



Workplace Flexibility and Organizational Commitment: The Mediator Role of Psychological Contract

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Abstract

In this study, the mediator role of the psychological contract on the effect of workplace flexibility on organizational commitment was examined.

The sample of the research consists of 112 participants working in different sectors and positions in Istanbul. To test the research hypotheses, Simple Regression Analysis and Hierarchical Regression Analysis were performed.

As a result of the analyses, the full mediator role of the relational psychological contract and the partial mediator role of the transactional psychological contract on the relationship between workplace flexibility and affective commitment and normative commitment were determined. With the inclusion of continuance commitment in the analysis as a dependent variable, the mediating role of both types of psychological contracts did not occur.

Organizations can influence their employees' psychological contracts and increase their commitment to the organization by providing flexibility in the work environment.

There is a limited number of national studies in which employees' perceptions of flexible practices in the workplace are considered. Also, it is predicted that examining flexibility within the scope of different models will contribute to the field.

Keywords

Workplace Flexibility, Organizational Commitment, Relational Psychological Contract, Transactional Psychological Contract

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1. Introduction

Many organizations are attempting to create a flexible workplace to help employees better balance their work and family (and personal) responsibilities (Galinsky *et al.*, 2011: pp.142-143; French *et al.*, 2011: pp.36-37). From the company perspective, the issue of flexibility has become more important because of some factors such as increased competition (McCarragher and Daniels, 2002), the attraction of talent (Arthur and Cook, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2006), productivity pressures, and the need for a 24/7 available workforce (Glynn *et al.*, 2002; Kodz *et al.*, 2002); from the employee perspective, this issue is important due to the increasing interest in private life, the length of weekly working hours, the increase of women's employment, and the number of single-parent families (Sutton and Noe, 2005: pp. 151-152).

Flexibility is an important phenomenon for both employers and employees (Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa, 2008: p.219). Employers prefer flexible working practices to deal with customer demands and reduce labor costs (Armstrong, 2006: p. 384; Dex and Smith, 2002: p.10) whereas employees prefer them to deal with their responsibilities outside of work (Halpern and Murphy, 2005: p.25). Through flexible working practices, both employers and employees can cope with various demands more easily.

The framework of employment relationship is not only shaped by the written rules, but it is also shaped by the expectations of the parties. These expectations are called psychological contracts in the literature (Rousseau, 1995). The expectations of the parties in the employment relations differ from each other. An employer expects honesty, commitment, and productivity; an employee expects justice, respect, equality, and appreciation (Sabuncuoglu and Tuz, 2013). According to Anderson and Schalk (1998), flexibility is an important factor, in addition to factors such as new technology, globalization, and job insecurity, that causes psychological contracts to be included in more and more studies. A model was created by Guest (1998) regarding the causes and consequences of psychological contract. While HRM policies/practices were considered as one of the causes, variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation are considered within the scope of its results.

Specifically, the flexible working opportunities offered by the employer can positively predict the type of psychological contract of the employees, and the psychological contract can positively predict the attitudes of the employees towards the organization.

2. Workplace Flexibility

In the literature, there are two different perspectives on flexibility (Hill *et al.*, 2008: pp.150-151). Flexibility definitions may differ according to these perspectives. Flexibility, from the most common point of view, involves the organization's adaptation to the changing environment and its quicker reaction (Grenier *et al.*, 1997). This

definition addresses flexibility as a strategic tool for the organization. Practices that make it easier for the organization to meet environmental demands indirectly affect people and communities in a positive way (Fleetwood, 2007: p. 387). For example, from the organizational perspective, the “compressed workweek” is used to respond to customer demands whereas for employees, it helps them to spare time for childcare. Another type of working flexibly, “teleworking,” can enable an employee to volunteer in social responsibility projects as well as controlling the costs of the organization (Hill *et al.*, 2008: pp.150-151).

