An empirical study to identify the forms of organizational commitment in public sector organizations in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract:
Organizational commitment (OC) is an important psychological construct that has been studied for more than four decades. Meyer and Herscovitch (2002) defined commitment as the incentive that sustains a line of behaviour towards one or more objectives. It has been theorized that commitment is a multidimensional construct with various antecedents, correlates, and consequences across various dimensions (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2001).

The relationships between employees and their organizations have become imperative to the effective functioning of the workplace. These relationships affect not only employees but also the companies (Meyer et al. 2001). Positive consequences can be: good attendance, participation and low turnover (Abbott et al. 2005). While negative consequences can be negative, for instance: high turnover, low productivity and absenteeism. Practicing managers and behavioural scientists have been influenced by organizational commitment in recent years (Mowday et al. 1982) and given it increased attention for the numerous positive and negative occupational impacts. Although most practitioners are inclined to associate high commitment with increased productivity and lower turn over, organizational scientists strive to understand the component of commitment and their differential forms in order to analyse the relationships between these commitment forms and the antecedents or work outcomes (Allen and Meyer, 1990;1991;1997; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001 ). Accordingly, this study will explore the type of organizational commitment in the public sector in

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the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; assess the levels of commitment of the Saudi employees, and the personal and structural effects on employees’ commitment; and, investigate the effects of the different types of commitment on performance, productivity and turnover.

Existing theoretical and field studies demonstrate that commitment has direct implications on individuals and an overall influence on organizations. In particular, the extent of employees’ commitment to the organisation exerts a major effect on their performance (Mowday et al. 1982; Allen and Meyer, 1990; Hackett et al. 1994; Herscovitch and Meyer 2002; Shaw et al. 2003; Yousef, 2000). Employees with strong organizational commitment tend to be more productive and more willing to assume larger responsibilities (Show, 1994; Herscovitch and Meyer 2002; Abbott et al. 2005). In contrast, high indications of occupation flow out, absence, strain, and other working problems are associated with employees of low commitment (Ward and Davis, 1995). There is also evidence that points to the low productivity and poor performance in developing countries as being consequences of weak organizational commitment (Bhian, Al Shammari and Jefri, 2001; Shaw et al. 2003; Yousef, 2000; Shaw, Delery, & Abdulla, 2003).

Despite the importance of organizational commitment for successful and competitive organizations, the organizational behaviour literature has mainly focused on OC in developed countries. As a result, relatively little is known about organizational commitment in Saudi Arabia in particular. There is also little understanding of the relationship between organizational commitment, turnover and productivity (Zeffane, 1994; Yousef, 2000). In addition, little knowledge exists of the extent the demographic factors that shape and constrain and affect the organizational commitment in this context. Despite the need to improve understanding of this area, a more generalizable research that truly reflects the organizational commitment of individuals from representative of Saudi samples is truly lacking. To fill this gap, this study aims at investigating the levels of organizational commitment in the public sector of Saudi Arabia.

One importance of this study emerges from understanding the influence OC appears to have on conduct of public and private sector employees, in terms of performance
and efficient delivery of services. Another importance is that the study presents a critique of numerous findings of previous studies that indicate the success of private sector organizations in increasing commitment of employees, contrary to public organizations (Somers, 1995). It is worth mentioning that recommendations quoted in some of the earlier studies call for the understanding of the factors and circumstances that have direct effects on levels of organizational commitment. This is because the understanding of this concept in the Saudi Arabian context remains limited despite the increased importance placed on commitment (Robertson, Al Katib and Al Habit, 2002). Another aspect of importance in this study relates to the delineation of the contextual variations discussion of their impacts on employees’ level and form of organizational commitment in the public sector in Saudi Arabia, and. Such knowledge is particularly important in light of the global trend towards increasing productivity, and promotion of standards of service by the public sector, which necessitates the provision of the appropriate environment that allows employees to perform to their abilities.

The study aims at identifying the types of commitment found among Saudi public sector employees. Such undertaking will pave the way towards understanding organizational commitment in the public sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It also aims to identify the factors, which are likely to have positive impacts on organizations and assist in raising the standards of productivity of employees. Hence, paving the way for taking practical steps towards providing a work environment that boosts commitment and reduces negative impacts such as high turnover, low productivity and absenteeism.

The study proposes a conceptual framework, inspired by Allen and Meyer three-component (1991) model, and explores its validity in and generalizability to the Saudi Arabian public sector. A detailed discussion of the relevant literature is provided. Antecedent variables that are deemed to be suitable for the Saudi Arabian culture are suggested. In addition, the theoretical justification for the conceptual framework integration will be discussed. Finally, managerial implications and recommendations for the three components model are suggested.
By treating the issues pertinent to management theory and epistemology of administration and management ethics with particular emphasis on organizational psychology, the study will envisage making significant contribution to knowledge in the area of organizational behaviour.

References


