

# Organizational Factors and Organizational Commitment: A Conceptual Framework

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## Abstract

*This paper endeavors to construct a conceptual model of organizational commitment in Saudi Arabian context. This conceptual model seeks out to illustrate the main organizational factors which may affect the organizational commitment attitude of the employees. This study discusses and reviews the existing and past literature regarding the organizational factors and their impact on organizational commitment attitude of the employees. This paper joins the current researchers that are endeavoring to explore the factors impacting organizational commitment.*

*Key words: Organizational commitment, procedural justice, distributive justice, organizational politics, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support.*

## Introduction

Research on commitment indicates commitment has significant effects on the efficiency of entities such as organizations, occupations, work groups, and so forth. Although the world is changing rapidly by the effects of developing global competition and information technology, which, in turn, are sometimes impacting and reshaping the

structures of organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1997). However, this does not mean that the organizations are disappearing. They already exist in the everyday life of humanity; and therefore, even in our contemporary era, it is important for organizations to understand well the behaviors of their employees in order to enhance organizational efficiency.

Every employer expects their employees to be committed to their respective organizations regardless of type of organization. In accordance with these facts, extant research also suggests that organizational commitment affects those outcomes that are significant to the efficiency and success of any organization. Hence, it is important to understand how significant an employees' commitment to their organizations is, and what factors affect an employees' commitment to their respective organizations. This paper aims at investigating the impact of organizational factors such as organizational justice, organizational politics, job satisfaction and perceived organizational support on organizational commitment.

## Concept of Organizational Commitment.

Organizational commitment, basically, states to an employee's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. The concept of commitment has been widely researched by scholars over the past few decades in a variety of domains, such as organizational behavior, industrial sociology, management, business administration, and public administration. It is commonly recognized however, that commitment is a sophisticated construct, which can readily be confused with similar constructs and it has thus been hard to draw general conclusions from the early related studies in this area. This construct of commitment is complex because it may embody several dimensions, such as attachment to one's work, one's commitment to one's career, one's work ethic, union, professional, or organizational commitment Ashforth&Mael, 1989; Buchanan, 1974; Pinder, 1998, p. 262). Therefore, it is important to identify what form of commitment is being measured in any study, as well as how it will be measured. While preceding studies have commonly measured organizational commitment, later studies have tended to focus on commitment to unions, employment, professions, and careers etc. respectively as well (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Why is organizational commitment important? As Simon (1991) aptly conveyed, all types of organizations ranging from those in the public sector to nonprofit and private organizations have the same aim, which is to spur their employees on to achieve their organizational goals (Simon, 1991, p. 28). A number of researchers have thus proposed that more committed employees in an

organization make better contributions to the organization when compared to the less committed employees (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, 1999). Extant research indicates a positive influence of organizational commitment to works' outcomes like effort, attend office on time, and continuing with the organization etc. (D. M. Randall, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Steers, 1977).

In this regard, the organizational commitment concept is one of the constructs considered to be highly significant in relation to organizational effectiveness; hence, an employee's organizational commitment and attitude is important in the realm of any organization that seeks to accomplish its goals. More to the point, not surprisingly, organizational commitment founded to be a significant variable in various studies as far as comprehending the behavior of employees in organizations (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979)).

The literature and idea of organizational commitment is very extensive, therefore, it is very difficult to come to any consensus as regards the definition of organizational commitment (Buchanan, 1974; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Over the course of conducting the previous body of studies, researchers have developed various definitions with respect to the concept of organizational commitment (Becker, 1960; Buchanan, 1974; Kanter, 1968; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Porter et al., 1974; Stebbins, 1970).

Basically, OC also can be explained by "the degree of loyalty a person holds for a particular employer" (Morrow, 1993; Pinder,

1998, p. 262;), or “loyalty to the organization” (Brooke Jr, 1986, p. 355). Buchanan viewed it as “a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to one’s role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth” (Buchanan, 1974, p. 533). Similarly, in terms of affective attachment to the organization, also according to Kanter “the attachment of an individual’s fund of affectivity and emotion to the group” (Kanter, 1968, p. 507).

