



# PERSONALITY, PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

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*Organizational commitment; employee commitment; leadership communication, transformational leadership*

## ABSTRACT

*The present research paper analyzes the relationship between employee personality, their organizational commitment and their perception of their leaders' behavior and communication quality. Following this leading research scope, a literature review is conducted, describing different models of organizational commitment and its multi-factorial structure. Leadership is discussed within the framework of transformational and transactional leadership. In these regards, the influence of leadership on organizational commitment is discussed, leading to the description of the big five framework, as a relevant concept in research on personality.*

*The empirical study followed a quantitative approach, using a sample of  $n = 300$  business professionals measures of emotional and behavioral commitment, perceived leadership communication quality, perceived leadership style and employee personality were administered using an online survey. Analyses followed a correlational approach, aiming at explaining the relationships between the relevant variables. Using multiple, stepwise regression analyses, the study was able to show how both emotional and behavioral commitment are predicted by employee personality (conscientiousness for both measures, neuroticism additionally for emotional commitment), by perception of transformational leadership style and by perceived leadership quality. A total of around 30% of overall variance in both measures of organizational commitment could be explained using these predictors, the multiple regression analyses revealed.*

*Thus, the importance of leadership and leadership communication on organizational commitment could be shown alongside the role that employee personality plays. The criterion validity of the measure for emotional and behavioral commitment could also be confirmed.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Why employees matter

These In a society and economic environment increasingly being dominated by technological

advancements and developments that on the first glance seem to minimize the need of employees their relevance still seems to grow, according to experts such as Morgan (2017) or Suseno and Pinnington (2017). At the same time, technologies such as Business Intelligence or Artificial Intelligence (Larson & Chang, 2016) or

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robotics (Taylor et al., 2016) and other forms of automatization (Geyer-Klingenberg et al., 2018) make it seem like the business world is taken over by spiritual machines, as Ray Kurzweil (2000) already predicted two decades ago. One of his predictions was that a wide variety of work would be replaced by machines and that this would not only apply to mechanical, menial jobs that can be outsourced to machines but also to intellectually challenging jobs. Machines – spiritual machines, as the author named those systems that should already have self-awareness and an artificial intelligence – were according to his educated predictions also to take over so called white-collar jobs. Whether this became true or will become true, however, stays unknown and is outside of the scope of this work. However, the rise of such systems did influence the employment market strongly: Machines and technical solutions did destroy jobs, as the public perception often labels this development (Balsmeier & Woerter, 2019). On the other hand, however, the consequences of the on-going digitalization and subsequent digital transformation (Pretsch, 2019) are also described to be job-creators and value-creators. Individuals who are able to perform in a highly complex environment and who are able to innovate and transform companies and businesses are in higher demand than ever before – a development labelled already two decades ago as war for talent (Chambers et al., 1999). Winning this war for talent implies from a corporate perspective two important battlefronts: recruiting and retaining talents, thus, highly skilled individuals, capable of outperforming the competition (Ulrich, 2015; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012).

The present work focuses on the aspect of retainment of employees, thus on ways to foster their motivation, reducing their intention to quit (Firth et al., 2004) and their organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meixner, 2020). Organizational commitment describes the commitment employees feel in regards to their company and can be discussed from different viewpoints and perspectives as this paper will show. One of the core questions of modern leadership and human resource management (HRM) is how this organizational commitment can be fostered – leadership approaches like transformational leadership aim at fostering commitment and at motivating employees, thus actively contributing to a successful pathway through the aforementioned war for talent (Avolio et al., 2004; Busse, 2014a).

## **1.2 Research Gap and Research Question**

As section 1.1 showcased, organizational commitment can play a major role for a company's success – retaining valuable employees seems to be a focus of contemporary business leaders in a business environment, that is competitive not only on the product market but also on the employer market. Different factors influence this commitment which in itself is a multi-factorial construct, as research such as the one by Meixner (2020) shows. As multi-factorial and broad as the construct itself, the

predictors and influencers of commitment are shown to be in scientific literature (Steers, 1977, Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Comparatively little is known about the interplay of employee personality, employee perception of leadership and leadership communication and how this cluster of aspects influences employee commitment. Especially empirical, quantitative studies on this complex topic seem to be lacking, as a literature review conducted shows – while separate aspects of the general scope of this work are addressed by various papers, the overall relationship of those three clusters (commitment, perceived leadership and leadership communication behavior, employee personality) has so far not been addressed in a comparable way.

