

Contingent workforce, organisational commitment and job satisfaction: Review, discussion and research agenda

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to analyse the existing theoretical frameworks of organisational behaviour and job satisfaction while taking into account, in connection with working conditions, the social and economic changes that are taking place in most of the western countries. The analysis and discussion suggest the need for new lines of research to determine whether the current practices carried out in human resources departments are well directed.

Design/methodology/approach: First, we show a short review of the classical literature and the predominant paradigms through an exhaustive review of the scientific literature that has led to their subsequent evolution. Afterwards, we analyse the evidence sustaining their evolution in the light of the current changes, and we explain the future research needs from a theoretical point of view.

Findings: The identification of the worker with the organization and their perception of job satisfaction are the key variable to adaptation and retention, by the organizations. This article analyzes current theories of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, highlighting the need to adapt to social and economic changes that are occurring. The identification and adoption of these key factors by the organization is essential to carry out adequate human resources policy.

Research limitations/implications: Owing to the nature of the article, it is a theoretical essay to launch a new scientific debate in connection with the models

displayed and fully justified. Practical implications depend on the development of future research, as justified at all times.

Originality/value: Currently, few investigations and theoretical contributions have taken into account the increase in contingent work, and more specifically moonlighting, either from an empirical perspective or as a theoretical critique of the existing organisational behaviour models. The main value of this essay is its invitation to take control of the debate while analysing its possible practical implications.

Keywords: Contingent workforce, Organisational commitment, Job satisfaction, Two jobs

Jel Codes: M12

Introduction

Traditionally, organisational behaviour literature has studied the main variables that determine the attitudes and behaviours of its members based on a classic work environment in which employees enjoy some job security and do not perform more than one job at a time. According to these investigations, a solid evolution of the theoretical models of organisational commitment has been drawn to reach those who today determine the policies and practices in the personnel departments of most companies.

The growing increase in western societies of new career profiles (Simó, Enache, Fernández & Sallán, 2010; Enache, Simó, Sallán & Fernández, 2011), and the proliferation of a larger contingent workforce (Martin & Sinclair, 2007), together with the scarcity, in comparative terms, of investigations that explore these deep-seated social changes in organisational commitment and job satisfaction, lead us to the analysis and discussion of the need to methodologically reconsider the investigations based on these models, to be able to analyse whether such theories are sufficiently strong and generalizable to establish their applicability.

In this article, we first analyse the theoretical framework of organisational commitment and job satisfaction as one of the most accepted models in today's literature. Afterwards, in the discussion, we show the work and social changes that are taking place in many western countries, thus asking ourselves whether the classic models can continue to apply despite the changes. This concludes with the need for the scientific community to launch new lines of research in this direction and a thorough discussion about the current situation, given that the hypothetical model variations would affect the current work-organization policies of many organisations.

Theoretical framework: organisational commitment and job satisfaction

Organisational commitment and job satisfaction have been two of the recurring constructs in the scientific literature about work organisation. Traditionally, they have been associated with the desired and undesired behaviour of those who interact inside an organisational system. For years, theoretical models have been evolving (e.g. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002), as they were being empirically tested. However, beyond their different approaches, which we shall be considering later, a key turning point was their joint treatment. This resulted from an in-depth analysis of the antecedents (i.e. pay satisfaction), the consequences (i.e. organisational citizenship behaviour), and the correlations (i.e. job satisfaction) (e.g. Meyer et al., 2002).

The joint model, compromise and satisfaction (figure 1), has traditionally been considered correlated and, even if longitudinal investigations attempted to determine whether one can be the cause of the other, no solid and meaningful results have so far been found in this sense. Currivan (1999) proposed ambitious research that suggested four possible causal models (satisfaction comes before commitment, commitment comes before satisfaction, satisfaction and commitment have a reciprocal relationship, and satisfaction and commitment have no significant relationship), assuming the view dominant up to now, that job satisfaction was the cause of greater organisational commitment. The results could not determine this causality significantly. Hence, the continuing view is that both work together in obtaining high correlations in cross-sectional models, in other words, according to the Affective Attachments Theory (Lowler, 1992), both are correlated since the more immediate positive emotions such as satisfaction cause more lasting affiliative attitudes such as organisational commitment. Examples of this influence are found in many investigations (e.g. Bluedorn, 1982; Iverson, 1992; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982; Mueller, Boyer, Price & Iverson, 1994; Wallace, 1995; Williams & Hazer, 1986).

