

Organizational Commitment: Status Quo in Qatar

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A b s t r a c t

Qatar is a fast growing economy which is largely dependent on expatriate labour. This creates a unique situation that affects organizational commitment. This research focusses on understanding the relationship between the job characteristics and organizational commitment. The first of its kind of study in Qatar, it presents the relationships among various job characteristics and the dimensions of organizational commitment. The study provides good support for the predictive effect of job characteristics on organizational commitment, indicating that enriching jobs through changing the four core job dimensions would have a positive effect on employees' organizational commitment.

Key words:

Organizational Commitment, Job Characteristics, Qatar, and Psychological Contract.



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Organizational commitment (OC) refers to the nature of an individual's attachment to an organization. According to Guest (1995), organizational commitment is at the heart of Human Resource Management and is a central feature that distinguishes HRM from traditional personnel management. Although OC has been the topic of numerous published investigations, and has received a great deal of scrutiny over the years, researchers have not always conceptualised the construct in a similar manner (Dunham et al., 1994; Randall, 1993).

OC is closely related to intent to remain and retention, and can be defined as an "individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Crewson, 1997), and "the strength of a person's attachment to the organization" (Grusky, 1966). OC has been operationalized as a combination of three distinct factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, eagerness to work hard for the organization, and desire to remain a member of the organization (Grusky, 1966).

Organizational Commitment (OC) has emerged as one of the most important variables in the study of management and

organizational behaviour, but Morris et al (1993), stated that “it is commonly noted that consensus over the definition of commitment does not exist.” Suliman and Iles (2000) added that despite the plethora of studies of organizational commitment, and its nature, antecedents, consequences, and correlates, the issue remains ill-defined and ill-conceptualised.

Although there are many definitions of OC and many ways to measure it, the most widely recognized definition comes from Porter and his colleagues in 1974 and a classic text on the subject by Mowday et al (1982). It has been defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Porter et al 1974; Crewson 1997), and ‘the strength of a person’s attachment to the organization’ (Grusky, 1966; Mowday et al 1982; Steers, 1977). Therefore, Mowday et al (1982) and Crewson (1997) summarized that organizational commitment has been operationalized as a combination of three common components:

1. A strong desire to remain a member of the organization (loyalty).
2. Willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization (involvement).
3. A strong belief and acceptance of the organization’s values and goals (identification).

The first two components can be related to employee motivation to produce or perform and the third component can be related to employee motivation to participate (March and Simon, 1958). These three characteristics show that commitment is not only an attitude, but also behaviour.

Qatar’s proven reserves of natural gas exceed 25 trillion cubic meters; more than five percent of the world total and third largest in the world. Thus, Qatari economy is primarily based on the production and export of crude oil and other hydrocarbons such as liquefied natural gas, condensate, propane, and other natural gas liquids. Qatar’s rapid economic growth has seen it attain one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. But, the state of Qatar is a capital rich state suffering from severely limited indigenous human resources. As the development plans of the country are ambitious on the agricultural, financial and industrial fronts, the country has been largely depending on migrant manpower. The country employs large labour forces from the Indian subcontinent,

the Far East, and from relatively less rich Arab countries. This has led to a situation where most organizations in the public and private sectors in Qatar often comprise many different nationalities - each individual having his/her own role perception, attitudes toward other nationalities, cultural orientation and educational background. This creates a multicultural work environment, which affects the attitude and the behaviour of the workforce in Qatar. Thus, there is a need for an empirical study to uncover the factors affecting organizational commitment, and this study will represent one of the first studies in this field.

The Three Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Several forms of organizational commitment have been identified in the literature. Some researchers have defined commitment as *behavioural* commitment (Salanick, 1977) or *attitudinal* commitment (Mowday et al., 1982). The most common classification that has been widely used is Meyer and Allen (1991) classification of organization commitment that comprises affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. They stated that when all these three types of commitment are taken into consideration, an individual’s relationship with his/her organization can be understood better. When these commitment types increase, an individual’s desire to stay in his organization rises as well. The three components should not be seen as mutually exclusive types of commitment, but as components that can variously co-exist; that is, a person’s commitment can be based upon one, two, or all three reasons.

Each of the three aspects of commitment is thought to contribute to a psychological state which characterizes an employee’s relationship with the organization, and has implications for their continuing membership, and may be affected by different antecedents or have potentially different consequences with regard to absenteeism, job performance, citizenship, and other topics (Reichers, 1985; Meyer and Allen, 1991, 1993).

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is the employee’s attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Mowday et al (1979, 1982) characterized affective

commitment in their definition of organizational commitment as entailing “a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.” Affective commitment refers to feelings of belonging and sense of attachment to the organization. Affective commitment has also been referred to as value commitment (Angle and Perry, 1981; Meyer and Schoorman, 1992) or identification commitment (Bar-Hayim and Berman, 1992). The affective commitment dimension has been related to personal characteristics, organizational structures, and work experiences (pay, supervision, role clarity, and skill variety).