Basing on a study of Meixner (2020), the present work seeks to address the question, how emotional commitment and behavioral commitment are linked to employee personality and to employee perception of their leaders. The assumption is, that both the personality and the perception should play a role in predicting both types of commitment, however, it is further assumed, that employee personality and employee perception of their leaders are also connected with each other. Given these assumed relationships within the set of (potential) predictors, a multiple regression analysis will be used, as this approach is able to consider the correlations within the set of predictors as well. Such a robust analytical tool that allows for the assessment of multivariate relationships aims to offer a strong contribution to the pre-existing work on organizational commitment. The empirical study (see sections 3 and 4) is accompanied by a literature review, covering the state of research in regards to the concepts relevant for this paper.

## **2. STATE OF RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Organizational Commitment – a multi-factorial construct**

Organizational commitment, as described within the introduction of this research article, is a concept of great relevance to practitioners and researchers alike, as it is considered to be a strong predictor of various financial and organizational outcomes of businesses in the contemporary business environment (Cohen, 2017, Yousef, 2017). Typically, organizational or employee commitment is discussed to be a multi-factorial construct, consisting typically of multiple layers. Wolf (2014), for example, discussed it as a four-factorial construct, consisting of a rational, behavioral, normative and emotional layer. Allen and Meyer (1990), in their influential research article on organizational commitment, differentiate between three distinctive types of commitment – affective, normative and behavioral commitment. Affective commitment therein describes the emotional aspect of commitment and thus the strongly relationship-based aspects of commitment.

This can be seen in relationship to the emotional layer as described by Wolf (2014). Normative behavior, Allen and Meyer (1990, 1991) argue, describes an individual's notion about whether it is right to stay with a company, independent on the actual relationship. Individuals scoring high in this dimension tend to hold strong beliefs about loyalty towards their company. This is also discussed by Meixner (2020) who argues that this aspect of commitment, thus, should be less influenced by leadership behavior or other aspects of the relationship between company and employee and rather be dependent on the individual's personality. Behavioral commitment, lastly, refers to the actual behavior and can be viewed as the opposite of the intention to quit (Elangovan, 2001; Klassen & Chiu, 2011).

In an empirical evaluation of existing measures on organizational commitment, Meixner (2020) found evidence only for two of the three/four dimensions of organizational commitment – a confirmatory factor analysis based on items derived from a wide variety of measures on organizational commitment only revealed evidence for emotional and behavioral commitment. The remaining two factors, the authors argue, lay outside the realm of the relationship between employee and employer, and are thus, not adequately covered by existing measures. Figure 1 showcases the assumed relationships.

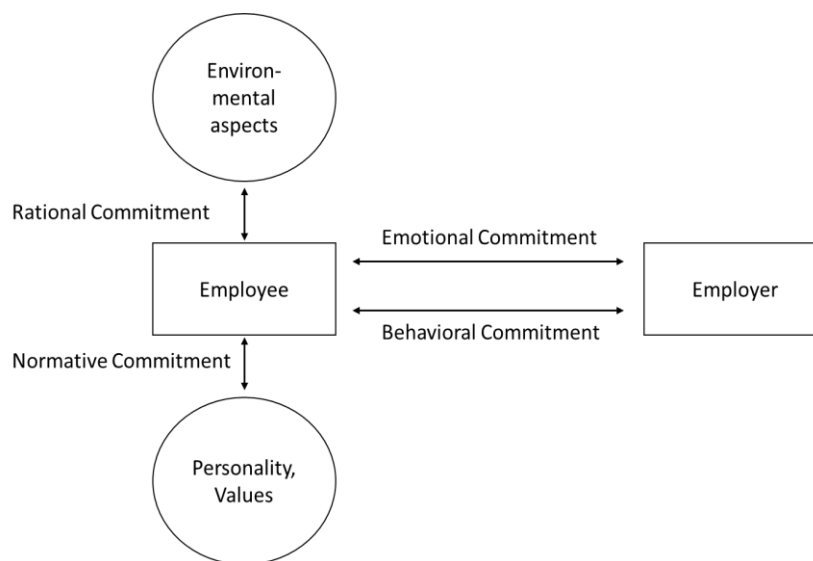


Figure 1. Model of Organizational Commitment (Meixner, 2020, p89)

Normative commitment, the authors argue in alignment with relevant literature (see above), should mostly be dependent on the individual's personality and values. As Allen and Meyer (1990) explain, normative commitment is mostly connected to a person's beliefs about whether loyalty to a company is the right thing to do or to feel. Rational commitment on the other side, Meixner (2020) further argues, should also be mostly independent of the relationship between leader and employee – as the rational commitment as defined by Allen and Meyer (1990) or Wolf (2014) mostly implies commitment because of rational aspects like a lack of alternatives or satisfaction with the payment and overall job security, it also depends less on the leadership behavior or subsequent relationship between leader and employee.

