ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

In the world wide organizational context, HRM is considered as decisive organizational resource that helps an organization to sustain its effectiveness and also it is critical for growth of today’s organization. The world around us is changing and changing very fast. The changes are visible in multiple forms and from multiple directions. The concern for quality, customer satisfaction, competitiveness of products, cost effectiveness, rising level of customer education and expectations have all created new challenges for Indian organizations. To meet these challenges, every organization in general needs competent people and requires every employee to be technologically competent, reliable, fast efficient, customer oriented and above all, enterprising as adding value to the company. The only choice the organization is left with is to develop commitment among their employees. In today’s competitive business securing organizational commitment among the employees can potentially offer dividends in performance. This article aims to develop understanding of organizational commitment among employees. It also explores key facets of commitment from theoretical perspectives. The exploration is based on defining organizational commitment, discussing its main antecedents and outcomes.

Keywords: Organizational Commitment, Demographic Variables, Psychological Variables.
INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment in recent years has become an important concept in organizational research and in the understanding of employees’ behavior in the workplace. It reflects the extent to which employees identify with an organization and are committed to its goals. Studies have highlighted that commitment has a great impact on the successful performance of an organization. This is because a highly committed employee will identify with the goals and values of the organization, has a stronger desire to belong to the organization. And if human resources are said to be an organization’s greatest assets, then committed human resources should be regarded as an organization’s competitive advantage.

The aim of this paper is to develop understanding of the organizational commitment of employees. Further, it is now a business buzzword, part of the language of human resource management. Although there are many aspects of organizational commitment that are contentious, key themes in commitment can be identified. The antecedents and outcomes of commitment are particularly important themes. This paper focuses on these.

First, in order to frame understanding of organizational commitment, the term itself needs to be defined. From the various definitions that exist, Porter et al.’s (1974, p. 604) enduring definition of organizational commitment is adopted in this article. That is: Organizational Commitment is defined as the strength of an individual’s identification and involvement with a particular organization, characterized by three factors:

(a) A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values;
(b) A willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization;
(c) A definite desire to maintain organizational membership.

This definition combines both a psychological and an attitudinal dimension, in the “belief and acceptance part,” with an applied dimension, in the “willingness to exert considerable effort” part. It also reflects typical definitions of commitment (Cannon, 2002). On the basis of Porter et al.’s (1974) definition, this paper discusses the theory on the main antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment, and then it discusses evidence of commitment in practice in a survey of commitment among managers in hotels. Finally, the way forward for encouraging organizational commitment among managers in hotels is discussed.

Antecedents of organizational commitment

Antecedents of organizational commitment are quite diverse in their nature and origins.” Because of the range of theories and diversity of antecedents categories are useful. Four categories of antecedents are influential: personal characteristics, job- or role-related characteristics, work experiences (Steers, 1977), and structural characteristics. Therefore, job/role characteristics and work experiences may be the most important characteristics in encouraging organizational commitment.

Job / role characteristics

The first set of antecedents to organizational commitment concern job characteristics and employee roles. Job scope, role conflict and role ambiguity are key elements of job/role- related characteristics. Each of these is outlined.
Many researchers contend that commitment is higher when employees have a broad job scope (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Steers, 1977; Stevens et al., 1978). The argument is that a wider range of duties and responsibilities means employees experience more challenges, hence become more committed. The notion of exchange is important here as the individual swaps their commitment for a satisfying work experience. Job scope, however, is finely balanced in that work overload, which is not by any means unusual in the hotel industry, especially for managers, has been found to have a negative effect on commitment (Stevens et al., 1978). Role conflict refers to uncertainty over which tasks have priority. It is consistently argued in the theory that a lack of practical evidence of this. Role ambiguity refers to how clearly job tasks are identified. Opinion on the effects of role ambiguity is apparently more divided than on role conflict. Some researchers believe that role ambiguity is not “a significant independent predictor of commitment” (Morris and Sherman, 1981, p. 519). In contrast, a study by Steers (1977) concluded that task identities were very significantly identified with commitment. In short, the theory on job/role characteristics suggests that: job scopes that allow some challenges but do not involve work overload are important to encouraging commitment; avoiding role conflict, and possibly role ambiguity, is important to generating.

