
An Empirical Assessment of Social–Support and Organizational Commitment Relationship

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Abstract

The essence of human existence is expressed in our relations with others. Social bonds, social integration and primary group relations in general are central concepts in socio psychological analysis. The main assumption of primary group theory is that our sense of well-being is sustained by membership in primary groups and absence of such primary group affiliation is dangerous to an individual's cognitive and emotional state. Social support too plays a prominent role in an individual's commitment towards an organization. It can enhance commitment as it buffers stress. Social support not only includes the support of the family but also that of official colleagues and society. If the society gives recognition to a person's profession and appreciates it, he can contribute towards the output with renewed vigor.

Looking at the encompassing role that the social support plays and recognizing the relevance of social support in management and other professions, the present research is conducted on the managers working in the state Government Controlled Cooperative Dairy Sector with the aim to determine the relationship between their social support and organizational commitment. The present paper depicts the relationship between Social Support (Tangible Appraisal and Belonging Support) and Organizational Commitment and stresses the importance of Social Support (areawise and overall) in enhancing the commitment of the people of the organization. It may be concluded by the research findings that if the soldiers and any other personnel have adequate social support then their commitment towards the organization would be high ultimately resulting in better performance and accomplishment of organizational goals. The research findings emphasize the need for social–support in attracting the people towards applying in armed forces and also retaining them and motivating them to attain their goals.

Key Words: Social Support, Tangible Support, Appraisal Support and Belonging Support

INTRODUCTION

Today's organizations are very complex and dynamic; they constantly put immense pressure on the people to give desired results. In order to accomplish their personal and professional goals the individuals face lots of demanding and stressful situations both at home and workplace. If the management is prompt in handling employees stress and provide social support then the employees would be more productive and be more committed to their organizations. This paper is an attempt to find out the relationship between social support (areawise and overall) and organizational commitment.

Social support is physical and psychological comfort provided by friends and relatives to people facing various types of problems in their personal or professional lives. House (1981), integrating many a

definition of social support views that social support is an interpersonal transaction involving one or more of the following features:

- ▶ Emotional concern (esteem, affect, trust, concerns, listening).
- ▶ Instrumental aid (goods and services).
- ▶ Information (advice, suggestion, directives, information).

According to Cohen et.al (1985),

The tangible support is the perceived availability of material aid; The appraisal support is the perceived availability of confident and a trusted advisor, the belonging is the perceived availability of someone with whom the respondent could socialize or relax.

House (1981) breaks social support as following:-

a) Esteem support:

Upsetting life experiences can represent a threat to one's self-esteem raising benefit in sharing feelings and thoughts with others may be to feel accepted, loved and valued even though one is having difficulties. Esteem support can reduce a person's anxiety about troubling events and perhaps can strengthen personal beliefs about being in control of significant areas of life (Sarason and Pierce, 1990). Esteem support may occur when a discloser target listens attentively, shares similar personal experiences, avoid criticism or offers sympathy (Wills, 1985).

b) Informational Support:

Another person might be able to offer information, advice and guidance in coping with a problem. The success of informational support depends in part on the help seekers willingness to render information about their upsetting needs and provide support.

c) Instrumental support:

Old aged people can provide instrumental support such as helping with food, shopping or child care for someone who has been physically injured or ill. In other situations if older people who need assistance cannot or will not tell others that something is seriously wrong instrumental support (the most tangible form of assistance) will not be available.

d) Motivational support:

Even if problems are not easily resolvable other people can offer encouragement or motivational support. It might be difficult to find a new job quickly or to change the working conditions but we can share with others what has happened. They might be able to reassure us that matter will improve, that efforts to look for a new job will be successful and that we can get through the worst. Motivational support may encourage individuals to persist in coping with upsetting situations in which the ordinary tendency might be to give up and become depressed.

e) Listening:

Listening is one of the basic and vital functions served by the social support network. There is need in us to share, at least periodically, our jobs of success as well as the pain

and frustration of failure with someone who will actively listen without giving advice or making judgments, someone who shows interest and concern, someone who is a good listener with a friendly ear and open heart.

f) Emotional support:

Most people need someone who is willing to provide unconditional support at least occasionally. This can be vital in a stressful situation or in a constantly stressful job. An emotional supporter is a person who is willing to be on our side in different situations even if he/she is not in total agreement with what we are doing. It is something that people of home, parents, relatives, spouse, friend and especially older age people can provide when under stress.

Social support has been generally characterized as a degree of support provided to an individual particularly in times of need by person involved with them-spouse, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and members of the larger community (Johanson and Sarason, 1979; Lin, Simeone, Ensel and Kuo, 1979b).