Affective commitment happens when the employee has an emotional or psychological commitment and wants to stay with the company. Individuals whose OC is based on affective commitment continue employment with the organization because of their desire to do so; this desire is based on the individual’s degree of identification with the organization and his or her willingness to assist the organization in pursuing its goals (Hackett et al, 1994). Akhtar and Tan (1994) suggested that organizations enhance affective commitment by “improving welfare measures, developing trust between superiors and subordinates, creating conditions for collegial relations in the work place, and other activities that promote feelings of belongingness in the organization.”

Continuance Commitment

This is related to a person’s experience that has been given to an organization, difficulty in giving it up, the cost incurred if he leaves the organization or having few or no alternatives when he leaves the organization. Meyer et al, (1993) stated that skill and education are not easily transferred to other organizations, so they increase workers’ commitment to their own organizations. Those who stay within their organizations with strong continuance commitment are in their organization because they need it (Meyer et al, 1993).

Continuance commitment relates to perceived costs of leaving, both financial and non-financial (Becker, 1960) and perceived lack of alternatives (McGee and Ford 1987; Allen and Meyer 1990). When an employee feels continuance commitment, he or she perceives the cost of leaving the organization as too high (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Some of the potential costs of leaving include lost effort if skills or systems are non-

transferable; disruption associated with changes in family arrangements; and loss of valued, future opportunities.

Continuance commitment increases when an individual invests in an organization or gets benefits from the organization because they will be lost when he or she leaves the organization. Where there is a lack of alternatives, this type of commitment is developed. Akhtar and Tan (1994) indicated that continuance commitment could be increased through “the appropriate use of rewards, job redesign, goal setting, career planning, and organizational goals.” Shouksmith (1994) suggested that one of the ways to enhance the probability of continuance commitment would be to increase the possibility for promotion within the organization.

Normative Commitment

According to the normative approach, congruency between an employee’s goals and values and organizational aims makes him or her feel obligated to the organization. Normative commitment reflects an individual’s feelings of obligation to stay within an organization, not for personal advantage, but because an individual thinks such behaviour is ethical and right. The commitment, which develops as a result of socialization, shows an individual’s loyalty to his or her employer. Those who have a strong normative commitment stay in their organizations just because they feel obliged to do so (Meyer et al, 1993). This sense of obligation is based on what Wiener (1982) described as generalized cultural expectations that “a man” should not change his job too often or “he” may be labelled untrustworthy and erratic.

Normative commitment can increase when people feel loyal to their employer or responsible to work for the benefits that they get from the organization (e.g.; training of skills, payment of study costs, and consideration of special needs (forgiveness for missed deadlines due to family commitments) as a result of the desire to compensate the favours received from the institution (Meyer et al, 1993). Normative commitment may last only until the “debt” is perceived to be paid and hence is subject to rationalization if other circumstances change (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Akhtar and Tan (1994) suggested that normative commitment could be promoted through “proper selection of employees, job previews, induction training, and organizational socialization.” This could help to match organizational and

employee expectations as well as facilitate the entry of new employees.

Job Characteristics and the Three Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Many researchers argued that organizational commitment is not a function of personal characteristics; rather it is a function of job-related variables (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996; Moon, 2000). In addition, studies concluded that job characteristics are the most important to predict commitment (e.g., Gallie and White, 1993; Peeters and Meijer, 1995). Hackman and Lawler (1971) argue that intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment increase when two elements are present: (1) higher order need strength is salient and (2) employee experience a high degree of skill variety, task identity, task significance, and autonomy.

Past research provides significant support for job characteristics' predictive effects on organizational commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Flynn and Tannenbaum, 1993; Van Dyne et al, 1994; Heywood, 2003). Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972), Hunt et al (1985), Chelte and Tausky (1986), Igbaria et al (1994), Leong et al (1994), and Bhuian et al (2001) also emphasized that job characteristics have a great influence on organizational commitment. Jobs high in skill variety, task identity, autonomy, and feedback on performance may lead to higher organizational commitment.

Despite decades of research on job characteristics, there is a lack of generalizability of research findings concerning their application to organizational commitment in the management research literature. Since employees differ in pay, status, and job conditions, it is likely that they would be committed and satisfied uniquely in an organization. Following this argument, an employee's degree of organizational commitment and job characteristics should vary across different organizations.

