

# Organisational Commitment: A Review of the Evolution from Side-Bets to the Three-Component Conceptualisation Model

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Received: 9 December 2019 Accepted: 3 January 2020 Published: 15 January 2020

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## Abstract

The main aim of this paper was to present and evolution of the concept of commitment for the side-bet theory to the three conceptualisation Model. These was done by presenting successfully commitment as side-bets, affective-dependence period, the multi-dimensional approaches; organisational commitment as Moral, calculative, and alienative attachment, O'Reilly and Chatman Model 1986 and lastly, three-component conceptualisation Model of organisational commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). All these presentation will help increase the understanding of commitment and will help employers and managers foster the commitment of their employees to their organisations so as to have a better organisation.

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*Index terms*— organisational commitment, affective, normative and continuance commitment

## 1 Introduction

ommitment has been widely studied by many organisational behaviourists (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Mowday, 1998). Commitment in marketing and sales has always been seen as an essential concept that could be used in understanding the behaviour of sales person (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Singh et al., 1996). For practitioners to be able to anticipate the impact of certain policies in an enterprise, the understanding of commitment is very primordial (Ergmann et al., 2000). Commitment deals with measuring and capturing workers opinion of their identification with their organisations' core values, their intent to stay with their organisation, and their readiness to put extra energy than expected by their organisation (Mowday et al., 1979).

To have a good comprehension of what has been done so far in commitment, is better to first understand the picture of the advancement of the notion and dimension of OC and the way the current conceptualisation of commitment has affected the evolution of commitment.

## 2 II.

## 3 The Eras of Development of Commitment

The concept has developed for three eras; all these eras have an impact on the actual state of commitment.

### 4 a) The early era: commitment as side-bets

The "side-bet" theory was the first contemporary theory of commitment raised by Howard S. Becker in 1960. As per this model, workers are committed because they have wholly hidden investment, "side bet", they have invested in a given organisation. Becker (1960) focused on what he called "side-bets" which explain the procedure to which workers tie themselves to organisations through investment such as effort, time and reward. These investments however have cost which reduce to some degree on employee's freedom in their future activity. Through investment employees are tied to organisations because of the costs linked with their departure from their organisation (for example, pension plans, seniority and firm specific knowledge) (Edey, 2004). Becker (1960) suggested that there are certain costs that will accumulate over a period of time that will make it tough for individuals to untie themselves to a regular pattern of activity, namely; sustaining its affiliation in the enterprise. Side-bets always compel behaviour and it comes to light via the individual adjustment process to societal positions. A person

## 6 I. ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AS MORAL, CALCULATIVE, AND ALIENATIVE ATTACHMENT

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42 pattern of activity may be altered in the process of conforming to the requirement for one social position that  
43 require that he unfit himself for the position he might have right to (Becker, 1960).

44 There is a close connection between the commitment process and the turn over process in Becker's model.  
45 Becker's model sees commitment as the main variable in explaining voluntary turnover. This view was held by  
46 other research that tried to operationalise Becker's theory (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973;Ritzer & Trice,  
47 1969). According to these studies, commitment should be measured by assessing the motives, if there are any,  
48 which can cause an individual to vacate his enterprise. The scale that was assumed to represents Becker's  
49 approach was accepted by future research as the approach to Becker the link between turnover and commitment  
50 affected the future conceptualisation of commitment and turnover was to be affected by OC. The continuance  
51 commitment of Meyer and Allen's scales is influenced by the side-bet approach. Continuance commitment was  
52 advanced as a tool for testing the side-bet approach and is one dimension of the three OC dimensions outlined  
53 by Meyer and Allen (1991).

### 54 5 b) Middle era: Affective-dependence period

55 This approach was advanced by Porter et al. (1974). Here the attention of commitment shifted to psychological  
56 attachment a person has for his enterprise. This approach advanced by Porter and his colleagues is an attempt  
57 to designate commitment as a dedicated attitude. Accordingly, Porter and his followers defined commitment  
58 as "the relative power of an individual's involvement and identification in a specific organisation?" (Mowday,  
59 Steers, & Porter, 1979). Commitment here was characterised by three related factors: "(1) a tough acceptance  
60 and belief in an organisation's goals and values; (2) the will to utilise significant effort for one's enterprise; and  
61 (3) a strong wish to continue attachment with one's enterprise?" The theory of exchange has been seen as the  
62 principal reason for the commitment process (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982).

