

## **Do we really behave the same way? Assessing the three dimensions of organizational commitment as antecedents of human resource practices in a non-western context**

**Michel Zaitouni Ph.D**

Assistant professor of management

College of business administration

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), Kuwait

E-mail: Zaitouni.m@gust.edu.kw

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the underlying processes and the mechanisms by which HR practices exert influence on the three dimensions of commitment-affective, continuance and normative- in a non-western context focusing on the banking sector of Lebanon.*

*Data were collected as part of a more general survey of job-related attitudes among various levels of employees of the participant banks. Of the 1000 questionnaires distributed in the different banks, 460 employees responded, generating an overall usable response rate of 39.8% (62 non-usable responses).*

*Findings As expected, the findings from the hierarchical regression analysis reveal that HRM practices did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the three dimensions of commitment, except for information sharing. Some hypotheses have been rejected because of cultural differences between eastern and western societies. The present results bring to the forefront the element of risk involved in human resource investments, and what may be the most significant predictors of commitment dimensions among a host of human resource management practices*

*This is one of few studies to provide insight into human resource practices and its relationships with the dimensions of organizational commitment in a country that has a very different culture from that of the US and other western societies, where most of the research on organizational commitment has been conducted. Commitment has long been assumed to be an essential outcome of work-related behaviour, yet this study shows that its effectiveness may be contingent on national culture.*

**Keywords** HRM practices, banking sector, organizational commitment, cultural differences.

Organizations see their employees as a critical source of competitive advantage (Gottschalk & Zollo, 2007) and consider them as valuable sources of performance (Zheng, Morrison & O'Neil, 2006; Beck & Wilson, 2000; Parker et al., 2003). Therefore, a myriad of challenges are faced by organizations to effectively manage and implement

their human resource management practices (Anakwe, 2002). Despite few exceptions, Guest (1992) contends that many organizations adopt human resource practices intended to maximize employee commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1997) believe that the relationship between human resource practices and employee commitment should be examined more fully. They asserted that additional research is needed to identify the antecedents associated with the multiple domains of employee commitment.

It is imperative that management retains its best workers and keeps them committed to the organization in order to attract other quality employees. Therefore, this concept should be the primary focus of researchers in their studies of employment, organizations, and related fields (Scarpello, Ledvinka, & Bergman, 1995).

The concept of organizational commitment has been investigated and proven to be a consequence of HRM practices in many studies (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Delaney and Huselid (1996) empirically suggested that fair rewards, competence development, empowerment, recognition and information sharing all affect organizational commitment. Although several studies have been conducted about organizational commitment, ambiguity still exists about the factors affecting the development and promotion of it (Beck & Wilson, 2001).

Empirical studies are still needed to detangle the factors leading to organizational commitment. Therefore, based on the deficiency of the prior research, this study attempts to add a valued work to explain the causal linkage between HRM practices and employees' affective, normative, and continuance commitment, supplemented with more appropriate statistical methods to conduct this causal reasoning.

My focus here is on specific human resource management practices, many of which have seldom or have never been investigated in relation to organizational commitment. Hence, rather than investigate bundles of practices (Delery and Doty, 1996; MacDuffie, 1995; Wright et al. 1999; Yalabik et al. 2008), the present study considers specific human resource management practices designed to (1) praise and appreciate employee achievements (recognition); (2) develop employee skills (competence development); (3) elicit motivation and commitment (fair rewards); and (3) provide employees with knowledge to make decisions (information sharing).

The primary objective of the present study is to explore the underlying processes and the mechanisms by which HR practices exert influence on employees' commitment. Moreover, this study aims at extending the existing research on organizational commitment by conducting it in a non-western work context focusing on the banking sector of Lebanon.

In this study, I choose the banking industry for many reasons. First, the Lebanese banking sector is a highly competitive industry, facing a rapidly changing environment, and therefore, is considered as a fertile land for researchers and practitioners to study employee commitment. Second, because of the high rate of turnover resulting in huge costs of recruiting and training new employees, banks in Lebanon should retain employees and

keep them committed to their organization. Third, the banking sector as a service industry focusing more on customer satisfaction reveals a stronger relational and emotional component than many other industries.

The following sections will present some theoretical foundation on the organizational commitment and will draw hypotheses for its relationships with various HR practices. Next, data , measures, methodology, analysis, and results will be discussed. Finally, a conclusion presentation with a discussion section will address limitations, contributions of the study, and the implications for future research.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of organizational commitment has been subject to numerous studies. These studies have shown that organizational commitment predicts important variables, such as competence, recognition, information sharing and fair rewards (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Koys, 1988; Paré & Tremblay, 2007; Smith, 1995; Whitener, 2001). Previous research also have supported the positive relationship between organizational commitment and selected HR practices (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Porter, Steers, Mowday& Boulian, 1974).