The present study builds on these findings and addresses organizational commitment as a two-factorial model when viewed in terms of the relationship between employee and leader. Emotional and behavioral commitment thus will be discussed and analyzed within this research paper.

## 2.2 Leadership and Commitment

While both scientific literature and managerial practice know a wide variety of different leadership approaches and leadership styles (Adams, 2007; Busse, 2014a; Jogulu, 2010), the focus of this paper lays on the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational and transactional leadership approaches, while often portrayed to be two ends of one spectrum, are actually two separate and distinct approaches towards leadership that can – in theory – appear independent of each other. Thus, a leader can be both transformational and transactional or only either transformational or transactional. This is further accentuated by Neubauer, Bergner and Felfe (2012) who point out that effective leadership anyway does not follow one single approach, independent of the situation, but is rather situationally aware and reacts to the circumstances in regards to its style. However, leaders typically still do possess a preferred leadership style. Transactional and transformational leadership are among the most discussed leadership styles, both of them aiming to improve employee motivation and commitment, with different tactics.

Transactional leadership, in general, accentuates the transactional nature of leadership (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999) – employees are given a reward in exchange for their commitment or performance. This transactions of services for rewards, of course, forms the very basis of all employment scenarios but transactional leadership accentuates the transaction above and beyond the regular payment models: Rewards are exchanged for better performance, as is often the case on bonus-based systems as typically found in sales or management roles (Bass, 1997; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Rich, 2001). Such approaches “are aimed at monitoring and controlling employees through rational or economic means” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 902). The two dimensions of which transactional leadership consists (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999) are contingent reward, where “leaders provide tangible or intangible support and resources to followers in exchange for their efforts and performance” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 902) and management by exception (active), which focuses on “setting standards and monitoring deviations from these standard” (p. 902). The comparable approach of management by exception (passive) only intervenes when necessary, as problems become necessary to manage.

Transformational leadership, again following the distinction presented by Bono and Judge (2004) in regards to its sub-dimensions focuses in its leadership approach more strongly on the relationship between leader and employee and less on the transactional nature. Leaders following such an approach are characterized by what Bono and Judge (2004) label an idealized influence with “high standards of moral and ethical conduct” (p. 901), thus creating loyalty by leading by positive example. Transformational leaders also typically follow an approach described as inspirational motivation. One of the core goals of transformational leaders, thus, is to inspire employees and to motivate them, by making them believe in the goals of the company and pushing them towards actively wanting to contribute to the success. This stands at a stark contrast to the description of transactional leadership, where employees are expected to perform because of their desire for rewards or to avoid punishment. Transformational leadership, rather, focuses on the intrinsic motivations of employees and tries to align those with the goals of the company (Bass, 1999). In terms of intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders also “challenge organizational norms, encourage divergent thinking, and who push followers to develop innovative strategies” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 901) and also focus on the individual growth of employees (individual consideration).

The distinction described here makes clear, that the impact of these leadership styles on commitment also seems to be a different one. Meixner (2020) proposed that different types of organizational commitment should be dependent on different predictor variables, implying that especially rational commitment – as defined within the framework of Meyer and Allen (1991) – should be dependent rather on

outside variables such as the economic situation or the employment market. Also, it can be deduced, that rational commitment should be closely linked to a transactional leadership approach, which focuses on the rational nature of collaborations – money in exchange for work (see Mahmoud, 2008). Transformational leadership, however, focuses mostly on the emotional and motivational aspects of the relationship between leaders and employees, thus, should also stronger influence these aspects of organizational commitment (Meixner, 2020).

Concludingly, it can be stated that leadership – whether viewed through the lenses of transformational or transactional leadership or through other models – does influence employee commitment and it also helps create and shape a corporate culture that can also either foster or hinder the development of commitment (Busse, 2014b; Jackson, Meyer & Wang, 2013).

