Human Capital Management in the Wandering Context of Events – Challenges for the Managerial Staff

edited by Marzena Stor

Chapter 11

THE SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF ORGANIZATIONS AS A DETERMINANT OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

Dominika Nieć[a], **Grzegorz Łukasiewicz**[b]

11.1. Introduction

The dynamic development of technology and globalization processes have led to the formation of highly competitive markets. Organizations operating in such an environment are forced to constantly search for sources of competitive advantage and to consolidate it, among which the knowledge, experience, and talents of employees. Their effective use depends, in turn, on the level of their satisfaction and commitment to work. Satisfied and engaged employees are very valuable to an organization, as they identify with it more strongly, generate higher revenues, or are characterized by lower absenteeism. Therefore, all the actions taken by organizations to increase the level of satisfaction and commitment at work become very important. These actions can cover many areas, such as those discussed in the previous chapters of this monograph.

In this part the authors are interested in the area of social activity. In the literature, this term is rarely used in the context of organizations, researchers mostly use it to explain civic attitudes. However, given the role that organizational social activity can play in shaping employee satisfaction and commitment, **the goal of this chapter** is to propose the conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment. This goal is realized in three stages which correspond to the subsequent sections. Firstly, the authors outline the theoretical foundations for the concept of the social activity of an organization, including their own definition of this phenomena. Next, the attention is focused on the explanation of two types of relations – the first concerns those

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[a] Czatkowice Limestone Mine, a subsidiary of the TAURON Group.
[b] Cracow University of Economics, ORCID: 0000-0001-7203-2413.

between employee commitment and the social activity of an organization, while the second one addresses the relations between employee job satisfaction and the social activity of an organization. Finally, the concept of the relations between employee satisfaction and commitment and the social activity of an organization makes up the last section of this chapter.

11.2. Theoretical foundations for the concept of the social activity of an organization

All of us live in two perspectives, individual (individual) and social (collective). Each person sets individual goals, concerning his or her development, as well as social goals regarding the requirements and expectations of the surrounding environment. Both individual and social perspectives play an important role for people (Klamut, 2013, p. 187). A person's involvement in the public sphere can take the form of professional activity or socially oriented activities, including, for example, local, regional, or national issues, and can be realized in the form of individual or institutionalized activities. The former should be understood as pro bono work for those most in need, performed outside the place of one's professional (providing income) activity. While the latter, the so-called institutionalized social activity, is carried out within organizations, associations, unions, church, and religious associations (Worach-Kardas, 2015, pp. 24-25).

In social psychology, social activity is described in the area of pro-social behavior, such as altruism, benevolence, and friendship. Klamut defines social activity as actions for the benefit of fellow citizens, i.e., actions for the widely understood social interest or the common good (Klamut, 2013, p. 200). In turn, Słowik states that social activity is a personality trait, meaning the very readiness of an individual to deal with social problems, and readiness to act for other people and groups (Słowik, 2008, p. 98). The PWN encyclopedia defines social activity as all socially normalized activities of individuals, performed as part of specific social roles (*Encyklopedia PWN*, n.d.).

The literature lacks, however, a complete definition of the social activity of organizations. It seems to be a term that is in the process of constructing its meaning. Despite attempts to find a definition of the social activity of organizations, in both domestic and foreign literature, one can only find the meaning of the term *social activity*, *local government,* and *local community*. An interesting combination of the term social activity with the praxeological concept of efficient action was presented by Kotarbiński (2019), according to whom both individuals and entire organizations pursuing a specific goal should be as active as possible, i.e. make full use of the resources and opportunities at their disposal to develop strategic action and influence the processes taking place in the course, approaching the set goals. This approach seems to strengthen employers' image activities, yet it only reveals the hallmarks

of the social activity of organizations and should be treated as a prelude to creating a definition of the term.

There is also a noteworthy concept describing social activity through participation in civic engagement networks, e.g. in the so-called 'country housewives' clubs' in the post-war Poland, associations, foundations, sports clubs, and others. Klamut also described a model of civic activity understood as the social activity of a person in the context of being a citizen of a democratic state (Klamut, 2013, p. 187).