Social support itself is defined by Cutrona (1996) as 'responsiveness to an other's needs and more specifically as acts that communicate caring; that validate the other's worth, feelings or actions; or that facilitate adaptive coping with problems through the provision of information assistance or tangible resources.'

Another variable under study in the present research is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment in the fields of Organizational Behavior and Industrial / Organizational Psychology is, in a general sense, the employee's psychological attachment to the organization. According to Meyer and Allen's (1991) there are three "mind sets" which can characterize an employee's commitment to the organization and based on this theory postulated three component model.

Affective Commitment:

It is defined as the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization. An employee who is affectively committed strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization. The employee commits to the organization because he/she "wants to". In developing this concept, Meyer and Allen (1991) drew largely on Mowday, Porter,

and Steers (1982) concept of commitment, which in turn drew on earlier work by Kanter (1968).

Continuance Commitment:

The individual commits to the organization because he / she perceives high costs of losing organizational membership (Becker's "side bet theory" 1960), including economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) that would be incurred. The employee remains a member of the organization because he / she "has to"

Normative Commitment:

The individual commits to and remains with an organization because of feelings of obligation. These feelings may be derived from many sources. For example, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels a 'moral' obligation to put forth effort on the job and stay with the organization to 'repay the debt.' It may also reflect an internalized norm, developed before the person joins the organization through family or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization. The employee stays with the organization because he/she "ought to".

. Social support best functions as the process for the discussion and venting of negative feeling about the job or self (Badure and Waltz. 1982; La Rocco, House and French 1980; Mclean, 1985) and builds self esteem (House 1981). Suffocation due to stress can be lightened if social support is there and it would also result in recognition of self worth and increased organizational commitment. Success of the organization can be built on the competence and commitment of its employees. Mowday, Porter and Steers [1982] viewed organizational commitment as relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in an organization. Groer [1993] found that subjects high on organizational commitment had a propensity to report more accurately to the organization than subjects with low commitment to the organization. Organizational commitment, as a subset of the psychological contract, is an important consideration for organizational leaders to foster. Strong positive commitment can lead to increased levels of devotion, loyalty, and effort and can reduce costs. In today's competitive environment organizations are aiming to grow, sustain and survive These goals can only

be attained if the organizations have competent and committed employees. But these days people are encountering stress in their personal as well as professional lives. Studies reveal that if people get support from their social encounters then they can cope up with any problems in their lives. This will ultimately result in better performance and more commitment for the organization they work for. Hence it frames the basis of present investigation. Keeping in the view of the above facts the present investigation attempts to find out the relationship of social support with organizational commitment of managers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

. The population under study is Managers of Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation (PCDF), Lucknow a State Level, Federated Tertiary Cooperative Society, an appendage of Government of Uttar Pradesh dealing with Dairy Development and Milk Trade in State of Uttar Pradesh. The population of officers, retained by Government / Cooperative / Private Sector Dairies, is spread all-over the country. The nature of industry dealing with highly perishable essential food commodity like milk is so critical, stressful, operation intensive and important that it becomes quite difficult to get them in the desired number at one place. So incidental sampling technique was used to select the sample. It has been observed that highly qualified Management Graduates, Chartered Accountants, Dairy Technologists, Agriculturists, Computer Professionals and Engineers who had joined PCDF as officers are still associated with this organization for past over 25 years despite all odds and no career advancement offered to them. So much so that they were denied even minimum two promotions enshrined in law. But till now, only a few managers left this organization either to move out on deputation to other departments or joined new organizations, thereby showing a remarkable organizational commitment in the face of all adversities. PCDF officers present a classical case of extreme organizational commitment in the present work environment where companies are finding it difficult to manage high employee turnover despite best packages being offered. This would not have been possible without strong network of social support to those employees .A need was hence felt to identify the relationship of organizational support with the exemplary organizational commitment these managers portrayed by not quitting PCDF.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out the relationship between tangible support and organizational commitment
- To find out the relationship between appraisal support and organizational commitment in PCDF managers
- To find out the relationship between belonging support and organizational commitment in PCDF managers
- To find out the relationship between overall social support and organizational commitment in PCDF managers
- To find out the contribution of social support to organizational commitment in PCDF managers

HYPOTHESES:

In the direction of available literature concerning the relationship of social support and organizational commitment following hypotheses were formulated:

