



Organizational commitment among women working on leadership positions in Saudi Arabia

Zahiruddin Butt, Fauzia Khurshid and Amina Hafeez
ARAMCO, NUML, ARAMCO Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining the perception of organizational commitment of women working on leadership positions in Saudi Arabia. The three dimensions of organizational commitment including affective, continuance and normative commitment were looked at. The influence of demographic factors including age, experience, qualification, level of income and marital status on the organizational commitment was studied. It was a descriptive correlational study in which organizational commitment Questionnaire-OCQ was used to collect data. The study found that the level of women leaders' organizational commitment was high with continuance commitment as the strongest form. Demographic variables of age, experience and income significantly influenced the organizational commitment of women leaders. This study is significant because of the insights it provides for the management to better understand the nature of organizational commitment of women leaders and develops an understanding of the commitment process to promote it among them in Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia- KSA is an oil-based economy and it possesses about 20% of the world's petroleum reserve. Even though currently the Kingdom is encouraging growth of the private sector to diversify its economy but while diversifying from a purely petroleum based economy has its potential as well as its challenges. There is an enormous untapped potential in the Saudi labor market but because of lack of relevant and required skills, there is a huge reliance on foreign labor. Further added to the challenges is the lack of women participation in Saudi job market (Al-Munajjed, 2010). The literature review on the state of women in leadership in KSA revealed that in KSA women representation is less than one percent in the decision-making posts (Al Turki, 2010). A web review of board of directors of top twenty companies of KSA shows an evident absence of women in decision-making positions. Moreover, there is a dearth of updated socio-demographic and employment data on working women. However, the need to bring more women in the leadership positions in Saudi Arabia is slowly making its course as the need and the global environment is stressing the importance of their significant participation in the economy. Saudi companies are gradually changing to cope with the changing environment. In this regard, Saudization policy has been significant in encouraging employment and advancement opportunities for women and as a result, women presence can be seen in today's workplace. But of course mere presence is not enough, to achieve, retain and also grow their positions in today's knowledge age Saudi women have to face lot of challenges and competition as companies prefer to hire staff with not only educational qualification but with professional attitude, dedication and commitment.

Introduction of the Study:

Organizational commitment has long been concern for employees and employers because of the impact and influence it

wields on work performance. It is widely illustrated in the human resources management and organizational behavior literature as a key factor in the relationship between individual and organization (Cohen, 2007). Employees are regarded as committed to an organization if they willingly continue their association with the organization and devote considerable effort to achieving organizational goals. Meyer and Allen (1987) defined organizational commitment as a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization with its implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization. Johns, (2005) defined organizational commitment as the extent that an individual accepts, internalizes, and views his or her role based on organizational values and goals. These authors argue that the high levels of effort exerted by employees with high levels of organizational commitment would lead to higher levels of performance and effectiveness at both the individual and organizational level. The broad consequences of organizational commitment are retention, productive behavior, and employee well-being. It is generally assumed that a positive attitude towards the organization is reflected in a high level of organizational commitment. It relates to the behavior that is favorable to organizational effectiveness, for instance higher level of commitment is believed to be associated with low turnover, limited tardiness, low absenteeism, and enhanced job performance. It helps employees in the acceptance of values and goals of the organization (Butt, 2009). Low organizational commitment on the other hand can bring about numerous undesirable adverse effects on work outcomes like increased absenteeism, increased intention to quit and poor job performance (Simone, 2002). An extensive review of the literature revealed that a great deal has been written in the western countries about the importance of organizational commitment for the realization of organizational and professional goals, however, very few studies were found which

addressed the organizational commitment issue in KSA. It appears that a gap exists in the availability of empirical data to understand the phenomena of organizational commitment among female leaders in KSA, who are yet an untapped but soon will be major contributors in the economy of KSA. This study aims at examining the perception of organizational commitment of women working on leadership positions (women leaders) in Saudi Arabia. It investigates the level and forms of organizational commitment (affective, normative, continuance) of women leaders. The study also examines the influence of demographic factors including age, experience, qualification, level of income and marital status on the organizational commitment.

Research Hypotheses:

Hypotheses formulated for this research are as following:

H1: The perceived organizational commitment level of women leaders is higher.

H2: Women leaders have higher continuance commitment compared to affective and normative commitment.

H3: higher women qualification is negatively related with organizational commitment.

H4: Organizational commitment increases with age, experience and the level of income.

H5: Married women leaders are more committed (affective, normative and continuance) to their organization than the unmarried ones.