In research examining the relationship between job characteristics and organizational commitment, investigators have turned their attention to the notion that the congruence between characteristics of the individual and characteristics of the organization itself can have an impact on attitudes and behaviours (Chatman, 1989). Research examining job characteristics and OC has also referred to the congruence between the individual and the organization as the "person-organization fit." Researchers within the person-job fit

tradition have argued that an experience that is congruent with individual's values or meets their needs will be rewarding to them and, thus, will influence organizational commitment (Heywood, 2003). Other mixed results between job characteristics and organizational commitment were found by other researchers (Johnson et al, 1987; Edwards, 1994; Finegan, 2000; Bhuian et al, 2001).

The Four Core Dimensions of Job Characteristics

Job characteristics have been important to different areas of management research. Perhaps the most widely known job characteristics are those developed by Turner and Lawrence (1965). Hackman and Lawler (1971) reviewed job characteristics and classified the six dimensions of job characteristics into two categories. The first four dimensions were labelled "core dimensions" because they postulated, "... individuals will be able to obtain meaningful personal satisfaction when they perform well on jobs which they experience as high on variety, autonomy, task identity, and feed-back." The last two dimensions are dealing with others and friendship opportunities.

In this study, the four "core dimensions" variables of job characteristics will be investigated coherent with some of the previous research (Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Becherer et al, 1982; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Bhuian and Menguc, 2002; and Schneider, 2003).

Several empirical studies have supported the positive effect of the job characteristics-organizational commitment link. Hunt et al. (1985) found that the four "core dimensions" variables of job characteristics (autonomy, variety, task-identity and feedback) influence the level of an employee's organizational commitment. Likewise, other researchers support the notion that jobs influence strong commitment when they involve a high degree of autonomy, job challenge, and a variety of skills (Steers, 1977; Ramaswami et al, 1993; Dunham et al, 1994; and Heywood, 2003). Other researchers argued that favourable organizational characteristics will induce employees to become committed to the organization through reciprocity. According to Strauss (1977) and Tyagi and Wotruba (1993), when an organization attempts to enrich jobs by providing autonomy, variety, task-identity and feedback in jobs, employees reciprocate by identifying themselves more closely with the organization.

Flynn and Tannenbaum (1993) found that job characteristics demonstrated a strong impact on commitment among private sector managers versus public sector managers. Their explanation is that the common concepts of public sector bureaucracies make public sector managers more tolerant of low autonomy and challenge.

In addition to the positive relationships between job characteristics and OC, some studies theoretically support direct relationships between job characteristics and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For instance, Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991) and Singh (1998) argued that high levels of autonomy, variety, and task-identity in a job can enhance the level of intrinsic motivation by increasing the employee's feeling of accomplishment and self-actualization in performing their work.

Some researchers argue that job characteristics can serve as positive motivational forces that stimulate employees to increase their efforts in better performing their tasks. According to O'Reilly et al, (1980) employees who identify with the organizational goals, value their organizational membership, and intend to work hard to achieve the overall organizational mission (employees with a high level of organizational commitment) will perceive the job characteristics of autonomy, variety, task-identity and feedback as highly motivational and stimulating to their task performance. They added that highly committed employees perceive job characteristics as more stimulating and experience greater job satisfaction, whereas less committed employees view job characteristics as less stimulating and are less satisfied with their jobs.

In the following sections, the four "core dimensions" variables of job characteristics will be explained.

Task Variety

Task variety is defined as the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of employees (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). Much of the literature relevant to task variety is found in discussions of "routinization." Both variety and routinization are concerned with the degree of repetitive work roles. Variety is a nature of work variable in organizations and suggests that certain members within the organization have more (fewer)

opportunities to do more of different things in their work than other members. It is assumed that employees will value task variety rather than high routinization as an attractive outcome to be offered by the organization. Porter and Steers (1973) indicate that "... pressures of increased production or efficiency may result in increased fractionation or routinization of certain jobs. This repetitiveness of task may then contribute, ... to increasing costs through increases in absenteeism and turnover" (p. 162).

Several studies (such as Porter and Steers, 1973; Price and Mueller, 1981; Hunt et al, 1985; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Ramaswami et al, 1993; Bhuian and Menguc, 2002) supported the positive relationship between task variety and organizational commitment and the negative relationship between task variety and turnover.

Degree of Autonomy

"Autonomy is the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion for the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedure to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

It is believed from several studies that a high degree of autonomy is a positive outcome for members of an organization. In addition, it is assumed that individuals will negatively evaluate controls in the form of orders and rules imposed on them by the organization. Therefore, if an organization is characterized by a high degree of autonomy, its members have opportunity for scheduling their work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out and so on. This will positively reflect on the employees' attitude toward their organizations, which, in turn, may increase their commitment and reduce their intention to leave their jobs (Hunt et al, 1985; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Ramaswami et al, 1993; Eby et al, 1999; Bhuian and Menguc, 2002; and Heywood, 2003).

