

Antecedent HRM Practices for Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The authors set forth with the objective of assessing the impact of Job Design and Empowerment on Organizational Commitment. The basis of the study is the framework enunciated by Myer and Allens. Three major components of Organizational Commitment considered are Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment. Job Design was measured taking into consideration skill identity, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Empowerment was assessed using training and development, competency development, participation, decision making and self determination. The relation between job design, empowerment and organizational commitment was established and it was felt that organizations need to structure jobs and empower employees on a continuous basis as a means to improving commitment levels.

Keywords: HR Practices, Organizational Commitment, Employee empowerment, Job Design

1. Introduction

1.1 Defining Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined as a psychological state that binds an employee to an organization, thereby reducing the incidence of turnover¹ (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and as a mindset that takes different forms and binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target. Porter & Steers (1973) outlined the distinction between *attitudinal commitment*, a mindset in which individuals consider the congruency of their goals and values with those of their employing organizations, and *behavioral commitment*, the process by which individuals' past behavior in an organization binds them to the organization². The complementarity of attitudinal and behavioral commitment was integral in Meyer and Allen's (1990) conceptualization of a multidimensional model of organizational commitment.

1.2 The Three-Component Model

The Three-Component Model of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990) has gained substantial popularity since its inception. Meyer and Allen (1990) concluded that an employee's commitment reflected a desire, need and obligation to maintain membership in an organization. Consequently, commitment manifests itself in three relatively distinct manners. *Affective commitment* refers to the degree to which a person identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in an organization. Employees with affective commitment want to remain with an organization. *Continuance commitment* involves a person's bond to an organization based on what it would cost that person to leave the company. Continuance commitment echoes side-bet theory, and employees with continuance commitment remain with an organization out of need or to avoid the perceived cost of leaving.

Normative commitment involves a feeling of moral obligation to continue working for a particular organization. For any number of reasons, such as a feeling of indebtedness, need for reciprocity or organizational socialization, normatively committed employees feel that they ought to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1990) As part of their research, Meyer & Allen (1990) developed a framework that was designed to measure three different types of organizational commitment:

(a) *Affective commitment* refers to employees' emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment stay with the organization because they *want to*.

(b) *Continuance commitment* refers to employees' assessment of whether the costs of leaving the organization are greater than the costs of staying.

Employees who perceive that the costs of leaving the organization are greater than the costs of staying remain because they *need to*. (c) *Normative commitment* refers to employees' feelings of obligation to the organization. Employees with high levels of normative commitment stay with the organization because they feel they *ought to*. To cope with increased competitive pressure of globalization and demand for efficiency, many organizations have come to rely on the strategy of restructuring and downsizing. The effectiveness of this strategy, however, depends, in part, on its impact on survivors' work attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, much of the evidence from research on survivors' work-related attitudes and behaviors subsequent to restructuring and downsizing have documented evidence of feelings of job insecurity, *intent to quit*, decline in organizational commitment, loyalty and trust, among others³. Of these, intent to quit poses the most serious threat to the effectiveness of the restructuring and downsizing strategy because if unchecked, with appropriate organizational interventions, it leads to voluntary turnover of high performing survivors on whose long-term commitment, motivation and loyalty, the success of restructuring and downsizing depends (Mueller et al. 1989, Spreitzer and Mishra, 1998).

What is more, intent to quit is considered to be one of the most reliable predictors of voluntary turnover⁴. This underscores the need for a conscious and structured organizational approach to the management of survivors' adverse reactions (intent to quit and subsequent voluntary turnover) to restructuring and downsizing. Using Larzarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of stress offer a theoretical model that explains survivors' responses to downsizing⁵. It classifies responses as either constructive or destructive and explains how they are influenced by trust, sense of justices, empowerment and job redesign. Empowerment and work redesign, they argue, influence secondary appraisal and facilitate constructive active responses because they enhance survivors' assessments of their capacity to effectively respond to the challenges that restructuring and downsizing represent. Consequently, they respond by obeying orders, waiting willingly through good and bad times for conditions to improve in the organization, accepting the goals and objectives assigned to them by management and by actively finding ways to help the organization fulfill the objectives of the downsizing.

1.2.1 Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is defined as employee emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization and its goals. 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 organization⁶, identified factors which help create intrinsically rewarding situations for employees to be antecedents of affective commitment. These factors include such job characteristics as task significance, autonomy, identity, skills variety and feedback concerning employee job performance, 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 the degree that employees are involved in the goal-setting and decision-making processes.

