Committed Salesforce: An Investigation into Personality Traits

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover the pre-dispositional roots of organizational commitment. More specifically, the purpose of the study is to investigate whether affective and continuance dimensions of organizational commitment are delibrately influenced by a defined set of personality traits. The study applies well-established measurements of organizational commitment and personality traits on a sample of sales representatives in six major Egyptian pharmaceuticals. The findings reveal that organizational commitment is an attitude which is influenced by the sales man's personality traits, although cultural differences may affect the way personality traits influence commitment at work.

Keywords: The big five model of personality, Affective commitment, Continuance commitment, Employee performance and job satisfaction

1. Introduction

The committed workforce is a valuable asset that effectively contributes to organizational development and strategy implementation. The committed employee is loyal to the organization's values and proud of being a member of its work team. In this sense, organizational commitment is a positive pyschological state of attachment that pushes the employee's performance upward to successfully turn the firm's strategic vision into a reality (Porter et al, 1974).

In today's competitive markets, managers are in need for a committed workforce which is capable for working under pressure and ready to exert every possible effort to handle organizational objectives. However, the process of recruiting individuals who demonstrate a potential organizational commitment is not, by any means, an easy task to perform. This is, most probably, due to the fact that managers and researchers have mainly focused their effort on identifying work-related determinants of organizational commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). In this context, it is assumed that organizational commitment is formed after the employee has positively interacted with work environment. Unfortunately, few studies have attempted to investigate whether organizational commitment is pre-dispositionally rooted in the personality fabric of the individual. Erdheim *et* al (2006) are pioneers in this connection. They have analyzed the relationship between personality traits and organizational commitment. They have found that specific personality traits are strongly associated with different levels of organizational commitment. Their findings have, in fact, paved the way for a new field of research that could, certainly, enable HR specialists to be in abetter position to judge the job applicant's commitment potential.

The present study examines the relationship between salesmen personality traits and their organizational commitment levels in the context of the Egyptian pharmaceutical industry. The Arab Republic of Egypt is an example of a typical Middle Eastern country that is culturally influenced by Islamic and Arabic values and traditions. This region has not received sufficient academic focus in international personality research. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill this research gap by: a) defining the role of personality traits in explaining variances in organizational commitment and b) theoretically investigating whether cultural differences may lead to a change in the way personality traits influence organizational commitment. Although a number of studies have examined the proposed relationships, very few ones have included samples from continents other than North America (Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005). Moreover, few studies have theoretically examined the cultural underpinnings of a society which may shape the personality traits of its individuals.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Commitment

The organizational commitment literature has received a wide academic interest in the last three decades (Lok and Crawford, 2001). The contributions of psychology and business scholars result in multiple operationalizations for the organizational commitment concept. Their contributions have undoubtedly enriched the analysis of organizational commitment antecedents and outcomes. In this context, Meyer et al (2004) argue that the most significant developments in commitment theory include the realization of commitment as a concept that can: 1) take several forms such as the affective, continuance, and normative forms of commitment; and 2) be directed toward different targets. For example, an employee may be committed not only to his organization values, but also to his supervisors, co-workers, and the career itself. Regardless of the theoretical developments, the situation is still unclear concerning the identification of the true core essence of organizational commitment (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). This escalates the difficulties associated with understanding the avenues from which organizational commitment develops and affects behaviour. The symptoms of these inherent difficulties are demonstrated in studies which criticize the way some research models are inconsistently organized to predict organizational commitment (Reichers, 1985; Meyer and Allen, 1997; and Meyer et al, 2004). Therefore, this section theoretically examines the development of the organizational commitment concept to provide the basis on which the research model evolves and then provides a theortical review of the big five model of personality, job satisfaction and performance. Further, it introduces the hypothezied model and explains its dynamics.

2.1.1 The Early Conceptualizations of Organizational Commitment

Porter et al (1974: P. 604) introduced a fresh evaluation and measurement of organizational commitment. They defined it as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with on involvement in a particular organization'. The definition presents an attitudinal or affective state of commitment where the employee has a strong belief in the organization's values, a willingness to exert effort for the organization and a desire to stay as a loyal member in that organization. Their perspective provides an alternate view of organizational commitment that differs from that of common transaction-based approaches (Gouldner, 1960; Homans 1958). Transaction-based approaches view organizational commitment as a manifest of the investment quality of organizational participation (Becker, 1960). The more bonds an employee develops with an organization, the harder the option to leave the organization is. Thus, employee commitment improves when the costs of leaving the organization are difficult to compensate (Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1974). The two views are different, but not contradictory. They explain two different states of commitment that exist in organizations. In fact, both views have prepared the academic environment for the next most dramatic change in the conceptualization of the organizational commitment construct as will be discussed later in this section.

