

A STUDY ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Organizational commitment is one of the most investigated constructs in organizational research. Organizational commitment has become a highly researched job attitude in recent years. One reason that commitment is so well studied is that the impact of commitment is associated with work outcomes such as turnover, absenteeism, performance, motivation, and job withdrawal behaviours. Organizational commitment has a strong association with intent to leave, employee retention, and job performance in many organization. Hence the basic purpose of this article is to provide a review of literature pertaining to organizational commitment research.

Keywords: *Turnover, Organizational Commitment, Affective organizational commitment, normative organizational commitment, Continuance organizational commitment.*

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY:

Organizational commitment among employees has been addressed in various scholarly works, including those by Riketta (2005), Fiorito et al. (2007), and Edwards and Peccei (2010). These scholars have taken different approaches to issues related to what causes differences in organizational commitment among employees and how these differences impact employee performance, recruitment, and retention.

The first conceptualization of organizational commitment traces back to Becker's (1960) side-bet theory. According to Becker (1960), workers enter into an unspoken contract with their organization in which exchanges, or —side-bets are made. These side bets are essentially investments that a worker makes in their organization. As time goes on, Becker (1960) contended that workers make progressively more side-bets in their organization. As these side-bets accrue, it becomes more difficult for a worker to leave their organization. Even though researchers have moved away from Becker's (1960) original conceptualization of organizational commitment, the link that he describes between commitment and turnover is still evident in modern theories. Additionally, most modern scales incorporate the side-bet component on some level in the form of continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The focus of this study is on organizational commitment. Organizational research dates back to the 1950s. Organizational theorists including Becker (1960), Etzioni (1965), Kanter (1968), and Saunders (1956). Seminal research on the concept of organizational commitment. These studies all suggested that organizational commitment is a large multivariate construct. Although it may elude precise definition, organizational commitment has been shown to be important to improving organizational effectiveness and retention. More recently, organizational commitment has been studied with respect to other concepts such as careers, organizations, norms, identification, morals, work, job involvement, security "side-bets," affect, psychological ownership, and so forth (Pierce & Geyer, 1991; Porter et al., 1974; Powell & Meyer, 2004; Liou & Cheng, 2008; Wagner, 2007). The majority of research in this area has been derived from the perspectives of organizational psychology and sociology and has focused on retention and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979; Price & Mueller, 1981).

2. ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT:

Meyer and Allen (1997) use the tri-dimensional model to conceptualise organisational commitment in three dimensions namely, affective, continuance and normative commitments. These dimensions describe the different ways of organisational commitment development and the implications for employees' behaviour.

2.1 Affective commitment dimension

The first dimension of organisational commitment in the model is affective commitment, which represents the individual's emotional attachment to the organisation. According to Meyer and Allen (1997) affective commitment is "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation". Organisational members who are committed to an organisation on an affective basis, continue working for the organisation because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Members who are committed on an affective level stay with the organisation because they view their personal employment relationship as congruent to the goals and values of the organisation (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Affective commitment is a work related attitude with positive feelings towards the organisation (Morrow, 1993). Sheldon (1971) also maintains that this type of attitude is "an orientation towards the organisation, which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation". Affective commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation (Mowday et al, 1982).

The strength of affective organisational commitment is influenced by the extent to which the individual's needs and expectations about the organisation are matched by their actual experience (Storey, 1995). Tetrick (1995) also describes affective commitment as "value rationality-based organisational commitment, which refers to the degree of value congruence between an organisational member and an organisation". The organisational commitment model of Meyer and Allen (1997) indicates that affective commitment is influenced by factors such as job challenge, role clarity, and goal clarity, and goal difficulty, receptiveness by management, peer cohesion, equity, personal importance, feedback, participation, and dependability. Affective commitment development involves identification and internalisation (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Individuals' affective attachment to their organisations is firstly based on identification with the desire to establish a rewarding relationship with an organisation. Secondly, through internalisation, this refers to congruent goals and values held by individuals and the organisation. In general, affective organisational commitment is concerned with the extent to which an individual identifies with the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

2.2 Continuance commitment dimension

The second dimension of the tri-dimensional model of organisational commitment is continuance commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) define continuance commitment as "awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation". It is calculative in nature because of the individual's Perception or weighing of costs and risks associated with leaving the current organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) further state that "employees whose primary link to the organisation is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so". This indicates the difference between continuance and affective commitment. The latter entails that individual's stay in the organisation because they want to. Continuance commitment can be regarded as an instrumental attachment to the organisation, where the individual's association with the organisation is based on an assessment of economic benefits gained (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Organisational members develop commitment to an organisation because of the positive extrinsic rewards obtained through the effort-bargain without identifying with the organisation's goals and values.