The gap in defining the term of the social activity of organizations prompts further exploration. It seems that the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could become a supporting element in the further clarification of the notion. In the literature on the subject, one can find numerous ways of presenting the essence of Corporate Social Responsibility, however this study quotes a synthetic way of defining this term proposed by Hopkins, who analyzed the problem, defined its components. He also drew attention to an important aspect, presenting CSR as the process of treating a company's stakeholders ethically and responsibly, namely in a manner recognized as acceptable according to international standards. According to Hopkins, the notion of Social Responsibility includes economic, financial, and environmental responsibility, and the broader goal of Social Responsibility is to create ever higher standards of sustainability while maintaining organizational viability and integrity, both inside and outside organizations. He emphasizes that the key to CSR activities is to generate profit, and not to pursue profit at any cost. CSR is a process of achieving sustainable development, and treating key stakeholders responsibly. However, assuming such a position, the issue of CSR should be treated more broadly and always discussed from the macro position, while the term of the social activity of organizations should be treated from the micro position, as it directly affects local, possibly regional issues. Assuming that CSR is a broader area than the social activity of organizations, the initial attempts to identify both terms seem to be a wrong direction of research.

Figure 11.1. Concepts underlying the social activity of organizations

Source: own elaboration.

To fully understand the essence and activities in the field of the social activity of organizations, it appears important to show the notions that can be used to indicate the proper direction of defining the term, namely *sustainability*, the idea of *Green HRM, dual labor market,* and *the concept of stakeholders* (Figure 11.1).

The first of the presented terms within the framework of deliberations devoted to the theoretical sources of the problem of the social activity of organizations (SOA), is *sustainability*. The origins of this concept can be traced back to the World Economic Forum held on 31st January 1999, when Kofi Annan, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, called on world business leaders and organizations of workers and representatives of civil society to engage in the Global Compact initiative. The idea was to enable nations around the world to share in the benefits of globalization and to define the fundamental values and methods of operating on the global market to meet the socio-economic needs of all people. In addition, the initiative was intended to encourage companies around the world to align their organization's strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labor, environmental protection, and anti-corruption. In 2007, the UN Global Compact introduced the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). This is a set of six principles that should be adopted by management institutions to educate and train managers sensitive to social and environmental challenges along with an understanding of economic issues.

Sustainability refers to a company's ability to continuously learn, adapt and develop, revitalize, reconstruct and reorient for maintaining a sustainable and distinctive position in the market by offering above-average values to buyers today and in the future (consistent with the paradigm of innovative growth), thanks to the organic variability constituting business models, and resulting from the creation of new opportunities, as well as objectives and responses to them while balancing the interests of different groups (Wysokińska-Senkus and Senkus, 2016, p. 114).

The second term presented for the problem of the social activity of organizations is the idea of *Green HRM*. This is a component of sustainable development that considers the environmental context as a basis for making decisions related to human resources management. It is an important tool for implementing the concept of sustainable development in an organization. The main objective of *Green HRM* is to shape employees' ecological sensitivity, pro-environmental work environment, and ecologically responsible attitudes of employees, which will consequently be implemented as a functioning model into the subsequent areas of the organization, such as employee teams, organizational units, inter-organizational relations, and into the private lives of the organization's employees (Różańska-Bińczyk, Matejun, and Matusiak, 2020, p. 79). *Green HRM* practices include green initiatives in all activities related to human resources management, such as planning, acquisition, and adaptation, motivating and evaluating, developing, or de-recruiting employees. These include, but are not limited to, activities within organizations' best practices that incorporate green criteria and competencies.

Pocztowski (2016, p. 306) pointed out the desirability of introducing in organizations the idea of *Green HRM* and implementing solutions, such as building employee involvement in environmental issues, creating the so-called green teams, training, building green leadership, and shaping the organizational culture.

The third term discussed within the framework of the issue under consideration is *the dual labor market*. *The dual labor market* as a theoretical concept, and the notions of primary and secondary labor markets were first introduced by Piore in 1969. Subsequently, the terms were clarified by Doeringer (cf. Leszczyński, 2007, p. 26 ff). The concept distinguishes between the so-called good jobs, attributed to the primary sector of the economy, and bad jobs, associated with the secondary sector. The primary segment offers jobs in large, profitable companies that are largely subject to union supervision and influence. Employment and salary mechanisms are set by state legislation. Those employed in this sector are protected from radical decisions by employers, have high job security, promotion prospects, incentives, and opportunities to expand their professional knowledge, as well as stable working conditions. The jobs offered in this sector are generally sought by all employees, have more favorable salary conditions, and social prestige. Secondary market jobs are not very attractive. Salaries offered in this segment are relatively lower, the working conditions are assessed as very low, there is also a lack of opportunities to improve qualifications or opportunities for promotion with high instability of employment. At the same time, in the secondary market, there are various forms of failure to use the potential of employees. This is due to the lack of representation of employees' interests. The low attractiveness of jobs consequently leads to high employee turnover. The secondary labor market consists of immigrants, national minorities, juveniles, some women, and others referred to as those discriminated. These people have less bargaining power and little chance of entering the primary market. Moreover, they are employed under much worse conditions.

