Organisational Commitment: Revisited

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Researchers have worked on Organizational Commitment (OC) with a variety of dimensions and perspectives. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the contributions made in the last six decades to understand how OC should be viewed in an organization to make employees committed to their work. Initially the concepts of job involvement, motivation etc. were used in social systems in order to formulate constructs, definitions and interpretations in the industrial scenario; the commitment of an employee could be observed as emerged in the interpretation of the studies. OC in early studies was seen as identification with individuals' or organization's values or goals. It was also seen as the surrender leading to a total involvement with the higher system of authority. In sixties and seventies, a broader concept of commitment wherein employees' commitment not only to norms but also to other aspects of social systems was put forth. While eighties and nineties, a period of extensive stress on OC, witnessed a bifurcation as attitudinal and behavioral commitments. Presently it is being studied with a psychological frame of reference of employees' characteristics and their relationship with organizational factors leading to the commitment. This paper is an attempt to bring the various views, dimensions and perspectives studied in the last six decade or so together to arrive at a comprehensive view of OC for further research.

Globalization, the opening up of the economy, has brought out a change in the business scenario. Initially it was carried out within the small boundaries of cities or the country; but now the whole world has turned into a global village thus widening the world boundaries. This has led to a tremendous competition resulting in the adoption of modern technology for mass production and disciplined enforcement of quality systems and work culture so as to keep the customers delighted and also to ensure sustained profitability. With acquisitions and mergers, the culture of the organizations seen as per the perceptions of the employees also plays' a role in OC. Business Organizations have been sharpening their competitive edge by reducing the manpower, flattening the hierarchical system and going for multiskilling to get the best of the employees remaining in the organization and by adopting all modern management and quality techniques. Business organizations must develop a psychological bond between employees and the organization in the form of OC in order to create total dedication of their manpower towards their goals, interests and values,

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) defined Organizational Commitment (OC) as a multidimensional concept embracing an

employee's desire to remain in an organization, willingness to exert effort on its behalf, and belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization. A committed employee is described as the one who stays with the organization through thick and thin, attends work regularly, puts in a full day's work, protects company's assets, shares company's goals, etc.

The relationship between an organization and its employees has been studied primarily in the form of job involvement, loyalty, motivation, etc. and was used in different contexts to explain the terminology. The term commitment could be referred to as a force that binds a person towards an object, a goal or a role and named after it. In the beginning, commitment was studied in social and religious organizations. Later on, with the increase in strained relationships between employees and their organization, the concept of commitment was applied in the industry considering labor as the important factor for the continuous economic development. Commitment involves both performance and acceptance of behaviors appropriate to an industrial way of life. Over the last sixty years, many researchers have given different constructs, definitions, meanings and interpretations of the term OC. This paper is an effort to review the development of OC in the last six decades chronologically.

Researchers have studied the relationship between an employee and the organization with different perspectives. Cantril (1941) discussed the concept of institutionalized awe to meet individuals' need for a meaning. Tolman (1943) while describing the development of psychological attachment suggested the process of identification, which meant an attachment to an individual or organization based on values or goals.

Hartman (1952) explained the concept of 'surrender', which involves attaching a person's prerogative for decision making to a greater power, leading to a total involvement with the higher system of authority. This provides a sense of correctness, certainty and conviction that promote moral-evaluative commitment and surrender to collective authority. Blumer (1953) explained the term 'communion' and defined the membership of a social movement as a collectivity of individuals characterized by 'we' feeling.

Becker and Carper (1956) studied commitment, mainly in professions and found that professional organizations develop commitment to their values by a lengthy socialization period and that adequate attention has not been paid to the development of OC. Festinger (1957) predicted that by and large persons who have a central life interest in work (CLI) will show a higher level of OC than those who have a CLI away from work. CLI is a person's expressed performance for doing their activities in a given organizational setting. Turner and Killian (1957) after studying the function that communion processes serve for group cohesion observed that a social movement must weld members into a group creating a strong in-group sense and eagerness for fellowship of the movement, which in turn provides them determination to continue in the face of obstacles.

