

*Organizational Commitment as a reducer of Turnover Intentions: which component (affective, calculative and normative) is the best predictor?*

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**Abstract**

This study aims to provide additional empirical evidence on the effect of the three components of organizational commitment on turnover intentions. To this end, we hypothesized that organizational commitment (affective, calculative, and normative) has a significant and negative effect on turnover intentions. A total of 302 participants, employees in different organizations in Portugal, participated in this study. The results revealed a significant and negative effect of affective commitment (AC) and normative commitment (NC) on turnover intentions. Of the three components, affective commitment is the one with the strongest association.

**Keywords:** Affective Commitment, Calculative Commitment, Normative Commitment, Turnover Intentions

**Organizational Commitment (Affective, Calculative, and Normative) and Turnover Intentions**

The study of organizational commitment becomes relevant in a world of permanent change resulting from the globalization process, technological changes, industrial restructuring, and

economic recessions (Cesario et al., 2012).

Allen and Meyer (1996), refer that one of the reasons responsible for the interest in studying organizational commitment is its negative effect on turnover intentions because organizational commitment leads the employee to feel motivated to stay in the organization, and it is extremely harmful for the organization to lose highly qualified employees (Benson, 2006).

There are several definitions of organizational commitment and there is not always a consensus among them. From Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) perspective, all definitions are based on the existence of a psychological bond between an employee and the organization where he/she works, being a stabilizing or imposing force that directs his/her behaviour. Also, for Ng (2015), this psychological bond is a stabilizing force that binds employees to the organizations where they work.

In 1991, Meyer and Allen's three-component model emerged, which includes the AC, the calculative commitment (CC), and the NC. According to this model, the employees' commitment to the organization where they work is reflected through three different psychological states: the employees of an organization are committed through emotional relationships (AC), transactional relationships based on a personal investment with a view to a certain return (CC) and feelings of obligation and moral duty towards the organization (NC). Meyer & Allen (1991) consider that organizational commitment is a psychological state simultaneously determined by these three components, which assume different intensities and through which the employee's relationship with the organization is characterized, having implications in the decision to remain a member of the organization.

Turnover intentions refer to the willingness that employees have to leave the organization where they are and start looking for a new workplace (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Turnover intentions are the best predictor of voluntary organizational departure from the organization. Among the various antecedents of turnover intentions, there are attitudinal antecedents such as organizational commitment (Shore and Martin, 1989).

As previously mentioned, for Allen and Meyer (1996), organizational commitment has a significant and negative effect on turnover intentions, and the same is true for unjustified absences from work (Meyer et al., 2002). Wasti (2003) considers that of the three components of organizational commitment, AC is the best predictor of turnover intentions.

**Hypothesis:** *Organizational commitment (affective, calculative, and normative) has a significant and negative effect on turnover intentions.*

## Sample

A total of 302 employees working in several organizations based in Portugal participated in this study. Data collection took place between December 2014 and March 2015. Of these participants, 224 (74.2%) were female, with a mean age of 33.97 years ( $SD = 12.185$ ), ranging from 19 to 64 years. As regards the level of education, 85 (28.1%) of the participants had up to the 12th grade, 111 (36.8%) had a Bachelor's degree and 106 (35.1%) had a Master's degree or higher. With regard to the type of employment contract, 189 (62.6%) of the participants had permanent contracts and 113 (37.4%) had fixed-term contracts, with average seniority in the organization of 10.77 ( $SD = 11.31$ ), ranging between 2 months and 41 years.

## Instruments

To measure organisational commitment, the instrument developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) was used. It consists of 19 items rated on a 7-point *Likert-type rating scale* (from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 7 “Strongly Agree”). This instrument is composed of three components: AC ( $\alpha = .89$ ); CC ( $\alpha = .76$ ); NC ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

As for the turnover intentions, they were measured through the 3 items that make up the instrument developed by Bozeman & Perrewé (2001), classified in a 5-point *rating scale* (from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree”). With regard to the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was .89.

## Results

The association between the three components of organizational commitment and turnover intentions was initially studied through Pearson's correlations.

AC ( $r = -.63$ ;  $p < .001$ ), CC ( $r = -.11$ ;  $p = .047$ ) and NC ( $r = -.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ), were found to have a significant and negative association with turnover intentions.

Next, a multiple linear regression was performed in which the predictor variables were the three components of organizational commitment. The results obtained indicate that the AC ( $\beta_{AC} = -.50$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the NC ( $\beta_{NC} = -.21$ ;  $p < .001$ ), have a negative and statistically significant effect on turnover intentions. CC did not prove to be a significant predictor of turnover intentions ( $\beta_{CC} = -.07$ ;  $p = .119$ ). We obtained an  $R^2_a = .43$ , which indicates that organizational commitment accounts for 43% of the variability in turnover intentions.

## Discussion

This study aimed to study the effect of the three components of organizational commitment on turnover intentions and additionally to verify which of them was the best reducer of organizational commitment.

As expected, there was a significant and negative effect of the AC and NC on the intentions to leave the organization. These results are in line with what the literature tells us since Meyer and Allen (1991) consider that the main predictor of intentions to leave the organization is organizational commitment. Also, for Mowday et al. (1982), employees, when they feel committed to the organization, wish to remain in it. On the contrary to what was expected, CC did not have a significant effect on turnover intentions. This result is a reflection of the study of the association between the variables since the study of Pearson's correlations indicated that the association between CC and turnover intentions was very weak.

Among the three components, the one which had the strongest effect on the turnover intentions was the AC. These results are also in line with what the literature tells us, since, according to Wasti (2003), the AC is, among the three components, the best predictor of turnover intentions.

It is necessary that Human Resource Management is concerned with developing practices that foster in employees a high organizational commitment so that turnover intentions decrease and with them the high turnover that causes organizations to lose highly specialized employees, as replacement costs are very high (Reiche, 2008).

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