The second perspective of flexibility in the workplace addresses the subject in terms of employees. This perspective covers flexibility options offered to employees and aims to increase the ability to meet personal, family, professional, and social needs (Hill *et al.*, 2008: pp.150-151) and benefits individuals directly. This type of flexibility allows the employee to decide when, where, and for how long to deal with their job-related tasks (Hill *et al.*, 2008: p. 152) and also provides an alternative to the traditional weekly 5-day, 9-5 work schedule (Eaton, 2003). A flexible workplace can offer employees the following options (Pitt-Catsoupes and Smyer, 2006: p.3);

-Flexibility about working hours (flexible working schedules, compressed work-weeks ...)

-Flexibility about the number of working hours (full-time jobs, part-time jobs, reduced working hours, job sharing, gradual retirement)

-Flexibility for the workplace (telework or alternative work locations)

-Task-related flexibility (re-designing the work considering the experiences, skills, and preferences of the elderly employee)

Different theoretical approaches have been proposed related to workplace flexibility. These are job control, work-family conflict, and border theory. According to the job control theory, the main concepts related to flexible work practices are employees' perceptions of control over working hours and perceived work autonomy (Fonner and Roloff, 2010; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). In respect to the work-family conflict approach, workplace flexibility can reduce the work-family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). In terms of border theory, which suggests that individuals switch between different roles, flexible work practices facilitate transitions between these borders (Kossek and Lautsch, 2007).

Flexibility is a concept that leads to positive results such as attracting talented people towards the organization, retaining them in the organization, increasing morale and job satisfaction, increasing productivity, and reducing stress and burnout (Friedman, 2012). One of the most important advantages of using flexible work practices or

accessing flexible practices is increased well-being, low levels of stress, and health problems; a second main benefit is the high level of focus and satisfaction (Kossek and Michel, 2011: p. 36).

Scandura and Lankau (1997: p. 378) suggested that the advantages and disadvantages of flexible working hours are addressed in various studies; their advantages are low stress, increased job enrichment, autonomy, job satisfaction, productivity, and decreased tardiness and absenteeism. They argued that their disadvantages were problems with job coordination and work programs, the difficulty of managing employees in flexible hours, and changes in organizational culture.

3. Psychological Contract

The origins of the concept of psychological contract and traces of its initial development are based on the work of Argyris (1960), Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl, and Solley (1962), and Schein (1965) (cit., Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000).

According to Rousseau (1995), the psychological contract is an agreement based on the exchange between the employee and the employer; according to Kotter (1973), it is an implicit contract that determines what the employee and the employer expect to give and receive from each other in their relationships. Thus, when an individual participates in the organization, they expect to be promoted, to receive salaries and status from the organization, and to give the organization their technical skills, time, energy, and loyalty; the organization expects to receive what the employee hopes to give and give what the employee hopes to receive.

Rousseau explained this concept in 2003 (p.234) as follows: *“Although subjective, an individual’s psychological contract is grounded in the social reality of others who believe they have reciprocal obligations with the individual and presumably share a common understanding of the nature of those obligations.”*

As long as the parties understand that they are working with reciprocal feelings like loyalty and commitment, they will have a certain degree of common expectation (Rousseau, 1995). For example, while the employee is waiting for a safe work environment, justice, respect, equality, and appreciation; the employer also expects employees to strive, be reliable, have responsibility, follow the rules, and show commitment (Sabuncuoglu and Tuz, 2013). Although labor contracts are comprehensive, they are unlikely to contain items that regulate all aspects of the employment relationship. Therefore, psychological contracts reduce uncertainty by providing settlement employment conditions. Employees feel secure by considering an agreed agreement with their employers (Shore and Tetrick, 1994).

The three states (mutuality, alignment, and reciprocity) that characterize the psychological contract may increase the probability of contract fulfillment or decrease in its absence. “Mutuality” means the degree of mutual belief of two or more parties regarding the terms of the contract. “Alignment” is the degree of proportionality or balance of employee and employer obligations. “Reciprocity”, on the other hand, indicates the degree to which the parties declare their obligations (Rousseau, 2011: p.201).