### **Relationship between personal variables and organizational commitment**

Some research drew results that male employees are more committed than their female counterparts (Knoke, 1988), while other studies found no significant link between the genders (Igbaria & Wormley, 1992; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998). With regard to the education level, some research showed a negative relationship with normative and continuance commitment (Cohen, 1999; Mayer & Schoorman, 1998), but others showed no obvious relationship (Knoke, 1988).

Many scholars in the field considered age as an important factor to predict commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) revealed a significant positive correlation mean, 0.2 and 0.36, between commitment and age. Kaldenberg, Becker and Zvonkovic (1995) indicated that current job attractiveness increases as the employee ages due to fewer other employment options. Hawkins (1998), on the other hand, found an insignificant statistical correlation ( $r = -.004$ ) between age and affective commitment for a sample of 396 high school principals.

Meyer and Allen (1997) stated that organizational tenure can lead to contemplative organizational commitment due to the fact that uncommitted workers leave early while the committed ones stay. In another study by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993), it was found that the new and the senior-tenured employees are more committed than the middle-tenured ones. In addition, Liou and Nyhan (1994) concluded that affective commitment has a negative relationship with tenured employees and continuance commitment had no correlation at all.

### **Dimensions of organizational commitment**

In previous years, organizational commitment has been a major focus of interest for many researchers and practitioners (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch& Topolnytsky, 2002). The increasing

interest in the area has generated a great deal of research and comments. Since researchers have not always been clear about the concept of commitment, some misunderstandings are bound to arise, resulting in a lack of consensus on the definition of organizational commitment. In the following, we will attempt to overview the various inferences and theoretical propositions concerning components of OC by past researchers.

Organizational commitment is defined as an attitude of emotional attachment to the organization that may engender a sense of belonging and a stronger personal commitment (Mowday et al., 1982; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Buchanan (1974) defines organizational commitment as an effective attachment of employees to the organization that results in their willingness as social actors to give their energy and loyalty to a social system apart from the purely instrumental worth of the relationship. Commitment is a psychological state that binds individuals attachment or bond to the organization (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Porter et al., 1974 ; Meyer et al., 1993). Organizational commitment can be characterized by an important work-related attitudes and behaviors to foster among employees to attach and identify them with the organization (Hackett, Lapierre & Hausdorf 2001; Mathieu & Zajac ,1990). Committed employees are those who believe in and accept the organization's goals and values, are willing to exert an extensive effort on the behalf of the organization, and have a desire to stay (Porter et al., 1974).

In this study, I explore the model of Allen and Meyer (1990) that gained a substantial popularity, and reflected employees' psychological state that has an implication on their intention to stay or to leave the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) identified three distinct components of commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. The affective component refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. Finally, the normative component refers to employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization.

### **HR practices and organizational commitment**

Prior research demonstrated a great deal of support for predicting a positive relationship between organizational commitment and HR practices, trying to empirically show the development of a causal relationship (Paul & Anantharaman, 2004; Ulrich, 1997; Wimalasiri, 1995). For example, McEnroe and Hechler (1985) and Paré and Tremblay (2007) found that opportunities for promotion and the fairness of the process (recognition practices) were positively associated to organizational commitment. Other researchers (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Bartlett, 2001) posited that providing employees with the necessary skills and abilities and encouraging them to apply what they have learned in their daily work (competence development) were found to be positively related to organizational commitment. Further, several researchers (Oliver, 1990; Rousseau & Greller, 1994) argued that fair rewards are an indication of how much the organizations values its employees. Thus, they speculated that fairness in distributing rewards creates the norm of positive reciprocity associated with commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) contended that sharing information has a direct and positive influence on the variables associated

with commitment by enhancing trust and building employees' self-worth and perceptions of importance. The present study attempts to examine the role of HR practices in predicting commitment, and thus fill this void in the literature.