Research Methodology:

This is a descriptive correlational research in which scientific methodology to examine the research hypotheses. A random sample of 100 women leaders was collected from 36 selected organizations based in Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah (54 per cent response rate). It was decided to include only those employees who have at least two years of supervisory work experience. For data collection, the respondents were approached in their job settings and were briefed about the purpose of the research. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the results and after their willingness, the research questionnaires was handed. The revised Organizational Commitment Questionnaire- OCQ developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) was selected to measure women leaders' organizational commitment level. OCQ has three scales to evaluate the Affective (ACS), Continuance (CCS), and Normative (NCS) Commitment to describe respondents' attachment to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). A pilot study on a sample of 10 was conducted in order to determine the reliability and validity of OCQ. Statistical techniques employed to examine the data included arithmetic mean, standard deviation and percentile analysis. The results related to measure reliability of instruments indicated that all subscales of OCQ were internally consistent for measuring the construct. The alpha reliability coefficients test on OCQ indicated scores ranged from .59 to .87, meaning that the subscales including NC, AC, and CC have enough reliability with the total scale of OCQ. Inter-correlation of subscales and total scale of OCQ were also calculated and it was found that the subscales NC, AC and CC have positive correlation with each other and with total scale of OCQ. The highest correlation exists between NC and total scale.

Results:

Levels and Percentages Organizational Commitment

To determine the respondents' level of organizational commitment, percentages for three levels including low, moderate and high level of OC were computed.

Table 1
Level and Percentages of organizational commitment on OCQ (N=100)

Levels of commitment	n	Percentages
Low Commitment	15	15%
Moderate Commitment	23	23%
High Commitment	62	62%

The results indicate that 15% respondents fall in the category of low organizational commitment, 23% moderate and 62% respondents fall in the category of high organizational commitment. It indicates that majority of the respondents have from high to moderate organizational commitment. The results on OCQ on its subscales indicate that the women leaders' continuance commitment is highest followed by normative and affective commitment (CC M= 38.11, NC M=23.05, AC M= 12.23).

Table 2
Comparison Organizational Commitment and its subscales (N=100)

OCQ	NC		AC		CC	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	23.05	4.17	12.23	4.70	38.11	5.25

Results related to Demographic Variables and Organizational Commitment

Educational Qualification: The results related to qualification and organizational commitment indicate that the respondents with higher qualification have low level of organizational commitment (Undergraduate M= 50.61, Graduate M= 47.00, Master= 44.12).

Table 3
Qualification and Organizational Commitment (N=100)

OCQ	Undergraduate (n=36)		Graduate (n=52)		Master (n=12)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
NC	19.95	4.38	12.42	2.75	12.68	2.40
AC	15.43	2.40	12.03	2.60	13.44	2.01
CC	15.30	2.18	22.54	4.33	20.18	5.64
Total	50.61	6.57	47.00	6.66	44.12	6.74

The mean scores on subscales of NC, AC and CC indicate that the respondents with graduate and master degree reported higher continuance commitment (Graduate= 22.54, Master = 20.18), whereas undergraduates reported normative commitment as the highest (NC= 19.95).

Age: The results related to the influence of age on the organizational commitment indicate that the older women leaders are more committed towards their organization than the younger ones (20-30 years M= 47.62, 40 years and above M= 53.35).

Table 4
Age and Organizational Commitment (N=100)

OCQ	20-30 Yrs (n=21)		30-40 Yrs (n=54)		40 and Above (n=25)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
NC	12.84	2.91	14.10	2.15	15.01	2.20
AC	15.27	2.64	15.13	2.17	16.90	2.94
CC	19.49	4.33	20.90	4.93	22.42	5.38
Total	47.62	7.11	47.86	6.04	53.35	7.28

Interestingly NC, AC and CC all show increasing trend with the increase in age. On the subscales of OCQ the continuance commitment is the highest for all the age groups followed by

affective commitment (20-30 years CC= 19.49, 40-40 years CC= 20.90 and 40 years and above CC= 22.42).

Experience: The results for the variable experience and OC show that the respondents with more work experience have higher organizational commitment as compared to the less experienced ones (3 years M= 47.27, 7 years and above M= 56.1).