Feedback on Performance

Feedback on performance is defined as "the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the employee obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance" (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). In other words, it is the degree to which employees receive information as they are working that

reveals how well they are performing on the job (Arnold and House, 1980).

Muchinsky and Morrow (1980) reported that the findings of some previous studies had shown that employees are less likely to quit their jobs if they receive feedback and recognition for their work. Allen and Meyer (1990) identified significant relationships between OC and work feedback. Therefore, it is believed that feedback on performance (the clear information employees receive from the supervisors regarding the evaluation of their performance) helps employees to improve their skills and their present and future performance, which will lead to high commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Eby et al, 1999; Bhuian and Menguc, 2002).

Dunham et al (1994) found that when supervisors provided feedback about performance and allowed employees to participate in decision-making, employee levels of affective commitment was stronger than both continuance and normative commitment. However, Schneider (2003) found this variable to have significant relationships with affective and normative commitment. For continuance commitment, a non-significant relationship was found for feedback on performance.

Task Identity

Task identity is considered to be the extent to which employees do an entire or whole piece of work, and can identify with the results of their efforts (Arnold and House, 1980). Several items can be used to measure this variable, such as “how often you see projects or jobs through to completion,” “the degree to which the work you’re involved with is handled from beginning to end by you,” and “the opportunity to complete work you start.”

Researchers such as Strauss (1977), Hackman and Oldham (1976), Hunt et al (1985), Tyagi and Wotruba (1993), and Bhuian and Menguc (2002) agreed that employees’ high task identity will be reflected in their attitudes toward their organizations, which, in turn, may increase their affective commitment to their organizations, which, in turn, may increase their normative commitment also. Thus, employees with higher task identity are likely to have higher levels of commitment to their organizations than other employees.

In Qatar, if employees perceive their needs (e.g. pay, security, variety, and task-identity) to have been fulfilled, they are

likely to be committed to their organizations. Likewise, these Qatari and non-Qatari employees’ positive appraisals of their jobs and job experience would depend on their perceptions of autonomy, variety, task-identity, feedback and other facts of their jobs, which in turn, could indicate employee organizational commitment.

As mentioned in the previous studies, it is expected in Qatar that employees with jobs that require them to perform a wide range of operations and use a variety of equipment and procedures will find their job more attractive and will show higher attachment to the organization, than those whose jobs are less varied. Furthermore, employees’ high task identity will be reflected in their attitudes toward their organizations, which, in turn, may increase their affective commitment to their organizations, which, in turn, may increase their normative commitment also (Bhuian and Menguc, 2002). Additionally, based on Dunham et al, (1994) findings, in Qatar, it is expected that employees who receive a higher amount of feedback on performance (receive clear information about the effectiveness of their performance and recognition for their work) are likely to produce higher levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment than other employees.

Hunt et al (1985) found the four “core dimensions” variables of job characteristics positively influence the level of an employee’s organizational commitment. Ramaswami et al (1993) and Naumann (1993) provided similar support for the direct influence of autonomy, variety and feedback on organizational commitment. Additionally, according to Heywood (2003), all of the four “core dimensions” variables of job characteristics (degree of autonomy, skill variety, task identity and feedback on performance) were found to have significant relationships with affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

Based on previous discussions and especially Heywood’s findings, the following proposition can be expected for the previous four “core dimensions” variables of job characteristics:

Hypothesis: *Employees with higher amounts of task variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback on performance are likely to have higher levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment than other employees.*

Research Design

Research design, as explained by Kerlinger (1986), is the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions. In general, research designs are about organising research activity, including the collection of data, in ways that are most likely to achieve the research aims. According to Black and Champion (1976) research design serves many functions: it provides the researcher with a blueprint for studying social questions; dictates the boundaries of research activity and enables the investigator to channel his or her energies in specific directions; and it enables the researcher to anticipate potential problems during the implementation stage.

In this research, it was felt that there are almost no reliable investigations and very little information about organizational commitment topic in Qatar. Consequently, it became evident that the questionnaire technique is easier to analyse across all respondents, since the researcher can obtain the same data for all. In addition, questionnaires can permit a large number of people to be included in an investigation at a relatively low cost. As a result of these advantages, a survey research based on questionnaire was adopted for the present research.

To solve the aforementioned limitations of the questionnaire, the researchers of this study increased the return rate by asking some of their friends and relatives to distribute questionnaire copies to their friends and colleagues in their companies and collect them later, instead of doing so themselves, to be sure that respondents would fill and return questionnaires. In addition, the researchers made the questionnaire brief, simple, and ensured that it was free from ambiguity, and that each item of the questionnaire was expressed clearly in terms which could be understood easily, by the respondents.

The content of the questionnaire is another important area in the research. Every effort was made to cover all aspects of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and other important variables in this research. Each set of questions or statements was intended to measure a particular variable. Most of the items used here have been borrowed partly or wholly from other research instruments, which have demonstrated reliability and validity.

