Exploring a Common Theme of Organizational Commitment: A Way to Consesusness

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Abstract

The concept of Organizational Commitment has been critically analysed and evaluated by different authors yet number of different definitions of organizational commitment reveals the fact that no real consensus exists regarding the very construct of organizational commitment. It is high time to condense and streamline the distinct views on the concept of organizational commitment to arrive at some common inflexion. The present study is a humble attempt in this direction. This study conclude that despite the lack of consensus on various definitions, conceptualisations and measurements, a common theme is shared across all these deviations which may be presented in concurrent stage to bring them under a common parlance.

Introduction

Organizational commitment is a critical factor in understanding and explaining the work-related behaviour of employees in organizations. This is in part due to the vast number of works that have found relationships between organizational commitment and attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Porter et al., 1974, 1976; Koch and Steers, 1978; Angle and Perry, 1981).The concept has attracted more attention recently from organizational scientists, perhaps due to changes taking place in employment practices that have arisen from the international employment marketplace and increased alternatives for skilled employees in a global economy (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). The rationales for studying organizational commitment are "(a) variety of desirable outcomes including job satisfaction and performance, and to a decline in an employee's intention to leave (Cheng et al., 2003). (b) employee commitment is argued to be critical to contemporary organizational success (Pfeffer 1998).(c) employees with high levels of organizational commitment are more work-oriented than other employees (d) willing to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization (Van Scotter, 2000). In fact organizational Commitment links: as an antecedent of job, personal, organizational and economic characteristics, role states, socialization and leadership ; correlates with various outcome desirable attitudes like motivation, job involvement, job satisfaction; as a consequence to job performance, intention to leave, lateness and turnover.

Litrature Review

There is a proliferation of foci, types, definitions and measures of organizational commitment as a result of which organizational commitment has emerged as a multiple construct. The multi dimensional concept of organizational commitment was propounded by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) by proposing three independent foundations representing separate dimensions of organizational commitment: compliance; identification and internalization. The *compliance* centralise about the employee who accept the rules and influence of people in authority mainly to benefit from them, in terms of remuneration and promotion. *Identification* occurs when an employee feel close connection with his organization in order to maintain a self defined relationship as a consequence of desire for the affiliation with the organization. The component *internalization* takes place when there is value congruence between employees and the organization. However, this classification has been diluted by the fact that it has been difficult to distinguish between identification and internalization, because the measures tend to correlate highly with one another and to show similar patterns of correlations with measures of other variables (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991).

However, Penley and Gould in 1988 again propose three construct of organizational commitment, namely *moral commitment*, which they refers as the acceptance of and identification with organizational goals. *Calculative commitment* - which is based on employee's receiving inducement to match contribution and finally *alienative* commitment refers to attachment which results when an employee no longer perceives that there are rewards commensurate with investments; yet he remains with the organization due to environmental pressure.

Later, a review on organizational commitment research literature by Meyer and Allen (1991), argued that the psychological states reflected in the different definitions of organizational commitment are not mutually exclusive, corroborated by Dunham, Gruba and Castaneda (1994), they identified three types of organizational commitment: *affective, continuance and normative..*

They redesigned the classification of O'Reilly and Chatman, by introducing the concept of normative commitment and integrated the employee identification and internalization as affective component of commitment. While as compliance was coined as continuance commitment. They defined affective commitment as the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, involvement in, and enjoyment of membership of, the organization while continuance commitment conceptualized as the cost associated with leaving and benefit associated with

continued participation and normative commitment is related to the employee's feelings of obligation to remain with organization. Employees can experience these three components concurrently and to distinct degrees (Allen & Meyer, 1991).

Affective commitment

Affective commitment defined as employee emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization and its goals (Mayer and Allen, 1991). It results from and is induced by an individual and organizational value congruency. As a result, it becomes almost natural for the individual to become emotionally attached to and enjoy continuing membership in the organization (March & Simon, 1958; Hall et. al., 1970; O'Reily & Chatman, 1986, Meyer & Allen, 1984). Affective commitment also defines as the degree to which an individual is psychologically attracted to an employing organization through feelings such as loyalty, affection, belongingness (Lee et.al.2007). Affective commitment is the extent to which employees are involved with and have attached emotionally to their organizations because they identify with the goals and values of their organizations (Addae et al., 2008) and results as the affective bond an individual feels toward the organization, characterized by identification and involvement with the organization as well as enjoyment in being a member of the organization (Bergman, 2006). Individuals with a high level of affective commitment continue to work for an organization because they *want to* (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Affective commitment is willingness to exert high degree of efforts on behalf of an organization to achieve organizational goals beyond the passive loyalty of an employee. Operationally affective commitment may have three factors.

i. Individual and organizational value congruence characterizes as employee's belief and in acceptance of organizational goals and values.

ii. An obsession for helping organization to achieve its goals and

iii. A definite desire to maintain organizational membership out of choice.