Despite the academic value of the organizational commitment questionnaire developed by Porter et al (1974), it has received some noteworthy criticisms. Reichers (1985) indicates that the items measuring the individual's desire to maintain organizational membership are actually measuring that individual's intention to stay or leave (i.e. turnover intentions). In his point of view, these items mainly explain the consistent relationship holding between commitment and turnover. He argues that the organizational commitment questionnaire should not measure the behavioural intentions which are not part and parcil of the construct. However, Steers and Porter (1983: P. 428) implicitly reject Reicher's argument by highlighting the reciprocal relationship holding between attitudes and behaviours. They emphasize that 'individuals who feel bound to an organization through sink costs' would certainly develop a form of 'psychological bolstering' to self-justify their situation. In this sense, behavioural commitment can initiate or enrich attitudinal commitment. In this context, McGee and Ford (1987) observe that affective (attitudinal) and continuance (behavioural) commitments can not operate fully independently of each other. This proposes the multidimensionality of the organizational commitment construct.

2.1.2 The Multi-dimensional View of Organizational Commitment

Several studies have examined the organizational commitment construct from a multi-dimensional perspective (Jaros et al, 1993; Mayer and Schoorman, 1992; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). However, Meyer and Allen (1984; 1991) have provided one of the most commonly accepted measurements of commitment. In this context, they argue that commitment is a 'force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets' (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001: P. 301). They identify three components that reflect the nature of the organizational commitment construct:

1)   Affective Commitment: the affectively committed individual has a desire to stay in the organization. The employee feels a strong sense of belonging to the organization. He or she is emotionally attached to the organization. In other words, the organization represents a 'great deal of personal meaning' to the individual.

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) emphasize that the employee develops a psychological attachment to the organization when he or she recognizes the relevance or congruence of organizational values to one's own values. This means that the emotional tie gets stronger when the employee derives his/her personal identity from working with an organizational entity.

2)   Continuance Commitment: the second component of organizational commitment includes the calculations a person conducts to realize the extent to which he or she needs to stay in the organization. For example, if the job choices availabe after leaving the organization are scarce, the individual may develop a sense of commitment. Thus, continuance commitment to an organization develops when an individual perceives the costs of leaving this organization to be higher than the expected gains.

3)   Normative Commitment: some individuals regard commitment to a specific organization as an obligation. For example, individuals who volunteer in the army during wars may develop this state of commitment. In this context, it is argued that normative commitment reflects the psychological state through which an employee perceives staying in the organization as a morally right choice, regardless of the amount of satisfaction the firm gives him/her (Marsh and Mannari, 1977). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) propose that normative commitment increases when an individual internalizes the values of the organization, and also when the individual feels that staying in the organization is a return of favour to the organization which has provided him/her many benefits and inducements over the years.

The affective, continuance and normative components of commitment are theoretically rooted within the early conceptualizations of organizational commitment. For example, the affective and continuance components derive their premises from the early attitudinal (Porter et al, 1974) and calculative (Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1972) approaches of organizational commitment. Similarly, the normative component captures Wiener's (1982) view of organizational commitment which suggests that individuals commit to the values of the organization because they believe it is the 'right' thing to do. However, Meyer and Allen's (1991) model views organizational commitment as a multi-dimensional construct which implies that the employee can experience all these dimensions of commitment at varying degrees. In fact, the model has motivated researchers to focus on the specific antecedents and outcomes relevant to each dimension of commitment which resulted in reaching more precise findings and implications for commitment theory (Dunham et al, 1994).

However, the model has been subject to some criticisms. Ko et al (1997: P. 971) have noticed a conceptual overlap between the affective and normative components of organizational commitment. The normative component represents the employee's commitment to the organization because 'it is the right thing to do'. On the other hand, the affective commitment reflects the employee's involvement in and identification with the organization's values. From their point of view, it is difficult to distinguish between the two concepts. An affectively committed employee may already believe that belonging to the organization is the right thing to do. Therefore, the current study applies the organizational commitment questionnaire developed by Porter and colleagues (1974) which focuses mainly on affective and continuance commitments.

2.1.3 The Motivation-Based View of Commitment

Recent studies have theoretically analyzed the motivational determinants of different types of employee commitment. Based on the notion that individual differences in commitment are attributed to diverse motivation-based variables, Johnson et al (2010) have proposed a model that incorporates self-identity levels with regulatory foci to explain organizational commitment. In this context, they distinguish among three targets of commitment, namely;

1) Group-Based Commitment: individuals whose self-definition is based on group membership tend to respect and abide by group norms. The collective identity of an employee motivates him/her to continuously engage in self-monitoring behaviour that evaluates the employee's contribution to the group (Johnson and Chang, 2008). It further motivates the employee to get strongly involved in group activities, internalize group values and develop moral bonds to group duties. Therefore, Johnson and Yang (2010) argue that the collective identity is strongly associated with both affective and normative commitments to a specific group.