In another conceptualization, Becker argued “commitment comes into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity” (Becker, 1960, p. 32). In this regard, the perception of employee’s regarding the costs involved in leaving the organization forms his/her attitude, since the advantages of the organization hinder the employee from switching the organization (e.g. pension, seniority). While Meyer and Allen (1997) used the term “continuance” to explain the type of commitment associated with the concept of costs and benefits, some researchers have used the term “calculative” to explain the construct (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). However, these concepts cannot be distinguished easily because they interact with each other, and each might be found to include elements of the other in the process of measurement. For example, if someone can get a job because this is seen to be a beneficial exchange in relationships (calculative OC), he/she may be willing to maintain his/her membership more

readily (attitudinal OC) (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

As to the most studied and cited conceptualization, Porter, Mowday and their associates defined commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” in their studies (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226; Porter et al., 1974, p. 604;). They also developed the Questionnaire for Organizational Commitment, which has been the most commonly used instrument to measure commitment in related research studies. The scale items are related to “the subject’s perceptions concerning his loyalty toward the organization, his willingness to exert a great deal of effort to achieve organizational goals, and his acceptance of the organization’s values” (Porter et al., 1974, p. 605).

Organizational commitment is mainly conceptualized by related factors, which include a strong trust in the organization’s goals, morals and achievement. And also willingness to apply extensive effort for the organization, and a have an aim to a part of the organization (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). In sum, commitment requires active involvement in the organization rather than any passive loyalty to it. As a result of increasing efforts of employees, this active involvement develops and contributes to the organization’s effectiveness and efficiency (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226).

According to Mowday et al., two trends are available for constructing the definition of commitment. First, several studies have

focused on those overt manifestations of commitment such as someone “bound by his actions” or “behaviors that exceed formal and/or normative expectations”, which actually aligns with a behavioral approach to commitment. According to the second approach, attitude is also a term to define the commitment by different researchers; therefore, some scholars contend “attitudinal commitment exists when the identity of the person is linked the organization” (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 225; Sheldon, 1971, p. 143) or “when the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent”(Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970, p. 176; Mowday et al., 1979, p. 225; ).

In the behavioral approach, the attitudinal consequences of a behavior are believed to predictably lead to a reoccurrence of that behavior in the future. It is obvious in this regard that organizations here would take advantage of ‘good’ employees, and by extension of their ‘good’ behaviors, which then further promotes the development of their ‘good’ attitudes and ‘good’ behaviors (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Accordingly, the presence of ‘good’ behaviors helps to create the quality of the work environment (Seven, 2012). This perspective has been paid less consideration by researchers when compared to the attitudinal approach.

In the attitudinal approach, the behaviors as a result of commitment are supposed to influence the antecedent conditions of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Various researchers examined the attitudinal approach

and developed their models from different perspectives. Meyer and Allen argue that their developed model describing the attitudinal construct of commitment includes an employees’ desires, needs, and willingness to keeping citizenship in the organization when compared to Mowday et al.’s model, which only focuses on values and goal congruence (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1974). In this respect, as maximum existing research and literature takes focus on the attitudinal aspect of commitment, this study will delve into the concepts of commitment from a strong attitudinal perspective.

### **Determinants of Organizational Commitment**

“The best that a social science can do is to explain about one-third of any type of economic or social behavior, leaving the other 66 percent un-explained”; furthermore, meta analyses of the main research topics such as leadership behavior, job satisfaction, absenteeism etc. suggest that 75% to 90% percent of the variance of behavior remains unexplained (Mitchell & Scott, 1987, p. 447). Sometimes it is difficult to convey behavioral explanations based on the robust scientific foundation in the field of administration (Mitchell & Scott, 1987). Accordingly, researchers in different disciplines proposes that decisions related to commitment attitudes and the consequences of these are usually the result of many different contributing factors (Naumann, 1993). Therefore, it can be argued that there are many other factors that affect organizational commitment and its outcomes.