Being cardinal in nature, Affective commitment is more productive than other types of commitment (normative & continuance) because what could be achieved through desire cannot be achieved through compulsion. Manager rated affective commitment has positive whereas, continuance commitment has negative relationship with the potential and profitability of employee (Shore,1995) corroborated by Meyer and Allen's findings that, employee who exhibited a high degree of continuance commitment were more likely to earn poor remarks from their supervisor on performance and potential. However, It has also been

demonstrated that it is the affective characteristics has greatest impact on both negative outcome variables such as absenteeism and turnover (Dunham et al., 1994; McFarlane-Shore & Wayne, 1993; Somers 1995) and associated with positive organizational outcomes as well such as improved retention, attendance, and citizen behaviours, self reports of performance, and objective measures of supervisor ratings of employees 'performance as well as indicators of improved operational costs and sales (Meyer & Allen,1997). Thus, Affective commitment, in particular, is seen as most beneficial to organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1997). That is the reason affective commitment remains the dominant measure in commitment studies (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall 1990).

Commitment has a number of antecedents, and antecedents to affective commitment include employee comfort and opportunity for self expression (Meyer and Allen, 1984). Organizations have to ensure that they have the quality of empathy and emotional intelligence to initiate affective commitment of their employee's towards the organization. This is justified by Steers (1977), and Mottaz, (1988), who identified factors which help create intrinsically rewarding situations for employees to be antecedents of affective commitment. These factors include such as perceived organizational support or dependence (the feeling that the organization considers what is in the best interest of employees when making decisions that affect employment conditions and work environment) and other job characteristics like task significance, autonomy, identity, skills variety and feedback concerning employee job performance, and the degree that employees are involved in the goal-setting and decision-making processes. In other words, Affective commitment develops mainly from positive work experiences, such as job satisfaction and organizational fairness, and is associated with desirable outcomes, such as higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviours, and lower levels of withdrawal behaviours like absenteeism and tardiness (Wasti, 2002).

Normative Commitment.

Buchko et al., (1998) defined normative commitment as an obligation to remain with an organization. It may be the consequence of an internalized norm, developed by the person prior to joining the organization through the values inherent or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization. It is based upon generally accepted rules about reciprocal obligations between organisations and their employees. Reciprocity is a mechanism underlying commitment (Powers, 2000) yet contingent. This reciprocity is based on "social exchange theory"', which suggests that a person receiving a benefit is under a strong "normative" (i.e. rule governed) obligation to repay it in some way. According to social exchange theory

individuals enter into a relationship with an organisation so as to maximise the benefits they obtain (Blau, 1964). Social exchange is based on an implicit agreement between employee and the employer, referred to as a psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). These psychological contracts are governed by the norm of reciprocity and have been shown to play an important role in determining organisational behaviour (Garrow, 2004). In fact, normative commitment has its antecedents in an employee's values as determined by their cultural, social and familial background and prior experiences. In more precise terms normative commitment could be based on organizational investment in an employee who then feels a moral obligation to stay with the organization, based on employee social or culture norms and believes that one should be loyal to the organization (Ali Mohammad Mosadeghar, 2008). Thus the receipt by the employee of something "over and above" what they might normally expect from their employer, places them under a social obligation to repay it in some way (McDonald and Makin, 2000).

The literature suggests that employees enhance their commitment towards the organisation when the organisation meets their expectations as regards fulfilment of their individual needs (Malhotra, 2007). Normative commitment is induced by a feeling of obligation to remain with an organization. Such a feeling of obligation often results from what Wiener (1982) characterized as "generalized value of loyalty and duty". This view of commitment holds that an individual demonstrates commitment behaviour solely because she or he believes it is the moral and right thing to do i.e. ethically imperative. Schwartz and Tessler (1972) identified personal norms as the factor responsible for what Wiener (1980) referred to as an internalized normative pressure, that makes organizational commitment a moral obligation because the individual feels he or she ought to do so. This feeling of moral obligation is measured by the extent to which a person feels that he or she should be loyal to his or her organization, make personal sacrifice to help it out and not criticize it (Wiener and Verdi 1980).

Continuous commitment

Continuance commitment is the perceived costs to the employee of leaving the organisation, and may include the loss of benefits or seniority status within the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1991). Employees with strong continuance commitment stay with the organisation out of self-interest (Alexander&Rani, 2010). Continuance commitment is an attachment to an organization based on an employee`s awareness of the costs associated with discontinuing membership (Reza, 2010). It is inertia of an employee to retain or towards the organizational membership and this inertia has mainly two antecedents:

investments (perceived sacrifice) and lack of alternatives. Remaining with an organization tends to result from the accumulation of side bets (investments) an individual has made in the organization which would be lost if the individual discontinued membership in the organization (Ko, 1996,). However, Mayer & Allen (1997) recognize that in order for there to be continuance commitment between employee and organization the employee must be able to identify alternatives. The sacrifice subcomponent has a stronger negative correlation with withdrawal cognition and turnover intention than does the alternatives subcomponent (Mayer & Stanley, 2002).