1.2.2 Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment is defined as willingness to remain in an organization because of personal investment in the form of nontransferable investments such as close working relationships with coworkers, retirement investments and career investments, acquired job skills which are unique to a particular organization, years of employment in a particular organization, involvement in the community in which the employer is located, and other benefits that make it too costly for one to leave and seek employment elsewhere.

1.2.3 Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is induced by a feeling of obligation to remain with an organization. Such a feeling of obligation often results from what Wiener⁸ characterized as "generalized value of loyalty and duty." This is an almost natural predisposition to be loyal and committed to institutions such as family, marriage, country, religion and employment organization as a result of socialization in a culture that places a premium on loyalty and devotion to institutions.

This view of commitment holds that an individual demonstrates commitment behavior solely because she or he believes it is the moral and right thing to do. Schwartz and Tessler (1972) identified personal norms as the factor responsible for what Wiener referred to as an internalized normative pressure, that makes organizational commitment a moral obligation because the individual feels he or she ought to do so⁹. 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 it¹⁰.

1.0 Impact of commitment

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. Employees with a strong affective commitment remain with an organization because they want to, those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they have to, and those with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to. Allen and Meyer (1990), found, however, that these three classifications of commitment are conceptually and empirically separable. Even though there appears to be some overlap between affective and normative commitment, both were found to be relatively independent of continuance commitment. Therefore, they can be measured separately.

2.0 Approaches to study Commitment

Over the years, two basic approaches have been used to study organizational commitment: commitment-related attitudes and commitment-related behaviors. Each approach offers a slightly different definition. The commitment-related attitude approach defines organizational commitment as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth define it as the willingness of an employee to exert a high level of effort on behalf of the organization, a strong desire on behalf of the organization, and an acceptance of its major goals and values¹¹. According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1982), attitudinal commitment represents a state in which an individual identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals¹². The commitment-related behavior approach focuses on a behavioral pattern guided by internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational goals and interest (Wiener, 1982).

Wiener argued that the pattern of behavior resulting from commitment should possess the following characteristics: (1) it should reflect personal sacrifices made for the sake of the organization; (2) it should show persistence - that is, the behaviors should not depend primarily on environmental controls such as reinforcements or punishment, and (3) it should indicate a personal preoccupation with the organization, such as devoting a great deal of personal time to organization-related actions and thoughts. In this sense, organizational commitment is viewed as (1) willingness of an individual to identify with and the desire not to leave an organization for selfish interest or marginal gains; (2) willingness to work selflessly and contribute to the effectiveness of an organization; (3) willingness to make personal sacrifice, perform beyond normal expectations and to endure difficult times with an organization-- low propensity to "bail-out" in difficult times (4) acceptance of organization's values and goals - the internalization factor. This study adopted the organizational commitment behavior-related approach.

4.0 Statement of the problem:

Organizational commitment is an attitude and is therefore a difficult parameter to measure. Further organizational commitment is comprised of Affective, Continuance and Normative commitments.

This is a complex combination of emotional, informational and obligatory inclinations of employees and is therefore not easy to ascertain. It may be also noted that attitude change and level of commitment cannot remain static.

5.0 Need for the study

Organizational Commitment is a very important element in having an able, willing workforce that is desirous of continuing with the organization and are willing to contribute at high levels of performance. An Organization like XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) finds it necessary to assess the levels of Organizational Commitment from time to time for only a committed team can accomplish organizational goals in a competitive market.

6.0 Scope of the study

The present study encompasses two possible important inputs that influence organizational commitment.

- Job design
- Employee empowerment

Further the study covers managerial cadre of XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) as the technical, support staff and pilots, and maintenance personnel are inaccessible.

7.0 Objectives

1. To assess Organizational Commitment of top and middle level employees of XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed).
2. To ascertain the impact of Job Design, Employee empowerment and other HR influences on Organizational Commitment levels.
3. To suggest measures in improving level of Organizational Commitment of employees.

Hypothesis

1. Job design is positively related to organizational commitment.
2. Employee empowerment has an influence on organizational commitment.

8.0 Research Methodology

The data was gathered using a structured questionnaire from a sample of 188 employees using the simple random sampling technique. Simple percentages and chi-square test was used to analyze the data and test the hypothesis.