### **2.3 Personality – the Big Five Framework, a psychological construct and its economic consequences**

An employee’s personality is considered to be one of the vital predictors of his (organizational) behavior (Erdheim, Wang & Zickar, 2006; Roberts, 2006; Weiss & Adler, 1984). Personality also influences commitment towards an organization or a job (Morrison, 1997). Economic research on personality and its influence on various outcomes such as organizational behavior, however, sometimes lacks a clear definition of what personality constitutes. For the sake of the present study, however, personality is defined by the concept of Big Five which is prevalent within social sciences, especially psychology, and is therein described to be an excellent predictor of various personal outcomes and behaviors (Goldberg, 1990; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). The Big Five model, which is also known as OCEAN model, consists of five distinct personality factors which are supposed to describe the personality, thus the non-cognitive, stable traits of individuals. The five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Barrick & Mount, 1991). These five dimensions are described to be mostly stable over the course of a lifetime, although minor changes within the aging process can be observed in some empirical studies (see Cobb-Clark & Schurer, 2012). Conscientiousness is among the most intensely studied variables when it comes to organizational and personal performance outcomes and is in general described to be the strongest predictor of academic and vocational success.

Big Five factors are able to predict major life choices and motivational aspects as well as future behaviors. Among the behaviors predicted by (some factors of) the Big Five of personality are academic access (Poropat, 2009), career success (Judge et al., 1999) and the aforementioned construct of organizational commitment (Erdheim et al., 2006). Erdheim et al. (2006) were able to show, that all five personality dimensions are correlated to the three aspects of organizational commitment as proposed by

Allen and Meyer (1991; see section 2.1): “Results indicated that Extraversion was significantly related to affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience were all significantly related to continuance commitment. Lastly, Agreeableness was significantly related to normative commitment“ (p. 959).

### 3. METHODOLOGY / MEASURES

#### 3.1 Emotional and Behavioral Commitment

The scales for emotional and behavioral commitment are derived from an empirical work presented by Meixner (2020). Based on a confirmatory factor analyses, this work proposed a two-factor mode of commitment, consisting of emotional and behavioral factors. Reliability scores for both factors are presented and of appropriate nature for ongoing empirical work. Criterion validity has not been reported so far on those scales, however, the items from the scales were – as Meixner (2020) explains – derived from other, well evaluated and validated scales, which is taken as an indicator for their criterion validity. However, the present study seeks to also provide appropriate information on this validity.

The measure consists of two distinctive scales, measuring emotional and behavioral commitment and uses a five-point Likert scale.

#### 3.2 Perceived Leadership Communication Quality

The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ; Schneider, Maier, Lovrekovic & Retzbach, 2015) is used to survey leadership communication as it is perceived by the participants of the study. According to the authors, the questionnaire is a concise, reliable and valid instrument for the survey of leadership communication from the two perspectives of a leader who leads at the very same time which makes it well suited for the present survey. The authors were able to show a satisfactory criterion validity by finding a correlation of  $r = .31$  in their validation study with the job satisfaction of the people they interviewed. The six items of the PLCQ are using, again, a five-point Likert scale in order to assess the quality of the leadership communication. Participants were asked to describe their immediate leader based on these items.

#### 3.3 Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

In order to assess the perceived leadership approach, participants were asked to assess their leader using the 45 items of the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ, Bass & Avolio, 1995). The questionnaire is based on the distinction between transformational, transactional, and avoidant leadership, as discussed within section 2.2 of this research article in terms of a theoretical framework. A total of nine sub-scales are devised by the MLQ which are summarized to scales for transformational, transactional

and passive-avoidant leadership. These leadership style descriptions are complemented by three additional subscales (extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction) that are summarized in the scale outcomes of leadership. More recent research, however, doubted the factorial structure of the sub-scales of the MLQ (Tejeda, Scandura & Pillai, 2001). For the sake of the present study, only the four scales are reported, with the sub-scales only being used to compute the scale values themselves. Like the other measures used within this research article, the MLQ uses a five-point Likert scale. The MLQ is validated both for self-reports and for assessing another person’s leadership approach, with the latter usage being relevant for this paper.

