, which can be observed especially in the last hours of work (Van Veldhoven and Broersen, 2003). Van Veldhoven and Broersen (2003) developed the need for recovery scale, which is used in this study. The scale is composed of eleven statements, which measure the respondent's concentration, energy after working day, interaction with environment after working day and it measures the degree of need for recuperation.

To summarise, orientation to work can be described as the attitude towards work (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1968). Bennet (1978) recognised and underlined its importance for organisational settings, because human skills, passion and enthusiasm directly affect every day operations and organisation's performance. It is argued that orientation to work reflects the organisational atmosphere and the value system, in terms of demands, resources and rewards, which mirrors friendly and supportive working experience in the organisation (Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). By promoting good working conditions, employees feel satisfied and their well-being positively impact attendance, commitment and loyalty (Zhang, 2010), thus their orientation to work will possess the feature of intrinsic orientation, which, in general, results in improvements of organisational outputs.

Methodology

This paper tests whether the Polish labour is intrinsically more orientated to work than the British labour, which result in different level of need for recuperation among both tested group. This paper builds on the research conducted by Van Veldhoven and Broersen (2003) and Demerouti *et al.*, (2012) in order to test the stated hypotheses. The study is focused on testing differences between Polish migrant labour and British labour in the UK and measures their respective orientation to work. The data was collected from manufacturing in the UK via a survey. The total sample consists of 128 responses; 54 from British employees and 74 from Polish migrant employees, working in the UK industrial sector. Table 1 represents a

summary of the participants' profile. Questions are used to establish the attitude towards employment using a four-point Likert scale based on Demerouti *et al.*, (2012) research. Low score indicates that respondent represents the characteristics of intrinsic orientation towards employment. Analogically, high score indicates that individual represents instrumental (extrinsic) orientation towards work. Four point scale and set of four questions give possible range of scores between 4 and 16. The set of eleven questions was used to measure and determine the need for recovery. This set of questions has been adapted from the study of Van Veldhoven and Broersen (2003).

		British employees		Polish migrant employees	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	31	57.4	18	24.3
	Female	23	42.6	56	75.7
	TOTAL	54	100	74	100
Age of the participants	<21	0	0	1	0.8
	21-30	14	26.5	27	21
	31-40	14	26.5	36	28
	41-50	16	29	5	3.6
	51-60	8	14	5	3.6
	>61	2	4	0	0
	TOTAL	54	100	74	100
Role within the organisation	Production worker	31	57.4	46	62.2
	Administrative role	8	14.8	4	5.4
	Supervisory role	4	7.4	14	18.9
	Managerial role	11	20.4	10	13.5
	TOTAL	54	100	74	100
Level of qualifications	No formal qualifications	6	11.1	0	-
	GCSE	20	37	3	4.1
	College	11	20.4	20	27
	A-levels	9	16.7	12	16.2
	Bachelor degree	4	7.4	20	27
	Master degree	1	1.9	13	17.6
	Professional qualifications	3	5.6	6	8.1
	TOTAL	54	100	74	100
Length of employment	<6 months	3	5.6	11	14.9
	6-12 months	3	5.6	8	10.8
	12-24 months	5	9.3	5	6.8
	2-4 years	4	7.4	15	20.3
	>4 years	39	72.2	35	47.3
	TOTAL	54	100	74	100

Size of the organisation	<10	3	4.1	11	14.9
	10-50	2	5.4	15	20.3
	50-200	34	63.5	24	32.4
	>200	15	27	24	32.4
TOTAL		54	100	74	100

Table 1- Participants' profile

Findings

Table 2 compares both nationalities and reports the number of participants, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation as well as the cronbach's alpha (Field, 2009).