### **Recognition practices and organizational commitment**

Monetary compensation is important, but not sufficient, to keep employees. Non-monetary recognition plays the same role as compensation does. Praise, appreciation, and positive feedback from managers and peers for a job well done is imperative to generate job satisfaction and commitment (Park, Erwin & Knapp, 1997; Davies, 2001). Recognition is needed in the social and organizational environment as a motivational tool to bring about a good work outcome. In high professional jobs, recognition is considered as a main objective to maintaining the feeling of high involvement and being an important element of the organization (Agarwal & Ferratt, 1999). Paré and Tremblay (2007) confirmed that recognition is positively related to continuance and affective commitment in their study which targeted 2,398 "Quebec members of the Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS)". Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formed:

- H1: Recognition is positively related to Affective Commitment
- H2: Recognition is positively related to Continuance Commitment
- H3: Recognition is positively related to Normative Commitment

### **Competence development practices and organizational commitment**

Investment by the organization in employee training is intended to send a commitment message to its employees that individual development is a valued goal of the organization (McElroy, 2001). The employee's commitment might be influenced more by the message HRM practices convey to the employee than by the practices themselves (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990). Training is used to enhance specific skills and correct performance issues to empower employees with the skills needed for the current and future job requirement (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 1995; Gold, 2001; Wood & De Menezes, 1998).

Koys (1988, 1991) found that workers' commitment is related directly to their faith in the intention of the organization's HRM practices to keep skilled employees and treat them fairly. The employee's skill, training, and personal development practices, including job redesign/enrichment, have shown positive results in building the employee's confidence level, a sense of control, and identification of their work, therefore, as result of affective commitment (Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004). Building employees' skills to perform their job would establish a higher level of confidence as well as the employees' perception that the organization values their presence, therefore establishing employees' long-term commitment (Smith, 1995). Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formed:

- H4: Competence development is positively related to Affective Commitment
- H5: Competence development is positively related to Continuance Commitment
- H6: Competence development is positively related to Normative Commitment

### **Fair reward practices and organizational commitment**

Previous studies on the influence of human resource practices on organizational commitment revealed a causal relationship between rewards and benefits and commitment. Pay can be used as an incentive to boost employees' motivation and commitment to achieve organizational goals (Pfeffer, 1994, 1995, 1998). Many employees look at pay allocation with suspicion and as unfair practice among peers (Trevor, Gerhart & Boudreau, 1997), which explains why the relationship between pay and commitment was found insignificant (Motowildo, 1988; Currall, Towler, Judge & Kohn, 2005; Tekleab, Bartol & Liu, 2005; Trevor et al., 1997).

When employees perceive, believe, and understand that the pay program intends to provide "internal pay equity", they tend to have high organizational commitment (Stum, 1999). Attractive benefits packages are viewed by employees as a sign that the organization cares and supports its employees, resulting in the development of a strong affective commitment and the belief that the loss of such a package would be costly. This feeling results in a greater experience of a continuance commitment, indebted attachment to the workplace, leading in turn to a stronger normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). More and more research revealed a positive link between benefit packages and employee commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995).

Reward practices would link employees' performance level to the expected rewards. Therefore, management should implement a "performance-contingent" reward system to predict an employee's output and performance commitment in the organization (Gagne' & Deci, 2005). The equity theory suggested that employees weigh their effort (output) with the compensation they receive. If viewed as a fair package, employees see justice is being provided, become satisfied, and therefore commit with a long-term relationship in the organization (Adams, 1965). Multiple studies (Pillai, Schriesheim & Williams, 1999; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Gopinath & Becker, 2000) have confirmed this relationship between fair compensation and organizational commitment. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formed:

H7: Fair Rewards are positively related to Affective Commitment

H8: Fair Rewards are positively related to Continuance Commitment

H9: Fair Rewards are positively related to Normative Commitment

### **Information sharing practices and organizational commitment**

Many researchers have identified a relationship between information sharing and organizational commitment for many years. Management adopts information sharing as an important and effective tool to enhance and strengthen the employee's commitment to the organization (Allen, Shore & Grieffeth, 2009). The information sharing process involves the way the organization sends and receives knowledge among the organization members in order to strengthen the decision making process (Ózgan, 2011). This practice ensures that employees are being recognized as part of the decision making process and management are treating their views or opinions with respect.

Meyer and Allen (1997) reported that information sharing is positively correlated to affective commitment by building management-employee trust and workers' self-worthiness. Aligned with Meyer and Allen, Trombetta and Rogers (1988), Thornhill, Lewis and Saunders (1996), and Guzley (2001) confirmed this relationship, stating that open and transparent communication along with access to adequate information and participative decision making involvement build a positive affective commitment. On the other hand, fostering downward and upward flow of communication among different levels of the organization would influence the level of employee commitment and comfort in the workplace (Young & Worchel, 1998).

