ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF MANAGERIAL EMPLOYEES: 
A UNIFIED THEORY AND ANTECEDENTS

A dissertation submitted by
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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about organizational commitment in the past twenty-five years and these studies have significantly contributed to the extant understanding of the concept. However, these efforts have also contributed to the confusion, inconsistencies, and disagreements about the meaning of the concept that seem to characterize the organizational commitment literature. This milieu required, as a matter of necessity, that the disparate conceptualizations of organizational commitment be reconciled and synthesized to form a unified, comprehensive theory. This situation and the apparent need to focus on those organizational factors that function as antecedents of managerial commitment to organizations provided the impetus for the present study.

In keeping with the above purpose, this study has developed a comprehensive unified theory of organizational commitment that was tested using structural equation modeling. The study shows that the theory of organizational commitment is based on six separate parent theories, including attitudes, psychological ownership, psychological contract, values, certain aspects of the three-component model of Meyer and Allen (1991), and social exchange, which makes it a multi-disciplinary theory. The theories of attitudes and psychological ownership constitute the psychological ingredient of the affection employees manifest to their organization and provide the theoretical foundation of the affective dimension of organizational commitment. Similarly, the theories of psychological contract, values and organizational culture provide the cornerstone for the feelings of moral obligation employees display toward the organization, and concomitantly, the moral dimension of organizational commitment. Finally, social exchange theory and labor market forces define a socio-economic relationship between each individual and the organization and provide the basis for the continuance dimension of organizational commitment.

The research problem identified for this study was the lack of a unified theory of organizational commitment that is needed to identify the antecedents of managerial commitment to organizations. Thus, the purpose of the study was to examine the state of the theory of organizational commitment and propose a unified socio-psychological theory that provided the theoretical foundation to identify the antecedents and dimensions of the organizational commitment of managerial employees. Therefore, the research question that the study answered is: what are the antecedents and dimensions of managerial commitment in organizations? In addition to this, the study investigated six related issues: (a) the socio-psychological theories providing the theoretical foundations of a unified theory of organizational commitment, (b) the principal dimensions of a new unified theory of organizational commitment, (c) the predictors and causes of managerial commitment, (d) the degree to which perceived pay equity, socialization tactics, opportunities for development, organizational trust, and job satisfaction act as predictors of organizational commitment, (e) the variable or variables which moderate and/or mediate the impact of the predictors of organizational commitment and, (f) the relationships among the five predictors named above.

The study was justified on the basis of its potential to make significant contributions to both management practice and theory. From the perspective of management practice, the study has provided evidence that should enhance the ability of organizations to: (a) promote feelings of assonance and minimize feelings of The study was justified on the basis of its potential to make significant contributions to
both management practice and theory. From the perspective of management practice, the study has provided evidence that should enhance the ability of organizations to: (a) promote feelings of assonance and minimize feelings of dissonance among their managerial employees through equitable pay, (b) increase the level of managerial job satisfaction and concomitantly elevate the trust levels of managers, (c) integrate the interests of managers with those of the organization through effective socialization tactics and provide managerial employees with opportunities for development in order to enhance their moral obligations to the organization. Moreover, the study provides evidence and tools which organizations may use to engender in their managerial employees strong feelings of ownership for their organizations, enhance managers’ trust levels, and minimize their inclinations to leave their organizations.

Theoretically, the study has analyzed and evaluated the extant theories of organizational commitment, reconciled differences among the various models, synthesized the multitude of disparate theories, models, concepts and definitions found in the literature of organizational commitment as a means of conceptualizing a new theoretical socio-psychological model of organizational commitment. In essence this effort should make a solid contribution to knowledge in the field and provide the foundation for future research in managerial commitment.

Methodologically, the data used in this study were collected from four different organizations at two different time periods of three months apart. Both descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS 12 and structural equation modeling using AMOS 16 were used to analyze the data. The SEM analysis determined the predictive strength of the selected independent variables/antecedents, and Barron and Kenny’s moderator and mediator analysis identified the moderator and mediator effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The outcome from these analyses is a model which fits the two sets of data. Apart from other fit indices, the computations indicated insignificant Chi-sq. values of 16.113, p=.065 and 8.037, p=.442 for the two sets of data respectively. This particular finding confirms that the model is theoretically sound and is perhaps a unique development in the field of organizational commitment.

The results of the study confirm that organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional theory with three major domains-affective, continuance, and moral commitment, each of which has a distinct conceptual foundation. The study also confirms that: (a) affective commitment is based predominantly on psychological factors; (b) moral commitment is founded on philosophical, ethical and sociological factors; and (c) continuance commitment which is socio-economic by nature focuses predominantly on risk, economic losses, economic gains and labor market conditions that indicate the availability/non-availability of suitable alternative employment. Additionally, the study indicates that pay equity, developmental opportunities and socialization tactics act as both moderators and mediators of job satisfaction and organizational trust which in turn are the two independent variables predicting the three dimensions of organizational commitment.

In the final analysis, the findings of this study should: (a) be significantly beneficial to future research in the field of organizational commitment, (b) provide organizations with critical information for human resource policy formulation and, (c) contribute meaningfully to knowledge in the field. No other known study in organizational commitment has gone through such indepth analysis, particularly the elaborate process of theory building.
CERTIFICATION OF DESSERTATION

I certify that this dissertation is entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the ideas, research, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported are original and have not been previously submitted for any award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Principal Supervisor

Date

Signature of Associate Supervisor

Date
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