Nationality		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev	Cronbach's alpha
British	Need for recovery	54	10.00	34.00	21.67	4.91	0.831
	Orientation to work	54	4.00	16.00	10.89	2.69	0.738
	Valid N	54					
Polish	Need for recovery	74	10.00	37.00	23.90	6.82	0.919
	Orientation to work	74	4.00	16.00	9.78	2.83	0.799
	Valid N	74					

Table 2 – Descriptive statistics

An independent t-test was performed to compare means of the both groups, check their significance and test the hypotheses. On average, British employees score higher on orientation to work scale (M=10.89) than Polish migrant workers (M=9.78). This difference was significant $t(126) = 2.226$, $p < 0.05$ in support of Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that Polish workers demonstrate characteristics of intrinsic orientation towards employment. The mean (M=9.78, SD=2.83) of Polish migrant workers indicates that they have a mixed orientation to work with a tendency towards intrinsic characteristic, supporting hypothesis 2. The score between 4 and 8 indicates intrinsic orientation towards employment and score between 12 and 16 indicates instrumental (extrinsic) orientation towards employment. It can be concluded that score between 8 and 10 indicates a mixed orientation with stronger characteristics of intrinsic orientation towards employment. Similarly, score between 10 and 12 indicates a mixed orientation with characteristics tending towards an instrumental attitude.

Hypothesis 3 states that British workers demonstrated characteristics of instrumental orientation towards employment. It can be established that British employees (M=10.89, SD=2.70) represent mixed orientation towards work with a tendency of instrumental characteristics towards employment. This supports the hypothesis 3.

However, an interesting trend can be observed. Orientation to work is not stable and it can be seen in Figure 1 that length of employment provokes comparable fluctuation of orientation to work among British and Polish workers. Figure 2 demonstrates the differences in estimated marginal means of orientation to work based on the gender.

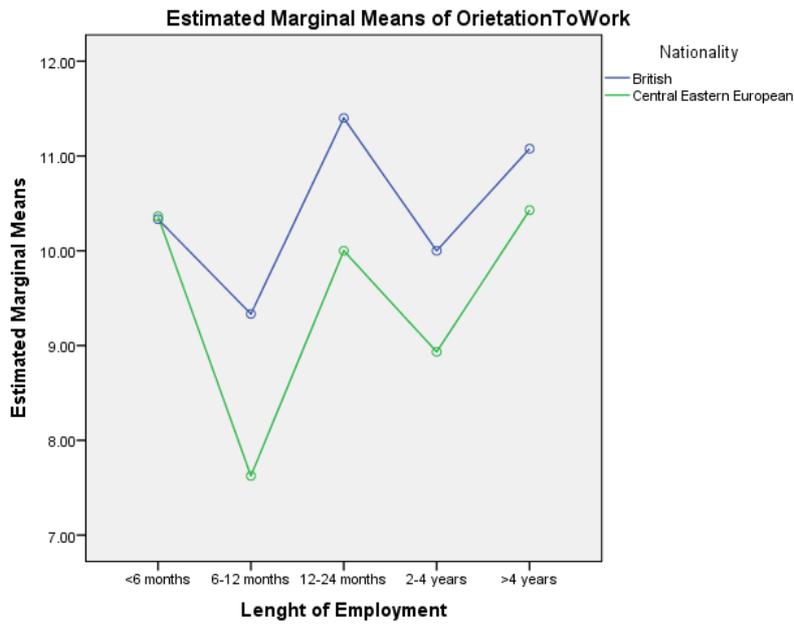


Figure 1 - Differences in estimated marginal means of orientation to work regard length of employment between British and Polish

