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# The Relationship between How Compensation Is Configured and the Level and Components of Commitment to Work – Findings Based on Allen and Meyer’s Organisational Commitment Scale

## Abstract

One of the most important problems in modern HRM is to design innovative solutions related to human capital management, which uses the maximum involvement and commitment to the organisation. One of the most critical solutions in this field is the system of remuneration. This article examines correlations between these areas. The first part of the paper provides a theoretical explanation of the basic assumptions, including definitions and concepts of commitment, elements of compensation, and Allen & Meyer’s Organizational Commitment Scale theory. The second part presents the main conclusions and findings related to the configuration of compensation with the level and components of commitment to work gained by correlation analysis. The most important final outcome is that there are only a few significant correlations among commitment and its components. The main factor that is correlative with the affective component of commitment is the level of remuneration.

**Keywords:** compensation, organisational commitment, motivation, Allen & Meyer conception.

## 1. Introduction

The main objective of this article is to uncover and discuss the relationship between the level, structure and criteria for setting compensation with the level and components of declared commitment to work. This is a significant challenge, especially given today's global, international HRM environment (Stor 2011, pp. 7–13). Obviously, there are a lot of complex multi-directional relationships between a perceptible sense of commitment and engagement, and factors that affect them and the extent to which they occur. Compensation systems are among the best tools for understanding this relationship (e.g. Armstrong 2007, Cascio 2011, Borkowska 2007). The first part of the paper presents the concepts of commitment and engagement as discussed in the literature today. The subsequent part presents the results and findings of a survey related to the components of commitment with the structure and field of compensation.

## 2. What Is Commitment?

Organisational commitment is manifested in the desire of employees to exert considerable effort for the organisation for which they work (Marzec 2011, p. 281). In this spirit, L. W. Porter defines the notion of commitment as the degree of employee identification with the organisation and his or her involvement in its overall affairs (Armstrong 2007, p. 223). In his view, organisational commitment is based on employees' acceptance of and faith in the organisation's goals, their willingness to devote significant effort for the good of the organisation and a strong desire to be a member of the organisation. A. M. Saks (2006) defines commitment as an intellectual and emotional devotion to the organisation or the level of the effort the employee puts in. According to M. L. Ballery and M. L. Morris (see Juchnowicz 2010), involvement is a condition in which employees want to provide on (submerge) the job. This means they are working towards a positive attitude and are satisfied with the job (Juchnowicz 2010, p. 35). M. Armstrong argues that engagement involves harmonising the goals and values of employees with the goals and values of the organisation and the need to belong to the organisation and the desire to work for its own good (Armstrong 2007, p. 31). B. Buchanan, on the other hand, stresses the emotional aspect of organisational commitment. In his view, it is affective attachment to the goals and values of the organisation, to one's role regarding these goals and values, and to the organisation (Buchanan 1974, p. 533). The desire to put an effort into work, the willingness to act and engage in the affairs of the organisation and possess a strong sense of being a member of the organisation are all rooted in employees' perception of motivation, both internal and external.

Commitment is seen by analysts and researchers as being different from motivation and job satisfaction (Spik i Klincewicz 2008, Juchnowicz 2012). Involvement affects the behaviour of the employee, regardless of other conflicting motives and attitudes. Factors that are in conflict with the motivation to work – the desire to spend time with your family, for example – do not eliminate the impact of organisational commitment on the behaviour of employees, but they can introduce a higher level of stress at work (Molek-Winiarska 2013, pp. 36–42). Improving job satisfaction while ensuring there is a high level of involvement from employees seems an obvious practice in human capital management (*Słownik...* 2010). However, numerous studies indicate that it is difficult to find a relationship between the concepts of efficiency, motivation, and commitment and satisfaction (Borowska-Pietrzak 2011). This problem is illustrated by Fig. 1.