The final issue discussed is *the concept of stakeholders*. Stakeholders are often referred to as strategic supporters, partners and they can be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who exert direct or indirect influence in an organization's efforts to achieve its goals. Obłój defines *stakeholders* as institutions and organizations that meet two conditions (cf. Ogrodnik and Mieszaniec, 2010):
- they have a stake in the company's operations, decisions, and effects,
- they are able to exert effective pressure on the organization.

Kafel characterizes stakeholders in the following way the dependence between an organization and a partner is usually mutual, but it does not have to be balanced, because the organization can be dependent on the partner, forming the basis of its existence, survival, and having power over it. Partners are dependent on the organization morally and legally and remain under its influence. The strength of the dependence is subject to change over time, the organization-partner relationship is contractual in nature, strives for balance, and is based on legitimate legal demands,

expectations, and they obligatorily move towards their satisfaction or weakening (Kafel, 2000, pp. 48-49).

In the environment of each organization, it is necessary to distinguish certain spheres in which stakeholders are placed. Each selected stakeholder should be assigned a certain level of influence and interest; conducting such a study can divide stakeholders into several groups, such as:

- key stakeholders who are very interested in the company's situation and have a very strong influence on it,
- stakeholders who are very interested in the company's situation but have little influence on it,
- stakeholders who have a very strong influence on the company but have no interest in the company's situation,
- stakeholders who are not interested in the company's situation and have minimal influence on it.

Thanks to this procedure, decision-makers receive clear information about whose interests and preferences should be taken into account most.

From the above analysis, the authors of this chapter propose the following definition of the social activity of organizations (SAO) as all initiatives and activities of an organization consisting in influencing its environment, going beyond the normal duties associated with running a business, expressed in undertaking activities for both individuals and groups, aiming at the implementation of tasks, satisfying the highly valued social values in the environment of the organization, even at the expense of additional financial outlays incurred by the organization.

The social activity of organizations is influenced by, among others:

- patronage and sponsorship,
- volunteering.

Among the first group of the indicated activities, the following are important:

- the participation of the organization's authorities during social consultations concerning widely understood public matters not undertaken by local authorities, e.g. acts of law (amendments, the enactment of new ones), investments, undertakings, initiatives;
- cooperation with education through the organization of internships, apprenticeships, providing materials for bachelor's, master's, postgraduate theses, as well as competence, and instrumental support for schools;
- supporting institutions involved in charity and civic activities, e.g. local associations, voluntary fire brigades, local sports clubs, etc.;
- patronage and sponsorship of cultural, sports, and scientific events;
- activities addressed to former employees of a given organization (including company retirees).

In the second group of activities, one can indicate as examples the following types and forms of volunteering:

- volunteering in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), associations, foundations;
- employee volunteering, supported by a company (the voluntary participation of employees in pro bono work for the benefit of those in need);
- senior citizen volunteering, sharing their time, knowledge, and experience;
- school volunteering, activities on school premises for the benefit of the school environment;
- sports volunteering, such as by organizing competitions, games, championships.

11.3. Theoretical concept of the relation between employee commitment and the social activity of the organization

Employee satisfaction and commitment are the key areas in which organizations see their competitive advantage. It has become a common belief that taking care of these areas through appropriate activities carried out as part of human resources management brings tangible benefits to organizations. Therefore, it is worth considering the relation between the areas and the social activity of organizations. The intensification of activities within the framework of SAO may have a positive influence on both the satisfaction and involvement of employees and thus improve the functioning of organizations.