Psychological contracts, as schemas, are often incomplete at the beginning of employment relationships and motivate employees to seek new information to better understand employment relationships. Depending on whether (a) the information sources are of high quality (reliable and clear) and (b) there is consistent information among the sources, different psychological contracts are expected to emerge (Rousseau, 2001: p.523). A contract, like most other schemas, becomes a stable and durable mental model or schema (Rousseau, 2001: p.512). However, the persistence of schemas about the employment relationships creates difficulties when organizations and their conditions change (Rousseau, 2003: p.234).

In 2018, Rousseau, Hansen, and Tomprou proposed a stepwise model for psychological contract processes in which the functions of key variables (e.g., promises, obligations, contributions, and incentives) change over time and context. In this model, the phases are identified as “creation, maintenance, renegotiation and repair”. For example, an employer’s promises, which is one of these key variables, are less related to the beliefs and behaviors of the employee in the stabilization of the psychological contract (i.e. maintenance phase); it is even more important for a newly hired employee (i.e. creation phase) or when remedies are sought for breach of contract (i.e. repair phase). As a result, the role of constructs related to the psychological contract varies according to these four phases.

The psychological contract is categorized as transactional and relational (MacNeil, 1985);

Relational Psychological Contract

A relational contract does not depend on time; on the contrary, it establishes an ongoing relationship between the employee and the organization and includes the exchange of monetary and non-monetary (mutual loyalty, support, career rewards) benefits. Employees are at the center of responsibility. In this type of psychological contract, individuals fully embrace the values of the organization and identify themselves with the organization (Millward and Hopkins, 1998).

The relational psychological contract includes implicit elements such as fair treatment, support for promotion request, and utilization of development programs (Guest and Conway, 2003: p. 145). Relational contracts can increase the affective commitment or

participation of employees and promise that the employer will invest in the individual, such as education, individual and career development, and job security. Relational contracts are defined as emotional and internal obligations by nature, and it is claimed to be open-ended and indefinite-term (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007: p.155).

Transactional Psychological Contract

For employees with a transactional orientation, the organization is simply a place where they do their job and have little affective commitment. As a result of the employment relationship, they are looking for the rewards (e.g., money) they can get in a short time (McDonald and Makin, 2000: p. 85; Millward and Hopkins, 1998).

The transactional psychological contract includes more clear and precise elements such as vacation timing, the basics of overtime, and performance criteria (Guest and Conway, 2003: p.145). These are contracts based on short-term monetary agreements with a low level of participation. Employees are concerned with salaries and individual benefits rather than being a good organizational citizen. In addition to economic and external obligations, transactional psychological contracts are more specific and short-term (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007: p.155).

4. Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is an important variable that has been addressed in many different studies in the field of organizational behavior. Morrow (1983:491) defines organizational commitment as the desire of the employee to maintain his/her membership in the organization and to strive for the organization and, at the same time, to adopt the values of the organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1984, pp. 372-378), it is expressed as the actions of an employee who goes to work regularly, stays loyal to the workplace under all conditions, uses a full working day or more, and observes the purpose and vision of the workplace.

Although there are different classifications regarding organizational commitment (e.g., Etzioni, 1975; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986), this study is based on the study of Allen and Meyer (1990), which is the most widely used classification in the literature.

In 1984, Meyer and Allen developed a model of organizational commitment consisting of affective commitment and continuance commitment, based on the work to date. In their study in 1990, Allen and Meyer added a third dimension to the model. This dimension, called normative commitment, refers to a perceived obligation to stay in the organization (Meyer et al., 2002:21). Normative commitment also makes the employee feel indebted to the organization as a result of the investments and expenditures made by the organization on the employee. This situation forces the employee to stay in the organization and attaches the employee to the organization normatively. This type of

commitment can only end when the employee pays his/her debt to the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Affective commitment dimension expresses the emotional commitment of the employee to the organization, integration with the organization, and participation in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1984). Employees continue to work in the organization by establishing an emotional bond with the organization. In this way, they express their desire to stay in the organization (Meyer, Stanley and Parfyonova, 2012, p. 1). Continuance commitment, on the other hand, reflects the employee's perception of the costs he or she thinks he/she will face if he/she leaves the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1984). The scarcity of alternative job opportunities and the benefits of their commitment to the workplace make it difficult for employees to leave the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990: p.18).