In line with the concept of equity theory, this study will utilize the following concepts and develop a model to examine the determinants of organizational commitment.

### **Distributive Justice**

Distributive justice (allocation resources) relates to “the fairness of outcome distributions” (Miner, 2005, p. 152). Distributive justice advocates employing equity for allocating resources. In the literature, Brooke (1986) argues, “distributive justice has direct effects on satisfaction and commitment” (Brooke Jr, 1986, p. 352). By employing this framework, Brooke links equity theory to commitment in his study (J. E. Martin & Peterson, 1987). Since the perception of equity, or fair treatment, influences organizational commitment, employees’ fair sense of distributive justice should increase the level of commitment of employees to their organizations.

In organizations, it is mostly in the interest of employees to be able to answer questions such as “who is to receive how much, and how fairly are these outcomes distributed?” (Pinder, 1998, p. 286). In his Ethics treatise, Aristotle emphasized the disagreement of sides on the process of distribution of justice and aptly conceptualized that “the democrats are for freedom, oligarchs for wealth, other for nobleness of birth and the aristocratic party for virtue”, and thus it might be difficult on occasion to come to any consensus on any issue. Even over-rewarding may lead an employee to perceive an inequity. However, it

is obvious that employees have beliefs about the ratio of their inputs and outcomes as a result of their contributions in their workplaces; hence, justice related constructs are important in reducing inequities in any workplace (Miner, 2005).

Colquitt et al. (2001) examined 183 studies published between 1975 and 1999 to observe the association between dimensions of justice and several organizational outcomes. In this meta-analysis, Colquitt et al. (2001) studied 24 of the all available publications to describe the correlation between distributive justice and organizational commitment and found that distributive justice had high correlations with organizational commitment (Colquitt et al., 2001).

In accordance with these findings, Warner et al. (2005) also found that distributive justice had a positive and significant impact on the workers’ sense of organizational commitment. In their study, they examined a sample of full-time workers in the national setting. The results suggested that while procedural justice better predicts organizational commitment among workers for survivors or unaffected workers, distributive justice is the stronger predictor for victims of downsizing (Clay-Warner, Hegtvedt, & Roman, 2005). This study is important because the researchers conducted the research from a nationally representative sample of 2,502 full-time workers selected by random sampling from 1997 National Employment Survey. Therefore, this gives us the opportunity of for

generalizing the research finding in a national context.

In the context of equity theory, Hassan also examined a heterogeneous group of 181 middle and lower managers from the banking and finance, production and manufacturing, and service sectors in the setting of Malaysia. He found that distributive justice, if perceived as fair, made significant contributions to employees' organizational commitment and intent to leave (Hassan, 2002). These findings emphasize the fact that perceived distributive justice has an important effect on the attitude of organizational commitment among different work groups in the international context outside the US. Research focusing on the effects of justice dimensions on police organizations is considerably sparse. One of the rare studies, conducted among law enforcement officers at a large metropolitan police department and a large federal law enforcement agency by Frost (2006) found organizational justice factors influenced organizational commitment within police organizations. In contrast to the findings of Warner et al. (2005), the results also suggested that the distributive justice factor is a stronger predictor in explaining organizational commitment attitudes of officers on duty than either procedural justice and or the demographic characteristics of officers (Frost, 2006).