Kelman (1958), while investigating into the grounds for attitudinal change related commitment to social roles like cognitive continuance commitment, observed that people are likely to be influenced in three ways, firstly as compliance or exchange, secondly as identification or affiliation and thirdly through internalization or value congruence. Compliance occurs when attitudes and behaviors act as a source to gain specific rewards and not because of shared beliefs. When an individual accepts influence to set up a satisfying relationship, identification occurs and when the person's values and the organization's values are the same, internalization is stated to occur. The person may feel proud to be part of a group respecting its values and accomplishments. These concepts gave a distinct foundation to the

concept of OC in the subsequent years. March and Simon (1958) observed that attitudinal commitment often encompasses an exchange relationship in which individuals attach themselves to the organization in return for rewards or payments from it. While studying OC, Orzack (1959) focused on the values of the organizational employees.

Becker (1960) viewed commitment as a tendency to engage in activity resulting from his recognition of the cost or lost side bets associated with the discontinuance of that activity. The study also described commitment as the unanticipated involvement of other sources of rewards or other aspects of a person.

Thus it can be concluded that in this decade commitment was viewed as more relevant to industries than to other social systems. Researches by and large focused on the supremacy of organization and individual's attitudinal inclination towards it due to shared beliefs, values or rewards.

Parsons and Shils (1962), in their social action theory, discussed the concept of commitment in a broader sense, wherein actors become committed not only to norms but also to different aspects of social systems. On the basis of social action theory they proposed that cognitive, cathectic and evaluative orientations form the personality system axes of commitment and stated that each of these personal orientations would seem to be able to support a particular social system area. Cognitive-continuance commitment is commitment to social roles or to positions in social systems and no evaluation is attached to the role. Cathectic-cohesion commitment is attachment to social relationship and does not have internal moral imperatives attached to them. Evaluative—control commitment is commitment to norms, values and inner convictions that make an individual obligated. These were found to be similar to Kelman's (1958) terms, "compliance", "identification" and "internalization".

The terms 'investment' and 'sacrifice' got evolved during this period. Investment is a process whereby the individual gains a stake in the organization, commutes profits to it making him to continue in the organization to get the returns. Sacrifice seeks members to give up something as a price of membership and their motivation to remain as participants increase.

Protestant work- ethic endorsement defined by Blood (1969) is the belief that hard work is intrinsically good and an end to itself. Personal worth of one's moral stature is to be gauged on the willingness to work hard. One's job, career, organization or union is stated to be merely a backdrop in which to exert high levels of effort. The psychological literature contains ample evidence that classical conditioning influences affective reactions to a wide variety of stimuli (Byrne & Clore, 1970). Hall, Schneider and Nygren (1970) concluded that OC involves the individuals' incorporation of organizational values and goals into his own identity. Brown (1969) and Patchen (1970) studied employees of large public bureaucracies and determined that job characteristics like opportunities for achievement, participation in decisions etc., were correlated with identification.

During eighties great strides in the construct clarity and definition of OC was observed. A distinction was also made between attitudinal and behavioral commitment. Greenhaus (1971) defined a related concept career salience as the importance of work and a career in one's total life. It is one of the few commitment concepts that attempt to capture the notion of devotion to a craft, occupation or profession apart from any specific work environment over an extended period of time. Kiesler (1971) found considerable support for behavioral commitment predictors in laboratory settings and concluded that individuals who freely choose a course of action are likely to be more committed to it. Sheldon (1971) described commitment as a positive evaluation of the

organization and the intention to work towards its goals. Commitment in Sheldon's study was seen as an affective orientation and defined commitment as an attitude or an orientation towards the organization, which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organization and found that social involvements increase the commitment of the professionally competent men to the organization, reinforcing the effect of investments.

Gupta, Sharma and Rahman (1971) made a study on scientists and their commitment to organization's goals with the main operative variables as recognition, professional freedom and researcher-supervisor relationship. The study revealed that scientists with less experience, those with high recognition are highly committed, the freedom of scientists to select the field of research work does not seem to influence the commitment whereas an increment in the harmony of researcher-supervisor relationships shows an increment in the degree of commitment.

Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) viewed commitment as cost-based and defined it as a structural phenomenon which occurs as a result of individual-organizational transactions and alterations in side bets or investments over time furthering Becker's (1960) views and suggested that the lack of extensive examination of OC of professionals might be due to the difficulty of making that concept operational and of deriving indexes amenable to empirical testing and validation. Hrebiniak and Alutto (1973) considered commitment as the unwillingness to leave the organization for increments in pay, status or professional freedom or for greater colleagueal friendship.

