

Determinants of Organizational Commitment among Public Hospital in Al- Qassim Region Employees in Saudi Arabia

Preparing

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Abstract:

The main objective of this research is to explore the effect of personal factors and job characteristics on the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Al-Qassim Region employees in Saudi Arabia. The determinants of personal characteristics included age, nationality, marital status, education, experience and income. Whereas the job characteristics included such factors as skill variety, task identity, friendship opportunities, feedback and autonomy. The results of this study show that skill variety and task identity (job characteristics) were the best predictors of commitment; these were followed by education and income (personal characteristics).

In the past, organizational commitment has been a major subject among researchers in the field of organizational behavior in Western countries, America and Japan. For example, Becker and Carper (1956) and Becker (1960) studied professional commitment and Kornhauser (1962) examined commitment in political organizations. These studies and others focused on the level of organizational commitment and its influence on the outcomes of organizations. In 1961, Etzion

argued that utilitarian organizations seek the commitment of their employees, even if this commitment accords with an exchanged utilities account between the employees and the organizations (Sheldon, 1971). Becker and Carper (1956), in research on graduate students in Physiology, Philosophy and Mechanical Engineering departments of a university, discovered that the identification with a profession was related to three types of experience:

- (1) investments (time spent on the graduate program);
- (2) involvement with their friends and teachers;
- (3) development in terms of technical interests and skills in their field.

In this research, studies which focus on levels of organizational commitment and the factors that affect this will be examined in detail. There is also a small number of Arabian studies from Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia which concern this field.

In general, organizational commitment has received a great deal of attention in the literature on

organizational psychology. The findings of such research are not always consistent; some of the studies suggest that commitment is positively associated with motivation and involvement (Farrell and Rusbult, 1981; Stumpf and Hartman, 1984) and denotes loyalty (O'Reilly and Caldwell, 1980). Some studies, which have attempted to identify the antecedents to commitment, have compared variables such as personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experience, organizational size, organizational structure, and role-related factors to commitment. These studies have revealed few consistent findings. Morrow (1983) states that "many researchers have elected to formulate their own definition and measure of work commitment", while Reichers (1986) argues that the empirical literature concerning organizational commitment is potentially confusing, because it is characterized by a diversity of definitions and operationalizations of organizational commitment". However, Buchanan (1974) stated that the meaning of the concept of

commitment includes: the willingness of an employee to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization, a strong desire to stay with the organization, acceptance of the organization's major goals and values, and the degree of "belonging" or loyalty to the organization.

A large range of personal characteristics has been examined in relation to organizational commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). The most frequently investigated in the international literature are age, education, gender, marital status and tenure (Randall, 1993).

Age: Stevens et al., (1978), in their research into federal government management, found age was not correlated with commitment but with tenure. This is supported by the result of Reichers (1986), which showed there is no correlation between tenure and commitment; she explains this by the relatively young average age of her sample.

Nationality: The research of Yavas et al., (1990) was carried out to measure the levels of commitment of two groups of managers (Saudis and non-Saudis) in several organizations in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia (Dammam, Zahran and Alkhuber). The subjects chosen for the study were 145 managers divided into two groups (52 Saudis, 93 non-Saudis). The results showed that the two groups had the same level of commitment to their organizations.

Marital Status: Ritzer and Trice (1969), who tested the validity of the side-bet theory of Becker (1960), found that there were no significant correlations between personal variables such as age, education, marital status and organizational commitment. However, they did find that marital status can affect people's commitment to their organizations and they were expecting to find significant relationships with organizational commitment under the side-bet theory. Therefore, Ritzer and Trice (1969) asserted that the side-bet theory should be rejected.

These findings are consistent with other studies indicating that single respondents have fewer extra-organization responsibilities, resulting in decreased salience of organizational side-bets or investments (Brock, 1967; White, 1967; Colombotos, 1963; Vollmer and Mills, 1966). The studies of Alutto et al., (1972) revealed that single respondents were more likely than their married or separated counterparts to be favorably disposed to *alternative employment* situations.

Education: Most of the studies found that education is negatively related to organizational commitment: workers with better educations are less committed than those who are less educated (Mowday et al., 1982; Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1972; Steers, 1977). On the other hand, the findings of the studies by Wallace (1995), Balfour and Wechsler (1991) and Meyer and Bobocel (1991) found that there is a reasonable relationship between organizational commitment and training or education. Bryant (1977), in his study, found that there was a

positive and significant correlation between organizational commitment and the variable of education. The results of Mottaz (1988) also showed that the relationships between organizational commitment and demographic factors, such as education, marital status, gender and family income, tended to be spurious.