***Proposition 1: Distributive Justice is positively associated with organizational commitment***

### **Procedural justice**

In addition to distributive justice, the researchers have recently begun to study procedural justice, "the fairness of policies and procedures used to make decisions" within the framework of equity theory (Miner, 2005, p. 143). For example, Lowe and Vodanovich (1995) examined the effects of distributive and procedural justice on the construct of satisfaction and organizational commitment, and they found that although distributive justice is a stronger predictor than procedural justice, both of them explained 28 % of the variance in the normative organizational commitment (Lowe & Vodanovich, 1995). However, Sweeney and McFarlin found that procedural justice was more closely related to organizational – level outcomes such as organizational commitment rather than distributive justice (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993).

The manners in which the rewards and outcomes are distributed to employees are significant and as important as original decisions; hence, the justice and fairness of procedures in the workplace has become a topic of considerable interest to researchers (Pinder, 1998). Sometimes, employee's perceptions about the fairness of decision making process might mitigate perceptions about the unfair consequences of those decisions (Minton, Lewicki, & Sheppard, 1994). For instance, if an employee believes that the procedures are fair in the decision-making process, any unsatisfied distribution of outcomes such as a missed promotion will seem to the employee as appropriate. In short, when procedural justice is high, it can compensate for the adverse effects of negative

outcomes experienced by employees (Pinder, 1998).

Downsizing is a process of planned dropping of positions or jobs. It is important for an organization to convey reasonable explanations to its employees about the reasons for downsizing, either for the 'survivors' or for the victims and to try and support the victims in their future life. Brockner et al. examined three different groups in a field study to search for the interactive effects of procedural justice – in relation to outcome negativity. They found that perceived fairness in procedures kept employees committed to their organizations and assuaged the bitterness of any negative outcomes (Brockner et al., 1994).

Existing literature however, yields inconsistent findings in terms of the relationships that exist between procedural and distributive justice with organizational commitment. While some studies suggest a stronger relationship for procedural justice than for distributive justice, especially in institutions, others found opposing results (Colquitt et al., 2001; Lowe & Vodanovich, 1995; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993). Accordingly, findings also suggest inconsistent results in terms of the effects of procedural and distributive justice perceptions in law enforcement organizations.

For instance, Frost examined the effects of procedural and distributive justice among law enforcement officers at two large law enforcement organizations and found that while perceptions of procedural justice increased the commitment attitudes of young

officers to a greater degree, perceptions of distributive justice affected the commitment attitudes of older officers more significantly (Frost, 2006). All of the aforementioned findings suggest that although they are influenced by other factors, justice dimensions have significant effects on the commitment attitudes of officers; hence, it important to examine these factors.

***Proposition 2: Procedural justice is positively linked to organizational commitment***

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support (POS), which can be defined as an individual's perception of an organization's commitment to them as individuals is assumed to increase the employee's affective attachment to the organization. Some researchers have examined the effect of POS within the concept of equity theory as regards organizational citizenship (Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998). Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002) found that fairness was related to POS, and by extension POS was related to commitment, which suggested that POS leads to affective commitment. In doing so, they employed POS in the realm of equity theory framework (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001).

In this context, POS, which represents the employees' perception of the organization's commitment to them is of vital importance to employees since they concerned about the degree to which organizations value their inputs and care for their well-being. The degree of POS, if positive, is expected to

increase an employee's affective attachment to the organization, and by extension his or her work effort to fulfill the organization's goals (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Accordingly, Eisenberger et al. (1986) suggested that POS is a determinant of organizational commitment and developed a questionnaire to measure POS. Studies using this questionnaire in the literature have been found to have a reliability coefficient of .97, and the survey consists of 36 statements that represent both the opinions of employees and the expectancies of employees from the organization.