In the selection of the companies, this research focused on companies that have more than 300 employees working for

them. The selection of participant companies was largely based on representation of nationalities and cooperation of employees and management.

Regarding the selection of the participants, Sekaran (2000) mentioned two ways to select individuals in studies, either by matching or random selection. Use of a matching technique may not take account of all the factors that could possibly contaminate the cause and effect relationship in the research situation, and hence may fail to match some critical factors across all participants. A randomisation technique will take care of this, since all known and unknown contaminating factors will be spread across all participants.

This research used the second technique to select participants drawn from the target population of participating companies. The researcher asked the human resources directors of most of the participating companies/ministries, and some friends and relatives, to help him in distributing questionnaires, targeting Qatari and non-Qatari employees in their companies if possible. This kind of technique was advantageous, as it allowed the researcher to collect an adequate amount of suitable data with speed, accuracy, economy and convenience for all employees.

Sample Size

Calculation of the appropriate sample size is an important starting point for any research. In general, selecting an appropriate sample size can help the researcher to reduce the work-force requirement, cut cost, and get information more quickly, with more focus. There is no clear-cut answer in the literature on the appropriate sample size. Hamburg (1987) emphasized that any investigator should answer two important questions to decide the appropriate sample size. These two questions are related to the degree of precision desired and the probability attached to the desired precision. A very large sample will increase the accuracy of the results but also would be a waste of available resources, while a small sample may not serve the objective of the study.

In a study of this type, it is nearly impossible for researchers with limited means and time to carry out representative sampling based on probability sampling techniques. In addition, the lack of up-to-date and accurate information on numbers of employees, especially employees working in Qatar's private and public sector companies, make it difficult for the researchers to calculate an appropriate sample size in these two sectors.

Fowler (1984) noted, "The size of population from which a sample of a particular size is drawn has virtually no impact on how well that sample is likely to describe the population. A sample of 150 people will describe a population of 15000 or 15 million with virtually the same degree of accuracy, assuming all other aspects of the sample design and sampling procedures were the same." Bearing these points in mind, it was decided that the present research would seek to obtain data from samples of between 150 and 175 subjects in each sector of the Qatar's workforce. Therefore, the present research was confined to a sample of 520 employees. It was felt that this sample size would be quite sufficient.

In view of the past experiences reported by other researchers in the region, it was decided to select an initial sample of nearly two times the targeted sample size. As it was intended to collect useful information from about 520 respondents to answer the research questions and to meet the objectives of the study (more than 170 employees from each sector), a sample of about 800 was chosen on the basis of quota coupled with convenience sampling. This is a large sample size compared to many in the literature reviewed.

Research Measures

Job Characteristics

This study asked participants to respond to questions pertaining to their jobs. These characteristics are skill variety, job autonomy, feedback on performance, and task identity. According to the literature, there are two important scales to measure job characteristics: Hackman and Oldham's (1975) - Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) and the Sims, Szilagyi and Keller's (1976) Job Characteristics Index (JCI). These two scales will be explained next.

1. Hackman and Oldham's (1975) JDS is the most widely used perceptual measure of job design, though its underlying dimensionality has been increasingly questioned (Pierce and Dunham, 1976). The JDS is used to obtain measures of five inter-correlated dimensions with reliability estimates typically above 0.70. The JDS employs 12 items (three items per scale).
2. Sims et al. (1976) developed the JCI as an extension of the Hackman and Lawler (1971) job measurement approach. The JCI is purposed to measure four of the core characteristics tapped by the JDS. To measure the

four core dimensions, the JCI uses 17 items (five items for variety, five items for autonomy, four items for feedback, and three items for identity).

The results of several studies using the JCI scale revealed that the instrument has high validity and reliability for research on the relationship between job characteristics and employee attitudes and behaviour. For example, Pierce and Dunham (1978) evaluated and compared the dimensionality and internal consistency of the JDS and the JCI scales. They found Cronbach's coefficient alpha internal consistency to be higher for the JCI than the JDS scales. Furthermore, compared to coefficient alpha values for the JDS scales ranging from 0.69 (feedback) to 0.79 (autonomy), Pierce and Dunham (1978) found each of the four JCI scales had reliability estimates above 0.85.

Therefore, this study used the Job Classification Index (JCI) developed by Sims et al (1976) to measure the four core variables of job characteristics. Empirical studies from diverse samples indicate high coefficient alphas of reliability for all of the variables. Bhuian et al. (2001) and Bhuian and Menguc (2002) found in their evaluation of job characteristics, organizational commitment and job satisfaction that all dimensions scales of JCI had reliability coefficients above the 0.70 level.