#### 3.4 Big Five Inventory (Short Version)

Personality was assessed following the Big Five model of personality, as described within section 2.3 of this paper. The Big Five Inventory (BFI, short version; Rammstedt & John, 2007) was used for assessment here. This version was developed on the longer version of the BFI, which consists of 45 items. Based on empirical research and a validation study, the authors formed a ten-item version, which is used within this study. This ten-item version measures the five dimensions of the personality model, using two items per dimension, with one of them per dimension being depicted in a negatively structured way, thus requiring re-computation for scale-computing. Rammstedt and John (2005) were able to show that this ten-item version of the Big Five inventory does possess similar psychometric properties as the full version, thus, being an appropriate measure for assessing individuals’ personality. The downside of this short-measure is, however, that individual facets of the five personality dimensions of course cannot be assessed; this, however, was outside of the scope of the present research paper anyway. A five point Likert scale is used by the BFI-short version.

#### 3.5 Data and Material

In order to assess the research question presented within section 1.2 of this research paper, using a German research panel, a total of  $n = 300$  participants were presented with the above described questionnaire, consisting of measures of commitment, perceived leadership communication quality, perceived leadership style and personality. The focus of the research was the employees’ perspectives, thus, all 300 participants were employees, describing their own commitment and their perception of their leaders’ approaches and behaviors. The employees have been on average for  $M = 8.16$  years with their current employer. 32.3% of them also reported to be currently in a leadership position themselves, however, they still reported to also have direct leaders above them, which they assessed within the current work.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Relevant Variables

In a first step, descriptive statistics were computed in order to showcase the variables used within this study in regards to their relevant parameters. There was no need to conduct reliability analyses or factor analyses to evaluate the psychometric quality of the scales used, as only scales have been used that have already been evaluated before and that have been published in peer-reviewed

publications (see section 3.2, where the measures are described in detail).

Table 1 thus shows the means, standard deviations, as well as the minimum and maximum values of the scales used within this study. There are – apart from the sociodemographic measures – no single-items being used for subsequent analyses. Scales were computed following the directions given by the respective papers or manuals, in which the measures have been initially published. For the analyses in regards to the MLQ, the summarized characteristics are being used for the subsequent analyses. This implies a total of three scales for leadership (transformational, transactional, passive avoidant) and an additional scale for outcomes of leadership.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Relevant Variables (own data)

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational_Leadership	300	1,00	5,00	3,2330	,73656
Transactional_Leadership	300	1,50	5,00	3,1382	,56153
Passive_Avoidant	300	1,00	5,00	2,7975	,87019
Overall_Outcomes	300	1,00	5,00	3,2087	,86550
PLCQ	300	1,00	5,00	3,3683	,93806
BFI_E	300	1,00	5,00	3,3733	,86687
BFI_A	300	1,50	5,00	3,5450	,75656
BFI_C	300	1,50	5,00	3,7333	,77947
BFI_N	300	1,00	5,00	2,4567	,92519
BFI_O	300	1,00	5,00	3,4617	,73678
emotional_factor	300	1,37	5,00	3,3921	,68688
behavioral_factor	300	1,08	4,54	3,2264	,62515
Valid N (listwise)	300				

The description in table 1 shows that there is no missing data for either of the variables. The variables emotional factor and behavioral factor represent the two types of organizational commitment as discussed within section 3.2.1. Those two variables will be shifted into the center of attention within the subsequent analyses conducted within this paper, as the research question aims to understand, how organizational commitment can be predicted by employee personality (represented by the five Big Five variables), perceived leadership style (transformational leadership, transactional leadership,

passive-avoidant leadership) and perceived leadership communication quality.

Both types of organizational commitment, thus both behavioral and emotional aspects, are positively correlated to the perception of transformational and transactional leadership, to leadership outcomes and to perceived leadership communication quality, whereas a negative correlation could be observed between passive-avoidant leadership approaches and organizational commitment (see table 2)

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Relevant Variables (own data) *Correlations*

		emotional_factor	behavioral_factor
Transformational_Leadership	Pearson Correlation	,530**	,507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300
Transactional_Leadership	Pearson Correlation	,349**	,345**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300
Passive_Avoidant	Pearson Correlation	-,263**	-,288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300
Overall_Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	,520**	,512**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300
PLCQ	Pearson Correlation	,533**	,516**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In a next step, bivariate correlations between the big five variables and the other potential predictors of commitment were computed (table 3).

This depiction shows clearly, that an employee's personality is connected to the way, the employee perceives his leader. Openness and agreeableness, however, do not seem to be correlated to the perception of the leadership style or the leadership communication, despite the initial assumption (see section 2.3) that agreeableness might be an influential variable in these regards. However, significant relationships could be shown between the other three big five factors and the

indicators of perceived leadership. While for neuroticism only negative correlations could be observed (indicating that a high level of neuroticism goes along with a less positive perception of leadership style and leadership communication), for conscientiousness and extraversion positive correlations could be observed, thus high levels in these two personality factors go along with a tendency to describe leaders as more transformational, to have better leadership communication quality and also as more positive in general (overall outcomes). Also, those scoring higher on conscientiousness, tend to describe their leaders as less passive-avoidant.