2) Partner-Based Commitment: the relational identity determines the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of dyadic   connections with specific persons (Andersen and Chen, 2002). In other words, an individual's perception of self-identity is largely affected by the way significant individuals evaluate him/her (Johnson and Chang, 2006). The model suggests that the relational identity is expected to cultivate affective and normative commitments toward those significant individuals. Johnson and Yang (2010) consider a supervisor an example of the significant person with whom the employees would be keen to keep a sound relationship. The relational identity motivates the employee to establish affective and normative bonds with supervisors through

identifying supervisor values and internalizing them to achieve supervisor satisfaction and in turn, obtain the promised incentives.

3) Self-Based Commitment: employees with individualistic identities see themselves as distinct from others. They are basically committed to implementing their own goals and personal satisfaction. The individual identity is expected to motivate a person to maintain continuance commitment to the organization. That is, the employee with an individual identity is committed to a specific organization so long as it offers him/her benefits and incentives (Johnson and Yang, 2010). Similarly, the employee may stay with the organization provided that the perceived cost of leaving it is uncompensatable.

The motivation-based approach emphasizes that the varying degrees of commitment within the organization are attributed to individual differences associated with personal values, traits and identities. Therefore, the attempt to empirically test the personality-commitment relationship should contribute to the knowledge of motivation-based variables that influence commitment.

2.2 The Big-Five Model of Personality Traits

In order to develop a scientific taxonomy of the personality traits of human beings, Allport and Odbert (1936) have used an unabridged English dictionary to make a list of personality-relevant attributes. They have listed 18000 terms which could define the personality attributes of human beings. Following the work of Allport and Odbert, several researchers have attempted to develop a systematic and refined categorization of these terms to obtain a comprehensive taxonomy of personality traits (Tupes and Christal, 1961; Fiske, 1949; Cattel, 1943). Their great efforts have yielded a five-factor structure of personality traits; a) extraversion, b) agreeableness, c) conscientiousness, d) neuroticism and e) openness to experience which is considered representative for the personality traits of human beings across the universe. Each factor or dimension of personality includes a large number of distinct personality characteristics.

Extraversion is the dimension of personality associated with dominance, self-confidence and searching for excitement. According to the Big-Five Inventory (BFI) measurement, an extravert is talkative, energetic, assertive and generates a lot of enthusiasm. Extraverts show a high level of positive emotions and interpersonal connections (Bakker et al, 2006). They enjoy the company of many friends and generally spend more time in social situations (Judge and Illies, 2002b). Further, Extraverts can easily find new job alternatives because of their diverse social connections (Erdheim et al, 2006).

On the other hand, agreeableness represents the helpful, forgiving and trusting personality. Agreeable people often show respectable work behaviour (Organ and Lingl, 1995). Judge et al (1999) found that people who score high in agreeableness 'prioritize' relationships with others over work and career success.

The conscientiousness dimension represents the individual who works efficiently and tends to be a reliable worker. The conscientious employee perseveres until the task is finished (John and Srivastava, 1999; Behling, 1998). Unsurprisingly, conscientiousness is considered the most consistent predictor of performance across jobs (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Neuroticism describes the person who is dramatically affected by negative life events (Bozionelos, 2003: Suls et al, 1998). Based on the BFI measurement, neurotics are depressed, tense and worry a lot about different life circumstances. Similarly, they are in short of positive psychological adjustment and emotional stability (Judge et al, 2002a). The psychology research in coping has found that neurotics tend to apply disengagement coping methods against variant organizational stressors (Conner-Smith and Flachsbart, 2007). Disengagement coping refers to the individual's attempt to deal with stressors through withdrawal and escaping from the causes of stress. This coping method does not resolve the causes of stress. Rather, it substantiates the problems stemming from these stressors as the individual spends extended time trying to escape from them (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). The continuous escape from resolving the causes of stress should gradually reduce the individual's motivation to return to the stressor which, in turn, minimizes the chance for solving the resulting problems (Lengua et al, 1999). In a similar vein, Conner-Smith and Flachsbart (2007) have noted that neuroticism is negatively associated with the individual's ability to learn to live with the stressor. Therefore, it is argued that neurotics can easily leave their organizations when work-related problems continue to escalate.