63 Porter and his peers while offering a different view of commitment, continued with the Becker's assumptions,  
64 which is the strong link between turnover and commitment. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) suggested in the same  
65 line that the first element focuses on the psychological basis to affection and the other two are the outcome of  
66 commitment rather than background of commitment.

67 The tool designed to measure OC centred on the approach of Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian is recognised  
68 as the OCQ (Organisational Commitment Questionnaire). It is determined by the threedimensional explanation  
69 aforementioned, though in practicable, many scholars use this tool as onedimensional tool. Critics of the OCQ  
70 suggested that some items of the OCQ are tied to turnover goals or performance goals and that all of the  
71 declarations are more reflective of behavioural intentions than attitudes (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Contrary,  
72 supporters of OCQ suggested that the will to perform actions in support of an enterprise reflects than just a  
73 mind-set rather than behavioural intentions, and therefore, elements as the ones above replicate the behavioural  
74 approach of OCQ (Mowday et al.,1982). Mowday et al (1979) therefore believed that commitment represents a  
75 mere passive employee's loyalty to his enterprise and in reality represents an active connection among workers  
76 and their organisation. So strong is this that employee are willing to give more of themselves so as to add to the  
77 organisation's effectiveness. Hence, commitment could be seen not from expression of an employee's belief and  
78 opinion but also from their actions within their organisation.

79 c) The third era: the multi-dimensional approaches Becker (1960) and Porter (1974) theories belonged all to  
80 the one-dimension era, after them, two leading multidimensional views were brought forth in 1980s, one from  
81 O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and from Meyer and Allen (1984).

82 Other multidimensional approaches existed, but these had much less impact than the two main ones  
83 (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002).

### 84 6 i. Organisational Commitment as Moral, Calculative, and 85 Alienative Attachment

86 The commitment of persons to their enterprises was profoundly investigated by Etzioni (1961) as well. It was  
87 based on his work that Penley & Gould (1988) created a commitment model consisting of three components.  
88 These three dimensions identified here are moral, calculative, and alienative commitments. The acceptance of  
89 and or identification with an enterprise goals is moral commitment. When an individual or worker gets incentive  
90 which tie with his contribution, it is called Calculative commitment. Alienative commitment results when the  
91 individual no longer receives compensations commensurate with his efforts, and yet he remains. Causes of staying  
92 are to be searched among external circumstances: absence of different job options, potential considerable financial  
93 loss resulting from quitting, and so on.

94 Penley & Gould (1988) sought to integrate and instrumental commitments into a single commitment model.  
95 They included calculative commitment into the instrumental category based on its exchange-based logic: the  
96 employee receives inducements from the organisation in exchange for his contributions. Contrarily, moral and  
97 alienative commitments can be tied with the affective type of commitment. According to the authors, the  
98 way moral commitment is associated with alienative commitment is similar to the relationship between job  
99 dissatisfaction and job satisfaction by Herzberg (1987). Implying that, they don't represent the two extremes of  
100 a dimension. Instead, the contrary of moral commitment is the absence of moral commitment instead of alienative

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101 commitment, and, likewise, the contrary of alienative commitment is the absence of alienative commitment instead  
102 of moral commitment.

103 As far as the consequence of commitment is concerned, the authors found that moral commitment has positive  
104 and significant correlations with the will to maintain organisational membership and job involvement, calculative  
105 commitment with two types of ii. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) Their approach was based on what  
106 they considered as problematic in commitment, which is the inability to differentiate between the different  
107 backgrounds of commitment and their results (consequences) and again, the roots of their attachment on the other.  
108 Commitment was defined by O'Reilly and Chatman as the mental connection felt by a person for his organisation,  
109 replicating the level to that which the person embraces the characteristics or perspectives of the enterprise. They  
110 suggested that the psychological attachment of a person could be determined by three autonomous factors: ?  
111 compliance or extrinsic rewards ? identification ? Internalisation or involvement based on the similarity between  
112 a person and the value of his organisation.