Work Experience

The second set of characteristics that precede organizational commitment centre on individuals' work experiences. It has been argued that “commitment is influenced by the nature and quality of an employee's work experience during his or her tenure in an organization” (Steers, 1977, p. 47). Rewards, organizational dependability, employee importance and social involvement are key aspects of work experiences explored in turn here.

If employees receive rewards, say promotion, for example, after overcoming some obstacles, then commitment is likely to be higher than if the rewards are automatically received. Pay in the absolute amount and relative to others' pay is also important in rewards. Grusky found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that high levels of pay encourage higher levels of commitment.

Organizational dependability refers to “the extent to which employees feel the organization could be counted on to look after employee interests” Clearly, the higher the experience of dependability, the more positive the impact on commitment. Interpersonal trust is closely aligned to organizational dependability. If the work environment is not seen as friendly or co-operative, and the relationship between employees is generally not amicable, then individuals are unlikely to feel committed to the organization. Further, an individual's experiences of their co-workers’ commitment can have an effect on their own commitment. Where the majority of employees are highly committed; it is likely this will encourage individual commitment. The opposite effect, where generally low commitment will reduce individuals' commitment, is also likely. Thus building commitment can have a reinforcing effect.

The extent to which employees feel they are important to the organization is posited to be significant in its influence on commitment. As a result, individual experiences of people management and employee relations are important in securing and maintaining commitment. Social involvement too has been found to increase commitment Steers used the term “optional interaction” for the same characteristic, arguing that, if an employee makes personal friendships within, and personally associates with people in, an organization, then they will be more committed to the organization.
FACTORS AFFECTING ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

There are a variety of factors that shape organisational commitments. Such factors include the following: job-related factors; employment opportunities; personal characteristics; positive relationships; organizational structure; and management style.

1. **Job-related factors**
   
   Organizational commitment is an important job-related outcome at the individual level, which may have an impact on other job-related outcomes such as turnover, absenteeism, job effort, job role and performance or vice versa (Randall, 1990). The job role that is ambiguous may lead to lack of commitment to the organization and promotional opportunities can also enhance or diminish organizational commitment. Other job factors that could have an impact on commitment are the level of responsibility and autonomy. Baron and Greenberg (1990, p 174) state that “the higher the level of responsibility and autonomy connected with a given job, the lesser repetitive and more interesting it is, and the higher the level of commitment expressed by the person who fill it.

2. **Employment opportunities**
   
   The existence of employment opportunities can affect organizational commitment. Individuals who have a strong perception that they stand a chance of finding another job may become less committed to the organization as they ponder on such desirable alternatives. Where there is lack of other employment opportunities, there is a tendency of high level of organizational commitment. As a result, membership in the organization is based on continuance commitment, where employees are continuously calculating the risks of remaining and leaving.

3. **Personal characteristics**
   
   Organizational commitment can also be affected by the employee's personal characteristics such as age, years of service and gender (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Baron and Greenberg (1990, p 174) state that "older employees, those with tenure or seniority, and those who are satisfied with their own levels of work performance tend to report higher levels of organizational commitment than others". This implies that older people are seen to be more committed to the organization than other age groups. Another personal characteristic that may affect organizational commitment is associated with gender. However, it is argued that gender differences in commitment are due to different work characteristics and experiences that are linked to gender.

4. **Work environment**
   
   Another factor within the work environment that may affect organizational commitment is work practices in relation to recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, promotions and management style. Metcalfe and Dick in their study conclude that “the low level of organizational commitment of constables could be attributed to inappropriate selection and promotion which lead to the perpetuation of managerial style and behavior that has a negative effect on organizational commitment of subordinates”.