Quijano *et al.* (2000) defend the existence of only one attitudinal nature of commitment with four progressive levels of bonding with the organization: need, exchange, affective and value-based commitment. They integrated these levels into two general categories or types of commitment: instrumental (or calculative) and personal (or affective). Instrumental commitment is related to individual dependence on organizational rewards. This type has two kinds of bonds: exchange commitment, relationship based on extrinsic rewards; and need commitment, the need to keep the job. Personal commitment includes, to some degree, the personal internalization of organizational values and objectives. It can have two levels of intensity: affective commitment, the affective bond that the employee establishes with the organization that transcends the contractual relationship – there is a need for affiliation; and value-related commitment, acceptance of organizational values and objectives that are similar to or congruent with their own. We assume that these four levels of bond are dimensions of OC and we opted to use this terminology.

However the popular and most accepted view on organizational commitment is of Mayer and Allen (1991). Corroborated by Hall (1977), remarked that better abandon the term altogether and deal instead with set of concepts. Hence commitment can be considered as a multidimensional concept. Therefore, this study based on the *affective, normative and continuance commitment*

Despite the lack of consensus on the various definitions, conceptualisations and measurements, a common theme is shared across all these deviations, namely that, Organizational commitment is psychological orientation which governs the attitude and behaviour of an employee and characterize as the degree of loyalty towards an organization and its goals. This psychological orientation develops by consistent and spontaneous as employees think about their relationship with the organization (Lee, 2000).For the sake of convenience this process of development may be described in the following concurrent stages.

Psychological orientation I

This is the stage where employees accept the influence of people in authority and adopt the behaviour not because of value congruence but for specific reward such as monetary benefits like salary, compensation and other rewards. Over a period of time, as an employee grows older and experienced in a particular organizational, this behaviour continues to exist for intrinsic rewards and other non monetary rewards like relationship with co-workers, promotion, recognition etc. Since at this stage employee comply with the organizational orientations because of cost and benefits associated which make an employee calculative with the need to stay in organization. This state of affairs is defined as compliance by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986); Alienative commitment by Panley and Gould in 1988; Continuance commitment by Allen and Meyer (1990) and instrumental commitment by Quijano *et al.* (2000). At this stage employee stays with the organisation out of self-interest (Alexander&Rani, 2010).

Psychological orientation II

At this stage employee regards the role they have in the organization as the part of self identity and identify himself with the organization. Employee at this stage remains with the organization for the need and desire of afflation with organization and is guide by sense of duty and loyalty towards the organization. The nature of commitment at this level is termed as normative by Allen and Meyer (1990); identification component of organizational commitment by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986); Calculative commitment by Penley and Gould in 1988; the contractual relationship – need for affiliation by Quijano *et al.* (2000).

Psychological orientation III

At this stage employee transcends the contractual relationship as the consequence of value congruence between employee and the organization. Employee develop the sense of passion towards the organization hence retain the membership of organization because he wants to. The behavioural tendency at this stage relate closely to the affection towards the organization. Quijano *et al.* (2000) indicates this feeling as value related. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) argued it is the consequence of internalization of organizational values and objective. Panley and Gould in 1988 referred this type of commitment as acceptance of and identification of organizational goals. Allen and Meyer (1990) comprehensively conceptualize this form of commitment as emotional attachment towards the organization.

Conclusion & Discussion

From the above literature it may be concluded that organizational commitment, irrespective of conceptual differences in mind set or psychological state is characterize as (a) the role that employee have in the organization as the part of self identity and identify him with the organization. (b) going beyond a usual limit as the consequence of value congruence between employee and (c) accepting the influence of people in authority and adopts the behaviour for self interest. For the sake of convenience the multidimensional concept of organizational commitment may be grouped under three distinct yet related stages. However it may be noted that there is no conventional order of these stage as far as their occurrence is concern. This is mainly because the phenomenon of this concept is dynamic itself and posits contingency. The present literature indicates that organizational commitment components have three maxims. First, value congruence and voluntary, due to which *employees remain with an organization because they want to*. Second, compulsion, here *employees remain because they have to* and finally sense of obligation which characterizes *employees' remains in the organization because they feel they ought to*. Each of organizational commitment components contributes to strengthening the likelihood that the employee will remain in the organization, but the nature of the mind set differs from others (Atif & Rehman, 2011) and employees can experience these three components concurrently and to distinct degrees (Mayer & Allen 1991).

In fact, common to all of the three types of commitment is the view that commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implication for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization (Isaiah O. Ugboro, 2006). The employee experience affective feeling towards their organizational are assiduous. Employer may ensure affective commitment by adopting by adopting a sense of altruism. Brewer (1994) and Kratina (1990) concluded that bureaucratic practices often result in negative employee commitment while supportive work environments could result in greater commitment and involvement among employees.

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