



ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF SCHOLARS IN TURKISH PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Organizational commitment, has recently started to receive increased attention from scholars. Organizational commitment is considered to be an important concept with respect to ensuring the continuity of businesses and the motivation of employees. As such, evaluating the commitment of scholars to their universities is important from the standpoint of both these institutions and the scholars themselves. To this end, this study investigated the organizational commitment of scholars employed in a number of public universities, utilizing the scale described in the study of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). Within the scope of this study, the scale was applied to 278 individuals working in 42 public universities in Turkey. Kruskal Wallis test was employed to assess whether there was any statistically significant difference between the groups with respect to their affective, continuance and normative components of commitment, which together constitute organizational commitment. In addition, Mann Whitney U-test was employed to assess whether there was any statistically significant difference between female and male respondents with respect to affective, continuance and normative components of commitment. The results of the analysis revealed that a statistically significant difference was identified between the female and male groups with respect to continuance commitment.

Keywords: Higher Education, Organizational Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Scholars

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1. INTRODUCTION

The attitudes of employees towards their work is closely related to the level of their job satisfaction. If an employee is satisfied with the work he/she performs, it will be more likely for her/him to continue her/his career within her/his current organization. Thus, job satisfaction is an important aspect for organizations (Hodgetts, 1991).

It is possible for individuals to be satisfied with their work, or to perceive their work as being entertaining; however, this situation does not guarantee that the worker's sentiments towards his/her organization will be positive. Similarly, individuals might think that their current workplace is perfect, and yet be unsatisfied with the work they are performing. For this reason, to gain an understanding of such cases, it is necessary to look beyond job satisfaction and to turn to the concept of "organizational commitment" when describing these situations. Organizational commitment is defined as the extent to which individuals associate and identify themselves with the organization in which they are working, as well as their level of unwillingness to leave the organization, and may also depend on his/her colleagues, subordinates, superiors, customers or upper management. Hence, organizational commitment may vary from one individual to another (Greenberg & Baron, 1996).

An evaluation of previous studies investigating the basis of the commitment towards an organization revealed two different approaches: the side-bets orientation and the goal congruence orientation. Previous studies have, on the whole, been carried out within the frame of these approaches, and three types of commitment have been proposed; these are being continuance commitment, affective commitment and normative commitment. The continuance commitment was developed based on the side-bets orientation approach, being defined as commitment associated with an individual's need to continue his/her current work due to financial reasons and difficulties. Affective commitment was developed based on the goal congruence organization approach, and is refers to the commitment resulting from an individual's willingness to work for his/her current organization. Finally, normative commitment is defined as the commitment resulting from social pressures on the individual (Greenberg & Baron, 1996).



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational commitment made its first appearance in the field of organizational behavior in the 1970s, and it is believed that the subject was overlooked in the first half of the 20th century was due to the prevailing *scientific management* approach of the time, which generally promoted a negative and unfavorable approach to workers. However, towards the beginning of the 1930s, the Hawthorne Studies conducted under the lead of Elton Mayo changed these attitudes towards workers, and emphasized the importance of taking their social and psychological well-being into consideration (Hodgetts, 1991). Studies into the subject of organizational commitment only started to become particularly prevalent in the 2000s.

Studies into organizational commitment have generally evaluated its relationship with job satisfaction, corporate culture and organizational justice, while a number of field studies have sought to better assess and describe the subject based on particular findings and observations. London and Howat (1979) in their study of 49 companies in Illinois, US, determined that organizational commitment was associated with salary, age and the number of children. They also found negative correlation between organizational commitment and professional commitment (London & Howat, 1979). Furthermore, a 1974 study by Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian investigated organizational commitment, job satisfaction and labor turnover among psychiatry technicians, and based on the results, it was determined that organizational commitment was more of a predictor of labor turnover than an indicator of job satisfaction (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974).

Organizational commitment in universities and research institutions has recently started to attract growing attention. For example Choong, Wong and Lau (2012) investigated the organizational commitment of 247 academicians working in private universities in Malaysia, and identified a close relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. In addition, among the four cognitive aspects of psychological empowerment, they only found impact cognition had a direct contribution to organizational commitment. The study thus identified that managers willingness to support their subordinates psychologically could increase their commitment by giving employees the opportunity to determine their own working methods and approaches (Choong, Wong & Lau,



2012). Another study of academicians was conducted by Mohammed, Othnam and D'Silva (2012). Their analysis of 151 lecturers working in public universities in Nigeria sought to investigate the relationship between leadership types and organizational commitment using a random sampling method, and they were able to identify a relationship between leadership types and organizational commitment. They concluded that transformational leaders are most affective in creating organization commitment among employees (Mohammed, Othnam & D'Silva, 2012).