The four core dimensions variables used in this study of job characteristics are:

1. Task variety: The degree to which a job requires employees to perform a wide range of operations in their work and/or the degree to which employees must use a variety of equipment and procedures in their work. Reliability alpha from previous studies ranged from 0.78 to 0.82 (Bhuian and Menguc, 2002).
2. Degree of Autonomy (five items): The extent to which employees have a major say in scheduling their work, selecting the equipment they will use, and deciding on procedures to be followed. Reliability alpha from previous studies = 0.84 (Bhuian and Menguc, 2002).
3. Feedback on performance (four items): The degree to which employees receive information as they are working which reveals how well they are performing on the job. Reliability alpha from previous studies ranged from 0.83 to 0.86 (Bhuian and Menguc, 2002).

4. Task identity (3 items): The extent to which employees do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the result of their efforts. Reliability alpha ranged from 0.75 to 0.83 (Bhuiyan and Menguc, 2002).

The scoring of job characteristics variables was conducted following the guidelines requiring reverse scoring for selected items provided by the authors of this instrument. Responses to each item of the scale were measured on a five-point scale, ranging in value from one ("Very Little") to five ("Very Much") or ranging from one ("Minimum Amount") to five ("Maximum Amount"). The total score for each variable of job satisfaction was calculated by totalling the item scores.

The Three Components of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment can be positioned as a dependent variable or as an independent variable that acts a predictor of, for example, acceptance of organizational changes and turnover intentions. Thus, the majority of commitment studies have treated commitment as an independent variable influencing work outcomes such as turnover and absenteeism, or as a dependent variable affected by demographic factors and some other antecedent variables.

Most of the recent research in industrial/organizational psychology and organizational behaviour literature has identified the existence of multiple dimensions of OC that has been interpreted in a variety of different ways. Therefore, the dimensions on which one measure "fits" vary considerably among different researchers. Many researchers argued that a well-developed instrument, which has been carefully operationally defined, will be accepted and frequently used by other researchers.

Organizational commitment was measured in this research by using Meyer et al (1993) Organizational Commitment Scale, one of the leading instruments for empirical research on organizational commitment. The reliability estimates, factor structure, and tests of nomological net for this instrument are reviewed in Meyer and Allen (1997). The 18-(revised) item scale was used in this study instead of the original scales to measure the three components of organizational commitment. The revised scales of the three dimensions of organizational commitment comprise six items for each of affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

The scoring of the revised Organizational Commitment Scales as provided by the author's guidelines require reverse scoring for selected items for each affective, continuance, and normative commitment scale. Responses to each item of the revised scales were measured on a seven-point scale, ranging in value from one ("Strongly Disagree") through four ("Neither Agree or Disagree") to seven ("Strongly Agree"). A total score was calculated by adding the scores for each of affective, continuance, and normative commitment for each respondent.

In this study, the total score for each of the affective, continuance, and normative commitment was treated first as a dependent variable with the antecedents of OC and then as an independent variable when we measured the influence of OC on work outcomes such as turnover intentions and acceptance of organizational changes.

Response Rate of Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed to 780 employees working in three sectors in Qatar (from government, public, and private corporations that employed a minimum of 300 employees). A total of 260 questionnaires were distributed in each sector. Completed questionnaires were received from 544 employees from the three sectors with a response rate of 69.7 percent.

Data Analysis

Organizational Commitment Profile

Organizational commitment was measured in this study by the 18-item revised organizational commitment scale developed by Meyer et al (1993), which contains items to measure three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Descriptive analyses of components of organizational commitment were performed by computing mean and standard deviation scores for the three components of OC and items comprising these components. The means and standard deviation scores are based on a seven-point Likert scale, in which one represents strongly disagree with the item concerned and seven, strongly agree. Components (subscales of organizational commitment) mean and standard deviation scores were calculated by dividing the sum of the item scores by the number of items comprising that component.

From Table 1, it can be observed that mean scores for all three commitments ranged from 4.81 to 5.09 falling into the survey

Table 1: Mean Total Scores for the Three Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Dimensions of Organizational Commitment	N	Unit	Mean	SD
Affective commitment	544	1-7	5.09	1.39
Continuance commitment	544	1-7	4.59	1.24
Normative commitment	544	1-7	4.81	1.34

scale category choice, where a five value represented “slightly agree” to a six value represented “agree.” Prior research from a study by Allen and Meyer (1990) surveyed 337 employees from three organizations to examine affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The results from their study found the following mean and standard deviations: affective commitment ($M = 4.36$; $SD = 1.38$), continuance commitment ($M = 4.49$; $SD = 1.35$), and normative commitment ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 1.08$). Comparing the study’s organizational commitment mean values with those from Allen and Meyer’s (1990) study, there are only small differences in mean value scores for the affective and continuance commitment scale. Regarding normative commitment, we cannot compare this variable with Allen and Meyer’s (1990) result because we are using the revised normative scale.

