



Determinants of Organisational Commitment of Universities' Employees

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Abstract

All institutions aim at understanding the issue of the organisational commitment. Hence, the goal of the current study is to propose a conceptual model for understanding the factors influencing organisational commitment that can be used to study and address the institutions-related challenges. The current paper is based on reviewing the organisational commitment literature that focuses on the behavioural aspects, particularly the perspectives of the social exchange and social influence. Consequently, three major factors were identified as having an effect on organisational commitment of the universities' employees. These major factors include public spirit, ethics, and peer influence. Therefore, the current study contributes to the state of knowledge and literature related to the organisational commitment, particularly in the field of the behavioural aspects. This therefore provides a guide to administrations for maximization their efforts and encouraging the employees' commitment. The lack of organisational commitment possibly has an effect on the organisations' performance and efficiency, thereby discouraging its development.

Key words

Public Spirit, Ethics, Peer Influence, Organisational Commitment

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1. Introduction

Considering the role of universities as a source of human capital resource and sole liability to educate the intellect of nations the subject of organisational commitment should be more important to be studied in academic institutions (Malik *et al.*, 2010). The university is a platform for the transfer of skilled manpower in various capacities and also an opportunity to build the human capital needs to maintain the economy (Adekola, 2012). The teacher serves as the fundamental component in the educational system, thus performing several essential responsibilities. The university's performance to a great extent is depends on its teachers, their commitment, and definitely job satisfaction. This implies that proper consideration has to be given by the organizations towards understanding their employee's behaviour and attitudes (Tsui and Cheng, 1999). Organisational commitment could be referred to as the feeling of dedication towards an employer or an organization, the will for hard work in that organisation, and the intention to continue working for the same organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Consequently, it is expected that the employees who feel satisfied remain more committed to an organization and strongly convinced about its goals.

Hence, organisational commitment is regarded in management and behavioural science discipline to be a major factor in shaping the relationship among the employees and organizations. In accordance with

Raju and Srivastava (1994), organisational commitment is a factor that encourages the connection of individuals with their organization. An employee is argued to be committed towards his/her organization, when he willingly maintains his alliance with the organization and dedicates a substantial effort for the attainment of the goals of the organization (Raju and Srivastava, 1994). The argument by several authors supports that more efforts put forth by employees along with the higher exercise of organisational commitment which can boost the performance and efficiency for the individual and his/her organization as well (Adekola, 2012). In this regard, Kanter (1968) considers organisational commitment as the employees' will, the devotion of energy, and the dependability on an organization.

Generally, organisational commitment represents a strong belief and the approval of an organization's goals and values, the willingness to exercise reasonable effort towards boosting the organisational goal, and the conviction to continue the organisational membership (Porter *et al.*, 1974). An organisation's success or failure is a reflection of its staff, because the staff is responsible for executing various tasks and functions in the organization (Paoline *et al.*, 2006). Hence, the present study is founded based on the soaring concerns of employers regarding their need for a highly committed workforce that can enhance the performance of their organizations. In other words, the present study is concerned with investigating the determinants of the employees' organisational commitment. However, the commitment of the employees in their respective workplace still remains a great challenge for organisations, researchers in the management discipline, the organisational behaviour, and the human resource (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005).

In addition, the findings of extant literature pose a challenge to most practitioners and scholars, since most of the literature concerned with improving the employees' commitment towards an organization has resulted in inconsistent findings, and in some cases, they are contradictory (Mercurio, 2015). Therefore, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) posits that regardless of the rise in the awareness concerning the need to understand the workplace commitment, a need arises to obtain a consensus on the concept of the commitment, the state of confusion, and the considerable disagreement regarding what the commitment is, where it is directed, its mechanism of development, and its effect on the behaviour. In this regard, several studies have been conducted on the antecedents and also the effects of the commitment on the work environment, notably the commitment of the individual towards an occupation, a workgroup, a job, a union, or the work in particular. Hence, the current study is considered one of the few studies that examined the organisational commitment in the Palestinian Universities context. The study hypothesized three factors which are perceived to affect the Universities employees' commitment towards their organizations, including the public spirit, ethics, and peer influence.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Public Spirit and Organisational Commitment

Public spirit, as described by Kelman (1987), is the situation in which an individual acts against his/her self-interest and considers others in taking a stand point in any decision. The concept of public spirit signifies an excellent attitude of people that is beneficial to the public, regardless of its personal cost and reduction of the individual's personal benefit (Andriani, 2015). In other words, public spirit stands for a positive attitude that citizens adopt in order to improve the public benefit. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004), in relating the spirit at work with organisational commitment, they documented that it is a unique state that has physical, affective, cognitive, interpersonal, spiritual, and mystical dimensions. These states include the physiological arousal, positive effect, a conviction that individual work has its share of contribution, a sense of connection with people and a common purpose, a connection to a larger concept than self, as well as a sense of precision and transcendence.