Meyer and Allen (1991) explain the main determining points in three different dimensions of organizational commitment as follows: in affective commitment, an employee remains in an organization because he/she desire it, in continuance commitment he/she needs it, and in normative commitment, he/she obligates to the organization.

5. Relationships Between Workplace Flexibility, Psychological Contract, and Organizational Commitment

Few studies have investigated the relationship between workplace flexibility and the psychological contract. Many of them deal with flexibility in terms of working style (temporary, part-time, full-time work). For example, in the study conducted by Lee and Faller (2005), it was observed that temporary employees generally started with a transactional psychological contract and that they had a relational psychological contract after about six weeks. In the study of Guest (2004), it is stated that temporary employees are prone to transactional psychological contracts rather than relational.

In a study, it has been suggested that the perceived flexible working hours can increase the commitment to the organization for various reasons (Scandura and Lankau, 1997: p.380). Firstly, employees might perceive that the organization that offers flexible working hours is interested in their jobs and families. Secondly, flexible working hours can increase the sense of control over the individual and his/her work. Thirdly, flexible working hours can increase individuals' positive feelings about their employer. Fourthly, employers can strengthen their psychological contracts by comparing their situation with equal-level employees in professions and/or organizations where flexible work practices are not offered. In different studies, flexible policies have been positively associated with affective commitment (Eaton, 2003), organizational commitment (Ng *et al.*, 2006), and

engagement (Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa, 2008; Richman *et al.*, 2008). In the light of foregoing results, our first hypothesis has been put forward;

H1: Workplace flexibility will significantly affect (a) relational psychological contract, (b) transactional psychological contract, (c) affective (d) continuance, and (e) normative commitment.

In a model in which the antecedents and results of the psychological contract are discussed, variables such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, sense of security, motivation, and organizational citizenship behaviour are evaluated as the results of the psychological contract (Guest, 1998: p.661). Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) found that the psychological contract affected organizational commitment. In the studies carried out in the textile (Keman, 2012) and education sectors (Dogan and Demiral, 2009; Donmez, 2015), it was also observed that the psychological contract affected organizational commitment.

In a study conducted on bank employees, a relational psychological contract was found to have a positive relationship with commitment, and a transactional psychological contract had a negative relationship with commitment (Cohen, 2011). In short, there is no possibility of high-level commitment to the organization in transactional contracts; a high-level of commitment can be seen in relational contracts (McDonald and Makin, 2000: p.86).

In addition to the first hypothesis, the following hypotheses have been determined:

H2: Relational and transactional psychological contract will significantly affect (a) affective, (b) continuance, and (c) normative commitment.

H3: Relational psychological contract has a mediator role on the effect of workplace flexibility on (a) affective, (b) continuance, and (c) normative commitment.

H4: Transactional psychological contract has a mediator role on the effect of workplace flexibility on (a) affective, (b) continuance, and (c) normative commitment.

6. Method

Purpose and Importance of the Research

It is important how the flexibility practices that are frequently used by organizations are perceived by employees because many studies have found that these perceptions are related to many organizational outcomes (e.g., Bal and De Lange, 2015; Dalton and Mesch, 1990; Grzywacz *et al.*, 2008; Hayman, 2010; Richman *et al.*, 2008; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). When the national literature is examined, it is seen that there is a limited number of studies in which employees' perceptions of flexible practices in the

workplace are considered (e.g., Avcı and Yavuz, 2020; Camlı, 2010; Dogan *et al.*, 2015; Kordeve and Aydıntan, 2016). Accordingly, it is predicted that examining flexibility within the scope of different models will contribute to the field.