Regarding affective commitment, as expected from the literature, with a mean score of 5.09 and standard deviation of 1.39, this component scored the highest of all dimensions of OC. In contrast, with a mean score $M = 4.59$ and standard deviation $SD = 1.24$, continuance commitment was the

weakest of the three dimensions of OC. This result indicates that employees had a moderate degree of continuance commitment. Finally, normative commitment, with a mean score $M = 4.81$ and standard deviation $SD = 1.34$, came second among the three dimensions of OC. From the above, this study can conclude that most employees expressed high levels of affective and normative commitment and a moderate degree of continuance commitment.

Job Characteristics

The present study examined four job characteristics, namely: (1) skill variety; (2) degree of autonomy; (3) task identity; and (4) feedback on performance. This study used the Job Classification Index (JCI) developed by Sims et al (1976) to measure the four core variables of job characteristics. Means and standard deviation scores for these characteristics are presented in Table 2. The means and standard deviation scores are based on a Likert-type response scale of one to five, in which one represents very dissatisfied with the item concerned and five, very satisfied.

Table 2: Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Job Characteristics Variables

Dimensions of Job Characteristics	N	Unit	Mean	SD
Skill variety	544	1-5	3.51	.83
Degree of autonomy	544	1-5	3.51	.83
Task identity	544	1-5	3.80	.82
Feedback on performance	544	1-5	3.58	.86

Skill variety: Three questionnaire items were used to build the variety index ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .83$, $N = 544$). The purpose of these items was to measure perceptions of variety by asking individuals about the extent to which they had opportunity to do many different things in their jobs, repetitiveness, and sameness of tasks performed in the job.

Degree of autonomy: This variable ($M = 3.51$ and $SD = .83$) contains five items used to investigate the degree of freedom to organize work, degree of independence in doing the job, chances of personal initiative, and responsibility for timing the work.

Task identity: Three survey items were used to build the identity index. All these items are concerned with the frequency of seeing projects through to completion, jobs and projects being completed by employees themselves, and the extent to which the employee controls his/her involvement in the whole job process from beginning to end. With a mean score of 3.80 and standard deviation of 0.82, this variable scored highest of all four job characteristics.

Feedback on performance: Four questionnaire items were used to build the feedback index ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.86$, $N = 544$). These items are concerned with examining perception of the constant feedback on performance, the lack of feedback, the frequency of supervisor feedback, and the employee's feeling about how well the job is done.

Hypothesis Testing: Job Characteristics

The relationships between four job characteristics (degree of autonomy, skill variety, feedback on performance, and task identity) and organizational commitment are now analysed.

Hypothesis statement: *Employees with higher amounts of task variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback on performance are likely to have higher levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment than other employees.*

A correlation matrix showing Pearson correlation coefficients can be seen in Table 3 to indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between OC components and the variables in the job characteristics cluster.

Table 3: Job Characteristics and OC Components: Correlations (N = 544)

Job Characteristics	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Skill Variety	0.11*	0.13**	0.12**
Degree of Autonomy	0.31**	0.065	0.24**
Task Identity	0.30**	0.10*	0.27**
Feedback on Performance	0.40**	0.09*	0.34**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Results indicate that all of the selected variables of job characteristics were positively and statistically, significantly related to affective commitment (r ranging from 0.11 to 0.40) and to normative commitment (r ranging from 0.12 to 0.34). However, only three of four selected variables of job characteristics were positively and statistically, significantly related to continuance commitment.

Regarding skill variety, Table 3 indicates that this variable correlated weakly to affective commitment ($r = 0.11$), continuance commitment ($r = 0.13$), and normative commitment ($r = 0.12$). As a result, a higher degree of skill variety is likely to produce higher amounts of commitment, though the levels of association are weak.

Regarding degree of autonomy and task identity, the findings presented confirm that both degree of autonomy and task identity were positively (moderately) related to both affective and normative commitment and reached the 0.01 level of

significance. Thus, higher degrees of autonomy and task identity are likely to produce higher amounts of affective and normative commitment. Furthermore, a weak positive relationship was found between continuance commitment and task identity but no significant relationship was found between continuance commitment and degree of autonomy.

Regarding feedback on performance, the correlation coefficients between this variable and the three OC components ranged from 0.09 to 0.40 and all reached the 0.05 level of significance. The strongest correlation was found between feedback on performance and affective commitment ($r = 0.40$, $n = 544$, $p < 0.01$, one-tailed) which indicates that employees may experience higher amounts of attachment and loyalty if they receive higher amounts of feedback to improve their performance from their supervisors and companies.