**Table 3.** Correlations between Personality and other Predictors (own data)

Correlations		Transformational_Leadership	Transactional_Leadership	Passive_Avoidant	Overall_Outcomes	PLCQ
BFI_E	Pearson Correlation	,173**	,111	-,105	,149**	,192**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003	,056	,070	,010	,001
	N	300	300	300	300	300
BFI_A	Pearson Correlation	,057	-,007	-,108	,042	,048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,324	,904	,061	,469	,411
	N	300	300	300	300	300
BFI_C	Pearson Correlation	,130*	,116*	-,152**	,179**	,165**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,025	,044	,008	,002	,004
	N	300	300	300	300	300
BFI_N	Pearson Correlation	-,171**	-,126*	,062	-,189**	-,180**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003	,029	,284	,001	,002
	N	300	300	300	300	300
BFI_O	Pearson Correlation	-,033	-,046	-,090	-,052	,064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,569	,428	,122	,366	,266
	N	300	300	300	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

In a similar vein, the correlations between personality and organizational commitment were computed (table 4). Again, openness does not seem to play a relevant role in regards to organizational commitment, similarly to how it did not seem relevant in regards to the leadership variables reported in table 3. However, for the other variables

distinctive correlations could be observed: While the behavioral commitment seems to only be correlated with the personality trait conscientiousness ( $r = .233, p < .01$ ), the emotional commitment is correlated with all big five traits apart from openness (see table 4).

**Table 4.** Correlation between Personality and Commitment (own data) *Correlations*

		emotional_factor	behavioral_factor
BFI_E	Pearson Correlation	,192**	,067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	,245
	N	300	300
BFI_A	Pearson Correlation	,189**	,100
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	,083
	N	300	300
BFI_C	Pearson Correlation	,286**	,233**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	300	300
BFI_N	Pearson Correlation	-,242**	-,106
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,066
	N	300	300
BFI_O	Pearson Correlation	,100	,066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,083	,254
	N	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

## 4.2. Regression Analysis

As the descriptive analytics and the depiction of the results of the bivariate correlations imply, emotional and behavioral aspects of commitment are distinctive variables with (partially) unique correlates – as could be shown in table 3 and 4. Thus, for the subsequent analyses in regards to how both aspects of organizational commitment can be predicted by employee personality, employees' perception of leadership communication quality and leadership style, both indicators of commitment were considered. Thus, two separate multiple regression analyses were conducted,

following the exact same pattern of a stepwise regression with two blocks. In the first block of each regression, the set of big five variables was proposed as possible predictors to be entered stepwise based on the significance of their variance explanation. The second block of proposed predictors were the variables derived from the MLQ (leadership styles and leadership outcomes) and the perceived leadership communication quality. Again, the variables in this block were entered stepwise into the final equations, based on the significance of their variance explanation. Tables 5 and 6 show the results of the regression analyses, respectively for the two criterion variables emotional and behavioral commitment.

**Table 5.** Regression analysis - Behavioral Commitment (own data)

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.233a	.054	.051	.60903	.054	17,037	1	298	.000
2	.537b	.288	.284	.52915	.234	97,765	1	297	.000
3	.565c	.319	.312	.51854	.031	13,281	1	296	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C									
b. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C, PLCQ									
c. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C, PLCQ, Transformational_Leadership									

**Table 6.** Regression analysis - Behavioral Commitment (own data)

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.286a	.082	.079	.65922	.082	26,619	1	298	.000
2	.338b	.114	.108	.64873	.032	10,718	1	297	.001
3	.584c	.341	.334	.56047	.227	101,902	1	296	.000
4	.608d	.370	.362	.54886	.029	13,659	1	295	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C									
b. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C, BFI_N									
c. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C, BFI_N, Transformational_Leadership									
d. Predictors: (Constant), BFI_C, BFI_N, Transformational_Leadership, PLCQ									