Work Experience: The last situational antecedent of organizational commitment represents those work experiences that occur during an employee's tenure with an organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Among such experiences, researchers have cited leader behavior and participative decision-making as having significant effects on commitment (Glisson and Durick, 1988; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1993). Becker (1992), in his study on military groups, found that older employees had more commitment than younger employees. Zaffane (1984) found that work experiences had a positive effect on organizational commitment, but he

found this was in the private, not the public sector. Becker (1960) noted that professional commitment seemed to increase with the work experience of professionals at the expense of organizational commitment. Another study by Orpen (1993) in Australia showed that work experience affected organizational commitment.

Work experiences, as they appear in Buchanan (1974), have significant effects on organizational commitment; this result is also consistent with the findings of Brown (1969), Sheldon (1971), Lee (1971) and Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972). In his study of the antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment of hospital employees such as nurses, managers, scientists, engineers and research technicians, Steers (1977) found that work experiences were most closely associated with commitment among the three categories he studied: personal characteristics, job characteristics and work experiences. The results showed that the three categories were

significantly related to commitment. On the other hand, Buchanan (1970) suggested that commitment was largely a function of work experience.

Salary: Savery (1994), and Green and Hotch (1990) indicated in their studies that there was a positive correlation between salary and organizational commitment. Another study by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), however, found a fairly low positive correlation between salary and organizational commitment. Becker (1960) argued that if an employee is offered a higher salary and better working conditions and he/she refuses to change his/her job, this decision would be the result of commitment. Several studies found there was a positive correlation between salary and organizational commitment: for example, Bateman and Strassor (1984) and O'Reilly (1980). Rusbult and Farrell (1983) added high job rewards and low job costs to increased job satisfaction to the factors which produce better commitment. Mottaz's (1988) study indicated that work rewards had a very strong and positive impact on organizational commitment. On salary levels and rates of mobility, there was a definite negative relationship between dissatisfaction and organizational commitment (Alutto et al., 1972).

Job Characteristics

Job satisfaction is a facet of job characteristics (Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell and Black, 1990) that has been widely investigated in domestic research (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), and more frequently than other job characteristics (e.g. role conflict, role ambiguity, and job scope) in the international literature (Randall, 1993). Some researchers have argued, however, that job satisfaction is a result of commitment rather than a cause of it (Bateman and Strasser, 1984). The study by Mottaz (1988) found that job characteristics, such as autonomy, skill, variety and job significance, had a strong and positive influence on organizational commitment, and job characteristics have more influence on organizational commitment than personal characteristics.

Brown (1969), in his study of a group of skilled and professional employees in the Tennessee Valley Authority, found that job characteristics, such as opportunities for achievement and participation

in decision-making, were associated with employees' identification with the organization. The study of Hall and Schneider (1972) found that job challenge was the most consistent strongly correlated variable of organization identification.

Steers (1977) found that job characteristics, such as task identity, optional interaction and feedback, were significantly related to commitment and represented important influences on commitment, as is suggested in the model. This finding seems to support the findings of Sheldon (1971), Lee (1971) and Buchanan (1974). It was also noted that the variable of feedback was significantly associated with commitment. In their study, Steer and Spencer (1977) found that jobs that were characterised by a greater amount of variety, autonomy, task identify and feedback increased employees' commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) in meta-analysis also found autonomy to be positively associated with organizational commitment. That is, the greater the autonomy, the greater the

loyalty to the organization. Hence, it is known that autonomy will have a positive impact on the attitudes to change via organizational commitment. A study by Decotiis and Summers (1987), using the sample of a group of restaurant managers, found that there was no strong effect on organizational commitment from personal characteristics, but they found that autonomy had a strong and positive impact on commitment. They also found that two facets of job satisfaction, satisfaction with co-workers and hours worked, were strongly associated with organizational commitment.