Parker and Kyi (2006) and Postames, Tanis and De Wit (2001) shed light on what is called vertical and horizontal communication and information sharing. Vertical information flows from top management to employees at the lower level, while vertical information is about social communication. Both findings showed only vertical information sharing reveals a positive and significant association with organizational and performance commitment. By involving employees with this knowledge sharing, management would build a healthy environment in which employees gain self-confidence, recognition of their ideas, and a feeling of control over what they are doing; this would lead to mutual respect, which positively impacts the employees' level of commitment (Leana & Florkowski, 1992; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999; Cook, 1994; Campbell, 2000). In the meantime, sharing information does not mean sacrificing trade secrets. Management has to decide what type and how much information to share with employees. Usually upper level management possesses more information than lower level employees. The organization would not share information if "it carries high efficiency cost" (Ronde, 2001). Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formed:

H10: Information sharing is positively related to Affective Commitment

H11: Information sharing is positively related to Continuance Commitment

H12: Information sharing is positively related to Normative Commitment

## **METHODS**

### **Sample and Procedures**

The relationships between Human Resource practices and the three dimensions of commitment were examined in a field study conducted in the banking sector in Lebanon. The data were collected as part of a more general survey of job-related attitudes among various levels of employees of the participant banks via the internal mail system through the HR director. Meetings were scheduled to inform employees about the general purpose of the study, to emphasize confidentiality, and to administer questionnaires. Employees were asked to participate in the research and received questionnaires, which were filled out during work time and returned via the internal mail system. Of the 1000 questionnaires distributed in the different banks, 460 employees responded, generating an overall usable response rate of 39.8% (62 non-usable responses).

Of this final sample of 398 respondents, there was a fairly close split between male (56.55%) and female (43.5%) participants and a fair distribution among age groups (28% between 21-25 years, 52% between 26-35 years, 13% between 36-45 years, 5.5% between 46-55 years, 0.9% between 56-60 years and 0% over 65 years). The sample

was relatively young in terms of age since the majority (80%) was less than 35-years-old. Regarding the educational level, the majority of respondents (86%) held a diploma and higher degree. Furthermore, 48.3% of respondents had been in their position for five years and above, and 18.3% of respondents had been working in the present organization for over five years. In terms of positions, 262 respondents were non-managerial (66%); the remaining respondents were managerial (34%). Table 1 details the sample proportion with respect to gender, age, educational level, job tenure, organizational tenure and position level.

### **Measures**

The items comprising the scales described generally below are detailed in tables 2 and 3, in the results section.

*Human Resource management practices:* The HR practices were assessed by administering scales for measuring recognition, competence development, fair rewards, and information sharing. The intended outcomes included affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Tremblay, Rondeau and Lemelin (1997) assessed all HR practices but one using a five-point likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), indicating the extent to which the four practices were used in their organization. The first HR practice, labeled 'recognition', included five items measuring the recognition of employees' suggestions and efforts from supervisors and peers (Cronbach alpha=0.812). The second HR practice, labeled 'competence development', included six items measuring employees' development skills and their chances for promotion (Cronbach alpha=0.855). The third HR practice, labeled 'fair rewards', included five items measuring employees' perception of their compensation level (Cronbach alpha=0.811). The last HR practice, labeled 'information sharing', adopted from a survey done by Lawler, Mohrman and Ledford (1992), included six items measuring employees' involvement in the communication process at all levels. The resulting Cronbach alpha for information sharing was 0.879.

*Organizational commitment* The three dimensions of the employee organizational commitment were assessed using the scale developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). The affective commitment scale included seven items measuring the emotional reasons for which employees would stay in the organization. The resulting Cronbach alpha for affective commitment is 0.678. The continuance commitment scale included seven items measuring the economic reasons for which employees would stay in the organization. The resulting Cronbach alpha for continuance commitment is 0.750. The normative commitment scale included five items measuring the ethical and the moral reasons for which employees would stay in the organization. The resulting Cronbach alpha for normative commitment is 0.526.

### **Covariates**

To control for the possibility that sociodemographic differences in the predictor and outcome variables might lead to spurious relationships, gender (1 = male, 2 = female), age (in years), educational level ( 1 =High school ....4 = Post graduate ), Job tenure and organizational tenure ( in years ) and Position level (1 = Manager, 2 = Non-Manager ) were entered as covariates of their jobs.