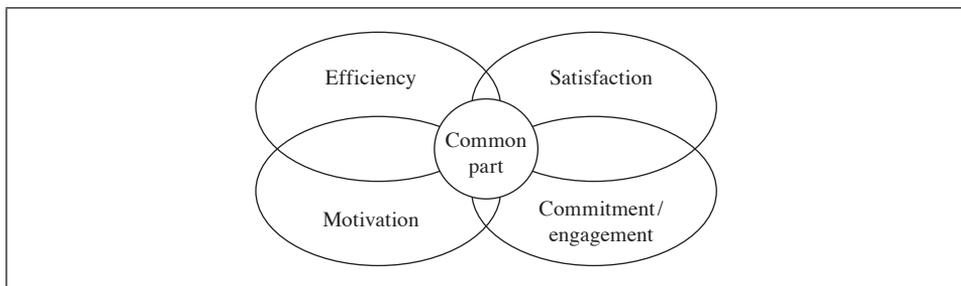


Fig. 1. Relationship between Notions in HRM – “the Holy Grail of HRM”

Source: own study.

The common part of these notions is the theoretical approach of understanding the goals of human capital management. The result of a high level of occurrence in all areas could indicate model behaviour and the attitude of the ideal, perfect employee. We can say, with a wink, that all practices and procedures of HRM seek just such solutions – “the Holy Grail of HRM”. Now the question is if it is attainable. The interdependence of factors affecting the level of organisational commitment is discussed in the literature. The most frequently mentioned include perceived organisational employee support and procedural justice, climate and organisational culture, organisational structure, improvement and the system of professional development, the evaluation and reward system, management style and the participation of workers in decision-making, achievement, esteem from a supervisor, job responsibilities, responsibility and self-reliance, promotion, development and career, direct superiors, results and evaluation, communication, equal opportunities and fair treatment, health and safety, cooperation, friendly work environment’, “family” relationships, and of course the system of

compensation. (e.g. Meyer & Allen 1991; Hampton & Howell 1989; Marzec 2011, p. 281; Robinson & Perryman 2004; Juchnowicz 2010, p. 116).

Organisational commitment can be broadly defined as a personal attachment to the organisation and individual identification with it. Employee relations with an organisation can be interpreted as a sequence of interactions, in which both sides define and gradually expand their powers, clarifying the operation of the rules contained in the contract of employment, and internal rules. Knowledge of sources and ways to increase involvement may therefore be sought after by managers to help them gain control over the hearts and minds of employees. In this light, an engaged employee is one who has a strong desire to remain a member of the organisation, is prone to giving a high level of effort, and believes in the goals and values of his or her organisation (Cohen 2007, p. 338).

According to Cascio and Boudreau (2011, p. 194), based on the analysis of financial indicators of the best companies of a “Fortune” magazine list, there is a relationship between the effectiveness of an organisation and the behaviours and attitudes of employees. The research suggests that positive labour relations may affect a company’s financial performance. Of course, correlation is not causation. Unfortunately, HRM researchers have yet to clearly determine the direction of the vector of such a relationship. They frequently suggest that relations are mutual, and work in two-way mode. Although research results published by the Corporate Leadership Council and Hewitt Associates indicating a relationship between increases in attachment to a company and double-digit increases in the company’s efficiency, there wasn’t any evidence for what was causing it (Cascio & Boudreau 2011, p. 201). Bragg, Wiles, and Wolf (see Bugdol 2011) also showed the relationship between engagement and positively understood the indirect effects of HCM (Bugdol 2011, p. 72). Involvement contributes to increased productivity and fewer fluctuations of headcount, helps people adapt to change, and reduces absenteeism. It is also, of course, conditioned by culture. This means that there is a relationship between a “learning organisation” with high ethical standards in such kinds of firms (Bugdol 2011, p. 72).

Clearly, defining the notions of commitment and engagement is no easy task. This is especially true when we talk about influences from other fields of HRM. Commitment and engagement are multidimensional, and have cognitive, emotional, and functional components. Commitment to the organisation is closely linked to one’s engagement in work (Cascio & Boudreau 2011, p. 196). Thinking, feeling, and action are the common components that shape commitment (Juchnowicz 2012, p. 34). The relationship between the three is positive, and leads to a state of mind about the work process which yields a feeling of vitality, dedication and absorption. This is a kind of inner energy and vigour of mind, a willingness to put effort into work, even in the face of problems. Also it could be a feeling of

importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge at work, a focus on and absorption in the labour process, and a feeling of happiness. Commitment is an attachment to work that leads to one doing high quality work and to identify with the goals and both the successes and failures of the organisation. Stabilisation, identification, passion, effective action for the organisation are the basic features of employee engagement in the organisation (Juchnowicz 2010, p. 38). Such involvement is determined by the personality of the individual, as well as cognitive, behavioural, and emotional factors (Juchnowicz 2012, p. 58). The relationship between engagement and satisfaction, just as between trust and justice, lies in the fact that the basis of overall productivity resulting from engagement is created in parallel with trust and organisational justice.