In the current study, the aim was to examine the perceptions of employees towards flexible practices in the workplace and to examine the mediating role of the psychological contract in the effects of workplace flexibility on organizational commitment.

6.1. Research Model

In this study, workplace flexibility is regarded as an independent variable and affective, continuance, and normative commitment, which are sub-types of commitment to the organization, are regarded as dependent variables; relational and transactional psychological contracts are included in the model as mediator variables (See, Figure 1).

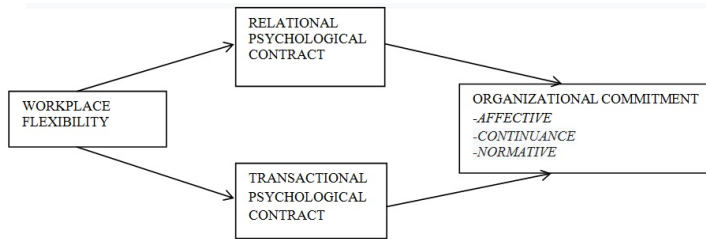


Figure 1: Model of the research

Sample and Procedure

The sample of the research consists of 112 participants working in different sectors and positions located in Istanbul. The participants were voluntarily part of the study, so the study was conducted with a non-randomly selected sample. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants in paper-pencil form.

6.2. Measures

The questionnaire consist of two main parts. In the first part the demographic questions were included, in order to see the differences among the participants. In the second part, workplace flexibility scale, consecutively psychological contract, and organizational commitment scales were used related to scope of the study. All responses were received on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The demographic part included questions about the participants' age, gender, marital status, level of education, position, contract type, the capital structure of the organization, and seniority.

The Workplace Flexibility Scale was developed by researchers and consists of 22 statements. The scale includes statements such as “I can work in different locations of the organization,” “I can take a break from my career for a certain period time,” and “I may take one day off, instead of overtime pay.” As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, 7 factors with eigenvalues above 1 explained 70% of the total variance. A Cronbach Alpha value was found 0.69.

The Psychological Contract Scale, which was revised by Raja, Johns, and Ntalianis (2004) from Millward and Hopkins (1998), has 18 items, such as some statements about the transactional psychological contract (e.g., “I try to achieve only the short-term goals of my job”) and relational psychological contract (“I feel like I am part of the team in this organization”). The Cronbach Alpha value of the transactional psychological contract was 0.68; the relational psychological contract was 0.88. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the 2-factor structure explained 53% of the variance.

Organizational Commitment Scale developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) was used to measure commitment to the organization. This scale includes 18 items in total, each sub-dimension (emotional, continuation, and normative commitment) consisting of 6 expressions. The Cronbach’s Alpha value of the scale was 0.80.

6.3. Analysis

To test the research hypotheses, Simple Regression Analysis and Hierarchical Regression Analysis were performed using the SPSS 21.0 package program. The steps of the analysis were carried out based on the study of Baron and Kenny in 1986. According to these paths, a mediation model can be supported in the following 3 steps:

- (a) The change in the independent variable causes the change in the mediator variable,
- (b) The change in the mediator variable causes the change in the dependent variable,
- (c) When path (a) and (b) are controlled, the meaningful relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable will disappear, the strong mediating effect will occur when path c disappears.

7. Results

Results related to demographic features

Considering the demographic characteristics, 61% of the participants were women, 54% were single and 88.4% of them have an undergraduate and postgraduate education. The mean age of the sample was 31.72. Accordingly, it is possible to say that the majority of the participants were female employees and had a high level of education.