The strength of continuance commitment, which implies the need to stay, is determined by the perceived costs of leaving the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Best (1994) indicates that "continuance organisational commitment will therefore be the strongest when availability of alternatives are few and the number of investments are high". This argument supports the view that when given better alternatives, employees may leave the organisation.

Meyer et al (1990) also maintain that "accrued investments and poor employment alternatives tend to force individuals to maintain their line of action and are responsible for these individuals being committed because they need to". This implies that individuals stay in the organisation, because they are lured by other accumulated investments which they could lose, such as pension plans, seniority or organisation specific skills. The need to stay is "profit" associated with continued participation and termination of service is a "cost" associated with leaving. Tetrick (1995) support the profit notion by describing the concept continuance organisational commitment as "an exchange framework, whereby performance and loyalty are offered in return for material benefits and rewards. Therefore, in order to retain employees who are continuance committed, the organisation needs to give more attention and recognition to those element that boost the employee's morale to be affectively committed.

2.3 Normative commitment dimension

The last dimension of the organisational commitment model is normative commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) define normative commitment as "a feeling of obligation to continue employment". Internalised normative beliefs of duty and obligation make individuals obliged to sustain membership in the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). According to Meyer and Allen (1991) "employees with normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organisation". In terms of the normative dimension, the employees stay because they should do so or it is the proper thing to do. Wiener and Vardi (1980) describe normative commitment as "the work behaviour of individuals, guided by a sense of duty, obligation and loyalty towards the organisation".

Organisational members are committed to an organisation based on moral reasons (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999). The normative committed employee considers it morally right to stay in the organisation, regardless of how much status enhancement or satisfaction the organisation gives him or her over the years.

The strength of normative organisational commitment is influenced by accepted rules about reciprocal obligation between the organisation and its members (Suliman & Iles, 2000). The reciprocal obligation is based on the social exchange theory, which suggests that a person receiving a benefit is under a strong normative obligation or rule to repay the benefit in some way (McDonald & Makin, 2000). This implies that individuals often feel an obligation to repay the organisation for investing in them, for example through training and development.

Meyer and Allen (1991) argue that “this moral obligation arises either through the process of socialisation within the society or the organisation”. In either case it is based on a norm of reciprocity, in other words if the employee receives a benefit, it places him or her, or the organisation under the moral obligation to respond in kindness.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) defined organizational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. Other researchers have defined organizational commitment as the psychological attachment that individuals develop toward an organization (Fiorito et al., 2007; Wright & Kehoe, 2007). More recently, Somunoglu, Erdem, and Erdem (2012) defined organizational commitment as the degree to which an individual embraces the values and goals of an organization. The key notion in each of these definitions is that organizational commitment is a major variable that influences a number of organizational outcomes such as employee job performance and job satisfaction, personnel turnover, and organizational citizenship behaviour. Gelada, Dobson, and Gilbert (2006) indicated that organizational commitment should be of interest to organizations because there is a body of research that links levels of organizational commitment to a number of outcomes for an organization.

4. CONCLUSION

There are numerous studies on factors associated with organizational commitment. For example, distributive and procedural justice as well as conflict and trust are linked to organizational commitment (Lambert et al., 2007; Moya, 2003). Organizational commitment is also influenced by culture, gender, group diversity, commitment profiles, and organizational information (Cohen, 1992). Management communication, opportunity for learning, and work schedule flexibility are also associated with organizational commitment (Wilson & Laschinger, 1994).

Our intention in this article has been to provide an overview of the organisational commitment research by presenting the results of a systematic and comprehensive review of some articles. After reviewing these articles the following significant antecedents and outcomes of organisational commitment are determined. The fundamental antecedents are knowledge sharing, perceived justice, motivation, perceived organizational support and the outcomes of organisational commitment are job performance, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, turnover intentions and absenteeism.

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