The results of both analyses show comparable, although distinctive results. Conscientiousness, transformational leadership (perceived) and leadership communication quality (perceived) are relevant predictors for both criteria, although with different impacts, as the results in both tables above show. Also, neuroticism proved to be a relevant predictor only for the emotional commitment, while it seems irrelevant for behavioral commitment. With an  $R^2 = .312$  for behavioral commitment and  $R^2 = .362$  for emotional commitment for both aspects of commitment meaningful predictions can be made by the set of variables chosen within the study. Out of the set of personality factors only conscientiousness proved to be a relevant factor for both aspects of commitment and out of the set of leadership aspects only transformational leadership (perceived) and perceived leadership communication quality seem relevant on this level. Thus, the perception of transactional leadership and of passive-avoidant leadership do not contribute to the explanation of variance in commitment, although they were bivariate correlates of both aspects of commitment.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The present study sought to foster understanding, how employees' personalities and their perception of their leaders' behavior influences two aspects of organizational commitment, as defined by Meixner (2020). Finding an answer towards this research question was conducted from two different perspectives – a literature review revealed that both personality of the employees and leadership styles and leadership behavior can influence organizational commitment. Especially the role of transformational leadership was pointed out here: As Bass (1999) or Carter et al. (2013) showcase, one of the main goals of transformational leadership is to positively influence the relationship between a company (and its leaders) on the one side and its employees on the other side. This is typically achieved through an employee-oriented leadership approach that aims to not only put the goals of the company in the center of attention but to also make a connection between those and employees'



motivations and goals. Leadership communication plays a vital role within this leadership approach, as forming a positive relationships between leaders and employees becomes a core goal of this leadership approach. Especially the emotional aspects of organizational commitment seem to be influenced by this approach (Yang et al., 2011). However, this does not rule out the relevance of transactional leadership, which – as could be shown by authors such as Dai et al. (2013) – also can be beneficial in dependence of its use-case. However, it seems that transactional leadership seems to focus less on the strengthening of organizational commitment and rather induces a transaction-based relationship between leaders and employees. However, as Bass and Avolio (1995) point out, both leadership styles are not mutually exclusive.

These findings in regards to transformational and transactional leadership lead to the findings of the empirical study conducted within this paper. Here, the focus was shifted towards perceived leadership behavior and approaches – as the study centered on employees, it was their perspective and their perception that were analyzed. Thus, it was not assessed whether their leaders were actually behaving in a transformational, transactional or passive-avoidant way, but rather how employees perceive this behavior. This was done using the MLQ that is considered to be a reliable and valid measure both for self-ratings and for other-ratings (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Tejada et al. 2001).

Using this empirical approach as described throughout sections 3 and 4, the research question can be answered directly: Employee personality plays a vital role in predicting organizational commitment. This was shown both on a bivariate, correlation-based level, where especially for emotional commitment strong relationships towards multiple personality factors could be shown. Based on the multiple regression analysis, conducted stepwise in two blocks, the role of conscientiousness stands out as relevant – for both emotional and behavioral commitment conscientiousness is an important predictor, that – on the personality side – gets supplemented by neuroticism for emotional commitment. The perception of leadership and leadership communication, however, also aid in predicting organizational commitment, the findings show.

These findings point out that only the perception of transformational behavior seems relevant for predicting organizational commitment, whereas neither transactional nor passive-avoidant behavior play a significant role from this perspective. However, pointing back towards the bivariate analyses, especially passive-avoidant leadership behavior stands in a negative relationship with commitment. However, due to inter-correlations between the (perceived) leadership types, only the transformational approach seems to be a significant predictor of commitment, along with the perceived quality of leadership communication.

Summarizing, it can be stated that conscientiousness (and in the case of emotional commitment, neuroticism) as well as transformational leadership and leadership communication quality are relevant predictors of organizational commitment, explaining around one third of variance. This results, furthermore, can be considered an indicator of criterion validity for the measure of emotional and behavioral commitment as proposed by Meixner (2020). The correlations with various leadership variables and personality variables are in strong alignment with the initial assumptions of both this paper and the one presented by Meixner (2020), thus, the measure used here seems to possess adequate criterion validity, as the correlations found are high enough to show the predictive validity but small enough to make clear that it is measuring a construct distinct enough from the perception of leadership behavior.