Results regarding relationship between variables

The mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients of the variables in the study are presented in Table 1. As seen in the table, when the correlation coefficients were examined, there were average meaningful relationships between all variables ($.20 < r < .73$). It was revealed that the Transactional Psychological Contract (P.C.) was negatively correlated with most of the variables. Additionally, Continuance Commitment was not associated with workplace flexibility, transactional, and relational psychological contract.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficients of the Research Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1- Workplace Flexibility	2,8	55,	-	**542,	**322,-	**436,	043,-	**384,
2- Relational P.C.	3,17	77,		-	**376,-	**729,	115,	**471,
3- Transactional P.C.	2,69	52,			-	**519,-	027,	**332,-
4- Affective Commitment	3,06	81,				-	*206,	**635,
5- Continuance Commitment	2,92	58,						**281,
6-Normative Commitment	2,6	65,						

** $p < 0,01$; * $p < 0,05$

P.C.: Psychological Contract

Results related to the direct effects

H1 suggested that workplace flexibility will significantly effect (a) relational psychological contract, (b) transactional psychological contract, (c) affective, (d) continuance, and (e) normative commitment. According to the research findings (See Tables 2 and 3), workplace flexibility predicted relational psychological contract ($\beta = 0,542$, $p < 0,001$), transactional psychological contract ($\beta = -0,322$, $p < 0,01$), affective commitment ($\beta = 0,436$, $p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,384$, $p < 0,001$) while it did not predict the continuance commitment significantly ($\beta = -0,043$, $p > 0,05$). With reference to these results, H1(a), H1(b), H1(c) and H1(e) were accepted, while H1(d) was rejected.

According to H2, relational and transactional psychological contract will significantly effect (a) affective, (b) continuance, and (c) normative commitment. When the research findings are examined, the relational psychological contract significantly predicted affective commitment ($\beta = 0,729$, $p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,471$, $p < 0,001$) while it did not significantly predict continuance commitment ($\beta = 0,115$, $p > 0,05$). The transactional psychological contract had a negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -0,519$, $p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = -0,332$, $p < 0,001$)

and also had no significant effect on continuance commitment ($\beta = 0,027, p > 0,05$) (Only support for H2a and H2c).

Results related to the mediation model

Results related to the mediating role of the relational psychological contract

In the first steps of Hierarchical Regression Analysis, the effects of the independent variable (workplace flexibility) on mediator variable (relational psychological contract) and on dependent variables (organizational commitment) were calculated. As a result of the analysis, workplace flexibility predicted relational psychological contract ($\beta = 0,542, p < 0,001$), affective commitment ($\beta = 0,436, p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,384, p < 0,001$) while it did not predict the continuance commitment significantly ($\beta = -0,043, p > 0,05$). In the third stage, it was observed that the relational psychological contract significantly predicted affective commitment ($\beta = 0,729, p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,471, p < 0,001$) while it did not significantly predict continuance commitment ($\beta = 0,115, p > 0,05$). At the last stage, when the workplace flexibility and relational psychological contract variables were included together in the analysis, the effect of flexibility on affective commitment ($\beta = 0,057, p > 0,05$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,183, p > 0,05$) disappeared, and the effects of the relational psychological contract on these two dependent variables continued.

Accordingly, it has been demonstrated that the relational psychological contract had a full mediator role in the relationship between workplace flexibility and affective and normative commitment (Hypotheses 3a and 3c were supported and Hypothesis 3b was not supported, See Table 2).

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Findings for Determining the Mediating Role of Relational Psychological Contract in the Effect of Workplace Flexibility on Organizational Commitment

	β			
	Relational P.C.	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Model 1				
Workplace Flexibility	,542***			
R ²	0.294			
Adj. R ²	0.288			
F	45,824			
Model 2				
Workplace Flexibility		,436***	-,043	,384***
R ²		0.19	0.002	0.148
Adj. R ²		0.183	-0.007	0.14
F		25,824	0,205	19,081

Model 3				
Relational P.C.		,729***	,115	,471***
R ²		0.532	0.013	0.222
Adj. R ²		0.528	0.004	0.215
F		125,106***	1,478	31,364***
Model 4				
Workplace Flexibility		,057	-,150	,183
Relational P.C.		,698***	-196	,372***
R ²		0.534	0.029	0.245
Adj. R ²		0.526	0.011	0.232
F		62,564	1,631	17,729

(Adj: Adjusted, P.C.: Psychological Contract)