Based on the great variety of research done on the topic, or varying criteria for separating a given type (attribute) of commitment, many forms and varieties of commitment can be discussed (Bugdol 2011, pp. 71–72). There are forms of normative commitment resulting from compliance with standards, and fear of punishment. Ideological commitment is based on respect for the overarching the organisation's objectives and values. Emotional commitment results from a positive or negative attitude towards environmental variables, depending on situational factors. Attractive (repulsive) commitment appears under the influence of leaders while calculation (implicit) commitment results from estimating profit and loss. Commitment to the organisation is therefore an attitude having in itself an attribute of behaviour based on engagement. Regardless of the factors influencing it, commitment is one of the most important attitudes expected by the organisation.

Summarising, commitment is the intellectual and emotional attachment to the organisation that results from the effort one puts into one's job. According to Hay Group's definition of engagement, it is an attitude so closely linked with the intention to remain in the organisation, and thus it can be identified with a high degree of commitment to work (Bugdol 2011, pp. 71–72). These notions are very similar.

### **3. The Meyer and Allen Model of Commitment**

From the point of view of the organisation, it is important to determine the advantage of having motivated, attached personnel. Researchers working on understanding this field are mainly focused on finding relationships between the forms of attachment to the organisation and the employee behaviours that are shown by the organisation (Bańka, Wołoska & Bazińska 2002, p. 66). What tools are needed to create such attitudes? To answer these questions, there is a need to consider some theory to facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon of commitment to work.

The factors analysed above clearly coincide with the stimuli that affect the sense of belonging to the organisation. This is especially true of system improvement and development, the evaluation system, receiving praise from a supervisor, and the compensation system. To introduce the concept of organisational commitment in the context of an analysis of factors influencing it, the work of J. P. Meyer and N. J. Allen, who list the three components of organisational commitment should play a leading role (Meyer & Allen 1991, pp. 61–89).

The Meyer and Allen model of commitment is one of the most important theoretical concepts – so important that it produced a breakthrough in research on organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen created a methodological tool that is useful in both research and practice and which has enabled the development of research on organisational commitment relationships with behaviours in the organisation. Using a questionnaire, Meyer and Allen (1991) examined the levels of three independent components of organisational commitment: affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). They define organisational commitment as the individual employee's attachment to and identification with the organisation (Meyer & Allen 1991). This model of organisational commitment has become the dominant model used in studying workplace commitment (Jaros 2007, p. 7–18). Three components constitute an employee's overall sense of commitment to work:

*Affective commitment (AC)* is the employee's emotional attachment to the organisation, and identification with its values. AC reflects the extent to which the individual wants to belong to the organisation. Affective commitment reflects the extent to which the individual wants to be in the organisation because it is very good for one's long-term career path. A sample statement of commitment to the organisation from the questionnaire used to diagnose affective commitment is "In my organisation I feel like a family member".

*Continuance commitment (CC)* – is the level of the employee's consciousness about the need to continue working for the organisation in the context of costs and losses associated with leaving the organisation and limited alternatives on the labour market. This component of commitment corresponds to how much a person needs to be in the organisation. It is commitment which refers to the awareness of the wider costs to be incurred by an employee leaving the organisation. This is the kind of calculation made to determine if the employee loses, as he or she will leave the organisation. It is the drive rooted in the kind of thinking that tells the individual "I must stay in this job". A sample statement from the organisational commitment questionnaire related to the duration of engagement is: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my professional life in the organisation".

*Normative commitment (NC)* is a feeling conditioned by social norms and a sense of obligation; it is loyalty and an employee's fidelity to the organisation.

This commitment reflects how a person feels about whether or not to remain in the organisation. It is a commitment conditioned by education, social patterns, and indicates the level of devotion to the organisation. It is a kind of obligation that grows out of a sense of duty or perceived loyalty. Employees remain in the organisation because they feel they should, and it is the right and best course of action. A sample question from the organisational commitment questionnaire on normative commitment is: "I feel that this organization deserves my loyalty".