### **Response Bias**

From the initial sample of 460 respondents, 62 were excluded as a result of missing information, leading to a final sample of 398 respondents systematically differed from the excluded respondents with respect to their scores on the four HR practices and the three dimensions of commitment. We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The results of the MANOVA did not demonstrate significant differences, minimizing concern about potential sampling bias.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Before testing the hypotheses, we conducted two exploratory factor analyses in order to get some evidence for the measures' discriminant validity. First, the items of the self-reported measures of recognition, competence development, fair rewards and information sharing were submitted to a principal components analysis with oblique rotation. As can be seen in Table 2, four factors emerged accounting for 60.728 percent of the variance. Each item "loaded" on its appropriate factor, with primary loadings exceeding .47 and cross-loading lower than .35. The items of organizational commitment measures were submitted to a principal components analysis with oblique rotation. As shown in table 3, the three factors that emerged appropriately represented the affective, continuance and normative commitment items, whereby primary loading exceeded .365 while cross-loadings were lower than .35. The three factors accounted for 60.143 percent of the variance.

### **TEST OF THE HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**

Table 4 shows the three subscale items of commitment, Cronbach's alpha and the total explained variance, omitting factors loading less than .035.

Hierarchical regression analyses consisting of two successive steps were conducted to test Hypotheses 1 to 12. In the first step, the sociodemographic variables were entered as covariates to control for relationships with affective, continuance and normative commitment. In the second step, we included recognition, competence development, fair rewards and information sharing practices to test their hypothesized effects on the three dimensions of commitment.

As shown in table 4, The first set of regression analyses was conducted with affective commitment as the dependent variable. The results provide support for the Hypotheses: H1, H7 and H10. (Overall model:  $F=23.402$ ,  $P<.001$ ; adjusted R-square=.302.) As expected, recognition, fair rewards, and information sharing were positively and significantly related to affective commitment ( $B=.16$ ,  $P<.05$ ;  $B=.21$ ,  $P<.01$ ; and  $B=.18$ ,  $P<.05$ ). In conflict with previous studies, the relationship between competence development and affective commitment (H4) was found to be positive but did not exhibit a statistical significance.

Furthermore, as hypotheses 8 and 11 predict, fair rewards and information sharing were found to be positively and significantly related to continuance commitment ( $F= 5.688$ ,  $p < .001$ , Adjusted R square= .031;  $B= .12$ ,  $p<.10$  and  $B=.20$ ,  $p< .001$  for H8 and H11 respectively) when the latter was entered as a dependent variable. Contrary to

hypothesis 2, recognition was found to be positively but not significantly related to continuance commitment. Moreover, in conflict with hypothesis 5, competence development was found to be negatively related to continuance commitment.

Finally, the overall model was significant when normative commitment was entered as the dependent variable ( $F=6.323$ ,  $P<.001$ ; adjusted  $R\text{-square}=0.077$ ). Since recognition was not significantly related to the outcome variable of normative commitment, the results provided no support for the hypothesis 3. Competence development was found to be negatively but not significantly related to normative commitment ( $H6$ ). Furthermore and contrary to hypothesis 9, fair rewards was found to be negatively but significantly related to normative commitment ( $B=-.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In line with hypothesis 12, information sharing was found to be positively and significantly related to continuance commitment ( $B=.28$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

## DISCUSSIONS

This study provides insight into human resource practices and its relationships with the dimensions of organizational commitment in a country that has a very different culture from that of the US and other western societies, where most of the research on organizational commitment has been conducted. Commitment has long been assumed to be an essential outcome of work-related behavior, yet this study shows that its effectiveness may be contingent on national culture.

Consistent with previous studies, recognition and affective commitment were found to be positively related. This finding suggests that greater recognition of employees' efforts may provide greater attachment to the organization. According to the social exchange theory (Whitener, 2001), employees excel at work when their supervisors provide them with positive considerations. Davies (2001) stated that employees tend to be more emotionally attached to the organization when they feel that their capabilities and efforts are recognized and appreciated. According to Meyer and Smith (2001), employees consider the provision of benefits as part of the employer's obligation within the psychological contract and the benefit programs offered in the organization as the most important predictor of their attachment to the organization.

