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Content Overview

Are you committed? To what? How do you define commitment? How can you differentiate it from engagement? What are the antecedents of commitment? What are the consequences of commitment? Is commitment different by culture? How can you measure commitment? This book, *Handbook of Employee Commitment*, can answer them all. This handbook was edited by John P. Meyer at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. Dr. Meyer and his colleague, Natalie Allen, developed the most frequently used measure of organizational commitment known as three component model (TCM): (a) affective commitment, (b) normative commitment, and (c) continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Organizational commitment is regarded as one of the most important constructs not only in HRD but also in OD field. The effect of organizational commitment on employee performance and organizational effectiveness has prompted much interest among researchers for several decades. Organizational commitment is defined as “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1990, p. 67). The unidimensional behavioral perspective on commitment emerged in the 1960s and continued in the 1970s. Mowday et al. (1982) developed the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) as a unidimensional affective construct. Later, Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed and validated their measure based on a three component model (TCM): (a) affective commitment, (b) normative commitment, and (c) continuance commitment. Commitment research has been incorporated into a broad range of theories including leadership, strategic human resource management, organizational trust and justice, employee engagement, stress and well-being, and the like as a key outcome, moderator and/or mediator (p. xiii).

Evaluation

This handbook consists of seven parts excluding an introduction (Chapter 1) and conclusion (Chapter 36). The authors of Part 1 discuss conceptualization and transition of commitment, including the construct dimensionality issue between unidimensional (Chapter 2) and multidimensional (Chapter 3). Traditionally the concept of commitment was unidimensional until Porter et al., (1974) defined commitment as three factors: belief in and acceptance of goals and values; willingness to exert effort; strong desire to maintain membership (p. 15). More
recently, Klein et al.’s unidimensional target-free (KUT) model was introduced (Klein et al., 2014). A typical multidimensional model is TCM (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

The authors in Part 2 provide relevant and similar constructs such as employee attachment (Chapter 5), employee engagement (Chapter 6), job embeddedness (Chapter 7), organizational identification (Chapter 8), and psychological contracts (Chapter 9). The differences and similarities among these constructs are thoroughly investigated. Job embeddedness, which is relevant to continuation commitment, is the combination of forces that keep one from leaving the job, capturing a broad set of factors that affect retention. Based on social identity theory, organizational identification is theoretically linked to the affective component of organizational commitment. Psychological contracts refer to an employee’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the employee and the employer (p. 119). Last, employee engagement has gained its popularity initially in the practice, consulting industry. For this reason, commitment and engagement often are confused and interchangeably used in the practitioner-oriented journals. Despite many emerging similar constructs, the editor and authors in this handbook agree that commitment theory is alive and well (p. 511).

In Part 3, diverse foci of commitment are discussed. In its inception, organizational commitment reflects a psychological bond that an individual identifies with an organization. Over time, the foci of commitment have expanded to within organization (e.g., co-worker, leader, top management; division), and even external to the organization (e.g., customer, client, career, profession, unions, and community). Specifically, the authors examined the concepts and research on occupational commitment (Chapter 10), social commitment (Chapter 11), union commitment (Chapter 12), and action commitment (Chapter 13).

From Part 4 on, the focus is on organizational commitment. In Part 4, based on the extant literature, the consequences of commitment such as performance, employee turnover, well-being, counterproductive work behaviors, and affective consequences (e.g., job satisfaction, well-being, motivation) are examined. The authors in this part examine turnover (Chapter 14); in-role/extra-role performance (Chapter 15), counterproductive behaviors (Chapter 16), employee well-being (Chapter 17); and other affective outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, negative affect, and so on (Chapter 18).

In Part 5, the authors discuss drivers or antecedents of organizational commitment: individual differences; person-environment (P-O) fit; leadership; empowerment; perceived organizational support (POS); organizational justice. Specifically, this part examines demographic and personality variables including Big-5 personality (Chapter 19); social influences (e.g., LMX, POS, psychological contracts) (Chapter 20 and 24); human resource practices (e.g., learning and development, empowerment) (Chapter 21 and 23); organizational leadership (Chapter 22); and organizational justice (Chapter 25).

The authors in Part 6 report the key features of commitment in diverse cultures (Chapter 26) including Europe (Chapter 27), China (Chapter 28), India (Chapter 29), Middle East (Chapter 30), and Latin America (Chapter 31).

Last, Part 7 examines diverse methodological issues involved in commitment research for future research. The authors suggest advances in methodology and analysis: the procedures for testing for invariance (Chapter 32); the use of latent growth modeling analyses (Chapter 33); the use of temporal process approach to the investigation of the development and consequences of commitment (Chapter 34); the application of a person-centered research strategy (Chapter 35).

**Recommendation**

The editor and the authors in this handbook are experts who have been involved in employee commitment research for many years. I believe this book attained its goal as the editor proposed in the preface. If you had to buy one book about commitment, I would not hesitate to recommend this book. Unlike many other edited books that lack organization with omissions and redundancies, I believe the editor has done a nice job incorporating diverse topics in a mutually exclusively and collectively exhaustive way. Moreover, each chapter is succinct and to the point. On average, each chapter is about 16 pages (36 chapters with 576 pages), but contains the most important contents.

This handbook will be beneficial not only for researchers but also for practitioners and students. For the researchers and doctoral students who are looking for research ideas, the experts in the field outline what they consider to be the biggest gaps in our understanding of commitment and describe the latest tools at our dispos-
al for addressing those gaps. For practitioners interested in the *business case* for investments in commitment and/or looking for guidance in developing an evidence-based approach to fostering commitment (p. xiii), chapters on the antecedents and consequences would be beneficial. To give you an additional tip, if you don’t have much time, you may want to read the last chapter first. Chapter 36, written by the editor, is a good summary of the whole book. You can start from there and choose the topic of your interests. Last, I thank the editor and authors for this comprehensive, well-organized, and resourceful book of employee commitment. As an author who published several empirical articles on organizational commitment on major HRD journals, it is my privilege to introduce this book to the potential readers in the field of HRD.

**References**