8.1 Sample Size

The sample is proposed to be selected employing simple random sampling with finite population. The formula for sample size calculations is:

SD can be calculated using $\sigma = \sqrt{(\sum x^2 / n) - (\sum x / n)^2}$.

Sample size n is calculated using $n = \frac{z^2 * \sigma^2 * N}{(N-1)p^2 + z^2 * \sigma^2}$

At 95% confidence level the value of Z=1.96

Simple percentages and chi-square test is used for analysis of data and interpretation.

9.0 Analysis

Various dimensions that were considered for this study are presented with analysis below:

9.1 Selection Criteria

Respondents (54.25%) opine that the selection process takes into account skills, knowledge and experience required for success in performing jobs. However, the researchers in discussions with respondents assessed that the potential to gel and contribute in teams was not being assessed nor being given the importance. Also the respondents opined that being a team player and the ability to learn quickly were important competencies that were essential and indispensable to superior performances on the job. Training is an on-going process in the organization and the respondents confirmed that training was given to all organizational members irrespective of the department and cadre they belonged to.

9.1.1 Participation in Decision-Making

Participation in Decision Making was limited in the sense that only 43.61% answered in the affirmative of chances to participate in decision making. Respondents felt that avenues could be more for participation and a climate fostering participation must be created to harness the potential of organizational members.

9.1.2 Dissemination of Strategic Information

Strategic information seldom percolates to members down the organizational hierarchy at XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed). Respondents opined that a shared vision could be created if there was dissemination of information. Only 32.97% of the respondents received some form of strategic information.

9.1.3 Mixed System of Pay

The presence of mixed system of pay in the organization is acknowledged by 91.48 % of the respondents. However they did not see a perfect linkage of pay for performance. This view has been reiterated in the next item of the survey.

9.1.4 Performance-Pay Linkage

While a majority (59.57%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative to the presence of a mixed system of rewarding, the remaining desired a stronger linkage between performance and pay. Pay, being an important input to prevent dissatisfaction can be given a close look to ensure equity, both internal and external.

9.1.5 Importance of Work

52.12 % of employees felt that their work was an integral and important part of what they were. They identified themselves with their work. However the remaining opined that the work could be designed in a more interesting way. Through opinions collected by the researchers, the employees felt that the skills that they possessed were not completely utilized and they required more objective and timely feedback on their performance. This opinion is corroborated with what has been deciphered from the dimension Job design studied in this empirical survey.

9.2 Analysis using weighted scores

9.2.1 Competence

The organization provides periodic training to its employees and ensures updating of competencies. The respondents rate the competence development aspect at 1.34 out of a maximum possible score of +2. Skills imparted through training are job oriented and enhance respondent's ability to improve performance level.

9.2.2 Self Determination

Most respondents opine that they do not enjoy autonomy in deciding nuances of their work. Opportunities to innovate at the work place are few and mistakes are seldom tolerated. The dimension self determination has been measured taking into account autonomy, opportunities to innovate and tolerance to mistakes. Respondents rate the organization negative at -0.29.

9.2.3 Affective Commitment

Respondents have a sense of belongingness and are emotionally attached to the organization. Problems are approached with concerted efforts and are owned up. XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) has created a value proposition and the employees perceive that they do influence outcomes in their departments. The respondents rate the organization positive at +0.35(from a scale that ranges from +2 to -2).

9.2.4 Effort Commitment

Effort commitment is an indicator of the willingness of employees to stretch their efforts beyond expectations. XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) employees are prepared to exert and exceed targets which is indicative of their higher effort commitment. Respondents score +1.0 on this dimension of effort commitment. It augurs well for the organization as its employees are never hesitant to put in their best and raise their performance levels.

9.2.5 Continuance Commitment

Respondents of XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) opined that they would consider offers with better pay packages. Retention is a major area of concern for most organizations and XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) is no exception. Employees have low continuance commitment (-0.96) and would consider other opportunities to move into. Continuance commitment is indicative of the cost of leaving present employment for a job incumbent.