Several researchers studied the relationship between organizational commitment and job characteristics, such as autonomy, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, skill variety, job challenge and feedback. Among these studies, Steers (1977) investigated variables such as autonomy, job significance and feedback. This study found that these variables created an equivalent organizational environment among the organization's

employees, and that working environment had a positive influence on organizational commitment. The results seemed to support those of Porter et al., (1974). Another study by Glisson and Durick (1988) investigated three variables (job, work and organizational characteristics) and their influence on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Data were collected from 319 employees. The results indicated that there was a correlation between organizational commitment, and role ambiguity and conflict. Moreover, the results also indicated that the characteristics of job tasks were the best predictors of satisfaction, and that role ambiguity and skill variety emerged as the strongest significant predictors; they also found that role ambiguity affected organizational commitment in a negative way.

Job Performance

Several researchers reported that organizational commitment may have an impact on job performance

(Mowday et al., 1974; Van Maanen, 1975; Porter, Crampom and Smith, 1976; Steers, 1977; Koch and Steers, 1978; Larson and Fukami, 1984). Also, Mowday et al., (1974) reported that it is widely accepted that the degree of organizational commitment and job performance are positively correlated. A study by Renn, Danchouer, Swsiercz and Icenogles (1999) added that goal acceptance and goal commitment related differently to participation, satisfaction with supervision, goal difficulty and performance. The study by Leifer and McGannon (1986) indicated that both scales related positively to performance but were differentially related to participation, satisfaction with supervision, and goal difficulty. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reported that job performance was found to have "a rather weak relationship" with organizational commitment.

Research Methodology

This research focuses on levels of organizational commitment and the factors which affect the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees in Saudi Arabia, by examining certain determinants of organizational commitment. Among these selected determinants are personal characteristics such as age, nationality, marital status, education, experience and income, as well as job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, friendship opportunities, feedback and autonomy.

This study is based on data collected from questionnaire responses from employees in the Public Hospital in Alqassim Region in Saudi Arabia. A questionnaire was mailed, in the summer of 2006, to a random sample of full-time employees; these included at top management, middle management, lower management levels and the employees in Public Hospital in Alqassim Region. Of the 400 persons in the sample chosen, 290 completed and returned the questionnaire

(96.66%). (For more details about the respondents, see Tables 1-8.) The questionnaire was designed to measure the level of commitment of employees. The ratings of most variables were on a

seven-point scale from one (lowest) to seven (highest), except those which were already qualified (such as age, salary, length of service and nationality).

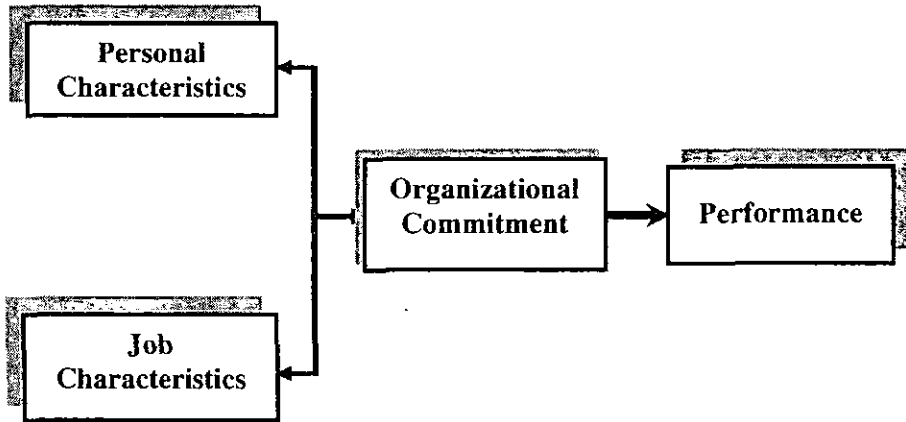


Figure (1): The Hypotheses of the Study

Organizational commitment is defined as the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. It is characterised by three factors: a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values; a readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and a strong desire to remain a member of the organization (Porter et al., 1974). Steers

(1977) identified three categories of antecedents of organizational commitment: personal characteristics, job characteristics, and work experience. The issues discussed in the current study fall into two categories: personal characteristics (such as age, marital status, nationality, education, experience and income) and job characteristics (such as skill variety, task identity, friendship opportunities, feedback and autonomy). The

emphasis here is on the organizational influence achieved through the three categories mentioned above on outcomes such as commitment and the outcome and, in turn, of organizational commitment on such factors as performance and absenteeism. In other words, organizational commitment reduces both turnover rates and absenteeism; it also increases employees' performance.

The hypotheses of the study are stated below:

H1. There is no significant relationship between the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and their personal characteristics.