Turning now to the two constructs, separately, job satisfaction has changed little in recent years, and both its definition and its measurement scales are widely consolidated. We define job satisfaction as the degree of positive emotions which a member of the organisation has in connection with his/her employment (Kalleberg, 1977; Locke, 1976; Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969). Regarding the scales of measurement, in the most recent work (e.g. Dello Russo, Vecchione & Borgogni, 2013), the reduced-item versions of the scale of Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967) (four items) are the most common. In relation to the background, we can highlight the positive relationship with peer support, with superiors (supervisor support) or with pay satisfaction, and negative relationships with unclear promotion expectations (role ambiguity) and excessive workload, among other things (Currivan, 1999). With regard to

behavioural outcomes, it is common to find a positive relationship with most of the behaviours that organisations desire (e.g. the intention to continue in the organisation, organisational citizenship behaviour, performance) (Meyer et al., 2002).

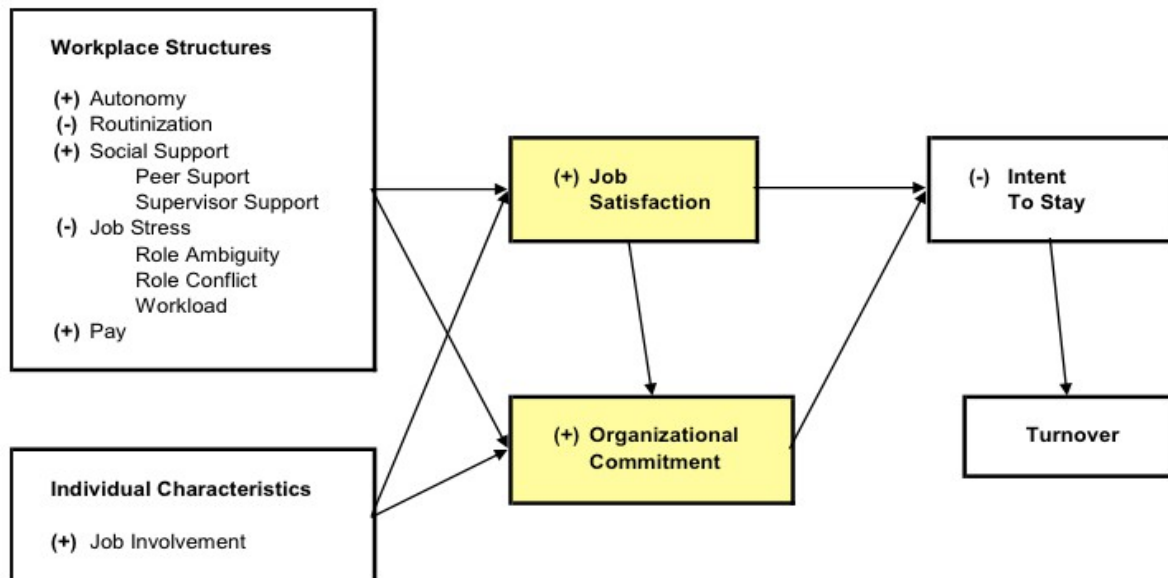


Figure 1. The Causal Model (Currivan, 1999)

On the other hand, with regard to organisational commitment, its conceptualization, its measurement scales and its theoretical basis have all varied over the past fifty years. Although no full agreement has been reached within the scientific community about its definition and measurement (e.g. De Frutos, Ruiz & San Martin, 1998; Bergman, 2006; Ko, Price & Mueller, 1997; Solinger, Van Olffen & Roe, 2008; Vandenberg & Self, 1993), the dominant model is still the one proposed by the team of Allen and Meyer (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991). Starting basically from the idea that commitment is an attitude (Mowday & Steers, 1979; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974) and that calculative commitment (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Ritzer & Trice, 1969) may be defined according to the concept of Becker's side-bet (1960), we now find a multidimensional model of construct. That is, Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991) and Allen and Meyer (1990) developed their three-component model to integrate the existing one-dimensional conceptualizations. First, Becker (1960) argues that commitment comes with the awareness of the cost associated with leaving the organisation; secondly, Mowday et al. (1982) define commitment as an emotional attachment to the organisation, and thirdly Wiener (1982) conceptualizes commitment as a moral obligation toward the rules.