Buchanan (1974) viewed commitment as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth. Feldman (1976) stated that full commitment of labor force is important for continuous economic development. Commitment there involved both performance and acceptance of behavior appropriate to an industrial way of life. Hall (1976) observed that the initial period of employment in an organization is critical and important in shaping employees' subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Steers (1977) studied attitudinal commitment by the measurement of commitment or the mindset along with the variables presumed to be its antecedents or consequences. The study was carried out with the objective to prove that a high level of commitment was associated with desirable outcomes such as lower absenteeism, turnover and higher productivity. Contribution of the causal factors like personal characteristics and situational conditions to the development of higher commitment was also studied.

Attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization mainly as a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own goals and values are congruent with those of the organization. Here, commitment is developed prospectively. Prospective view is individual's psychological bond as a function of his involvement, loyalty and belief in its values.

Salancik (1977) explained the behavioral approach to commitment wherein overt manifestations of commitment are shown representing sunk costs in the organization where individuals forego alternative courses of action and chose to link themselves to the organization. Behavioral commitment relates to the process by which individuals become locked into an organization and how they deal with the problem. Marsh and Mannari (1977) found that the committed employee considers it morally right to stay in the company, regardless of how much status enhancement or satisfaction the firm gives him over the years. Wiener and Gechman (1977) opined that commitment behaviors are socially accepted behaviors that exceed formal and/ or normative expectations relevant to the object of commitment.

Sinha (1977) in a survey of Indian organizations found that a large percentage of studies on OC considered commitment of managers to be one of the important issues facing organizations. Punekar and Haribabu (1978) noted that adequate study has not been done on value orientation and suggested that commitment is basically a value orientation of the individual or group and comprises of values namely 'performance value' and 'discipline value'.

Kidron (1978), while investigating the relationship between OC and work values, discussed the protestant ethic of the worker and commitment to the organization. In the study a distinction between moral and calculative commitments was observed indicating that work values are related more to moral than calculative commitment.

Hofstede (1980) found that affective commitment is the most desirable form of commitment but ethnocentric and normative commitments might be better predictors than affective commitment in collectivist cultures that emphasize strong social ties (and obligations) and in cultures characterized by uncertainty avoidance where loyalty is considered a virtue. Wiener and Vardi (1980) observed the presence of personal sacrifice and lack of alternatives for the development of OC.

Welsch and La Van (1981) in their study on inter-relationship between OC and job characteristics, job satisfaction, professional behavior and organizational climate concluded that OC is an important evaluation measure of the level of attachment between the employee and the employing organization. Amsa and Punekar (1981) stated that socialization causes commitment values and these values cause work commitment. The values can be termed as one of the strong determinants of a person's behavior and the value-based commitment model can explain the behavior of a committed person more effectively than most other models proposed in terms of job rewards and organizational

culture. Padaki and Gandhi (1981) reported positive relation between organizational climate and identification with the organization.

Wiener (1982) described commitment as the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational interests. Distinguishing between normative and instrumental processes as behavioral determinants a model of work attitudes serves as a framework within which commitment is conceptualized. Organizational identification and generalized values of loyalty and duty are viewed as immediate determinants. Thus commitment can be influenced by both personal dispositions and organizational interventions. He also identified three qualitatively different types of loyalty like 'blind loyalty', 'moral obligation', and 'balanced commitment'. Cascio (1982) associated turnover with high cost and emphasized that focusing exclusively on turnover is not correct and what the employees do on the job is actually important.

Morrow (1983) developed a facet design describing the theoretical and empirical inter relationships among five forms of work commitment (Protestant work ethic, Career salience, Job involvement, Organizational commitment and Union commitment). The analysis revealed that these concepts are partially redundant and insufficiently distinct and warrant continued separation. Study emphasized that though OC itself is a multi-dimensional construct but is distinct from other forms of work place commitments. Fukami and Larson (1984) in their study suggested that OC might have an impact on job performance, absenteeism and turnover.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) focused on the underlying dimensions of psychological attachment which could be predicated on compliance, identification and internalization. Although the term commitment is broadly used to refer to antecedents and consequences as well as the process of

becoming attached and the state of attachment itself, it is the psychological attachment that seems to be the construct of common interest.