H1.1. There is no significant difference between the gender of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H1.2. There is no significant relationship between the age of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H1.3. There is no significant difference between the nationality of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H1.4. There is no significant difference between the marital status of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H1.5. There is no significant relationship between the educational attainment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H1.6. There is no significant relationship between the experience of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and

organizational
commitment.

H1.7. There is no significant relationship between the income of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and organizational commitment.

H2. There is no significant relationship between the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees and job characteristics.

H2.1. There is no significant relationship between skill variety and the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

H2.2. There is no significant relationship between task identity and the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

H2.3. There is no significant relationship between friendship opportunity and the organizational

commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

H2.4. There is no significant relationship between feedback and the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

H2.5. There is no significant relationship between autonomy at the work place and the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

H3. There is no significant relationship between performance and the organizational commitment of Public Hospital in Alqassim Region employees.

Findings

Age:

The results of this study accept the hypothesis mentioned earlier. In other words, there is no relationship between age and organizational commitment,

the correlation is (-.062) as the age of respondents in the Public Hospital in Alqassim Region has a negative relationship with organizational commitment. The results show that, as the age of employees increases, they become less committed to their organization because the older worker gains more experience and this offers more individual opportunities for alternative employment. This finding has support from Bateman and Strasser, (1984); Putti, Aryee and Tan (1989); Ritzer and Trice (1969); Shoemaker et al., (1977). These findings gain further support from studies by Steers (1977); Stevens et al., (1978); and Morris and Sherman, (1981).

Nationality:

According to the results of the study, the hypothesis, which was mentioned earlier concerning nationality and its relationship with commitment, is accepted, the significance is (.657). No significant differences were found between organizational commitment and nationality as asserted by the side-bet theory.

In other words, this study found a weak difference between nationality and organizational commitment. These findings add support to the outcome of the previous research, for example, that of Al-Fathly (1997). That study found the average (mean) commitment of public sector employees by choosing five different public organizations. The results indicated that Kuwaiti employees had a low level of commitment to their organizations. Another study by Yavas et al. (1990) was carried out to measure the level of commitment in two groups of managers, Saudis and non-Saudis, in several organizations in the Western area of Saudi Arabia (Dammam, Zahran and Alkhuber). The subjects chosen for the study were 145 managers divided into two groups: 52 Saudis and 93 non-Saudis. The results showed that the two groups had the same level of commitment to their organizations.

Marital Status:

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between marital status and

organizational commitment, the significance is (0.015) for the benefit of the divorced employees against the married ones. However, the hypothesis regarding marital status and its differences with organizational commitment is rejected. These findings add support to the results from previous studies. For instance, the results of Sager's study (1991) showed that marital status had a difference with organizational commitment. The study by Nasser, Hamoodah, and Egypt (1990) came to the conclusion that there is a difference between organizational commitment and marital status. More support for the author's findings came from Leong, Furnham and Cooper (1996). In conclusion, marital status can affect people's commitment to their organizations and it can be added that the problems of family life affect a woman's job performance and work attitudes.

Education:

The results of the study indicated that there is a strongly positive and significant relationship

between education and organizational commitment (0.204). These findings support those of Sheldon (1971), Lee (1971), and Buchanan (1974). Bryant (1977), in his study, found that there was a positive and significant correlation between organizational commitment and the variable of education. The results of Mottaz (1988) also showed relationships between organizational commitment and demographic factors, such as education, gender, and family income.

Experience:

The results indicated that there is a good relationship between experience and organizational commitment (0.136). The findings of this author add support to the results from many previous research examples, for instance, Reichers (1986).

Income:

The results of the study indicated that there is no strong relationship between income and organizational commitment (-0.098). In other words, the more income

doesn't affect the employees in the Public Hospital in Alqassim Region, the less commitment they show to their organization. Savery (1994), and Green and Hotch (1990), indicated in their studies that there was a positive correlation between salary and organizational commitment. Several other studies have found a positive correlation between salary and organizational or behavioral commitment. These include Bateman and Strassor, 1984; and O'Reilly, 1980; Rusbult and Farrell, 1983.