According to Meyer and Allen (1997, see Bańka, Wołoska & Bazińska 2002, pp. 65–74), employees with highly developed AC to the organisation are more valuable employees – they work harder and produce better results than workers with less developed affective attachment. Similar but weaker effects are observed with NC. In contrast, workers with strong CC are worse performers, establish far fewer relationships with co-workers and have more dysfunctional activities than those with weaker CC. A good deal of research has indicated that there are negative correlations between attachment to the organisation and the motivation to leave the organisation. In light of the above, it can be assumed that commitment, and above all the scope of employee attitudes like "I want and I should" are closely connected with the system of non-material motivation, while the "I have to" component is most often associated with the material system of motivation. The following section examines material motivators, which to a large extent stimulate and affect whether an employee comes to and stays with an organisation.

On the other hand, the main process that leads to the development of affective attachment (AC) is the individual's personal satisfaction in the context of individual needs, a sense of support, a sense of the importance of the work, and the individual's contribution to the functioning of the organisation (Bańka, Wołoska & Bazińska 2002, p. 67). In this light, it is worth examining the impact of these factors towards configuring a compensation system. Consequently, the level of CC may develop as a result of some action or event that causes an increase in costs associated with a departure from the organisation. This is thinking in the context of alternative investments that the employee will potentially pay if he or she leaves the job. Such assessment of the level of investment incurred by the employee will refer to such expenses as the cost of retraining, the cost of relocation or the difference in salary to be received from a new employer. Thus there is more evidence to examine if the the remuneration system is a factor closely related to this component of commitment.

Finally, the normative component of commitment can be developed on the basis of a psychological contract between the employee and the organisation. Socialisation experience, the foundation of this attitude, includes a wide variety of information relating to the appropriateness of individual attitudes and behaviours. As a result, the person learns what is valuable and what is expected of him or her.

It has yet to be concluded if such a high level of NC is connected with the proper configuration of the compensation system.

#### **4. Compensation as a Factor Affecting Attachment to the Organisation in the Context of the Meyer and Allen Model of Commitment**

The factors clearly stabilising a sense of satisfaction and commitment in the cited literature (e.g. Jaros 2007, Juchnowicz 2012, Armstrong 2007, Borkowska 2007, Haromszeki & Kawka 2011) include: salaries, benefits, job security, work-life balance and a sense of security. Compensation should create the conditions required to fulfill the social partners of the psychological contract and provide organisational support. The material system in this light should be treated holistically – it should provide general benefits in a comprehensive manner, while also being individualised (Juchnowicz 2012, p. 58). Research conducted by A. Khon shows that a strong function of motivation and commitment, in accordance with the concept of Herzberg, is provided by the intrinsic motivation that comes from incentives (see Sedlak 2011, p. 180). A. Bańka and team, who adopted Meyer and Allen's original scale to the Polish version of OSC, did some correlation research on the scale and other variables related to quality of life and job (measures of job satisfaction). One of them was the remuneration system. They determined that job satisfaction is most strongly correlated with a high level of normative commitment and continuance scale. All scales correlated to satisfaction with pay, but the affective scale correlates most strongly. The highest coefficient was 0.56, and pertained to the relationship between compensation and affective commitment.

Table 1. Correlation of Scales AC, CC, NC and Overall Level of Commitment with the Measures Related to Satisfaction,  $p < 0.001$

Specification	ACS	CCS	NCS	Overall Commitment
Job satisfaction	0.56	0.20	0.35	0.47
Satisfaction with Work performed	0.32	0.05	0.18	0.23
Satisfaction with Compensation	0.56	0.22	0.25	0.43
Self-appraisal	0.20	0.04	0.05	0.12
Identification with organization	0.62	0.33	0.50	0.59

Source: Bańka, Wołoska and Bazińska (2002, p. 73).