Randall (1987) in a study concluded that blind commitment could be damaging. Colarelli, Dean and Konstans (1987) stated that commitment is positively related to job challenge, degree of autonomy and variety of skills the employee uses. Sharma (1987) found scope of advancement, grievance handling, participative management, objectivity and rationality, recognition and appreciation, safety and security, and training and education to be significantly correlated with OC.

Koys (1988) found that HRM practices were more likely to influence employees' commitment when they were seen as motivated by a concern for employees. Balaji (1988) viewed commitment as an affective attachment to the organization. Singh (1988) found grievance, safety and security to be positively related to commitment. Folger and Konovsky (1989) stated that commitment is more closely related to perceptions of fair treatment than to satisfaction with personal outcomes. Romzek (1989) while studying the effect of employee commitment on individual's non-work and career satisfactions concluded that the individual consequences of employee commitment are positive and supported the belief that psychological attachment to a work organization yields personal benefits for individuals. Putti, Aryee and Liang (1989) studying the relationship between communication relationship satisfaction (CRS) and OC found that top management relationships relate more closely to OC than either global CRS or supervisory relationship.

Singh (1990) found that supportive leadership, professional management, group cohesiveness and standardization have been found to be positively related to OC. The study also reported commitment to be negatively related to employees' perception of inequality.

Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly (1990) argued that commitment reflects the psychological bond that the employee has to the organization but the nature of bond can differ. The psychological bond between an employee and the organization can take three distinct forms labeled as compliance, identification and internalization which is in congruence with Kelman's (1958) work on attitude and behavioral changes.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) supported two-dimensional conceptualization of OC using active commitment characterized by involvement and identification, and passive commitment characterized by intention to stay. The study also acknowledged links between commitment and employee behaviors that might be moderated by situational factors. It was also concluded that education level has a low negative correlation with OC, while age shows a medium positive correlation whereas women show higher OC than men.

Randall, Fedor and Longnecker (1990) in a study of the complexity of the OC construct and respondent generated behavioral manifestations of the job attitude, found that each dimension of commitment relates in varying forms to work outcomes.

Thus, the decade witnessed some important developments with respect to industrial approach of job, profession and organizational climate factors and psychological approach concentrating on normative and instrumental beliefs. Facet analysis of work commitment and concept of different foci of commitments were some important developments. The attitudinal and behavioral approaches were also formulated. Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a three-component model of commitment measuring affective, continuance and normative commitment components.

O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) argued that commitment reflects the

psychological bond that ties the employees to the organization, but the nature of bond can differ and combined the 'identification' and 'internalization' to explain normative commitment more or less similar closely to affective commitment discussed by Allen and Meyer (1990). In the development of OC, there is a potential source of confusion, where different labels like calculative commitment and continuance commitment are used to describe same construct. Similarly, same labels are used to describe different constructs as the normative commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) found that commitment has been viewed by researchers as reflecting an affective orientation toward the organization, recognition of costs associated with leaving the organization and a moral obligation to remain with the organization. In order to acknowledge these differences, they gave different labels addressing them as affective, continuance and normative natures of commitment. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with the organization and normative commitment is stated to reflect a feeling of obligation to continue employment. The study also suggested that affective, continuance and normative commitments should be considered as components rather than types of commitment as the employee's relationship with an organization could reflect varying degrees of all the three. Sharma and Singh (1991) in a comparative study of one public sector and another private sector organization in Western India to find the factors involving affective commitment of Indian managers, observed that situational factors such as job characteristics and various dimensions of organizational climate have a decisive role to play in influencing OC in conjunction with certain personal attributes.

Becker (1992) preferring the multi-constituency approach showed that employees' commitment to top management, supervisors and workgroups contributed significantly beyond OC in the prediction of certain consequences like intention to quit, prosocial behaviors etc. Grover (1992) in a study of the relation between the level of education and professional commitment and behavior found that attitudinal commitment to the profession did not differ significantly among nurses holding different levels of education. Bourantas and Papalexandris (1992) studied variables affecting OC in a comparative study of private versus publicly owned organizations in Greece and found that OC among managers in the public sector was lower than that of private sector. The study revealed that both the type and size of an enterprise as well as the organization culture could affect the OC of managers. Vanderberg and Lance (1992) carried out a longitudinal study of the causal relationship between OC and job satisfaction. The results supported the 'commitment causes job satisfaction model'. Brockner (1992) found evidence for escalation of commitment to failing course of action as decision makers have shown to persist in a course of action even when they have objective evidence that it is not prudent to do so.