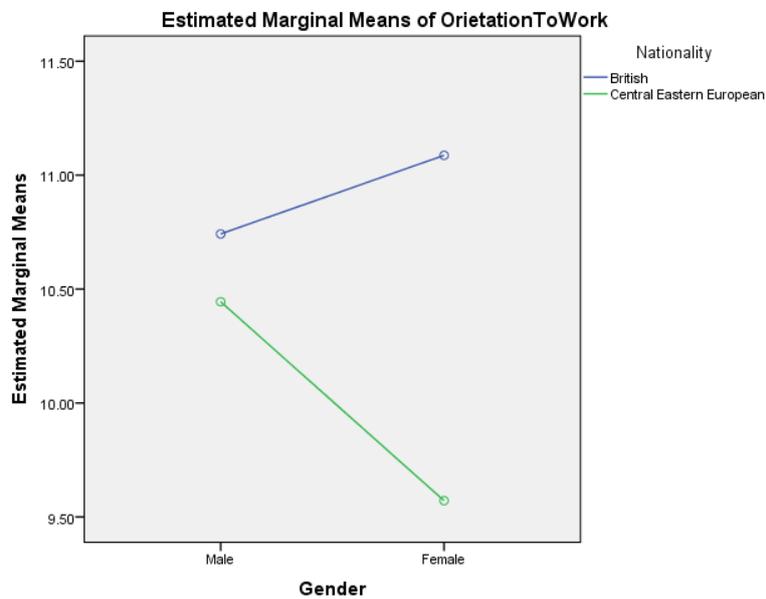


Figure 2- Differences in estimated marginal means of orientation to work regard gender between British and Polish

Finally, the need for recovery's mean of British workers is $M=21.67$ ($SD=4.91$) and need for recovery's mean of Polish workers is $M=23.91$ ($SD=6.81$). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the means. The test suggests that there is a significant difference

between the two groups of nationalities, $t(126)=2.16$, $p<0.05$. On this basis, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Relevance/contribution

The results reveal there is a difference in orientation towards employment between British and Polish employees in the industrial sector, in the UK. Polish workers reveal characteristics of intrinsic orientation to work, while British employees reveal characteristics of instrumental orientation to work.

It means that Polish migrants might find their work more satisfying or fulfilling in comparison to the host labour (Wilper, 1997). The appreciation of the job that Polish migrants expose might be a crucial factor for understanding the demands of CEE workers, in the industrial sector (Syal, 2013). 85% of migrant respondents were between 21 and 40 years old and they were mostly female, highly qualified, which confirms Janta's (2011) study, the statistics from the Border Agency (2008) and coincide with Cennamo and Gardner's (2008) findings. It is also underlined that Polish migrant workers are often qualified with a degree, which confirms that over-qualified graduates from Eastern European countries seek employment outside their home countries (Janta, 2011). It can be concluded that higher qualifications among CEE migrant workers influences the intrinsic orientation towards employment. The intrinsic orientation towards employment might be the reason why CEE migrant workers are willingly employed in the UK labour market (Benchflower, 2007). This might be a reason why CEE migrant workers are less reluctant to changes.

Moreover, orientation to work is different and visible according to the gender. British and Polish males seem to demonstrate comparable values of orientation to work. The huge difference is between females of both groups (c.f.: Figure 2). Polish females demonstrate intrinsic orientation towards employment and British females indicate instrumental orientation towards employment. Thus, the role of the gender is important when establishing orientation to work.

Furthermore, there are surprising results according to the need for recovery. Although Demerouti's *et al.*, (2012) study indicates a relationship between instrumental orientation to work and need for recovery, the current study does not confirm this relationship. Oppositely, the study indicates that high need for recovery is associated with intrinsic orientation to work. It can be deduced that Polish migrant labour demonstrates higher need for recovery because of commitment and engagement to the job. As it was underlined previously, due to the low level of employment rights and security of work in CEE countries (Jurgen and Krzywdzinsli, 2009), there is a conviction of strong commitment and loyalty to employer, to be able to keep the employment.

Need for recovery is associated with employees' well-being, health and eventual burnout (Sonnetag, Kuttler and Fritz, 2010). Findings of this study shed some light on the need for recovery and work life balance concept because the intrinsic orientated individual (through great level of engagement with the occupation) reveals higher need for recovery.

Knowledge of orientation to work among employees might allow leaders to improve organisational transformation implementation. These findings provide managers with valuable information on contentment, motivation and commitment of its employees. As the

study was applied in the industrial sector and the large majority of the respondents were shop floor workers, managers can allocate the resources in the specific manners either to increase job satisfaction. There is also an indication for managers that increasing job responsibility among workers (especially British) through implementation of lean thinking might positively influence the employees and change their orientation to work towards intrinsic characteristics.

The knowledge of orientation to work is essential to improve organisational outcome as motivated and committed workers increase organisational outcome. Moreover, this knowledge helps to collectively put successful teams together to achieve organisational goals.

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