## **5.2 Limitation of the Study**

One of the core limitations of the current study lays in the nature of correlational analyses itself: The correlations computed between personality, for example, show that extraversion and conscientiousness – among others – go along with higher ratings in regards to perceived leadership quality and a stronger tendency to describe leaders as transformational and partially transactional. However, these findings do not necessarily imply that leaders of extraverted and conscientious employees really are more transformational or more efficient and satisfactory, as one possible explanations of these findings might imply. Also, it cannot be proven that those scoring higher on these personality variables simply tend to judge their leaders in a more positive way, independent of their actual leadership quality. Thus, while the findings do point towards relationship between personality and leadership perception, no conclusive decisions can be made based on these results. However, an educated guess led by the relevant literature on the topic might imply that the relationship is a complex one – given the strong focus on communication found in transformational leadership (see Men, 2014) and which is also part of the leadership communication quality, it seems safe to assume, that leaders following such an approach would chose employees who also tend to be more extraverted. Also, extraverted employees might value leaders with a strong focus on communication and the transformational nature of leadership higher than introverted employees do. Indications for both of these interpretations do exist and they also do not seem to be mutually exclusive.

In general, the interpretability of the study is limited therein, that only the perception of leadership was analyzed. The research question and the subsequently conducted research itself both aimed at fostering understanding how personality and the perceived leadership style do influence the two aspects of organizational commitment. While the present study was able to show clearly how these factors are connected to each other, it leaves the research gap for follow-up studies, to reveal, how actual leadership can play an

influencing role in this model. However, the assessment of actual leadership in comparison to organizational commitment would require a drastically more complex design, as it can – for economic reason – only very rarely be found. It would be necessary to not only gather data from employees (as done within this study) or only from leaders but from both, leading to a paired sample, in which the data of individual employees could be linked to data from their respective leaders or line managers.

The findings in regards to neuroticism, which is a significant predictor towards emotional commitment, does not seem to come at a surprise, as the scientific literature on the big five factor neuroticism (thus, sub-clinical neuroticism) reveals. Highly neurotic persons are in general described to be more sensitive in regards to emotional stressors (Boyes & French, 2010), thus the result that neuroticism is connected to emotional commitment seems like a logical conclusion.

### 5.3 Conclusion and Outlook

Concludingly, the present work was able to show, that both employees' personalities and leadership behavior are relevant for the formation of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment, thus, is dependent both on internal and external sources, as – among others – already assumed by Meixner (2020). Thus, this paper builds on and expands the existing literature on organizational commitment. While it seemed clear that there is a link between leadership behavior and commitment, the present study was able to quantify this relationship using standardized measures. Also, it was able to empirically showcase the validity of the model of organizational commitment presented by Meixner (2020). Therein the relevance of emotional and behavioral commitment and their linkage to leadership behavior was shown in an exploratory way, with the present study adding evidence to the proposed relationship. The usage of pre-evaluated measurements such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1995) or the Big Five Inventory (Rammstedt & John, 2007) provide a high level of reliability, validity and objectivity to the study, thus allowing for a straightforward interpretation of the data found with only minor concerns of their psychometric quality.

However, in order to foster understanding of the relationship of these internal and external sources of

organizational commitment, more elaborate studies will be necessary. As the literature review conducted within this paper shows, most studies focus either only on the employee perspective (as done within this study as well) or on the leader perspective. For a full understanding of how actual leadership behavior influences employees' commitment a research design connecting employees and leaders in one data-set would be necessary. However, it seems clear that the combination of such data in a dataset of meaningful size that allows for statistical analyses seems like a major obstacle. Also, the role of the companies itself needs to be taken into account: Such studies will have to either limit themselves to one company (to eliminate variance in regards to general corporate culture and similar variables) or use such a wide array of companies that those company-based variables get averaged out of relevance.

The introductory statements of this research paper explained that employees are (still and more than ever) one of the most important resources of contemporary companies and businesses. Fostering their commitment, thus, becomes one of the main goals of business leaders. The present study was able to show that this also seems true in practice: Leaders who use a transformational approach and who are able to communicate in a way that is perceived as clear, concise and positive by their employees, can improve organizational commitment and thereby lead to better engagement, strengthened motivation and better performance. In these regards, it seems important to mention an observation of Busse (2014a, p. 61): “transformational leadership is trainable i.e. leaders can learn and practice to become transformational leaders or to improve their ability to lead transformational”.

While this paper addressed the linkage between this leadership behavior – or the perception of the behavior – future research will focus strongly on the mediating role, that various personality variables take on. The present work can already be seen as a first step towards fostering understanding of the complex relationship between external and internal factors influencing commitment (with leadership behavior being the external and personality one of the internal factors). Subsequent work focuses on personal values and their relevance to the way, various leadership behaviors are translated into commitment.

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