Taking into account the above considerations, there are some connections with the field of compensation. So, how material incentives are linked in the context of their configuration to overall level of commitment and distribution of its components must be determined. For this purpose, I did some pilot research, the main goal of which was to analyse the links between various elements of the compensation system and particular components of commitment in the Meyer and Allen model. I used a two-part questionnaire survey, the first of which contained more than 20 items related to elements of compensation. Respondents gave their own opinions and information about them. The second part consisted of a Polish version of Meyer and Allen's organisational commitment scales. The results were run through the Statistica programme, which counted the correlations between responses of parts on the attachment and variables relating to components of remuneration. Due to the small sample size of respondents and the nature of the data, which was collected as ordinal scales, I used the Spearman coefficient tool to do the calculations.

The study involved 63 employees – all MBA students – from different organisations characterised by the following dimensions:

1) Most highly represented:

- a) big companies – 45%,
- b) companies operating for more than 15 years – 61%,
- c) companies whose financial results are better than a year ago – 67%,
- d) limited liability and joint stock companies – 67%,
- e) Polish (origin of capital) firms – 58%, and other European – 39%,
- f) lower-level management – 42% – and higher level management – 19%,
- g) employees with duration of employment: 3–7 years – 33%, 7–15 years – 30%,
- h) generation X (born between 1965 and 1981) – 27%, generation Y (born after 1981) – 27%.

2) Least represented:

- a) small organisations – 9%,
- b) companies operating for no more than one year – 3%,
- c) companies where economic results of the present year have worsened from the previous year – 9%,
- d) single business activity – 3%,
- e) Asian firms (origin of capital) – 0%, American firms – 3%,
- f) position – assistant – 6%,
- g) employees with duration of employment less than one year – 6%,
- h) baby boomers (born before 1965) – 0%.

The first type of analysis is combined with the overall results for each of the components of commitment on a 7-point scale. Table 2 presents the division of these ratios.

Table 2. Results of Level of Commitment by Scale for All Groups of Respondents

Gained Values	ACS	CCS	NCS
Average value	4.73	3.01	4.16
Variation value	1.28	1.16	1.41
Maximum value	7.00	5.33	7.00
Minimum value	2.17	0.83	1.33

Source: the author.

As the table shows, the highest indication is the affective component of commitment, though the normative component came in at a similar level. Others have reported that CC usually shows lower scores (e.g. Bańka 2002, Jaros 2007, Juchnowicz 2012). ACS and NCS gained a maximum score, while the lowest AC and NC levels essentially differ from the lowest results at CC scale. All surveyed group of employees are divided into two sets:

- a) 61% of employees gained the highest indicator in the ACS component,
  - b) 39% of employees gained the highest indicator in NCS.
- 0% of the employees gained the highest indicator in CCS.

These results suggest that the group of employees surveyed had a solid and average high level of engagement. They will also provide a starting point for further considerations regarding the analysis of remuneration.

One of the more interesting issues here concerns the distribution of results related to answers about overall level of engagement. 61% of employees declared that they are highly engaged in their work, while 30% think they are very involved and only 9% said they are not all that engaged. It is worth comparing these results with the results of the Meyer and Allen scale of commitment. The average commitment value came in at 3.97 on 7-point scale, or 56% of the full scale. The potential level of engagement is slightly higher than the commitment from the entire group of respondents. Surprisingly, the findings on the relationship between engagement and commitment, based on the surveyed group, did not indicate a statistically significant relationship among these dimensions. The value came in at less than +0.16.

The valuable result of this research is the correlation between the three scales and elements related to HRM and the compensation system. Table 3 presents the only meaning correlates in the context of statistical significance, accepted at the level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . There are only a few essential relations, because the majority of factors (23 items) haven't indicated statistical correlation to the scale of the Meyer and Allen model. However, the most important relationship is the correlation between the scales and salary level, which is understood in this poll also as satisfaction with such gratification. The "x" in the table marks results with insignificant statistical numbers.

Table 3. Correlations between the Scales of the Meyer and Allen Commitment Model and the HRM and Compensation System ( $p < 0.05$ ) (grey ground – compensation field in survey)

Elements of HRM	ACS	CCS	NCS	Overall level of Commitment
Overall satisfaction level with motivation system	0.376	x	x	0.350
Compensation level	0.518	0.360	0.427	0.451
Expectations for an increase in salary	0.428	x	x	x
Appraisal of quality HRM processes	0.366	x	x	x
Expenditure on training	0.532	x	x	0.381
Duration at the Company	-0.398	x	x	-0.359
Position in the hierarchy	0.451	x	x	0.373
Appraisal of communication processes	0.352	x	x	x

Source: own study based on survey.