Currently, the definition that places construct as a mindset which can take different forms and becomes a force that binds an individual to a particular direction or approach in relation to one or more aims (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) and which we can conceptually differentiate from

motivation (Meyer, Becker & Vanderberghe, 2004) continues to be widely accepted. From a multidimensionality point of view, it is divided into three basic dimensions: affective commitment (AC) as the desire to belong to the organisation (they want / they desire to do so); the continuance commitment (CC) which is based on the belief that leaving the organisation would be costly (they need it) and the normative commitment (NC) as the feeling of obligation towards the organization (they must / are required) (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The main difference among them consists in the fact that the three of them represent different mindsets that characterize each dimension (Meyer et al., 2004).

$$OC = AC + CC + NC$$

Further investigations found that the model was more complex (McGee & Ford, 1987; Meyer et al. 2002), which led to a modification of the scale including two sub-dimensions in the continuance commitment dimension (Powell & Meyer, 2004): perception of a lack of alternative employment opportunities (CCLowAlt), and the high perceived sacrifice associated with leaving the organisation (CCHiSac).

$$OC = AC + CCHiSac + CCLowAlt + NC$$

As for the antecedents and the outcomes, there are many studies (e.g. Meyer et al., 2002) that have been broadly confirming the relationships shown in Figure 2. Based on a background with more robust results in terms of significance, we can highlight the following: personal characteristics, work experiences, alternatives, investments, organisational investments and socialization experiences. In relation to outcomes, turnover intention and turnover, intention to stay, attendance, organisational citizenship behaviour, performance, employee health and well-being (Meyer et al., 2002).

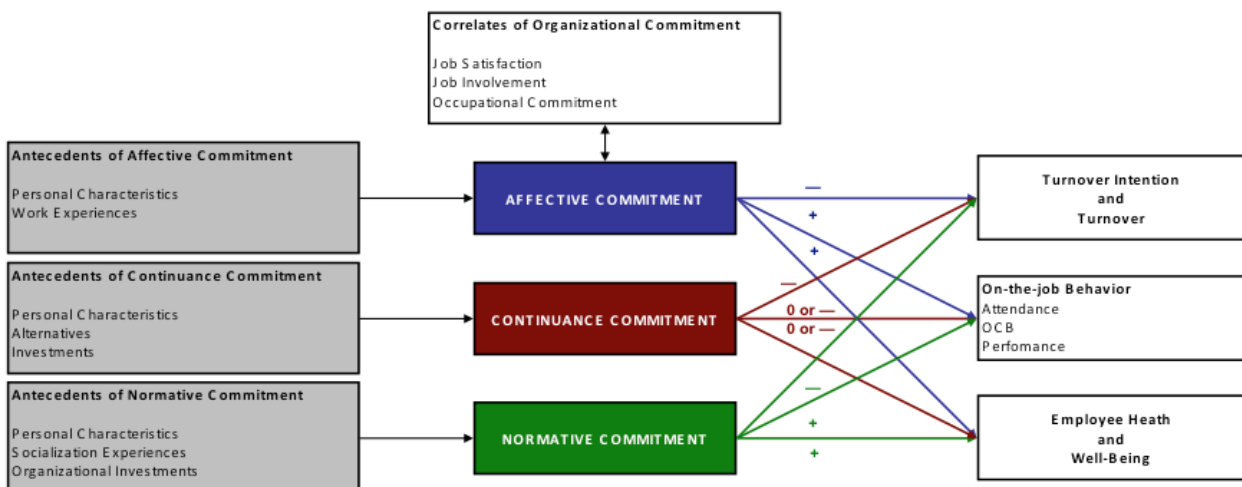


Figure 2. Three-component model (Meyer et al., 2002)

Traditionally, considerable research efforts have been made to determine organisational behaviour models of individuals, focused on internal organisational variables while assuming that the members of the organisation are employed in one organisation only.

Discussion and future lines

This knowledge should now be reviewed in the light of the changing demands of the current environment. Today's economic dynamic has caused an increase both in moonlighting and in insecurity at work. According to Zickar, Gibby and Jenny (2004), in 1995 over 6.3% of the active population in the United States already held more than one job simultaneously, and the number of contingent jobs could be affecting a very large population in the United States and Europe (Martin & Sinclair, 2007). In recent years, the economic and labour policies (e.g. in European countries) have increased the size of this contingent workers group, as can be seen, for example, in the Eurostat data (in the EU-27 the share of people employed part-time has increased from 16.2% in 2001 to 20.0% in 2012, and in relation to the number of people who have two jobs in 2012 held more than eight million people, an increase of 7.58% over 2001). However, despite that increase, the main trend in research is still to analyse models based on non-contingent workers and focused on personality and leadership variables, and on other internal organisation characteristics.