1. The relationship between tangible support and organizational commitment is positive.
2. The relationship between appraisal-support and organizational commitment is positive
3. The relationship between belonging-support and organizational commitment is positive
4. The relationship between overall social-support and organizational commitment is positive
5. Social support (area wise and overall) will significantly predict the organizational commitment of PCDF managers.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Nature Of The Study:

The research design in our case is correlational in nature. Present investigation is primarily focused on the following psychological variables:

Criterion variable: Organizational commitment

Predictor variables: Social support

Sample:

The study was conducted on 220 managers incidentally

selected from various branches of Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation spread across Uttar Pradesh. The age of the respondents varied between 40 to 52 years, with mean age of 46 years. In education they varied between graduations to doctorate, however, most of them were post graduate. All of the respondents were married and the working experience varied between 12 to 26 years in their present organization, with a mean experience of 19 years. The monthly income of the respondents varied between Rs. 25000 to 36000, with a mean income of Rs. 30,500

Measures:

Two psychometric tools were used to study the intensity of organizational commitment and social-support of Managers of PCDF in their work settings. The description of tools is given below:

Organizational Commitment Scale

The original organizational commitment scale comprises of 8 items each (Allen & Meyer, 1990a) on the three dimensions. The revised scale comprises 6 items on each of the three dimensions and hence, consists of 18 items (Meyer et al., 1993). To adapt in Indian culture the English version of the (Meyer et al., 1993) scale was translated in Hindi, and finally, Indian adaptation of organizational commitment scale (Khan & Mishra, 2002b) was used. Meyer & Allen (1993) applied different labels to what they described as three components of commitment: Affective, Continuance and Normative.

In order to control for a response bias, as suggested by Meyer et al. (1993) some of the items were negatively worded. Brief descriptions and details of items' distribution in different commitment sub-scales are given below:

Organizational Commitment Sub-scales	Item No.	Negative Scoring Items	No. of Items
1. Affective Commitment	1 to 6	3,4,6	6
2. Continuance Commitment	7 to 12	-	6
3. Normative Commitment	13 to 18	13	6
Overall Organizational Commitment	1 to 18	3,4,6,13	18

Administration:

The scale was administered on individual respondent.

Scoring:

Originally, the scale was 7 point Likert scale. The scaling was changed into 5-point scale with anchors labeled (5= strongly agree and 1= strongly disagree). There were four negatively worded items, three in affective commitment and one in normative commitment sub-scales. The negatively worded items are to be scored in reverse order. The responses of the identified items were added to generate individual commitment sub-scale score and all 18 items were added to generate overall organizational commitment score. Thus, the possible score for commitment sub-scales was 6 to 30 and overall organizational commitment scale from 18 to 90. High score indicates high intensity agreement and low score indicates low intensity agreement on the commitment dimension in the organization.

Reliability:

There are different ways to measure reliability (Lord & Novice, 1968; Nunnally, 1978). Estimating the median reliabilities for affective, continuance, normative commitment and overall organizational commitment scales appeared rational (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

It can be seen that median reliability coefficients for all the three sub-scales ranged between 0.83 to 0.93 and the same for organizational commitment scale was found to be 0.87. All these coefficients are higher than as reported by Allen & Meyer (1996) and are significant at 0.001, level of significance.

Validity

Content (Face and logical) validity of the bilingual scale was authenticated by professional psychologists / academic psychologists / technical Instructors (numbering about 10 experts) of Psycho-Technical Directorate, RDSO (Ministry of Railways), Department of Psychology, University of Lucknow and Zonal Training Centers of Indian Railways. In three of the Railway Zones (Central, Northern and Western) at a sample of 275 Drivers, validity was established by conducting nondirective interviews also.

The factor structure of the organizational commitment

scale has been examined to determine factorial validity in several studies using exploratory and confirmatory analyses. The estimates of the initial factors are obtained using principal components analysis. Although the factor matrix obtained in the extraction phase indicate the relationship between the factors and the individual items, it is difficult to identify meaningful factors on the matrix. One of the aims of factor analysis was to identify factors, which are substantially meaningful. The Varimax rotation phase of the analysis attempts to transform the initial matrix into one that is easier to interpret.

Convergent validity can be inferred from the loading of the items on the hypothesized dimensions (Morrison 1976). Examination of the factor structure also helps in ascertaining the discriminant validity. The percent of variance accounted by affective, continuance and normative commitment were 59.6%, 64.4% and 52.5 respectively. Significant link between affective commitment and performance was found. The confirmatory factor analysis has provided strong support for the scale, which exhibits discriminant and convergent validity (Hackett, Bycio & Hasudorf, 1994). For the most part, the results of both the exploratory (Allen & Meyer 1990a; Reilly & Orsak, 1991) and confirmatory (Dunham et al., 1994; Vandenberg, 1996) studies provide evidence to suggest that affective, continuance and normative commitment are indeed distinguishable constructs. Allen & Meyer (1996) discussed findings pertaining to construct validity of the scale and the findings tend to be consistent with the prediction and add to our confidence in the construct validity of the measure.