Becker and Billings (1993) discussed OC in terms of four dominant profiles - 'locally committed', 'globally committed', 'committed' and 'uncommitted'. Newman and Krzystofiak (1993) studied the negative impact of mergers/acquisitions and found in part to be because of misinformation. Cameron (1994) studied the effects of lay-off and downsizing on OC and found that the results were based on the perception of the fairness of lay off. Hunt and Morgan (1994) suggested that commitment to specific constituencies like top management, supervisors, workers etc actually contribute to employees' OC. Dunham, Grube and Castaneda (1994) found

that perceived job characteristics, organizational dependability and participatory management contribute to create favorable situations conducive to the development of affective commitment.

McCaul, Hinsz and McCaul (1995) found that the OC could be conceptualized as employee's global attitude towards the organization. The study supported the view that attitudinal commitment is related to retention and behavioral commitment is related to performance. Huselid (1995) and MacDuffic (1995) studied the effects of HRM systems on OC.Mignerey, Rubin and Gordon (1995), and Ashforth and Saks (1996) studied the effects of socialization and training on OC. It is suggested that commitment can be affected by training experiences, which in turn can influence employee's motivation for future training. Biswas and Balaji (1996) in a study of belief in co-operative values and employee attitudes found that value congruence was positively related to behavioral intentions and satisfaction measures but not to OC measure. The direction of value congruence is more important in reflecting positive employee attitude. Lund and Barker (2004) conducted a study on OC of expatriate managers in China. OC was found to be increased most likely as the expatriates improve their managerial effectiveness through promoting organizational and cultural harmony, maintaining supportive spousal/familial relationships within the organization.

Rai and Sinha (2000) found that the supervisors' transformational style has significant relationship with OC and the facilitating climate enhances the strength of association of leadership with OC.

Camilleri (2002) found that higher the position tenure in the organization, higher will be the degree of overall OC, continuance and normative commitments. The study also concluded that the degree of OC is dependent on the personality of the individual, level of ambiguity, conflict and overload role states.

Vashishta and Mishra (2004) studied the relative contribution of social support and occupational stress to OC of supervisors and reported that social support and occupational stress significantly predict the degree of OC.

Gautam, Dick and Wagner (2004) studied the conceptual differences between OC and identification. Identification was found to be distinguishable from four related commitment concepts (i.e., affective, continuance, normative and attitudinal commitments).

Muthuveloo and Rose (2005) in a study on antecedents and outcomes of OC among Malaysian engineers focusing on the three components of OC like affective, continuance and normative commitments and concluded that positive employee perception enhances OC, which in turn leads to positive organizational outcomes. Vanitha, Vasanthi, Kamalanabhan and Sivasubramanian (2006) in a study of sex impact on OC and stress among Information Technology (IT) professionals failed to find any significant difference between male and female IT professionals.

Smeenk, Eisinga Teelken and Dooewaard (2006) in their study on the effects of HRM practices and antecedents on organizational commitment among university employees observed that in the separatist faculty decentralization, compensation, training/development, positional tenure and career mobility have significant effects. Age, organizational tenure, level of autonomy, working hours, social involvement and personal importance significantly affects the employees' organizational commitment in the hegemonist faculty. Participation, social interactions and job level are factors that are important in both faculties. The findings indicate that the set of factors affecting the organizational commitment of employees differs between the separatist and hegemonist faculties.

Conclusion

OC studies though indicate strong evidence in favor of the psychological relationship of an employee with the organization, there is still a need for further corroborative studies across cultures as the various dimensions studied indicate a strong leaning towards culture and thus, influence the work pattern in a country specific organization. Even the multinationals experience such difference in commitment.

There is also a need to standardize terminologies reflecting OC and the study of antecedents and consequences as well as the processes requires a different perspective keeping in mind the impact of human resources management measures to improve both the employee and the organization for a better OC. Thus, Organizational Commitment (OC) in a broader sense can be viewed as an employees' psychological wedding to the organization i.e. an employee continue to serve the same organization throughout his work life.

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