Finally, Openness to experience refers to the intelligence, curiosity and imagination of the individual. It represents the degree to which an individual can produce original ideas (Bakker et al, 2006). Creative people tend to exert an extensive effort to successfully fulfill the assigned tasks (Feldman, 1999). They regard successful work accomplishment as a matter of personal identity and pride (Rostan, 1998). In this connection, Mumford et al (2002) assume that the focus of evaluation for creative people is the profession rather than the

organization they belong to. This implies that creative people are more committed to the development of their profession and expertise than to their organizations. Creative people prefer a work environment characterized by autonomy, minimal distractions and reduced time constraints (Mumford, 2000: P. 314).

Erdheim et al (2006) and Levanon et al (2008) have provided the earliest attempts to examine the dispositional sources of organizational commitment. However, their work has focused on examining organizational commitment in the context of western cultures. Based on their assumptions, the current study hypothesizes a model that assumes a relationship between personality traits and commitment in Egypt as an example of an eastern culture. The study aims to provide insights with regard to: 1) the replicability of the five factor model in an eastern culture and 2) the potential personality traits that relate to affective and continuance commitment.

3. Research Framework and Hypothesis Development

3.1 Personality Traits and Affective Commitment

From a personality trait perspective, an agreeable person is someone who is trusting, helpful, forgiving and co-operative. He/she is an effective team work player in terms of building trust with colleagues and being of help when needed. Such personal characteristics may be relevant in collectivist cultures where moral work relationships and co-operation with friends are valued. Given the high power distance values of the Egyptian society, obeying leaders' decisions and getting loyal to their initiatives is usually interpreted, on the part of managers, as a sign of affective commitment to the organization itself (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991). This is due to the culture-bound assumption that the manager is perceived as a father to the employee, and that he/she knows better than him or her. Thus, agreeableness in the sense of complying, out of loyalty and respect, to the parent manager's system may be perceived as a sign of affective commitment to the organization.

H1: Agreeableness is positively associated with affective commitment.

From a personality psychology perspective, perseverance at work and the ability to deliver a thorough job (conscientiousness) can serve as motivating factors on the basis of which the individual extends his/her natural job involvement to the organization itself (Erdheim et al, 2006). In this sense, the willingness to exert effort beyond that is expected to make an organization successful can be attributed to the conscientious employee's willingness to succeed in his/her particular job.

H2: Conscientiousness is positively associated with affective commitment.

An extravert shows a high level of positive emotions and interpersonal connections. According to Erdheim et al (2006: P. 961), 'positive emotionality is at the core of extraversion'. Since affective commitment is a positive emotional attachment to organizational values, it is logically be assumed that extraverts are more pre-disposed to get affectively committed to their organizations than less extraverts.

H3: Extraversion is positively associated with affective commitment.

3.2 Personality Traits and Continuance Commitment

In personality psychology, neurotics are incapable of confronting their work-related problems. They tend to withdraw until problems get out of control. Although some studies in Western cultures have found a positive association between neuroticism and continuance commitment (Erdhiem et al, 2006), the situation in Egypt may be different. People in high uncertainty avoidance societies tend to be more neurotic than those in less uncertainty avoidance societies (Hofstede, 1991). The employees prefer to work under strict rules and well-formalized work systems which help organize their work lives. In this context, a neurotic may conceive continuance commitment as an uncertain situation. The magnitude of depression, anxiety and tension a neurotic may suffer is amplified when he/she knows that the future job prospects are in a foggy land. Thus, in order to avoid this continuous misery of uncertain future, a neurotic may apply his/her disengagment coping strategy and avoid/quit the organization.

H4: neuroticism is negatively associated with continuance commitment.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Measurements

The big five personality traits of the human being are measured using the big five inventory measurement scale (BFI). It is adopted from John et al's (1991) personality study. The 44-item BFI uses short phrases to describe the trait adjectives which form the personality of markers of the big five (John and Srivastafa, 1999). The short phrases reduce the ambiguity associated with understanding complicated single terms. A meaningful translation process has been performed (From English to Arabic) in co-operation with professors in English linguistics,

Psychology and Management sciences. The BFI has been subjected to minor adaptations by the group to cope with the cultural specialties of the Egyptian environment. These minor adaptations were considered necessary by the group which translated the BFI in order to make it easier for the Arabic reader to understand and to avoid possible offences that may occur when reading direct adjectives or terms such as 'lazy, talkative and careless'

The organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ), originally adopted from Porter et al's (1974) study, is applied to measure affective and continuance types of psychological attachment to organizations. The OCQ consists of 15 items that measure the extent to which the employee is willing to exert effort to implement objectives and demonstrate signs of loyalty to firm values. The OCQ items were translated into Arabic by the same group of English, Psychology and Management researchers. The group did not apply adaptations to these items because they are easy to understand and do not signal cultural differentation.