Affective commitment correlated with organizational values ($r=0.31$), Continuance commitment with personal ($r=0.21$) and organizational values ($r=0.30$) and Normative commitment with personal ($r=0.25$)

Social Support Scale

To measure the level of social support, social support scale developed by Cohen et.al (1985) has been used. There are three areas in which social support is measured. i.e., tangible support, appraisal support & belonging support. The scale has 15 items, five in each area. There are nine positive statements and six negative statements. The response alternatives are: completely true, somewhat true, somewhat false, completely false.

The different items of the scale fall in three areas which are as follows –

Areas of Social Support	Serial no. of items	No. of items
Tangible Support	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	05
Appraisal Support	6, 7, 8, 9, 10	05
Belonging Support	11, 12, 13, 14, 15	05
Total	-	15

Reliability And Validity:

The three subscale of the social support scale are reasonably independent of one another as indicated by their testing evaluation which is in the 0.30 to 0.50 range. Complete independence of these scales is neither desirable nor possible since people often receive different kind of support from the same person is their network. Adequate internal and test-retest reliabilities of the three subscales range from 0.77 to 0.92 and from 0.70 to 0.90 respectively.

Scoring:

Out of the 15 items constituting this scale items no. 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 14 are negative whereas remaining nine items are positive. The possible score for each items ranged as 1 to 4 (completely false to completely true). The index course ranged is ascending for social support scale can be done separately for three subscale covering different aspects of social support. The total social support score can be obtained by adding the score of the three subscales. The maximum possible score on the scale is 60 and minimum will be 15.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS:

Coefficient of co-relations, were computed to find out the relationship of organizational commitment with social support (overall and area wise) of PCDF managers.

Multiple regression analysis was also applied for the purpose of determining the contributing role of social support to organizational commitment

The data was analyzed using statistical software package SPSS 16.

RESULTS

The appropriate statistics which have been used in this study are coefficient of correlations.

The results are as follows:

Relationship Between Social Support (Area Wise And Overall) And Organizational Commitment

Tablel-a

Social Support (areawise and overall)	Organizational Commitment
Tangible support	Pearson Correlation 0.13*
Appraisal support	Pearson Correlation 0.24**
Belonging support	Pearson Correlation 0.13*
Overall Social Support	- Pearson Correlation 0.18**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level	

Results show that the relationship between social support (area wise and overall) and organizational commitment is positive and significant. It extends support to the belief that social support is directly related to organizational commitment i.e. when social support increases organizational commitment also increases and vice-versa. The relationship between tangible support and organizational commitment is positive and significant. It depicts that perceived availability of material aid is significantly correlated to organizational commitment, Cohen and Will (1985) suggest that tangible support might be most likely dimension of social support to buffer the effects of economic problems. Thus when individual gets tangible support in the organization it solves many of their economic problems, thus they become much more desirous to continue his or her organisational membership. These

results confirm the first hypothesis that “there is positive relationship between tangible support and organizational commitment.

Appraisal support and organizational commitment are significantly and positively related with each other. Appraisal support depicts the individual’s perception of trustworthy people around him, with whom he can talk about his problems. Psychologist have been saying that person should have few people with whom he can share and seek information.

This process of sharing itself sorts out many problems, naturally when people get appraisal support they can flush their frustrations and grudges, thus strengthening their emotional ties with organization. Luthans and his associates (1992) concluded on the basis of his study that supportive climate has a clear and positive relation with organizational commitment. Thus the second hypothesis gets confirmed that there is positive relationship between appraisal support and organizational commitment.

Managers getting high belonging support are found to be committed to the organization as obvious from correlations value between belonging support and organizational commitment. Belonging support depicts person’s belief that he is significant part of social network and his interests and concerns are shared.

Fisher (1985) in his study concluded that the consistently observed correlations between social support and job satisfaction facet can be interpreted to reflect social support’s ability to make the work environment more pleasant and rewarding. This pleasant and rewarding environment provided by social support may enhance organizational commitment of managers.

Social exchange interpretation of organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Hutington, Hutchinson and Sowa, 1986) suggest that perceived organizational support is assumed to increase employees affective attachment to the organization and his or her expectancy that greater effort will be rewarded.