It should be noted that the studies on some types of contingent work have been gaining moderate relevance (e.g. Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; Feldman, 1990; Jamal, Baba & Rivière, 1998; Simó, Sallán & Fernández, 2008). However, many of these jobs continue to focus on workers employed in a single organisation. For example, the meta-analysis by Thorsteinson (2003) focuses mainly on part-time workers, stating that they have lower levels of involvement in the work than full-time workers, but similar levels of job satisfaction.

A few years ago emerging evidence began to be noticed that influences of situational effects may occur in the job satisfaction and organisational behaviour variables themselves, i.e. they vary depending on the context, and their conditions are set from outside the organisation, and therefore in-depth research should be undertaken. For example, Schaubroeck, Judge and Taylor III (1998) compared job satisfaction and organisational commitment with stress factors in the work of members of the armed forces who had a first full-time job in a private company and a part-time job in the military reserves, which provided a first indication about possible effects between both occupations.

Another study by Zickar et al. (2004) was focused on analysing employees with two simultaneous occupations. Their study, which we could consider as exploratory given the small sample size explained in the article's limitations, gives one the intuition that there are certain

relationships between continuance commitment and job satisfaction among primary and secondary jobs even if, as the authors note, the results are not generalizable. If subsequent research confirms that, it could corroborate that people with certain financial problems have additional motivation to continue with two occupations, thus justifying the relationship between continuity commitments. In the same vein, the work of Maynard and Joseph (2006), conducted on full-time and part-time faculty staff, with a sample of 167 individuals, shows certain differences between voluntarily working part time for pleasure or vocation and working because of financial necessity. That is to say, the involuntarily part-time worker showed less satisfaction in terms of promotion, pay and job security, while voluntarily full-time and part-time workers reported similar levels in these facets.

As we explained in the previous section, the current paradigm is very focused on a classic vision of work, where contingent work is not dominant, although every day there are more of the active population who hold two jobs at once (Zickar et al., 2004). Following the classic theory, employees should be able to be committed to more than one organisation without one job affecting the other, and the high correlation with job satisfaction could justify this same effect on satisfaction. But studies like those of Maynard and Joseph (2006) and Zickar et al. (2004) and research showing that job satisfaction is influenced by a more or less positive outlook on the world (Judge & Larsen, 2001) justify the need for a new methodological approach in this area of research.

Future research should focus on samples of employees working in more than one organisation and analyse whether there are inconsistencies in the exposed models and current theories. Thus, we wonder whether the commitment profile of an employee towards his/her main organisation can affect job satisfaction and the different dimensions of commitment to his/her secondary job, and vice versa. On the other hand, if interactions do exist, how can they affect the classic outcomes such as intention to stay or organisational citizenship behaviour? Future lines of research should also analyse the antecedents and see whether, as predicted by current theory, they determine both commitments and job satisfaction in the same way and with the same intensity. Hence, depending on the results obtained and the robustness of the same, we may be able to analyse whether the models presented are sufficiently generalizable or whether, on the contrary, they apply only in the classic employment model in which work in a single organisation, with some guarantee of stability, predominates.

Conclusions and practical implications

During the last few decades, the models of organisational commitment and job satisfaction, mainly studied in a classic work organisation framework, have given relevant evidence of their importance in inducing desired and undesired behaviours in organisations. In this paper, we

have reviewed the main theories underlying these results. Consequently, the management and recruitment departments, based on classic models, have been introducing variables into their policies and practices aimed at increasing commitment and satisfaction. As stated above, the profiles of professional careers are changing and so are labour relations, increasing substantially the number of people who do contingent work. For individuals holding more than one job, if we ignore the role played by the attitudes and experiences associated with a second occupation, we lose very relevant information, and we will not be able to understand the dynamic of this group. This invites us to show new lines of research and further study the possible psychological interactions that cause these specific characteristics. Based on these future results, organisations will decide whether to keep the current policies or, on the contrary, whether to adapt to these new specific scenarios in which Western societies are evolving, changing the recruitment model and the possible incentives policies.

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