Results related to the mediating role of the transactional psychological contract

As a result of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis, it was determined that the mediating role of the transactional psychological contract (See Table 3), workplace flexibility predicted affective commitment ($\beta = 0,436$, $p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = 0,384$, $p < 0,001$) while it did not predict the continuance commitment with statistically significance ($\beta = -0,043$, $p > 0,05$). In the third stage, it was observed that the transactional psychological contract had a negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -0,519$, $p < 0,001$) and normative commitment ($\beta = -0,332$, $p < 0,001$) and also had no significant effect on continuance commitment ($\beta = 0,027$, $p > 0,05$). At the last stage, in which workplace flexibility and transactional psychological contract variables were included together in the analysis, the effects of both the workplace flexibility and the transactional psychological contract on affective and normative commitment continued. Accordingly, it was determined that the transactional psychological contract had a partial mediator role on the effect of workplace flexibility on affective and normative commitment (partial support for H4a and H4c). As a result of the calculation of the Sobel test, it was found that the mediator effect was statistically significant when the dependent variable was affective commitment ($z = 3.10$, $p < 0.01$) and normative commitment ($z = 2.55$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Findings for Determining the Mediating Role of Transactional Psychological Contract in the Effect of Workplace Flexibility on Organizational Commitment

	β			
	Transactional P.C.	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Model 1				
Workplace Flexibility	-,322**			
R ²	0.104			
Adj. R ²	0.096			
F	12,729			
Model 2				
Workplace Flexibility		,436***	-,043	,384***
R ²		0.19	0.002	0.148
Adj. R ²		0.183	-0.007	0.14
F		25,824	0,205	19,081
Model 3				
Transactional P.C.		-,519***	,027	-,332***
R ²		0.270	0.001	0.11
Adj. R ²		0.263	-0.008	0.102
F		40,613***	0,081	13,653***
Model 4				
Workplace Flexibility		,30***	-,038	,31**
Transactional P.C.		-,423***	-015	-,233*
R ²		0.35	0.002	0.196
Adj. R ²		0.338	-0.016	0.182
F		29,380	0,112	13,312

(Adj: Adjusted, P.C.: Psychological Contract)

8. Discussion and Conclusions

Although organizational commitment, which is one of the most frequently discussed concepts in many studies in the field of organizational behavior, is frequently examined in relation with different variables, it has not been examined in the context of a model with flexibility and psychological contract variables. Accordingly, current research has integrated current issues such as flexibility and psychological contract into a model, including organizational commitment.

In the current research, it has been determined that workplace flexibility significantly affects affective commitment and normative commitment and does not significantly affect continuance commitment. Similar to these findings, in another study conducted in the health sector, it was determined that the attitude towards flexible working practices positively predicts affective and normative commitment and not the continuance commitment (Kordeve and Aydıntan, 2016). In other studies, it has been revealed that flexibility predicted commitment to the organization (Bal and De Lange, 2015; Camlı,

2010; Eaton, 2003; Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa, 2008; Scandura and Lankau, 1997). When considered within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, employees respond to the organization with a high level of performance and commitment as a result of the perception of organizational support (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch and Rhoades 2001: 44). Accordingly, one of the ways to show organizational support is to provide workplace flexibility within the companies. The employees who perceive more workplace flexibility show more emotional and normative commitment towards their organizations.

When the effects of workplace flexibility on the psychological contract are examined, it has been determined that the flexibility predicts the relational psychological contract positively and predicts the transactional psychological contract negatively. In another study, it was found that individuals working in flexible employment forms had higher relational psychological contract levels (Guest, 2004). When flexibility is considered to be an application which is preferred and controlled by the employees rather than designed according to the needs of the organization, it causes a relational psychological contract.