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) defines commitment as a positive attitude of an employee to an organization and its values. A committed employee is aware of business needs and cooperates with others to increase efficiency for the benefit of the organization (Vance, 2006, p. 3). In turn, Juchnowicz treats commitment as "a special attitude to work, which is manifested by above-average readiness to act, in which the interests of an organization are as important as individuals' own interests, passion for action, identification with the company (employees believe in the success of the organization, express positive opinions about the organization in the environment in which they function) and a desire to stay in the organization" (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 56).

The analysis of the literature indicates that employee commitment manifests itself in four forms (Młokosiewicz, 2017):

1) commitment to an organization – identification with its mission, shared values, and the goals of the company;

2) commitment to work – performing tasks at the highest level;

3) commitment to one's job – the consistent pursuit of one's own professional development path;

4) commitment to the social environment – identifying with superiors and co--workers.

The first form of engagement – the commitment to an organization – can be crucial in the context of the social activity of organizations. According to the IES Survey, the main factors influencing the level of engagement are the sense of being

appreciated and participation, which in turn are the results of a number of activities in many areas of human resource management. Feeling valued and participating in the life of an organization depend, among other things, on whether employers/ supervisors care about the well-being of employees, value their opinions, take into account their goals and value systems, care about their overall job satisfaction, or are willing to accommodate employees' requests in urgent, unusual cases. These issues are largely explained by the concept of psychological contract (Juchnowicz, 2012). It can be assumed that the activities carried out by employees as part of the social activity of organizations will strengthen their goals and the adopted system of values, and their opinions on social problems, for example in the local labor market, should be noticed and considered in the process of managing the company. Thus, the increasing sense of appreciation and participation translates into the level of commitment. This relation is shown in Figure 11.2.
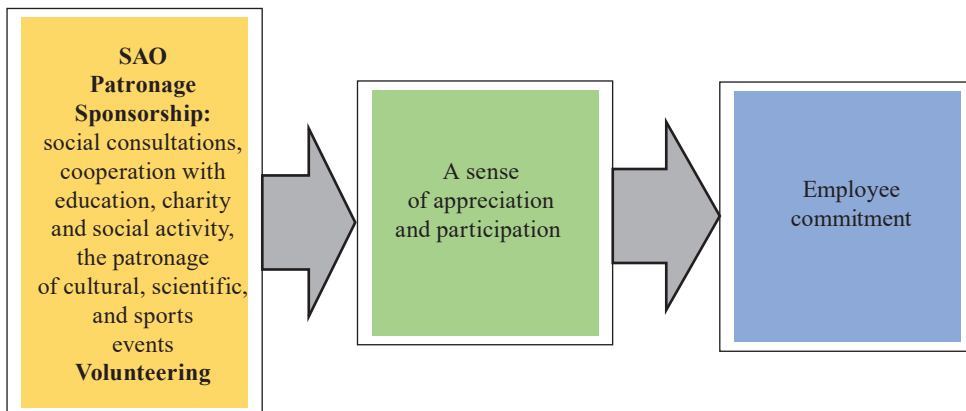

Figure 11.2. The relation between SAO, the sense of appreciation and participation, and employee commitment

Source: own elaboration.

11.4. Theoretical concept of the relation between employee job satisfaction and the social activity of an organization

Job satisfaction, despite numerous discussions and scientific research already conducted for several decades, is still a central point of consideration in many publications (Juchnowicz, 2014; Nieć, 2020). It is a highly subjective category, as it is based on individual expectations and value systems of particular employees. As a result, there are problems with designing a system that would affect all people employed in a given organization similarly and, at the same time, allow for the exact level of intensity of the discussed category (Sowińska, 2014).

Job satisfaction (contentment) is defined differently in the literature. Classically, it refers to the result of perceiving one's work as one that enables the attainment of important values, and these values are in line with or help to attain basic human needs (Locke, 1976). Yet Juchnowicz, analyzing the differences between job contentment and job satisfaction, states that job satisfaction is a higher level of job contentment, requiring that work provides intellectual challenges, a sense of success, the joy of professional development and self-realization, and full identification with one's job and/or organization (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 15).

Considering the problem-related nature of the chapter, the factors shaping the level of job satisfaction are of great importance. The literature on the subject provides many examples of their classifications. For example, Gross divided them into three categories (Gross, 2003):

1)   organizational – directly related to work, such as the type of tasks performed, the amount of remuneration, promotion prospects, organizational operating policies (care for employees and their needs);

2)   social – organizational climate, relations with supervisors and co-workers, respect at work;

3)   personal – age, gender, cognitive abilities, personality traits, etc.