In studies conducted on organisational change, the spirit at work is considered a factor of enthusiastic motivation and has a strong association with the work commitment (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). This is associated with public spirit since the two factors entail a passionate motivation that supports the contribution towards attaining common good. In Palestine, the society can be described as having a defined collectivist nature, whereby social relationships are dependent on the group cooperation in helping each other (Andriani, 2015). As a result, it is vital to link public spirit with organisational commitment in a context that stimulates organisational commitment voluntarily.

Therefore, to develop a better understanding of the relationship between public spirit and organisational commitment, the current study proposes the following:

H1: There is a positive relationship between public spirit and organisational commitment.

2.2. Ethics and Organisational Commitment

Ethics imply a moral mind-set which directs the human actions as well as businesses, and shapes a part of the attitude related to the behaviours of people (Abuznaid, 2009). Hence, the compliant with the moral tenets and values in the human activities is considered as ethics (Iserson, 1999), which includes various concepts along with principles that direct people to know the behaviours that are helpful or harmful (Paul and Elder, 2006). In other words, ethics is a structure of the behavioural standard intended to offer a direction during the social dealing or the association among people and is used to regulate and moderate the human interactions (Ho and Wong, 2008).

In this context, two ethical feelings such as guilt and shame would present an appropriate clarification about the commitment behaviour (Martinez-Vazquez and Torgler, 2009), since the ethical norms are considered a phenomenon that is difficult to be explained (Torgler, 2002). In the meantime, the empirical proof proposes that the extent of conviction on the significance of ethics along with social responsibility possibly has a direct effect on the ethical decision practices (Shafer *et al.*, 2016). According to Kirchler *et al.* (2008), the norms are associated with moral reasoning, authoritarianism and Machiavellianism, self-centeredness, norm dependency, and values. Therefore, it is logical to state that co-workers' actions are important for certain work results, such as their colleagues' attitudes, learning, and ethical or unethical behaviours.

Baumeister *et al.* (2001) opined that a decrease in job satisfaction exists as a result of the unethical or negative attitude of the co-workers. On the other hand, job satisfaction rises when positive ethical attitudes exist. This implies that the ethical behaviour of the co-workers is considered vital in determining which behaviour an employee interprets as ethical or unethical (Peters *et al.*, 2014). The Islamic view point regarding the workplace is most often designated as the "Islamic Work Ethic". That is, Islam encourages a high commitment towards the organisations. Hence, the commitment is understood to make the employees of some organisations accept the changes more willingly compared to others (Yousef, 2000). Other ethical values encouraged in Islam are cooperation and consultation, since these values are stated to lessen the mistakes (Yousef, 2000). In addition, the "Islamic work ethics" posits that the generosity and justice are values that the workplace cannot relinquishes (Yousef, 2000). Consequently, a hypothesis is proposed as follow:

H2: There is a positive relationship between ethics and organisational commitment.

2.3. Peer Influence and Organisational Commitment

Peer groups are highly influential in shaping the individuals' preferences, values as well as their behaviours (Puspitasari and Meiranto, 2014). Consequently, individuals, whose peers have influenced them into unlawful conduct, have a greater likelihood of non-commitment (Chau and Leung, 2009). In this regard, peer influence represents a portion of the cultural features of some groups of people or nations (Cummings *et al.*, 2009; Scholz *et al.*, 1992). For societies having a strong affinity towards the social cohesion, the level of commitment is expected to be high (Torgler, 2003).

Two factors are considered essential in determining the commitment, including first is opinions of peers and second is the degree of social influence experienced by the individuals (Sutinen and Kuperan, 1999). The concept of social influence relates to the shaping of an individual's feeling, thoughts, and behaviour based on a peer's presence (Crisp and Turner, 2007). This implies that in a social context the behaviour can be shaped through encouraging the conformity to social norms. In addition, the practice and the prevalence of corruption represent the social norms governing the relationships within groups (Gino *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, for any individual, his/her views towards the commitment of others define his/her commitment behaviour.