From the above results, it can be concluded that weak to moderate positive relationships exist between both affective

and normative commitment and all job characteristics. However, the correlation coefficient results between job characteristics and continuance commitment are mixed. Thus, hypothesis is partially supported.

Discussion and Conclusions

According to Hackman and Oldham (1975), Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Tyagi and Wotruba (1993), and Bhuian and Menguc (2002), when an organization attempts to enrich jobs by providing autonomy, variety, task-identity and feedback in jobs, employees reciprocate by identifying themselves more closely with the organization. In addition, researchers such as Hackman and Oldham (1976) and Chelte and Tausky (1986) emphasized that job-related characteristics can have a significant influence on organizational commitment.

The results of this study in Qatar revealed significant associations between various job characteristics variables and each component of organizational commitment. Only one non-significant result was found, between continuance commitment and degree of autonomy. The findings of this study therefore seem consistent with those of Hunt et al (1985), who found that among western employees the four “core dimensions” variables of job characteristics (degree of autonomy, skill variety, task identity and feedback on performance) positively influence the level of an employee’s organizational commitment. Ramaswami et al (1993) and Naumann (1993) provided similar support for the direct influence of autonomy, variety and feedback on organizational commitment.

A possible explanation for finding significant and positive relationships between affective commitment and all of the selected job characteristics may be related to the way these constructs were developed. According to Meyer and Allen (1997) the construct affective commitment is developed in part by employees being motivated for personal fulfilment and thus develops on the basis of psychologically rewarding experiences. It is noteworthy that the development of skill variety, task identity, autonomy, and feedback on performance are constructs that are specifically linked to personal fulfilment. Thus, one might expect these variables to correlate positively with affective commitment.

The construct continuance commitment is developed as a result of action that increases the costs of leaving the organization. Thus, employees will have a weak sense of

continuance commitment if they perceive that they have several viable alternatives to leave the organization. Since weak to moderate positive correlations were found for three of the four job characteristics variables (skill variety, task identity, and feedback on performance), it is probable that employees might perceive a moderate sense of commitment organizationally and/or have better opportunity elsewhere.

The research literature finds that the development of the normative commitment construct is based on the aspect of employees forming a psychological contract. The psychological contract can be either transactional (economic exchange) or relational (social exchange) (Rousseau, 1989). Since the nature of normative commitment is created where an employee feels a sense of obligation to the organization, it is plausible that employees can develop a psychological contract via social exchange, thus strengthening a sense of normative commitment. Thus, the study’s findings indicating a positive relationship between job characteristics variables and normative commitment may be based on a transactional psychological contract whereby employees could develop normative commitment based on social exchange.

The relationships between job characteristics and organizational commitment will now be discussed:

- ◆ Regarding skill variety: this study found only a weak relationship between job variety and the three components of OC, indicating that the greater the job variety, the more committed employees were to the organization. Thus, if employees get the opportunity to employ a variety of job skills, this will increase their job satisfaction and their involvement in their jobs and in turn will enhance their commitment to the organization.
- ◆ Regarding degree of autonomy: the results of this study indicate that there was a moderate positive correlation between degree of autonomy and each of affective and normative commitment, indicating that the more autonomy employees gained, the more they were satisfied with their jobs and the higher were their levels of organizational commitment. It is believable that if employees are provided with freedom as to how to do their jobs, then they will be more motivated toward accomplishing organizational goals.
- ◆ Regarding task identity: the results of this study found a weak to moderate relationship, indicating that the more

employees (Qataris and non-Qataris) believed that their jobs were specified and clear, the more they were committed to the organization.

- ◆ Regarding feedback on performance: the results of this study indicate that there was a moderate relationship between this variable and each of affective and normative commitment constructs. Although only a weak relationship was found between this variable and continuance commitment, the present study suggests that employees' commitment is influenced by the degree to which supervisors provide them with positive feedback in regard to their jobs. The more feedback on performance they received, the more employees were committed to their jobs and their organization.

From the above, the study results provide good support for the predictive effect of job characteristics on organizational commitment, indicating that enriching jobs through changing the four core job dimensions would have a positive effect on employees' organizational commitment. Naumann (1993) highlighted the positive consequences of job characteristics especially in improving job design and accommodating employees with a greater range of competence, skills, more recognition and autonomy. This finding may expand the knowledge of the relationship of job characteristics and OC and may support the importance of job enrichment in enhancing employees' organizational commitment.

Managements of Qatari companies, therefore, should implement clear goals, policies, missions, and specified and clear job responsibilities for all employees to improve OC. According to Hackman et al (1975) jobs that are perceived as more meaningful, with more responsibility and with more knowledge of working results, are most likely to generate commitment about work. Moreover, managements of Qatari companies should implement a system of keeping the employee informed of his or her success in meeting the company's goals (ongoing feedback). This step is likely to encourage greater organizational commitment among all employees working in these companies.

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