5. **Positive relationships**
   
   The organization as a workplace environment is built up of working relationships; one of which is the supervisory relationship. According to Randall (1990, p 370) “the supervisory relationship can affect organizational commitment either positively or negatively”. A positive
supervisory relationship depends on how work-related practices such as performance management are being implemented in the organization (Randall, 1990). When individuals find the supervisory relationship to be fair in its practices, they tend to be more committed to the organization.

Other work relationships, such as teams or groups, which exist in the workplace, can affect organizational commitment. Organizational members can demonstrate commitment when they are able to find value through work relationships. Brooke, Russell and Price (1988, p 141) state that “employee commitment and attachment to the organization can be increased through efforts made to improve the organizations social atmosphere and sense of purpose”. In essence, when work relationships reflect mutual respect to individuals, they are able to commit themselves to the organization.

6. Organizational structure

Organizational structure plays an important role in organizational commitment. Bureaucratic structures tend to have a negative effect on organizational commitment. Some of the research indicates that "the removal of bureaucratic barriers and the creation of more flexible structure are more likely to contribute to the enhancement of employee commitment both in terms of their loyalty and attachment to the organization". The management can increase the level of commitment by providing the employees with greater direction and influence Management style. It is stated by that "the answer to the question of employee commitment, morale, loyalty and attachment may consist not only in providing motivators, but also to remove demotivators such as styles of management not suited to their context and to contemporary employee aspirations". A management style that encourages employee involvement can help to satisfy employee's desire for empowerment and demand for a commitment to organizational goals. “More flexible and participatory management styles can strongly and positively enhance organizational commitment”. Organizations need to ensure that their management strategies are aimed at improving employee commitment rather than compliance.

MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Meyer and Allen (1997, p 106) use the tri-dimensional model to conceptualize organizational commitment in three dimensions namely, affective, continuance and normative commitments. These dimensions describe the different ways of organizational commitment development and the implications for employees’ behavior.

1. Affective Commitment

Affective Commitment is defined as the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization. Meyer and Allen pegged Affective Commitment as the “desire” component of organizational commitment. An employee who is affectively committed strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization. This employee commits to the organization because he/she "wants to". This commitment can be influenced by many different demographic characteristics: age, tenure, sex, and education but these influences are neither strong nor consistent. The problem with these characteristics is that while they can be seen, they cannot be clearly defined. Meyer and Allen gave this example that “positive relationships between tenure and commitment maybe due to tenure-related differences in job status and quality.
2. **Continuance Commitment**

Continuance Commitment is the “need” component or the gains verses losses of working in an organization. “Side bets,” or investments, are the gains and losses that may occur should an individual stay or leave an organization. An individual may commit to the organization because he/she perceives a high cost of losing organizational membership. Things like economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) would be costs of losing organizational membership. But an individual doesn’t see the positive costs as enough to stay with an organization they must also take into account the availability of alternatives (such as another organization), disrupt personal relationships, and other “side bets” that would be incurred from leaving their organization.

3. **Normative Commitment**

The individual commits to and remains with an organization because of feelings of obligation, the last component of organizational commitment. These feelings may derive from a strain on an individual before and after joining an organization. For example, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels a 'moral' obligation to put forth effort on the job and stay with the organization to 'repay the debt.' It may also reflect an internalized norm, developed before the person joins the organization through family or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization. The employee stays with the organization because he/she 'ought to'. But generally if an individual invest a great deal they will receive “advanced rewards.”

**CONCLUSION**

Organizations are continuously faced with the demand and supply challenges of the changing market. In order for the organization to adapt to the intense competition in the market place and the rapid changes in technology, it requires organizational members have to be internally committed. The organization is then faced with a challenge of managing its employees’ commitment throughout, to ensure sustainability. This article described the concept organizational commitment based on the previous researches. Herewith the second specific aim of the literature review, namely to explore the concept organizational commitment was met by focusing on the development, effects and management of the concept in detail.

**REFERENCES**