The employee’s perceptions of the organization’s commitment to them (perceived organizational support) creates feeling of obligation to the employer, which enhances employees’ work behavior.

When people get social support from their organizational colleagues they go beyond the role requirement in order to repay the organization for the support received. Caplan (1974) and Mechanic (1974) have observed that

social network serves multiple functions in helping one adjust to demands of the environment. Involvement in a network helps individual by providing information concerning what is expected of them, feedback regarding their behavior, assistance with task rewards for appropriate behavior. These conditions also lead to organizational commitment therefore it is natural that when belonging support increases, organizational commitment also increases. The studies conducted by Vashishtha (1998), Vashishtha and Mishra (1998, 1999, and 2000) and Khanna (2000) support the obtained results that social support and organizational commitment have significant positive relationship with each other. These results confirm the third hypothesis that “there is positive relationship between belonging support and organizational commitment.

The composite effect of social support emerging from tangible, appraisal and belonging support show that overall social support has a very high positive correlation with organizational commitment.

Tangible, appraisal and belonging support also strengthen the three independent foundations of organizational commitment viz., compliance, identification and internalization. Hence there is a strong association between social support and organizational commitment. Our study also confirms this view as overall social support and organizational commitment are significantly and positively related. Therefore on the basis of our study it can be said that high level of overall social support is associated with high level of organizational commitment. These results also confirm the fourth hypothesis that there is positive relationship between overall social support and organizational commitment.

Table (b) exhibit the regression models considering the organizational commitment as the criterion variable and social support (overall and areawise) as predictor variables

Table (b)

Criterion Variable: Organisational Commitment

Predictor Variable : Social Support (tangible, appraisal, belonging and overall social support)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R-Square Change	F Change	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.245 ^a	.060	.056	10.728	.060	13.945	218	.000	
2	.397 ^b	.157	.150	10.181	.097	25.034	217	.000	2.233
a. Predictors: (Constant), Appraisal support									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Appraisal support, over all social support.									

Goodness of Fit of Model

A commonly used measure of the goodness of fit of a linear model is r^2 , or the coefficients of determination. If all the observation falls on the regression line, r^2 is 1. If there is no linear relationship between the criterion and predictor variable, r^2 is zero. If r^2 is zero it does not necessary mean that there is no association between the variables. Instead, it indicates that there is no linear relationship

It has been observed that in our case r^2 is 0.16. This indicates that the regression model is explaining 16% of the variance in organizational commitment using appraisal support and overall social support as predictor variables.

Table- C
Regression coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity Stats	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	61.861	3.350		18.467	.000		
Appraisal support	2.504	.407	.960	6.159	.000	.160	6.253
Overall social support	-.889	.178	-.780	-5.003	.000	.160	6.253

The regression model on the basis of independent variables included into the equation can be written as follows:

Organizational Commitment = $61.861 + 2.504 \times \text{appraisal support} - .889 \times \text{overall social support}$

In table ©, when all the predictor variables of social support (tangible support, appraisal support, belonging support, overall social support) were entered into the equation, only two variables (appraisal support and overall social support) survived and passed the criteria (probability of F-to-enter = 0.05) probability to enter.

Multiple regression model were developed to predict organizational commitment on the basis of social support (overall and area wise).

In table ©, when all the predictor variables of social support (tangible support, appraisal support, belonging support, overall social support) were entered into the equation using stepwise multiple regression, only two variables (appraisal support and overall social support) survived and passed the criteria (probability of F-to-enter = 0.05) probability to enter and after passing the criteria only appraisal support, overall support were included into the model to predict organizational commitment

In our case r^2 was found to be 0.16. The coefficient is indicative that the regression model is explaining 16% of the variance in organizational commitment using appraisal support and overall social support as predictor variables. The present part of the study confirms the linear relationship between organizational commitment

and a set of predictor variables (appraisal support and overall social support).

The present study reflects that if people have strong support systems, they feel emotionally secured & have feeling of belongingness with the organization, which will also increase the commitment towards their organization,

CONCLUSION

The results of the present research can be beneficial suggestion for the organizations that how in today's ever changing business, political, social and economical environment they can ensure the commitment of the workforce. The message that this research conveys is that human resource is the most important asset of any organization. Hence all efforts must be made to satiate their needs of belongingness, security, growth, esteem, achievement and actualization. The organizations should pay due attention towards psychologically healthy and supportive environment. Then only the organizations will be able to attain their goals and grow and survive amidst tough competition and turbulent environment.

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