113 Conceptually, these two authors gave a clear differentiation amongst the two commitment processes that is the  
114 psychological attachment and instrumental exchange. The compliance facet that signifies the exchange process  
115 leads to a slightly shallower attachment to the enterprise. The strongest attachment as per these two authors  
116 (O'Reilly and Chatman) is the psychological attachment shaped by the two other facets, which are internalisation  
117 and identification.

118 They also pointed out the link concerning OC and its outcome. While previous approaches (Becker, 1960; Porter  
119 et al., 1974) emphasized commitment as the main determinant of turnover, O'Reilly and Chatman suggested that  
120 the psychological attachment of an individual can lead to different behaviours and pointed out that organisational  
121 citizenship behaviour (OCB) is an important outcome of commitment. This argument was included in the  
122 conceptualisation brought out here. Some few problems have been pointed out by studies that applied the scale  
123 of O'Reilly and Chatman. These authors, Vandenberg, Self, and Sep (1994), established that the identification  
124 facet added nothing from the captured explanations made from the OCQ. Others (Bennett & Durkin, 2000)  
125 concluded quite correctly that internalisation and identification appear to be tapping similar constructs and that  
126 the compliance facet cannot reflect psychological attachment to one's enterprise (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer  
127 & Herscovitch, 2001). In summary, O'Reilly and Chatman brought out a fascinating look to commitment, but  
128 because of the questionability of its operationalisation, limited researchers have followed this approach. Instead,  
129 the approach by Meyer and Allen (1984) became the dominant one in the field of commitment.

## 130 7 d) Three-Component Conceptualisation Model of

131 Organisational Commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) These authors defined organisational  
132 commitment as "the psychological relationship between workers and their organisation that makes it difficult for  
133 the workers to voluntarily quit their organisations (Allen and Meyer 1990). Allen and Meyer first identified two  
134 dimension of organisational commitment; affective attachment and cost attachment. After continued research,  
135 Meyer and Allen identified another dimension which was obligation.

136 The three distinct components of organisational commitment identified by these authors were termed affective  
137 orientation or affective commitment, costbased orientation or continuance commitment, obligation (moral),  
138 responsibility or normative commitment.

139 ? Affective commitment; it refers to a worker continuing to work for an entity because of the emotional  
140 attachment of the worker to, identification with and involvement in the entity (Allen and Meyer 1990). Example,  
141 a person can be proud to belong to enterprise Q and whole heartedly wants enterprise Q to succeed. Employees  
142 having tough affective commitment stay with an enterprise because they want to. ? Continuance commitment; it  
143 is the commitment that is grounded on the cost that is tied with quitting a specific organisation. The potential  
144 cost of quitting an organisation includes threats of wasting effort and time in acquiring non-transferable skills,  
145 losing attractive benefits, leaving behind privileges due to seniority or to disrupt personal relationship and to  
146 up root family. Apart from all these continuance commitment can also be developed because of the absence of  
147 different employment chances. Workers who are tied to their organisation based on continuance commitment  
148 continue because they need to. ? Normative commitment; it refers to the workers' perceived obligation to continue  
149 with their enterprises. Wiener (1982) suggested that the sense of obligation to continue with an enterprise might  
150 result from internalisation or normative pressure applied on a person before the person entered to the enterprise  
151 (family, cultural orientation) or following entry (organisational orientation). Normative commitment might come  
152 forth when an organisation gives the worker "advance reward" (paying college tuition) or incur significant cost  
153 in providing employment (cost tied with job training). For instance, a person can feel attached or indebted to  
154 an entity because the entity had paid for the education of the person. Employees having a commitment were  
155 developed as per the different antecedents. Antecedent of affective commitment: Meyer & Allen (1991) developed  
156 three categories of antecedents to organisational commitment which are; personal characteristics, organisational  
157 organisation and work experience. ? Personal characteristics; personal characteristics are variables that define  
158 an individual (Steers, 1977). These characteristics which are the need for achievement, affiliation and autonomy  
159 as well as need for achievement and interest of an individual at his job site have been found to correlate with  
160 commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991, Steer, 1997).