For such individuals, their likelihood of cheating in the work places is low as long as others act honestly (Frey and Torgler, 2007; Traxler, 2010). Baumeister *et al.* (2001) further identified that job satisfaction for an individual reduces his/her co-workers' negative conduct, thus implying that job

satisfaction increases with a positive attitude. Consequently, the general employees' organisational commitment will dramatically increase. In other words, the co-workers are significant means of information within the employees' direct social atmosphere resulting from time, proximity, and communication frequency among co-workers (Baumeister *et al.*, 2001). Hence, the instances given by peers serve to motivate the individual's decision choices. Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between peer influence and organisational commitment.

3. Theoretical Framework

The research model of the current study was founded based on the Socio-Psychological theories, specifically the Social Exchange and Social Influence perspective as presented in Figure 1. The Social Exchange is a theory which suggests that the perceived public spirit affects organisational commitment. Based on Blau (1964), Social Exchange leads to social integration via the establishment of trust mutually among people, thus encouraging the conformity of an individual towards the social norms. It has been recognized that this theory leads to outcomes that are not limited to the economic benefit. Rather, it includes a broader benefit of social exchange, thereby establishing fundamentally that the course of the social exchange is essentially reciprocity. Accordingly, its benefit could be non-economic, notably the enthusiastic or psychological benefits, which could motivate the employees towards organisational commitment.

Regarding the Social Influence Theory, it signifies that the perceived ethics and peer influence affect organisational commitment. This theory is concerned with the emotions, view or the etiquette of individuals as influenced by others (Sussman and Gifford, 2013). Besides, the product of the behavioural conduct has a vital role towards influencing the people's attitudes (Bandura, 1977). As suggested by Crisp and Turner (2007), the social influence relates to how people's feelings, thoughts, and attitudes change in peoples presence.

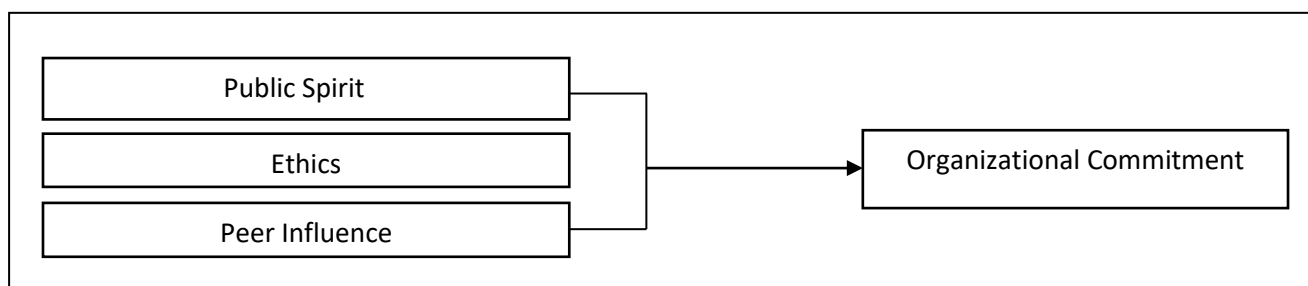


Figure 1. Proposed Organisational Commitment Framework

4. Conclusions

It is obvious that the organisational commitment has become a challenge for the stakeholders in the world; therefore, a detailed understanding of the factors that influence organisational commitment cannot be ignored. Many factors have been adduced to cause organisational commitment, but three factors, namely public spirit, ethics, and peer influence are conceptualised as essential in determining organisational commitment. The common sense could also agree with the fact that even in the higher education, the employees still could have a low organisational commitment which can lead to adverse results in terms of the economic and non-economic context, such as the high rate of exit, reduced teaching efficiency, and students' intellectual advancement. Currently, the researchers of the current study are in the process of collecting empirical data involving organisational commitment in the Palestinian context. Hence, the outcome of the present study is expected to serve as an important policy guide for stakeholders like academic administrators and policy makers in confronting the problem of organisational commitment. Particularly, the current study is important for the Palestinian context, and more broadly for other Middle East countries as well. Due to the dynamism of organisational commitment, a continuous research on this area over time is inevitable.

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