A number of studies similar to those mentioned above have been conducted in Turkey to assess organizational commitment. In a study by Çöl and Gül (2005), questionnaires were administered to 403 academicians and 222 administrative staff from 13 public universities. The responses of scholars and administrative staff were analyzed separately, and the effects of personal characteristics on affective, normative and continuance commitment were compared. The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between personal characteristics (age, education level, duration of service and salary) and the different types of organizational commitment. The results revealed that the age and duration of service variables did not affect the organizational commitment of academicians and administrative personnel. However they found that the education level and academic standing of academicians had a negative correlation with affective and normative commitment to university. Salary increases were also found to improve affective commitment, while decreasing the continuance commitment. Therefore, an increase in salary results in an increase in the affective and normative commitments (desirable forms of commitment for organizations) of both academicians and administrative personnel. In brief, employees with higher salaries not only display a greater affective commitment to their university, but also consider it an ethical obligation to remain within the organization that has allowed them to obtain a higher salary (Çöl & Gül, 2005).

Another study into the organizational commitment of academicians was carried out by Boylu, Pelit and Güçer (2007). They utilized, the "Organizational Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer and Allen and administered their survey to 366 academicians, in an attempt to investigate the organizational commitment level of academicians through an evaluation of the three aspects of commitment, namely affective, continuance and normative commitments. The study also investigated whether the commitment level of academicians



varied according to gender, marital status, age, academic title, duration of work and their department. Based on the results of the study, it was determined that, in corroboration with previous studies, the most prominent form of commitment among academicians was their affective commitment, followed by their normative and continuance commitments. Furthermore, married academicians were generally determined to have a higher affective commitment to their university than single academicians, while professors were found to have lower organizational commitment than research assistants. The study also found that academicians tend to have a stronger affective commitment towards the specific department they work than their overall commitment to the university they are associated (Boylu, Pelit & Güçer, 2007).

Another study conducted by Bozkurt and Yurt (2013) evaluated the organizational commitment of academic personnel working at Duzce University, and attempted to determine the organizational commitment types (normative, continuance and affective commitments) of the participants. Their study also investigated the impact of demographic characteristics such as age, academic title, seniority and education on organizational commitment. The results of the study showed that the academic staff had generally a high level of commitment to their organization/institution, mainly due to the affective commitment aspect. The least prominent form of commitment among the participants was continuance, which represents the form of commitment based on financial concerns. Based on the analyses performed during this study, it was determined in a manner similar to Boylu, Pelit and Güçer's (2007) study that married individuals tended to display greater organizational commitment than single people. Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that those who had recently begun working at the institution (0–6 years) and those who had been working for over 11 years had stronger normative commitment than those who have been working between 6–11 years. However no significant difference was identified between these three groups with respect to the other aspects of organizational commitment (i.e. the affective and continuance commitments) (Bozkurt & Yurt, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this paper is to investigate organization commitment of scholars employed in public universities. The study adopted the organizational commitment scale

developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). This scale is based on the assumption that workers display affective, continuance and normative commitment towards their organization, and comprises 18 questions based on these three dimensions. The questions were translated and adapted into Turkish, and pilot tested on 20 scholars were then carried out with the scale. Based on pilot tests, necessary adjustments were made and the scale was converted into a four-point scale comprising three dimensions. The possible answers to each question were as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, (4), strongly agree. The questionnaire also included demographic questions requesting information on gender, marital status and total work experience of the participants.

The study sample consisted of scholars employed in public universities in Turkey, who were invited to fill-out the online survey through a formal e-mail from the researchers. The participation was voluntary and questionnaire was completed by 278 participants from 42 public universities in Turkey.

4. FINDINGS

First descriptive statistics were analyzed in order to have a general overview of the sample profile and characteristics. Table 1 shows the division of gender of the study participants.

Table 1. Percentage Frequency Distribution with respect to the Gender Variable

Gender	Percentage Frequency
Female	51.1
Male	48.9

54.7 percent of the study participants were aged 25–34. Table 2 presents the percentage frequencies of age groups among the study participants.

Table 2. Percentage Frequency Distribution with respect to Age

Age Range	Percentage Frequency
24 and below	2.9
25–34	54.7
35–44	25.5
45–54	14.0
55–64	2.5
65 and above	0.4



Table 2 indicates that 83.1 percent of the participants were between the ages of 24 and 44. Data on the work experience of the study participants is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage Frequency Distribution with respect to Experience

Total Work Experience	Percentage Frequency
Less than 1 year	7.6
1–5 years	45.3
6–10 years	17.3
11–20 years	18.7
More than 20 years	11.2

Table 3 indicates that 70.2 percent of the study participants had between 0–10 years of work experience. On the other hand, an evaluation of the participants' academic titles indicates that 118 were research assistants.

Table 4. Percentage Frequency Distribution with respect to the Academic Title

Academic Title	Percentage Frequency
Professor	8.6
Associate Professor	10.8
Assistant Professor	27.7
Research Assistant	42.2
Lecturer	9.7
Expert	0.7

Table 4 indicates that 69.9 percent of the study participants were assistant professors and research assistants.

The reliability of the scale dimensions was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which is computed as an average of the inter-correlations of the items measuring organizational commitment. This coefficient has a value between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a higher reliability for the scale (Sekaran, 2003).