Employees' answers didn't indicate a considerable scope of correlations in the configuration of the compensation system. There were over a dozen surveyed components in the entire compensation configuration field, including:

- a) level of one's own salary, compensation level,
- b) average level of salary in company,
- c) internal structure of compensation,
- d) the spread of salary within the company and towards the labour market,
- e) evaluation of one's own level of compensation against market remuneration,
- f) evaluation of the attractiveness of one's own salary against the requirements of one's own job position,
- g) overall appraisal of motivating factors offered by the company (based on the Herzberg theory),
- h) overall appraisal of engagement level,
- i) evaluation of package salary,
- j) evaluation of the bonus part of one's salary,
- k) overall level of satisfaction with the motivation system,
- l) expectations for increases in one's own salary,
- m) decision criteria related to changes and salary increases,
- n) frequency of pay increases.

There were also several questions related to HRM policies, including: evaluation of the company's HRM quality, opinions about its appraisal system, communication

system, and some questions related to the level of the job position, date of birth (the generation) of the surveyed employee, or source of origin of the capital.

Table 3 shows that the higher one's salary, the higher one's sense of commitment, and of all three of its components. In accordance with the theoretical assumptions, the most sensitive scale is the affective source of attitudes. The level of correlation in this scope was one of the highest of all the correlation values in this survey (+0.518). The scales CC and NC came in with slightly lower correlation levels and overall level of commitment. This may indicate that remuneration significantly affects the overall feeling of attachment to an organisation. Affective commitment is also closely related to expectations for an increase in salary, and higher appraisal by the motivation system. This may confirm the theoretical foundations of Meyer and Allen's theory. Affective attachment is based on the positive evaluation of employees regarding their expectations about present and future conditions in a company. These incentives are felt as factors that shape the good and motivating conditions of work. Additionally, the AC scale (besides the overall level of commitment) was the only component of commitment correlated to other fields of HRM practices, such as the evaluation of the communication system or level of expenditure on training, or general appraisal of HRM quality in a given company. One of the most interesting aspects of the data is the inverse relationship among duration of the company and the level of affective commitment. The more experienced an employee, the less attached he or she tended to be, especially as regards the affective scope of attitudes. Could it be that the longer the employee works in a company, the more he or she lets go of illusions about his or her relations to the organisation?

Analysis of the data is my contribution to the cautious generalisation that there is a positive relationship between high quality personnel practices and a high level of perception of affective commitment. On the other hand, it would be highly risky to overstress the strong relationships between the components of the remuneration system and the source of the formation of the involvement of employees. In the case of the analysis of compensation structure, it appears that only the level of wages and wage expectations are correlates. Given the above findings, the next step in research on this issue may be a project that identifies the commitment of managers in the context of the motivation system.

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### **Zależności konfiguracji wynagrodzeń z poziomem i elementami zaangażowania pracowników – wnioski na podstawie skali zaangażowania organizacyjnego Allen i Meyera**

Głównym celem poznawczym niniejszego artykułu jest diagnoza i analiza zależności między poziomem, strukturą i kryteriami wynagrodzeń z komponentami poziomu zaangażowania w pracę. Opisywany temat jest istotnym problemem aplikacyjnym, szczególnie w dzisiejszym globalnym, międzynarodowym środowisku HRM. W pierwszej części tekstu zostały przedstawione teoretyczne założenia przeprowadzonych wyników badań: definicje i pojęcia związane z zaangażowaniem i strukturą systemu wynagrodzeń oraz podstawy teorii Allen i Meyera. W drugiej części zostały syntetycznie opisane zasadnicze wnioski związane z zależnościami pomiędzy elementami konfiguracji wynagrodzeń a komponentami przywiązania do pracy. Wyniki mają charakter ilościowy, a do ich uzyskania zastosowano analizę korelacji. Najważniejszą implikacją badań okazał się wynik wskazujący na niską korelację między zaangażowaniem a elementami systemu wynagrodzeń. Głównym czynnikiem, który jest współzależny z afektywnym komponentem zaangażowania, jest poziom wynagrodzenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wynagrodzenia, zaangażowanie w pracę, motywacja, koncepcja Allen i Meyera.