4.2 Data collection and Descriptive Statistics

The Arab Republic of Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East (the CIA world factbook). It forms the largest single market in the region and is regarded as one of the most important suppliers of labour force to gulf countries (Latowsky, 1984). The analysis of the characteristics of the Egyptian employee does not only benefit local firm managers, but also helps other managers in different Middle Eastern countries who wish to graft high potential employees from Egypt.

The current study focuses on the analysis of sales representatives because the behaviours of salesmen are largely influenced by their personal traits and skills. In this context, Sojka and Deeter-Schmelz (2008) have found that affectively oriented sales representatives perform better than less affectively oriented ones because affectively oriented individuals are capable of using their emotions as sources of information, which guide them through interactions and judgments. In a similar context, Anselmi and Zemanek (1997) emphasize the role of persistence and enthusiasm as strong personality predictors of salesmen performance. The current study applies the questionnaire methodology in the pharmaceutical industry context, because pharmaceuticals depend heavily on personal selling as a major promotional tool. Their products are of a complicated scientific nature and require careful presentation to professional medical doctors and chemists.

This study used an in-depth questionnaire survey to target the sales representatives of six Egyptian pharmaceutical companies. A group of business postgraduate students at the universities of Mansoura, Damietta branch were asked to co-operate in handing the questionnaires to sales representatives in the target companies. The group of 5 postgraduate students managed to collect completed questionnaires from 119 sales representatives which count for approximately 60% of the salesforce size (the overall salesforce size is 205) in these companies. The total number of females is 16 which represent 13.5% of the total sample. The total number of bachelor degree holders is 108 which approximately represent 91% of the total sample. On the other hand, the sample consists of only one master degree holder and 10 technical institute graduates. A technical institute accepts secondary school graduates, and their educational programs last for two years. The age of sample respondents range from 23 to 43 years old. The average respondent's age is approximately 28 years old. The pharmaceutical companies are located in Cairo, Alexandria and Manoura cities.

4.3 Data analysis

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities of the variables. The correlation analysis provides an initial support for many of the hypothesized relationships. For example, openness Vs extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness positively correlate with affective commitment (P<0.01). Besides, neuroticism negatively correlates with continuance commitment (P<0.05). On the other hand, the correlation analysis provides insights regarding commitment-performance and commitment-satisfaction hypothesized relationships. For example, affective commitment strongly correlates with performance and employee satisfaction (P<0.01), whereas continuance commitment does not show significant correlations. The correlational matrix provides initial insights on the nature of the relationship among suggested variables. However, the study further applies a multiple regression analysis to better predict the hypothesized relationships.

A principal component analysis with varimax orthgonal rotation has been conducted using SPSS to explore the dimensionality of the big five inventory and organizational commitment scales. It enables researchers to uncover potential dimensions which reflect integrated aspects of the tested construct. The exploratory factor analysis has been intensively used for the same purpose in personality and organizational commitment studies. A principal component analysis is also regarded an essential statistical test that should precede multiple regression analysis in order to purify the scales by exctracting irrelevant or un-important items which load weakly on their factors.

This step improves the quality of consequent predictive statistical tests by providing scales which consist of items that are strongly representative of the true meaning of the scales. In this context, the principal component analysis of the big-five inventory scale has revealed a four-factor model of personality that encompasses three pure factors (neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness) and one bipolar factor that generates items from both the openness to experience and extraversion dimensions of personality. The findings are reported at table 2. It shows the four-factor model of personality. The table also presents the items which strongly relate to each factor. It should be noted that items which load below (0.5) are ommited from further analysis. This step improves the quality of the scale in terms of predicability by ignoring items which weakly load on their respective factors and retaining those with strong factor loadings for further predictive analyses.

The bipolar factor is named 'openness Vs extraversion'. This factor suggests that being assertive and able to spread enthusiasm to oneself as well as to other colleagues collide with the individual's traits of originality, inventiveness and curiously about different ideas and topics. This dimension of personality could be of particular interest to sales management scholars because extraversion is considered a key determinant for a salesman's performance, whereas openness to experience is regarded as a strong influencer in the individual's preference to out-of-town traveling and selling (Stevens and Macintosh, 2002).

The three other factors of personality (neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness) are presented at table 2 along with their respective items. The author has retained only items which load high on their representative factors and suppressed those with loadings below (0.5).

In the same context, a principal component analysis has been conducted to investigate the dimensionality of the organizational commitment construct. Table 3 presents a three-factor solution for the organizational commitment scale. The finding supports earlier studies which have noted the multi-dimensionality of the OCQ. The first factor represents the affective dimension of commitment because it measures the extent to which the individual shows loyalty, admiration and willingness to exert effort for the purpose of maintaining a better future to the organization. On the other hand, factor 'three' represents the continuance component of organizational commitment because items 'similar' and 'assign' resemble, to a great extent, the items used to measure continuance commitment in Meyer and Allen's (1997) measurement scale.