9.2.6 Job Design

Job designs generate the requisite interest in work to create higher commitment levels. The researchers have considered parameters like skill variety, task significance, recognition, autonomy and feedback for assessing appropriateness of job design at XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed). Systematic job design can have a series of functional outcomes like experienced meaningfulness, job satisfaction, motivation and more importantly commitment. The above data indicate various results on these parameters. Employee's skill sets are not utilized completely by what they are required to do their jobs. However tasks performed by job incumbents are significant to the final outcomes. Employees at XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) get due recognition for their efforts. As inferred under the dimension self-determination, autonomy on the job is low. Little discretion is allowed in decision making, approaches to work and as to what should be accomplished. Feedback is also inadequate with respect to job incumbents current performances. Respondents also are not always certain of performance expectations. The combined effect of these dimensions is found to be negative at -0.16.

9.2.7 Empowerment

Respondents opine that XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) provides ample opportunities to update with the latest. They also felt that training ensured a continuous learning process for organizational members. Organizational culture at XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) is conducive for experiential learning.

Development and growth opportunities do improve the chances of increased commitment amongst employees. Empowerment, it is found is positive at 0.95. Higher scores on empowerment are also indicative of higher/greater accountability on the part of the employees.

Hypothesis 1: Job Design is positively related to Organizational Commitment.

The researchers set out to study the association between Job Design and Organizational Commitment. Chi-Square is employed to test the association between the two. The level of organizational commitment is considered as High, Average and Low. The matrix considered comprises of three rows and three columns. Therefore, the degrees of freedom is $(r-1) * (c-1)$, here 4 being the degrees of freedom. Chi-Square value calculated using the above tables is 11.52. Cross-checking and comparing table value (9.48) it is found that calculated value is greater than the table value. Hence the alternate hypothesis is accepted and it is inferred that there is an association between Job Design and Organizational Commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Employee Empowerment has an influence on Organizational commitment.

The second hypothesis presumes an association between Employee Empowerment and Organizational Commitment. Employee Empowerment is measured using a set of dimensions and the cumulative effect of all parameters gives us a measure of organizational commitment. The calculated value of 12.01 is greater than the table value of 9.48 at $df=3$. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is an association between Employee Empowerment and Organizational Commitment is accepted. Having established an association between Job Design, Employee Empowerment and Organizational commitment, the researchers now set out to assess the individual dimension strength and also assess the stronger dimensions that are contributing to organizational commitment

10.0 Findings

Findings are presented in four broad sections. The first section is a summary of the influence of various HR dimensions assessed under this empirical work. The second section presents the various dimensions used to assess Organization Commitment. The third section presents various suggestions offered by respondents on training, job design and retention strategies that the organization may implement. The fourth and last section presents the results of Chi-Square tests employed to establish relationship between Job Design and Empowerment on Organizational Commitment.

10.1 HR Dimensions

1. Majority of the respondents (54%) opined that the selection process took into account Skills, Knowledge and experience required to perform jobs.
2. Training was administered to all organizational members irrespective of their cadre.
3. Training was given once in six months and included case studies, videos, simulation sessions, sensitivity analysis etc.
4. Opportunities to participate, the respondents felt are not as they feel ideal and only 43.61% of the respondents confirmed of the opportunity to participate in decision making.
5. Many respondents (67.02%) wanted more information on expectations and on current performance, as well as job instructional information from time to time. The others were satisfied with informational inputs that they received.
6. While most respondents (59.57%) opined that the pay structure was performance based, the remaining wanted a review of the structure to ensure equity.
7. Nearly half of the respondents (47.87%) sought more interesting jobs that utilized their skill sets completely and gave them ample opportunities to perform and be recognized.

10.2 Organizational commitment Dimensions

- a. Competence: Continuous and periodic training in the organization is perceived positively and as being instrumental in developing competence. The organizations effort on this front is rated at 1.34 out of a maximum of 2 on a five point Likert's scale.
- b. Self Determination: Autonomy is scarce within the organization and this dimension is scored at -0.29 in the organization. The respondents also opined that greater freedom could only encourage greater responsibility and possibilities to improvise.
- c. Affective Commitment: A very important component of organizational component, affective commitment is scored marginally positive at +0.35. Though it does indicate a positive inclination to stay with the organization and a degree of emotional attachment, it also needs to be addressed and improved further.