An interesting proposal for the classification of factors determining job satisfaction was presented by Bartkowiak (2009), suggesting the factors discussed can be classified as direct or indirect, while in each group, one can distinguish employee and organizational factors. From the point of view of the deliberations carried out, indirect factors deserve attention, with particular emphasis put on the organizational context. According to the cited author, this group of factors should include the requirements of the organization, relations with customers, the environment, public opinion, etc.
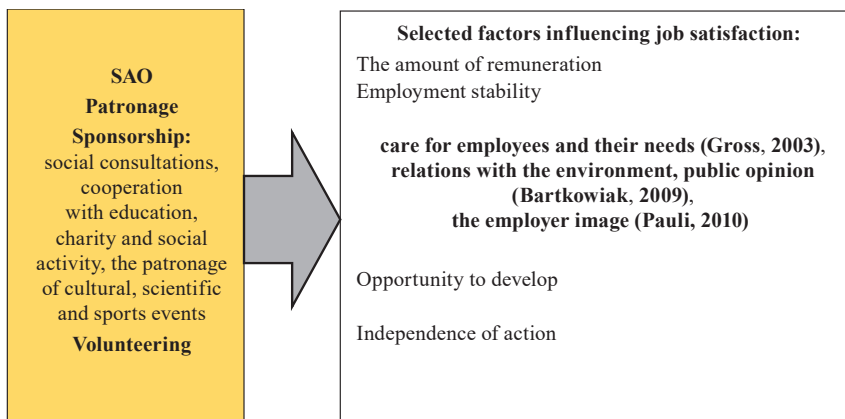

Figure 11.3. The social activity of organizations vs. factors shaping job satisfaction

Source: own elaboration.

Another proposal for the classification of the discussed factors was presented by Pauli (2010), who distinguished three areas: working conditions, relations at work, and the management system. Each area includes many factors that together determine the final level of job satisfaction. One of them is the employer image (working conditions area), which determines how recognizable the organization is in the labor market, to what extent working for the employer is a source of additional satisfaction, and indicates whether an employee would recommend working for the company to others. Again, SAO can have a large impact on the final level of job satisfaction, as shown in Figure 11.3.

11.5. The final concept of relations between employee satisfaction and commitment and the social activity of an organization

Concluding the discussion conducted in the previous sections it can be said that the social activity of organizations and employee satisfaction and commitment constitute interrelated categories. It is assumed that the basis for the full involvement of employees is to achieve the appropriate level of satisfaction. This relation can be presented as follows (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 57):

1) achievements at work result in extrinsic rewards;

2) an employee evaluates the fairness of rewards by comparing the results with the effort made;

3) when rewards are evaluated as fair, the employee is satisfied and feels satisfaction;

4) satisfaction becomes a motivator to undertake further tasks and increase commitment.

Figure 11.4. Relations between the social activity of organizations and job satisfaction and commitment

Source: own elaboration.

It is important to emphasize at this point that satisfaction is not just a cause but also an effect of the increased levels of engagement. This mutual driving of satisfaction and commitment can be strengthened by the participation of employees in the social activities of organizations. Help in organizing cultural or sporting events, active cooperation with education, charity or volunteer work for people in need all contribute to the stronger identification of employees with a given organization, thus lowering the probability of leaving it. These relations are shown in Figure 11.4.

The presented theoretical aspects of organizational social activity and its relation with employee satisfaction and commitment are an attempt to conceptualize them. Thus, they can be a starting point for adopting hypotheses and their verification in the research process. Their confirmation may contribute to a better understanding of the functioning of organizations in the context of the local community.

In the context of the above, it can be said that the goal of the chapter has been achieved. As a result of literature studies and their own considerations, the authors proposed the conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment.

Summarizing, the social activity of organizations includes all the initiatives and activities of an organization that involve influencing its environment, beyond the regular duties associated with running a business, expressed in undertaking activities for both individuals and groups, aiming to accomplish tasks that satisfy highly regarded social values in the organization's environment, even at the expense of additional financial outlays incurred by the organization. Its practical manifestation can be patronage, sponsorship, and volunteering. Based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, the relations linking SAO with employee satisfaction and commitment were presented. This new perspective opens a wide range of possibilities for organizations in terms of shaping the level of employee satisfaction and commitment.

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