Surprisingly and contrary to our expectations, competence development was found to be negatively and insignificantly related to affective commitment. Competence development practices are all activities which invest in human capital and provide employees with the needed resources and opportunities to improve and develop their skills, enabling them to work in an environment that promotes career development and initiative-taking. Commitment and intention to stay in the organization occur when HR practices produce in them a feeling of autonomy and competence (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2004). The negative and non-significant association could be due to the fact that employees are not provided with the suitable training or to some organizational constraints such as time, personnel, budget, training facilities and more probably the attitude of senior management toward training (Gomez-Mejia et al., 1995)

Results supported the hypothesis that fair rewards are positively related to affective commitment. The Mercer report (2003) demonstrated that employees who are rewarded fairly will be more committed and stay (I estimated my salary as being fair internally). Companies that use the reward budget effectively to distribute the rewards adequately among employees receive an increased consideration than other companies (The pay increases and/or bonuses I received in the last two years adequately reflect my recent performance evaluations). Furthermore, these results are in line with the findings of previous studies conducted in the western societies which support a positive association between rewards and employees commitment (Malhotra et al., 2007; Mottaz, 1988 ). One can conclude that the antecedents of employees' commitment in the Lebanese organizational setting may emanate from similar factors to those for employees in the western countries.

I found that the information sharing practices are more likely to significantly increase the emotional attachment of employees to the organization (affective commitment). Such a practice is likely to reflect a work environment that allows employees to express their concerns rather than to exit the workplace. Information sharing practices include all organizational practices implemented to transmit and receive information, and therefore to support decision-making (Haines, Jalette and Larose, 2010 ). Nevertheless, many companies would worry about sharing critical information (employees are regularly informed of financial results) with their employees because of the possibility of losing control of them (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

Furthermore, I found that the best predictors of continuance commitment in this study were Fair rewards and information sharing. I speculated that these practices might affect continuance commitment due to the assumption that employees perform their work and will be more committed to the organization if the employer reciprocates by providing compensation and other positive considerations. Like fair rewards, information sharing was found to be associated positively with continuance commitment. Organizations that inform regularly its employees of future projects, financial results, technological orientation, level of customer satisfaction and ways to improve their work unit's effectiveness reflect a work environment where employees feel the obligation to stay (continuance commitment) rather than to quit.

Results pertaining the non-significant effect of competence development and recognition on employees' attitudes toward their obligation to remain with the organization indicate that improving employee' skills and knowledge and recognizing their efforts do not necessary increase continuance commitment. Also, having fewer alternatives available to them outside their current organization will force them to be more committed. Our findings are consistent with the human capital theory (Becker, 1975), which dictates that employees stay because of the fewer opportunities they have elsewhere due to the difficulties in exporting the acquired knowledge outside the company. In the context of specific human resource management practices, my findings clearly indicate that employer-provided training may actually increase voluntary turnover rates (Batt, 2002; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1996; Shaw et al. 1998). This leads to conclude that more research is needed to understand the specific association between competence development and recognition and continuance commitment.

The HRM practices did not contribute significantly to the prediction of normative commitment, except for information sharing. Of the HRM practices measured in this research, information sharing practices were found to

be significantly related to normative commitment. This relationship could be explained in the context of the social values system held by employees from the Middle East in general and the Lebanese context in particular. Employees feel morally and ethically committed to stay within the same organization based on employees-management personal relationships within a high context environment. They tend to develop social memberships around the workplace so that leaving the organization for materialistic endeavor somewhere else is considered morally unacceptable among their peers. My study shows that the obligation to remain in the organization (normative commitment) is developed independently of desire. These findings indicate that other forces are at work shaping the associations between the above-mentioned HR practices and normative commitment. As Batt (2002) suggested, more attention should be given to the financial uncertainty, job security and efforts recognition rather than social values. Lebanese employees are more concerned about the dollar value of their job than being morally and ethically committed to the organization. Apparently, there is more at work here than mere conventional wisdom would suggest, pointing to the need to investigate financial and job insecurity aspects of commitment.

Despite substantive and theoretical contributions, my study had some limitations. The data were cross-sectional, which limits any conclusions that can be made about the causal relations between human resource practices and organizational commitment. Also, I measured HR practices and organizational commitment only from employee's perspective. Future research might assess these variables from both the organization and employees to examine whether measurement perspective may act as a moderator between HR practices, organizational commitment, and their correlates. In addition, all variables were obtained from the same source, which might raise concerns about common-method bias, particularly a consistency between their cognitions and attitudes.

The sample used in this study was collected from the Lebanese banking industry only. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other industries and countries, which explain why some hypotheses have been rejected because of cultural differences between the countries mentioned in the literature and the sample country. Further, only four HR practices were investigated in this study. There are probably other HR practices that have a significant impact on the level of employee commitment and which are not taken into consideration in this research (organizational support, decentralization, selective hiring, job security, procedural justice...).

A final limitation was that participation in this study was voluntary and some members chose not to participate. The research hypotheses in this study would have been accurately tested with data collected from a large number of employees. It was not possible to test the assumption that non-respondent did not differ on such critical variables as HR practices and organizational commitment.