In this study, the relational psychological contract had a positive effect on affective and normative commitment, and the transactional psychological contract had a negative effect. It was determined that both types of psychological contracts did not affect continuance commitment. In the studies conducted, it was found that relational psychological contracts lead to a higher level of affective and normative commitment and that transactional psychological contracts lead to a low level of affective and normative commitment (McCabe and Sambrook, 2013; McInnis *et al.*, 2009). Similar to these findings, it was determined in another study that relational psychological contract leads to a higher level of work and organizational commitment while transactional psychological contract leads to a lower level of work and organizational commitment (Millward and Hopkins, 1998). These findings may have arisen due to the fact that relational psychological contracts are emotional, internal, and long-term; on the other hand, transactional psychological contracts may have arisen due to their economic, external and short-term nature (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007: p.155). However, it is surprising that transactional psychological contract has no effect on continuance commitment. It may be important to re-examine the relationship between these two variables in future studies.

As a result of the hierarchical regression analysis conducted to test the mediation models, it was found that the change in the workplace flexibility affected normative and affective commitment by creating an effect on the perception of the relational psychological contract. This finding may have arisen due to the fact that the relational psychological contract covers the aspects related to the work-life balance of the

employees as Anderson and Schalk (1998) suggested. Especially when the workplace flexibility is considered as a concept related to the work-life balance of the employees, it is likely that the perceptions regarding this will affect the relational psychological contract and that the relational psychological contract will affect the commitment. However, in the results, it was determined that the relational psychological contract type did not have a mediator role in the effect of flexibility on continuance commitment. This result can be considered meaningful due to the nature of continuance commitment because relational contracts have an emotional and internal structure (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007). Continuance commitment does not cover emotions and values; it is a type of commitment that requires commitment not to lose various gains during employment in the company. On the other hand, the fact that affective and normative commitment is based on the emotions and values of the individual may have revealed the mediating role of the relational psychological contract.

While it was determined that workplace flexibility partially predicted the affective and normative commitment through the transactional psychological contract, no mediating effect was found for the continuance commitment. In other words, workplace flexibility decreased their perceptions of transactional psychological contracts and partially increased their affective and normative commitment. Accordingly, the partial mediator role of the transactional psychological contract indicates the existence of other mediator variables in the relationship between workplace flexibility and affective and normative commitment. When similar studies were examined in this subject, it was found that relational and transactional psychological contract mediated the relationship between developmental HRM (e.g., job enrichment, job rotation) and commitment (Bal *et al.*, 2013).

The collection of data from a limited number of participants (112) according to the scope of this research causes some limitations such as the generalizability of the research results. Additionally, the fact that the majority of the participants (89%) in the research have undergraduate or graduate-level education may have affected the results of the research. In future studies, different research findings may emerge if more participants with different educational levels can be reached.

The inclusion of individuals working in different sectors and organizations in the study is considered as one of the factors that affected the results of the study. In particular, it may have affected the research results by differentiating the psychological contract perceptions of some special elements belonging to the sectors or the organizations. According to Rousseau (2003: p. 233) because of some prototypes arising from the occupation chosen by the person, these beliefs may affect particular employment relationships. For example, the beliefs that healthcare professionals hold before joining a hospital may shape their subsequent psychological contracts and shape their reactions

to the policies and practices of that institution. In this direction, conducting this issue on a single sector, organization or occupation in future studies will make significant contributions.

In future studies, besides different sample groups, examining different variables (e.g., job satisfaction, work-family conflict, work-life balance) that may play a mediating role between workplace flexibility and organizational commitment will contribute to the literature.

Within the framework of the findings obtained, the fact that organizations include more flexibility practices may increase the affective and normative commitment positively by increasing the relational psychological contract. These two types of commitment are important for organizations. In such a way, individuals with affective commitment remain in the organization because they want while those with normative commitment remain in the organization because they feel an obligation to the organization. However, in continuance commitment, individuals remain in the organization in order not to lose some of their gains (such as money, status). In this context, workplace flexibility -that indirectly affects affective and normative commitment through psychological contract forms- emerges as an important concept. Especially, it is thought that the examination of flexibility from different perspectives in future studies, which has become more important with the Covid-19 pandemic period, will contribute to the field.

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