Existing research has consistently found positive relationship between organizational commitment and POS as well. Rhoades et al. (2001) for example examined the interrelationships among work experiences, POS and affective commitment in a diverse sample of 367 employees from various organizations and suggested that favorable work conditions (rewards, justice etc.) operate via POS to increase affective commitment. In another study, the aforementioned researchers conducted a meta-analysis to review existing research and summarized more than 70 POS studies in the literature. They found that POS was correlated to the outcomes favorable to the organization including affective commitment, performance, and reduced withdrawal behavior (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Eisenberger and his colleagues (1990) also conducted one of the preceding studies with respect to POS in the context of police organizations. They examined the relationship

between POS, and job responsibilities and organizational commitment. In the first study, the sample consisted of six occupations such as brokerage clerks, public high school teachers, and staff of a police department etc. Their results indicated that there was a highly consistent positive association between POS and employee attendance and job performance. In study 2, the sample involved manufacturing hourly-paid employees and managers working in a large steel plant. They found that POS was positively correlated with innovative supports of employees and affective attachment to the organization (Eisenberg, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990).

Beck and Wilson (1995) conducted a three-year longitudinal study to examine organizational commitment and factors affecting it in the settings of two large national police organizations, Australia and New Zealand. Their results indicated that "POS was the most important factor which influenced organizational commitment in both countries" (Beck & Wilson, 1995, p. 38). In a following study, Beck conducted an open-ended survey in a sample of 590 police officers in the institutions of Australian context. Beck's research findings supported the recommendations of the previous research with respect to organizational support and demonstrated that the expectancy of more organizational support was the foremost response selected by police officers (Beck, 1996).

Stowers (2010) examined the relationship between POS and organizational commitment

in the context of the army. Stower applied Eisenberger's questionnaire to a high number of respondents, totaling 1500 US Army reserve soldiers. The research findings indicated that POS was positively related to the affective commitment dimension of organizational commitment as in the context of police departments (Stowers, 2010). These various aforementioned research studies in different settings demonstrate the importance of POS in the development of the commitment attitudes of employees;

***Proposition3: There is a positive relationship between organizational commitment and POS***

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which people either like or dislike their jobs or job experiences (Locke, 1976). For purposes of non-experimental research, job satisfaction is the closest counterpart of positive feelings (Mueller & Lawler, 1999). Porter et al. (1974) suggest that "although we would expect commitment and satisfaction to be related, each construct appears to contribute unique information about the individual's relationship to the organization" (Porter et al., 1974, p. 608). Measuring job satisfaction is important for organizations since it provides the organization with feedback on how to reduce their employees' negative views.

Although some researchers have argued that organizational commitment leads to job satisfaction (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Bateman & Strasser, 1984), generally,

researchers suggest that job satisfaction is an antecedent to organizational commitment as applied to the conceptual models used in their studies (Mowday et al. 1982; Brook 1986). However, examining such a relationship is beyond the scope of this dissertation since this would require implementing a longitudinal data collection process in order to develop more generalizable implications, consequently, this proposed study will assume job satisfaction affects organizational commitment.

William and Hazer (1986) reviewed four causal models of previous studies to better understand the interrelationships of personal/organizational characteristics, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. They found support for a causal link from satisfaction to commitment, and furthermore, they proposed that personal and organizational characteristics including equity had an impact on only satisfaction directly, and affect commitment only indirectly by virtue of their impact on satisfaction and its subsequent impact on commitment (Williams & Hazer, 1986). By doing so, they added job satisfaction to the dimensions of conceptual framework of equity.

Meyer and his colleagues (2002) conducted a meta-analysis and assessed (155) independent samples consisting of 50,146 employees between 1985 and 2000. The research proposed to reveal the relations between three component of organizational commitment and variables defined as antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment. They classified 69 out of 155

studies as related to job satisfaction, and found that overall job satisfaction, using variables such as job involvement, occupational commitment, has the highest positive correlation with organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, existing literature suggests that although inconsistent findings exist, typically, job satisfaction is important in the context of understanding and managing an employee's behavior.

In his longitudinal comprehensive study, Baksh (2010) identified the antecedents and dimensions of the organizational commitment of managerial employees using data collected from four different organizations at two different time periods, three months apart. The results indicated that job satisfaction and organizational trust are the two independent variables predicting organizational commitment, and furthermore, pay equity, developmental opportunities and socialization tactics are both moderators and mediators of these factors (Baksh, 2010). Since the study was conducted in an Australian context, the results also indicate that job satisfaction is a significant element for all employees, regardless of their different settings.