Table 3 presents the items which load highly on their respective factors. It also presents the 'XC' factor which defines the organizational commitment dimension that is not included in the multiple regression analysis.

A multiple regression analysis has been conducted to examine the hypothesized antecedents of organizational commitment. It accurately predicts the strength and nature of the relationship among the hypothesized variables.

Table 4 exhibits the findings of the multiple regression analysis. Table 4, model 1 describes the relationship between personality traits and affective organizational commitment. The multiple regression model reveals that 'opennes vs extraversion', conscientiousness and agreeableness account for 28.5% of the variance in organizational commitment. This finding confirms the hypothesized personality-commitment relationship. However, it also points to the fact that organizational commitment is influenced by other different factors which are not within the scope of this study. The regression model also shows the standardized coefficient of correlations between each personality trait and affective organizational commitment. In this context, the 'opennes vs extraversion' trait is positively associated with affective commitment (B=0.222). Besides, conscientiousness is positively related to affective commitment (B=0.327), whereas agreeableness is positively associated with affective commitment at (B=0.151). The relationships are statistically significant at (P<0.05, P<0.01, and P<0.1) respectively. The regression model indicates that conscientiousness is the strongest predictor of affective commitment, whereas agreeableness is the weakest predictor. This finding agrees with earlier studies have found that conscientious employees are the highest performers across different job categories (Judge et al, 2002).

On the other hand, model 2 in table 4 shows the relationship between personality traits and continuance organizational commitment. The regression model reveals that 5.2% of the variance in continuance commitment is explained only by neuroticism. Besides, the model indicates that neuroticism is negatively associated with continuance commitment (B=-0.228 and P<0.05). This finding is really interesting for it disagrees with some previous studies which have reported a positive relationship between both variables. The current study implies that neuroticism is a dark personal trait which inhibits employees from showing any level of organizational

commitment. Moreover, it emphasizes that high neuroticism discourages employees to get committed to an organization for reasons of economic dependency or job scarcity.

Based on the regression analysis findings, it can be noted that hypotheses H1, H2, and H4 are supported whereas H3 is partially supported.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of the current study is to test the personality-commitment relationship in an Eastern cultural context.

The study findings indicate that the big five inventory of personality traits is replicable in a non-western culture, though a four-factor structure is generated in the principal component analysis. Besides, the study demonstrates that personality can partially explain the individual differences in organizational commitment regardless of the culture-bound specifics.

5.1 Uncovering the Pre-dispositional Roots of Affective Commitment

Affective commitment represents the degree to which an employee is loyal to the organization's values and proud of its reputation and image. The affectively committed employee is almost always willing to exert a great deal of effort in order to effectively and efficiently implement organizational objectives. The findings indicate that the agreeable, conscientious and open-minded extroverts are highly likely to be affectively committed to their organizations.

The big-five inventory of personality traits defines the agreeable employee as one who shows higher degrees of forgiveness, trust and help to others. In this context, Organ and Lingl (1995) emphasize that agreeable employees show respectable work behaviours by means of complying to organizational values and providing support to colleagues and superiors. The agreeable employees also believe that a man's sense of well-being is greatly affected by the establishment of a well-connected social network of friends (Judge et al, 2001). Thus, the agreeable employee wishes to be viewed as a sociable person who deeply respects organizational values. In this respect, it can be argued that agreeable employees are more exposed to affective commitment than non-agreeables because of their core beliefs that adhering to organizational values and performing constructive work-related behaviours is an enduring source of life satisfaction in general, and job satisfaction in particular. This argument can also be supported from an Egyptian cultural perspective. The collectivist culture of work in Egypt highly regards the strict obedience to authority figures and organizational rules and considers it a sign of loyalty and commitment to the organization (Leat and El-Kot, 2007).

The findings also reveal that conscientious employees are more likely to maintain affective commitment to their organizations than non-conscientious ones. The conscientious employee is naturally a workaholic individual who perseveres at work and believes in the effective achievement of results. Furthermore, the conscientious employee is usually characterized by a deep job-involvement attitude (Behling, 1998). Unsurprisingly, conscientiousness is regarded the strongest predictor of employee performance across a wide array of job categories (Barrick and Mount, 1991). In this sense, the personal qualities of the conscientious employee can strongly drive his or her personal attitudes towards the organization. If affective commitment to an organization is nothing but the wholeheartedly execution of great efforts to achieve organizational objectives, then it is not hard to imagine that a conscientious employee can be affectively committed to organizational values. According to Erdhiem et al (2006), perseverance at work, and the ability to deliver a thorough job serve as motivating factors on the basis of which the individual extends his/her natural job involvement to the organization itself.