Further research could clarify the causal relationship between HR practices and organizational commitment. Much of the research on HR practices has been conducted in Western societies; thus, the findings of this study can be useful in future comparative studies. Another direction for future research is to examine HR practices and organization commitment in sets, not as separate components, in order to assess their collective effect.

Moreover, a new direction in this research on organizational commitment can be opened up by mediating the relationship between HR practices and commitment with new variables such as procedural justice and trust which may provide more positive work-related attitudes and a numerous benefits for both the organization and its employees.

Although, this study provides a detailed theory-based assessment of the influence of human resource management practices on organizational commitment For people involved in human resource management decisions, my findings bring to the forefront the element of risk involved in human resource investments. This study also brings to light what may be the most significant predictors of commitment dimensions among a host of human resource management practices.

Specifically, my findings suggest that organizations need to focus upon developing policies and instituting practices that allow employees to voice their concerns about their future within the organization. In addition, business leaders need to consider how they invest in their human capital because the often-mentioned fear of losing those you invest in may not be that unreasonable. In sum, the findings we obtained from a large database of the banking sector suggest a complex pattern of relationships between human resource management practices and organizational commitment, one that deserves further empirical scrutiny.

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**Table 1 Sample frequencies**

| Variables     | Sample (n=398) | Variables      | Sample (n=398) |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Gender        |                | Job tenure     |                |
| Male          | 56.5           | 0-5            | 51.7           |
| Female        | 43.5           | 6-10           | 37.11          |
|               |                | Above 10       | 11.19          |
| Age           |                | Org.tenure     |                |
| 21-25         | 28.4           | 0-5            | 81.7           |
| 26-35         | 52.2           | 6-10           | 13.42          |
| 36-45         | 13             | Above 10       | 4.88           |
| 46-55         | 5.5            | Position level |                |
| 56-60         | 9              | Manager        | 34             |
| Above 65      | 0              | Non-Manager    | 66             |
| Edu.Level     |                |                |                |
| HS            | 12.6           |                |                |
| Diploma       | 14.4           |                |                |
| Degree        | 71.7           |                |                |
| Post.Graduate | 1.3            |                |                |

**Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis for HR practices**

| Variables  | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | Cronbach's $\alpha$ |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| <b>Recognition practices</b>   |       |       |       |       | 0.812               |
| 1. Employees' suggestions are seriously taken into consideration   | 0.692 |       |       |       |                     |
| 2. In my work unit, employees' suggestions are followed up regularly   | 0.635 |       |       |       |                     |
| 3. When an employee does good quality work, his colleagues regularly show him their appreciation.  | 0.590 |       |       |       |                     |
| 4. In my work unit, supervisors tangibly recognize employees' efforts (e.g. giving tickets to cultural or sports events, dinners at restaurants) | 0.731 |       |       |       |                     |
| 5. In my work unit, employees receive written recognition from their supervisors. (e.g. memos) unit, supervisors regularly                       | 0.667 |       |       |       |                     |
| <b>Competence development practices</b>  |       |       |       |       | 0.855               |
| 1. Employees can develop their skills in order to increase their chances of being promoted   |       | 0.712 |       |       |                     |
| 2. Employees can rotate jobs to develop their skills   |       | 0.681 |       |       |                     |
| 3. Several professional development activities (e.g. coaching, training) are offered to employees to improve their skills and knowledge.         |       | 0.704 |       |       |                     |
| 4. Proficiency courses such as specialized technical courses and professional certification are encouraged by management                         |       | 0.668 |       |       |                     |
| 5. I am able to apply new skills in my work  |       | 0.680 |       |       |                     |
| 6. Managers encourage employees to apply their new abilities and skills in the context of their daily work                                       |       | 0.583 |       |       |                     |
| <b>Fair reward practices</b>   |       |       |       |       | 0.811               |
| 1. I estimate my salary as being fair internally   |       |       | 0.842 |       |                     |
| 2. My salary is fair in comparison with what is offered for a similar job elsewhere  |       |       | 0.870 |       |                     |
| 3. In my work unit, our supervisors assign mandates in a fair manner   |       |       | 0.587 |       |                     |
| 4. In my work unit, employees consider that their compensation level adequately reflects their level of responsibility in the organization       |       |       | 0.473 |       |                     |
| 5. The pay increases and/or bonuses I received in the last two years adequately reflect my recent performance evaluations                        |       |       | 0.711 |       |                     |
| <b>Information sharing practices</b>   |       |       |       |       | 0.879               |
| 1. Employees are regularly informed of future bank projects (e.g. major investments, acquisitions, new technologies...)                          |       |       |       | 0.691 |                     |
| 2. Employees are regularly informed of financial results   |       |       |       | 0.756 |                     |
| 3. Employees are regularly informed of their work unit's performance   |       |       |       | 0.761 |                     |
| 4. Employees are regularly informed of technological orientations  |       |       |       | 0.820 |                     |
| 5. Managers regularly inform employees of the level of customer satisfaction for products or services offered                                    |       |       |       | 0.714 |                     |
| 6. Employees' suggestions concerning ways to improve our work unit's effectiveness are seriously   |       |       |       | 0.480 |                     |