As in other organizational research areas, job satisfaction studies are also sparse in police and military organizations. In one of those rare studies, Celik (2010) explored the reintegration and organizational commitment attitudes of returning peacekeepers to their national organizations, plus their job satisfaction attitudes toward their assignments

in the peacekeeping missions. The research sample consisted of 872 Turkish police peacekeepers that returned home from peacekeeping duties. Interestingly, the research findings indicated that job satisfaction was positively associated with both negative reintegration attitudes and organizational commitment (Celik, 2010).

***Proposition 4: there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment***

### **Organizational Politics**

Organizational politics can be defined as "behavior not formally sanctioned by the organization, which produces conflict and disharmony in the work environment by pitting individuals and/or groups against one another, or against the organization" (Ferris et al., 1996, p. 234). This conflict can arise as a result of a process of maximizing either short-term or long-term self-interests of individuals, groups, or organizations at the expense of others (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). Ferris et al. (1996) argued that the perception of employees as regards procedural justice or the perceived fairness of the procedures is related to perceived organizational politics (POP) (Ferris et al., 1996).

Lack of any systematic and objective basis with respect to organizational decisions might lead employees to have an idea that they work in a political work environment. They feel that decisions are made based on subjective measures and standards, which in turn, may lead them to experience stress and negative feelings with respect to the organization for

which they work. Subsequently, the existing literature suggests that one of the perceived organizational politics' outcomes is that employees show a lower sense of commitment to their organizations. For instance, one of the preceding studies conducted by Randall et al. (1999) on a field study including 128 participants working in private and public sectors indicated that organizational politics and organizational commitment, among several other outcome variables, were strongly related (M. L. Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999). Individuals thus perceive organizations, which are political as risky; hence, they consider these types of organization as places where they will not obtain rewards equal to their investments or work efforts. Accordingly, researchers have suggested that employees who have high levels of perceived organizational politics will show lower-levels of commitment to the organization. Ferris et al. (1989) proposed a model including four POPs outcomes, which are job satisfaction, job anxiety/stress, organizational withdrawal, and job involvement. In their examination of the recent studies in that decade, they found seven additional outcome variables and added this updated model (Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ammeter, 2002). Among these seven variables, organizational commitment was found to be one of the most studied consequences of POP in the literature. Further, Miller and his colleagues (2008) examined empirical studies in the literature related to the outcomes associated with POP and conducted a meta-analysis on 79

independent samples from 59 researches consisting of 25,059 participants. Research findings indicated that there was a high negative relationship between POP and organizational commitment in 25 independent samples, which included 7,237 participants (Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008). Typically, "politics are inherent in the very contextual fabric of organizations" (Ferris et al., 1996, p. 233).

***Proposition 5: There is a negative relationship between organizational commitment and perceived Organizational Politic.***

#### ***Conclusion***

The aim of this paper was to construct comprehensive conceptual model of organizational commitment in Saudi Arabian context. More broadly, this research examined the commitment attitudes of the employees.

All organizational management studies aim to provide an in-depth contribution to the knowledge base of the organizations researched; by doing so, they try to understand factors that influence the organizations' effectiveness and

success. However, most organizational management studies are not sufficiently comprehensive for explaining all facets of organizational behavior or the human decision-making process. Thus, a majority of these studies focus largely on one component of the organizational context in order to develop explanations for the overall organizational management process.

In line with these limitations, this study constructed a broader conceptual framework by including several organizational factors. The paper contributes to the body of knowledge by focusing on organizational factors in Saudi Arabian context. The conceptual framework might be useful for the top management of the in order to gain insight on the specific factors to focus in order to foster organizational commitment in employees.

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