In this context, it is also argued that the 'openness Vs extraversion' dimension of personality is worth more investigation. Although, creative individuals are usually more committed to the development of their profession than to their organizations (Mumford et al, 2002), the study indicates that they can be more affectively committed if they enjoy signs of extraversion such as enthusiasm and assertiveness. In this sense, extroversial traits breath positive emotionality to the creative individual which, in turn, lead to a positive perception and attachment to the organization. This agrees in substance with Erdheim et al, (2006: P. 966) who have found that extroverts tend to be affectively committed to their organizations because, in their point of view, affective commitment is a positive emotion, and that 'positive emotionality is at the core heart of extraversion'.

5.2 Uncovering the Pre-dispositional Roots of Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment refers to the extent to which an employee prefers to stay at the organization because of the scarcity of alternative job choices. In this case, the employee stays because of the economic benefits received in exchange of the efforts he or she performs at job. The study shows that neurotics tend not to be committed to their organizations even if staying in the organization is more profitable than leaving it. Neurotics are moody,

depressed and nervous individuals. They do not cope well with problems or work stressors. Rather, they tend to escape or withdraw from sources of stress until problems inflate (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). Thus, it can be argued that when problems inflate to a level where escape is not an acceptable solution, neurotics may withdraw or quit the job. In conclusion, the negative affectivity of neurotics and their weak problem-coping techniques are strong motivators not to commit to any organization.

5.3 Research Implications

The findings enable HR specialists to uncover the personality traits of affectively committed employees in a non-western culture. It is recommended that a specific attention be directed towards conscientiousness and agreeableness as personality traits of great importance to maintaining an emotional attachment to the organization. Besides, attracting inventive employees is vital for the organization provided that they show a sign of positive emotionality 'demonstrated by the extroversial traits of assertiveness and enthusiasm'. Besides, the research findings recommend that HR specialists avoid recruiting neurotics or individuals with highly negative affectivity levels. The negative emotions a neurotic forms regarding different life situations discourage him from forming an appropriate level of commitment to the organization. In this context, it is argued that neurotics may show high levels of job withdrawel especially when job stressors escalate.

By comparing the findings of this study to those of American studies (e.g., Erdheim et al, 2006; and Silva, 2006), it is observed that the effects of some personality traits on organizational commitment can vary from one culture to another. The differential impact of personality traits on employees' attitudes across nations may be due to the cultural specialities of every nation. In this study, I have attempted to hypothesize the personality-commitment relationship with a special emphasise on the cultural background of Egyptian employees and Egyptian organizations. However, future studies are encouraged to incorporate the element of cultural values in the empirical analyses of personality-commitment relationships. Future studies may depend on Hofstede's theory of cultural values to uncover the psycho-cultural roots of organizational commitment.

5.4 Limitations

The results of this study must be viewed in the light of some limitations. First, a larger sample size is needed to better ensure the generalizability of the current study findings. Future studies may still apply the BFI in different contexts to ensure its replicability across Arabic culture. Second, the study has targeted six pharmaceutical companies to collect data from sales representatives. Accordingly, further studies are needed to confirm the generalizability of the current findings in the sales management context. However, the study provides initial but, to some extent, deep-down insights regarding the personality traits of committed sales representatives. It has found an evidence that the personality trait plays an important role in the development of organizational commitment. Finally, the study is cross-sectional which leaves the inferences of causality questioned. Future longitudinal studies are recommended to realize the differential impact of personality traits on work-related attitudes across time.

Acknowledgement

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Note

Note 1. In January 25-2011 the Egyptian people initiated a nation-wide revolution against president Mubarak's dictatorial corrupt regime. This regime is off now and a new democratic system is being built.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and coefficient alphas of study variables

Variables	α	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-Openness vs. extraversion	0.74	19.8	3.6	-	-0.19*	0.5**	0.21*	0.41**	-0.02
2-Neuroticism	0.7	14.3	4.1	-	-	-0.17	0.07	-0.2*	-0.23*
3-Conscientiousness	0.71	12.6	2	0.5**	-	-	0.22*	0.47**	-0.04
4-Agreeableness	0.70	11.2	2.3	0.21**	0.07	-	-	0.27**	0.005
5-Affective commitment	0.86	30	6.5	0.41**	0.2*	0.47**	-	-	0.2
6-Continuance commitment	0.71	9	2.7	-0.02*	-0.23*	-0.04	-0.05	-	-

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level)

** correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (2 – tailed)

Table 2. Description of the BFI measurement items for each component

Factor title	Items code	Loading factor (a)	Variance extracted (b)
(1) Openness vs. Extraversion			0.1662
	Is original, comes up with new ideas	0.802	
	Generates a lot of enthusiasm	0.759	
	Has an assertive personality	0.688	
	Is inventive	0.622	
	Is curious about many different things	0.521	
(2) Neuroticism			0.144
	Can be tense	0.77	
	Can be moody	0.731	
	Worries a lot	0.633	
	Is depressed, blue	0.632	
	Get nervous easily	0.54	
(3) Conscientiousness			0.1233
	Does a thorough job	0.845	
	Does things efficiently	0.621	
	Perseveres until the task is finished	0.513	
(4) Agreeableness			0.115
	Is generally trusting	0.798	
	Has a forgiving nature	0.668	
	Is helpful and unselfish with others	0.603	

(a) Varimax orthogonal rotation and Kaiser normalization converging within 5 iterations

(b) Factors loading below 0.5 are suppressed

Table 3. Description of the organizational commitment questionnaire items for each component

Factor title	Item code	Loading factor (a)	Variance extracted (b)
Affective Commitment			0.3691
	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization	0.839	
	I'm willing to put a great deal of effort to help this company be successful.	0.81	
	For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work	0.675	
	This company really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	0.67	
	I'm proud to tell others that I'm part of this company	0.653	
	I find that my values and the company's values are very similar	0.653	
	I really care about the fate of this company	0.622	
	I'm extremely glad that I chose this company over others	0.522	
Continuance Commitment			0.1144
	It would take very little change in my circumstances to cause me to leave this company	0.745	
	I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar	0.686	
	I would accept any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this company	0.616	

* This component is excluded from further analysis.

(a) Variamax orthogonal rotation and Kaiser normalization converging within 5 iterations

(b) Factors loading below 0.5 are suppressed.

Table 4. The regression analysis table: personality – commitment relationship

	Model (1) *			Model (2) **		
	β	t	VIF	β	t	VIF
Openness vs. Extraversion	0.222	2.429	1.339	-	-	-
Conscientiousness	0.327	3.577	1.344	-	-	-
Agreeableness	0.151	1.854	1.1	-	-	-
Neuroticism	-	-	-	-0.23	-2.538	1
Overall model coefficient correlation (r)	0.534			0.23		
R square	0.285			0.052		
F-ratio	15.31			6.44		

* Model (1) examines personality – Affective Commitment relationship.

** Model (2) examines personality– Continuance Commitment relationship.

- Model (1) is significant at $P. < 0.001$

- Model (2) is significant at $P. < 0.05$

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Oppennes Vs Extraversion   │──────────────┐
└─────────────────────────────┘              │
                                             ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│     Conscientiousness       │─────▶│    Affective     │
└─────────────────────────────┘      │   commitment     │
                                     └──────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│       Agreeableness         │──────┘
└─────────────────────────────┘

                                     ┌──────────────────┐
┌─────────────────────────────┐      │   Continuance    │
│        Neuroticism          │─────▶│   commitment     │
└─────────────────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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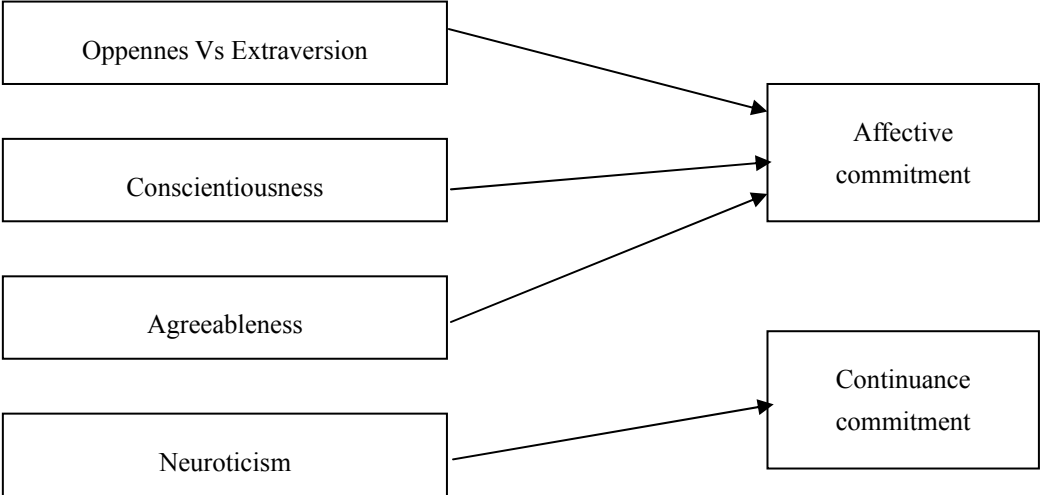
Figure 1. A graphical representation of research finding