**Table 4 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and correlations (340)**

| Variables | Means | SD   | 1       | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10      | 11      | 12      |
|-----------|-------|------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1.Gender  | 1.40  | .491 | (...)   |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 2.Age     | 1.98  | .845 | -.189** | (...)  |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 3.Edu     | 2.80  | .712 | -.089   | .099*  | (...)  |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 4.Pos.    | 1.24  | .532 | -.063   | .533** | -.061  | (...)  |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 5.Org.    | .33   | .472 | -.085   | .306** | .331** | .134** | (...)  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 6.Rec     | 3.142 | .918 | .029    | .080   | .022   | .049   | .060   | (0.812) |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 7.CD      | 3.486 | .896 | .056    | .070   | .043   | .072   | .076   | .614**  | (0.855) |         |         |         |         |         |
| 8.FR      | 2.859 | .927 | -.022   | .149** | .066   | .066   | .120*  | .484**  | .471**  | (0.811) |         |         |         |         |
| 9.IS      | 3.342 | .931 | .138*   | .023   | .056   | .034   | .040   | .643**  | .625**  | .382**  | (0.879) |         |         |         |
| 10.AC     | 3.277 | .963 | -.139*  | .220** | .049   | .164** | .042   | .435**  | .438**  | .406**  | .435**  | (0.678) |         |         |
| 11.CC     | 3.184 | .903 | -.093   | -.041  | .001   | -.047  | -.116* | .206**  | .238**  | .238**  | .240**  | .465**  | (0.750) |         |
| 12.NC     | 3.266 | .771 | -.021   | -.011  | -.026  | -.015  | .011   | .151**  | .104*   | .060    | .250**  | .335**  | .368**  | (0.526) |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); \*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Note. AC=Affective Commitment; CC=Continuance Commitment; NC=Normative Commitment; Rec=Recognition; CD=Competence Development;FR=Fair Rewards;

IS=Information Sharing; Gen=Gender; Edu=Educational Level; Pos= Positional Tenure; Org=Organizational Tenure.

Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient appears in parentheses

**Table 5 Hierarchical regression analysis of HR practices predicting organizational commitment**

| Variables              | Affective Commitment |                   | Continuance Commitment |                    | Normative Commitment |         |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------|
|                        | Standardized Beta    |                   | Standardized Beta      |                    | Standardized Beta    |         |
|                        | Model 1              | Model 2           | Model 1                | Model 2            | Model 1              | Model 2 |
| <b>Step 1</b>          |                      |                   |                        |                    |                      |         |
| Gender                 | -.099                | -.130*            | -.093                  | -.100              | -.038                | -.097   |
| Age                    | .170*                | .117 <sup>t</sup> | -.040                  | -.060              | -.154 <sup>t</sup>   | -.116   |
| Educational level      | .017                 | .006              | -.017                  | -.013              | -.035                | -.036   |
| Positional tenure      | .014                 | -.011             | -.098                  | -.114 <sup>t</sup> | .080                 | .080    |
| Organizational Tenure  | .080                 | .034              | -.026                  | -.035              | .122                 | .109    |
| <b>Step 2</b>          |                      |                   |                        |                    |                      |         |
| Recognition            |                      | .165*             |                        | .080               |                      | .007    |
| Competence development |                      | .102              |                        | -.003              |                      | -.082   |
| Fair Reward            |                      | .211**            |                        | .123 <sup>t</sup>  |                      | -.151   |
| Information sharing    |                      | .180*             |                        | .208***            |                      | .345*** |
| Adjusted R Square      | .050                 | .302              | .004                   | .031               | .001                 | .077    |
| R Square Change        | .069                 | .258              | .023                   | .041               | .020                 | .088    |

Notes: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001; <sup>t</sup>p < .10