161 Meyer and Allen (1991) stated that individuals who chose their work to be compatible with their personal  
162 characteristics should have a positive attitude than those employees whose job does not tie with their personal

163 characteristics. ? Organisational Structure; Few research have scrutinised the link between organisational  
164 structure and commitment (Glisson and Durick, 1988). None the less they are some evidence that affective  
165 commitment is linked to decentralisation of decision (Brooke, Russell and Price 1988) and formalisation of  
166 policies and procedures (Meyer and Allen, 1991). ? Work experience; Buchanan (1974) suggested that work  
167 experiences are major socialisation force and this represent an important psychological ties created inside an  
168 enterprise. Employee whose experiences within an organisation are the same as their expectation and that  
169 gratify the employees fundamental need are more inclined to develop a tougher affective commitment to their  
170 enterprise than the workers with less satisfying work experiences (Meyer et al 2002). Meyer and Allen (1991)  
171 believe that this work experience variable can be separated in two categories: those that satisfy employee's need to  
172 feel psychological and physical comfortable in their enterprise (comfort) and those that contributed to employees'  
173 feeling of competence in their job role (competence).

174 Variable correlating with affective commitment in comfort category include confirmation of pre-entry  
175 expectation, equitable reward, organisational dependability and support, no conflict and role clearness (Allen  
176 and Meyer, 1990). Factors in the competence related experiences include accomplishment, autonomy, scope of  
177 the job and challenges, opportunity for advancement, taking part in making and personal significance to the  
178 enterprise(Allen and Meyer, 1990).

### 179 **8 Antecedent of continuance commitment:**

180 It is associated to an employee's realisation of what will cost the employee to quite his/her organisation; whatever  
181 that can increase perceived cost can be considered antecedence (Meyer and Allen, 1991). The most frequently  
182 studied antecedence has been side bet, or investment and the readiness of alternative job prospect. ? Side  
183 bet/Investment: Backer (1960) proposed that a person has commitment for his organisation when the person  
184 makes site bets and the person continues with the organisation because of the fear to lose side bets. The side bets  
185 are in different forms and may be related to one's job or not (Meyer and Allen, 1991). ??usult and Farrel (1983)  
186 had similar view point in their investment model as Meyer & Allen, which shows how commitment to organisations  
187 will rise as the degree of the worker's investment within that organisation increases. ? Availability of alternatives:  
188 Meyer & Allen (1991) state that continues commitment will grow as a result of absence of different employment  
189 opportunities, so the absence of job availability is an antecedent to continuance commitment. Antecedent of  
190 norminative commitment: Wiener (1982) suggested that when an employee if felling obliged to stay in his/her  
191 organisation it may be as a result of the internationalisation of norminative pressure exercised on a person  
192 before the person entered the organisation (that is, familial or cultural socialisation) or following entry (that  
193 is organisational socialisation). Norminative commitments may also develop, however, when an organisation  
194 provide the worker with "advance reward" (example paying tuition, or incur significant budget connected with  
195 training the employees). Reorganisation of these investments as for what concerns the employee/organisation  
196 relation may cause employee to feel an obligation to reciprocate by being committed to his/her organisation till  
197 the moment when the debt will be repaid ??Scholl, R.W. 1981).

198 The antecedence of the three component model of Allen & Meyer (1990) are listed in the figure below.

199 Source: Researcher's own construction adapted from Meyer and Allen (1991) Meyer & Allen and their peers  
200 were conscious of certain hitches connected to their three-dimensional scales. Throughout the years, some  
201 variations in the scales were proposed and tested. For example, a six item version of the scale was brought  
202 to light, the normative scale was reviewed and proposed, and the continuance scale was brought forth to have  
203 two dimensions . Subsequently, major revisions in the scale of continuance commitment were advanced (Powell  
204 & Meyer, 2004). Though all this variations in the scale increased certain psychometric properties, it consists of  
205 a great problem for researchers as per of which scale (version) is to be used.

206 page 68

### 207 **9 III.**

## 208 **10 Conclusion**

209 The work was aimed at bringing out the key theories underpinning the different views of the concepts commitment.  
210 It was done by presenting the evolution of commitment theories. These theories presented and examined will go  
211 a long way to widen the understanding of the said concept, therein given employers and managers a hold of this  
212 concept. The understanding of commitment is very essential for the growth of enterprises, a committed employee  
213 is a happy employee, therefore motivated and satisfied. <sup>1</sup>

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## 10 CONCLUSION

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