- d. Effort Commitment: On a maximum scale that ranges between +2 to -2, effort commitment is scored by the respondents at +1.00. Though positive and healthy, it would augur well for the organization if it could consolidate on this dimension. Respondents were willing to exert and contribute their might to achieve organizational goals.
- e. Continuance Commitment: Indicative of the cost of leaving their present jobs, continuance commitment for the organization is found to be low at -0.96. This is a major area of concern for the employees wouldn't mind leaving the organization if greener pastures were available.
- f. Job Design: It is inferred from responses that the job incumbents skill variety isn't utilized completely, work design is not able to result in increased feeling of self-worth, responsibility, performance, commitment and satisfaction. This is evident as the respondents have rated the organization at -0.16 on a scale of +2 to -2.
- g. Empowerment: Experiential learning, training that is an on-going process at XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed) is one high point for the organization. It is scored positive at +0.95 on this dimension of Organizational Commitment.

11.0 Opinions of Respondents

- a. Suggestions on Training: Four major suggestions were given by the respondents on trainings. The first one is on the frequency of training programs. The employees felt that the training programs could be more frequent than what existed currently. Training modules some felt should be based on a thorough training need assessment so that training could facilitate superior performance. Training content, 16.23 % felt could be re-designed from time to time to make the training programs more interesting and useful. Resource persons from outside the organization were desired by trainees for they felt the need for fresh ideas and innovative methods in training.
- b. Suggestions regarding Retention Strategies: Respondents gave a plethora of means to successfully retain skilled workforce. Of them, 27.27% opined that systematic career planning could help in retaining employees. 33.56 % opined that jobs need to be designed to utilize all skills and that employees contributions must be significant in the final outcomes. Some respondents (21.67 %) made interesting suggestions that were related to Work Life Balance. They included the introduction of Flexitime, recreation, paid vacations etc. Some respondents (17.48 %) were concerned of the future of the organization for it has serious connotations to individual well-being.
- c. Suggestions on Design of Jobs: Respondents suggested measures to re-design jobs of which some common suggestions have been tabulated. 30.59 % of the respondents are for job enrichment as a means for improving commitment levels through job design. 23.88 % suggested appropriate job postings to ensure greater commitment levels on the job. Some (19.4 %) felt that activity analysis could be carried out to order the activities and generate higher commitment from job incumbents. Jobs they felt (26.11 %) can be structured to ensure team effort and synergy amongst organizational members.

12.0 Suggestions

- a. The organization may create a value proposition that attracts talented and qualified job incumbents and by delivering on these values the organization may improve commitment among employees.
- b. Training could be more frequent and need-based. The organizations appraisal process should be versatile enough to assess training needs based on which training content may be planned. Such an exercise could ensure greater transfer of learning and consistent performances from job incumbents.
- c. A climate that is conducive to participation is a pre-requisite before opportunities to participate are presented to employees. Superiors must be trained in participatory decision making techniques like brain storming, probing the whys', and team building to imbibe the importance of participation. Further, group responsibilities may improve participation opportunities.
- d. Communication must improve both at dyadic and at group levels for information to disseminate and be appreciated. Feedback sessions must be organized to clarify expectations and discuss performances. Counseling and mentoring must be employed to discuss hindrances that employees face, chart out development assignments and initiate corrective action.
- e. Designing jobs that are significant, assigning jobs that create identity for job incumbents and due recognition for jobs well-done would go a long way in increasing affective commitment. Organizational get-togethers, informal meetings, tokens of appreciations, citation, plaques, paid vacation, complimentary diaries, ties, visiting cards etc may be used to improve the sense of belongingness among respondents.

- f. Structured activities through periodic work planning and review would ensure better efforts from every organizational member. At XYZ Air (the actual name of the organization is not revealed), initiatives may be taken up to arrive at mutually acceptable goals through superior-subordinate discussions, periodic work progress reviews to monitor, and to initiate corrective action. Such an exercise would also ensure optimum allocation of resources and the opportunity for subordinates to present feedback and discuss difficulties confronted on the job.
- g. To ensure utilization of skill sets the organization must invariably ensure a person-job fit. His/her key strengths are matched first to key behaviors that are essential to high performance on jobs. Methods like work sampling, assessment centers and structured interviews may be conducted periodically to ascertain if employees skill have outgrown the job demands. Based on their skill breadth and depth, they may be re-assigned to jobs or promoted.
- h. Empowerment in the form of need based training, trust and job enrichment would ensure requisite freedom on the job and generate the commitment amongst employees.
- i. Training as suggested by the respondents may be more frequent, followed up with refresher programs, and must be administered using resource persons from outside the organization. The organization may also initiate steps to measure training effectiveness and also tie up training to compensation.

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