Job characteristics:

The results of the research indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between skill variety (0.339), task identity (0.252), and organizational commitment. Also, the results show that friendship (0.181), feedback (0.163), and autonomy (0.184) have a positive relationship with organizational commitment. This result supports the hypothesis of this research. Several researchers studied the relationship between organizational commitment and job

characteristics, such as autonomy, skill variety, and feedback. For example, the study by Mottaz (1988) found that job characteristics, such as autonomy, skill, and variety, had a strong and positive influence on organizational commitment. He also found that job characteristics have more influence on organizational commitment than personal characteristics. Brown (1969), in his study of a group of skilled and professional employees in the Tennessee Valley Authority, found that job characteristics, such as opportunities for achievement and participation in decision-making, were associated with employees' identification with the organization.

The study of Hall and Schneider (1972) found that job challenge was the most consistent strongly correlated variable of organizational identification while Steers (1977) found that job characteristics, such as task identity, optional interaction, and feedback, were significantly related to commitment and represented important influences on

commitment, as suggested in the model. This finding seems to support the findings of Sheldon (1971), Lee (1971), and Buchanan (1974). It was also noted that the variable of feedback was significantly associated with commitment. In their study, Steer and Spencer (1977) found that jobs that were characterized by a greater amount of variety, autonomy, task identify and feedback increased employees' commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) in meta-analysis also found autonomy to be positively associated with organizational commitment. That is, the greater the autonomy, the greater the loyalty to the organization. Hence, it is known that autonomy will have a positive impact on the attitudes to change via organizational commitment.

Job Performance:

The findings of the study show that there is a positive

relationship between employees' performance and organizational commitment (.255). In other words, when employees' commitment to the Public Hospital in Alqassim Region increases, their performance will also increase. However, research consistently provides clear support for the positive effects of significant commitment on work performance. Meyer, Plunonen, Gellatly, Goffin and Jackson (1989) found that supervisors' ratings of overall job performance and promotion of their subordinates correlated positively with those that demonstrated high effective commitment. Some researchers, such as Mowday et al., 1974; Van Maanen, 1975; Porter, Crampom and Smith, 1976; Steers, 1977; Koch and Steers, 1978; Larson and Fukami, 1984 add support to the findings of this research.

Table (1)
Correlations between organizational commitment
and the demographic factors

factor	correlation	Number	Sig.
Age	-0.062	328	0.262
Education	0.204	328	0.000**
Experience	0.136	328	0.013*
Income	-0.098	328	0.077

Table (2)
Correlations between organizational commitment and job
characteristics and performance

	correlation	Number	Sig.
Skill variety	0.339	328	0.000**
Task identity	0.252	328	0.000**
Friendship opportunity	0.181	328	0.001**
Feedback	0.163	328	0.003**
Autonomy	0.184	328	0.001**
performance	0.316	328	0.000**

Table (3)
One-way ANOVA for the differences in organizational commitment according to marital status

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.991	3	1.664	3.528	0.015*
Within Groups	152.802	324	0.472		
Total	157.793	327			

Table (4)
T-test for the differences in organizational commitment according to nationality

nationality	N	mean	Standard deviation	df	T-value	Sig
Saudi	259	4.2822	0.71614	326	0.444	0.657
Non-Saudi	69	4.2403	0.061096			

Table (5)
T-test for the differences in organizational commitment according to gender

gender	N	mean	Standard deviation	df	T-value	Sig
Male	252	4.2877	0.70244	326	0.679	0.497
Female	76	4.2259	0.67052			

Conclusion:

The concept of employee commitment to organizations has received increased attention in the research literature recently as both managers and organizational analysts seek ways to increase employee retention and performance (Steers, 1977). Employee commitment is an important managerial issue for several reasons. The evidence from recent research suggests that organizational commitment is more likely to explain employee turnover than job satisfaction.

This researcher can add that, as an observational finding, when employees' commitment to the Public Hospital in Alqassim Region increases, their absenteeism will decrease; this is a result of their commitment to their organizations. Employees' absenteeism itself, a costly personnel problem, has attracted the attention of authors.

The direct linkage between the determinants of employee commitment and their implications for job

performance, at both an individual level and at the level of overall organizational effectiveness, requires deeper investigation. By shedding more light on the causes and outcomes of organizational commitment, the present study has endeavored to explore, in an articulated way, the determinants of organizational commitment, as well as their possible implications.

Finally, as mentioned in the abstract, the results show that job characteristics have more impact on (or more correlation with) organizational commitment, i.e. skill variety (.332), task identity (.255), friendship (.123), feedback (.136) and autonomy (.096) more than personal characteristics, for example, age (.031), nationality (.033), marital status (.116), education (.191), experience (.027) and income (.159).

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