**Table 5. Results of Reliability Analysis**

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Affective Commitment	0.772
Continuance Commitment	0.713
Normative Commitment	0.704

Table 5 presents the internal consistency coefficient of each dimension included in the scale. The values for these dimensions were all above 0.7, which indicates that the scale was reliable (Durmuş, Yurtkoru & Çinko, 2011).

Hypothesis tests were then applied on the affective, continuance and normative commitment dimensions forming the scale. The hypothesis tests are evaluated for two groups, being parametric and non-parametric. An important consideration at this stage was the selection of a suitable test. Therefore we investigated whether the data for these dimensions satisfied the basic assumptions for parametric tests. Based on the obtained data, as the data was not normally distributed, we opted to employ non-parametric tests.

Mann Whitney U-test was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the female and male groups with respect to their affective, continuance and normative commitment ratings, which together constitute organizational commitment. This test uses the median – one of the main instruments for measuring the tendencies between two independent groups – to determine the presence or absence of statistical significance (Israel, 2008). The null hypothesis shows the indifference.

Table 6. Results of the Mann Whitney U-Test

	Probability Value
Affective Commitment	0.078
Continuance Commitment	0.017
Normative Commitment	0.936

Table 6 shows that there are significant differences among male and female respondents based on their ratings on continuance commitment. The level of differences among male and female participants on their affective and normative commitment on the other hand were insignificant at $p=0.05$ level.



Table 7. Descriptive Statistics Regarding the Continuance Commitment

Gender of Participants	Mean Rank
Female	128.18
Male	150.35

Table 7 shows the mean ranks related to the continuance commitment of the two genders. Continuance commitment refers to the form of commitment stemming from financial concerns of employees. In this context, it was observed that the male participants had a higher continuance commitment.

Kruskal Wallis test was employed to assess whether there were statistically significant differences between the groups with respect to their affective, continuance and normative commitment components, which together constitute organizational commitment. This test is the non-parametric counterpart of a parametric variance tests. Kruskal Wallis test assesses whether three or more independent groups actually constitute the same population (Israel, 2008). The null hypothesis of this test demonstrates the absence of differences between the groups with respect to the relevant variables.

Table 8. Results of the Kruskal Wallis Test

With respect to Age Groups	Probability Value
Affective Commitment	0.028
Continuance Commitment	0.177
Normative Commitment	0.002

With respect to Work Experience	Probability Value
Affective Commitment	0.004
Continuance Commitment	0.193
Normative Commitment	0.170

With respect to Academic Title	Probability Value
Affective Commitment	0.160
Continuance Commitment	0.344
Normative Commitment	0.186

Table 8 shows that a level significance below 0.05 was obtained for the affective and normative commitment variables between the different age groups, which can be construed as statistically significant. In addition to this, a statistically significant difference was identified between groups of different works experience in terms of their affective commitment. Based

on the obtained data, it was observed that increasing work experience was associated with increasing affective commitment, while increasing age was associated with decreasing normative commitment. These findings illustrate that the more time spent in an organization, the more an individual feels compelled for affective reasons to remain in their organization. In other words, longer a person spends in a given workplace, the greater their willingness to remain in the same institution. The findings also demonstrate that normative commitment – which stems from social pressures that oblige a worker to remain in his/her organization – decreases with increasing staff age. This further indicates that with increasing age, individuals became less sensitive to pressures from his/her social environment. Based on the analyses of all three types of commitments, academic titles were found to have insignificant differences in commitment levels. This indicates that the commitment of scholars to their organization is not affected by their academic titles.

6. CONCLUSION

Organizational commitment, which is defined as the extent to which individuals associate and identify themselves with the organization in which they work, as well as their level of unwillingness to leave their organization, is of considerable importance for both organizations and workers alike. The long term success of any organization depends on their employees commitment to their organization.

This study has assessed the affective, continuance and normative commitment levels of scholars working in public universities in Turkey by using the organizational commitment scale first developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). In this context, the survey was send by electronic mail to potential respondents, and was completed by 278 scholars from 42 universities. Non-parametric tests were applied to the obtained data, and based on the results, a statistically significant difference was identified between the female and male groups with respect to continuance commitment. Continuance commitment can stem from financial needs, and from the fear of becoming deprived of income and financial means after leaving a job/work, and was found to be higher among males. This might stem from the fact that social roles associated with males in the cultural context. In addition, a statistically significant difference was identified between different age groups with respect to their affective and normative commitments.



Based on the performed analyses, it was determined that the longer the experience of employees in an organization the higher the affective commitment, while increasing age was associated with lower normative commitment, as a consequence of social pressures and factors. In addition, an evaluation of the relationship between academic title and organizational commitment indicated that none of the three forms of commitment had any significant difference based on academic title. In other words, no significant difference was identified between the academic titles of individuals and their affective, normative and continuance commitments. Future studies examining scholars' organizational commitment in both public and private universities might also reveal interesting findings.

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