Table 5
Experience and Organizational Commitment (N=100)

OCQ Total	3 Years (n=12)		3-7 Years (n=37)		7 and Above (n= 51)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
NC	12.37	2.55	12.51	2.45	15.11	2.08
AC	15.41	2.10	14.72	2.62	16.41	2.62
CC	19.51	5.34	20.49	4.54	24.58	5.31
Total	47.29	8.99	47.72	9.41	56.1	10.01

The above results indicate that both the continuance (3 years CC= 19.51, 3-7 years (20.49, 7 years and above CC= 24.58) and affective commitment get stronger with more experience (3 years AC= 15.41, 3-7 years AC= 14.72, 7 years and above AC= 16.41). The literature pursued on the relationship of experience and organizational commitment suggested a positive link between them, as for an employee the cost of leaving an organization after a longer stay may be very high, which may result in stronger continuance commitment.

Level of Income: The results for the variable income on organizational commitment indicate that the respondents with high monthly income have a higher score on the total scale of OCQ (up to SAR 10000 M= 44.00, SAR 20000 and above M= 50.88). The results also indicate that the level of commitment increases on all sub scales of OCQ (NC, AC, and CC) with the increase in income

Table 6
Level of Income and Organizational Commitment (N=100)

OCQ	up to SAR10000 (n=31)		10000-20000 (n=58)		20000 and above (n=11)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
NC	12.74	2.01	12.54	2.33	12.46	2.42
AC	15.72	2.31	15.01	2.50	17.00	2.59
CC	15.54	5.24	19.49	4.19	21.42	4.76
Total	44.00	9.56	47.07	9.02	50.88	9.77

Marital Status: The mean scores for marital status illustrate that married women leaders are more committed towards their organization than the unmarried (Unmarried M= 43.71, Married M= 57.36). The mean scores on CC are the highest for married women (M= 28.43), whereas for unmarried respondents the highest mean scores are for NC (M= 20.83).

Table 7
Marital Status and Organizational Commitment (N=100)

OCQ	Married (n=79)		Unmarried (n=21)	
	M	SD	M	SD
NC	14.00	4.97	20.83	4.52
AC	14.93	2.80	11.28	2.26
CC	28.43	2.25	11.60	2.39
Total	57.36	10.02	43.71	9.17

Discussion:

This purpose of present study was to measure the level and dimensions of organizational commitment (affective, normative, continuance) among women working on leadership positions in Saudi Arabia and also to explore the influence of demographic factors including age, experience, qualification, level of income and marital status on the organizational commitment. The results of this investigation indicate that women leaders have a high level of organizational commitment. The results are in line with the work of Allen & Meyer (1993)

who studied gender wise differences in commitment and stress. They found that females have higher level of organizational commitment, and consequently experience less stress as compared to males, irrespective of sample's marital status, experience and age. The strongest form of commitment manifested by females was continuance commitment followed by affective and normative commitment. The literature perused on continuance commitment indicates that employees with a strong continuance commitment to an organization recognize that leaving the organization may be detrimental to them financially due to the lack of employment alternatives and a loss of investments. These investments include time, job effort, organization's specific skills that might not be transferable or greater costs of leaving the organization that discourage them from seeking alternative employment, work friendships and political deals. In addition to the fear of losing investments, individuals develop continuance commitment because of a perceived lack of alternatives. In addition to the above factors, a possible explanation for women leaders' higher continuance commitment in KSA may be the fact that women have few less employment opportunities and they lack marketable skills. They also face greater barriers than men in entering the job market in KSA do; as a result, they may feel compelled to commit to the organization because of the financial, social, psychological and other costs associated with leaving the organization.

The results of this study also provide insights into the demographic variables that may influence the level of organizational commitment (affective, normative, continuance). Age, experience, level of income and educational qualification seemed to have a statistically significant relationship with organizational commitment. It has been found that as a whole the women leaders' perception of organizational commitment increased with age. Interestingly, the respondents reported continuance commitment as the strongest form of commitment, which even gets stronger with increase age. The results from prior research revealed a correlation between age and affective organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2001). It can be assumed that with age comes experience, which would increase women desire to use their knowledge resources to obtain the goals of the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) suggested that age would have a stronger positive relationship to continuance commitment than to affective commitment. It can be assumed that as women get older, they feel that their alternatives for employment become limited so they prefer to stay with their current organization. It can also be assumed that after working for a company for an extended period of time, women feel that by leaving the organization they will not only forfeit their invested time and livelihood to the organization but personal relationships, retirement, and pension opportunities. Therefore, they may choose to remain in the same organization until retirement.

The work experience of a women leader may influence her perception of organizational commitment. The results of the study revealed that both the continuance and affective commitment increased with experience. A number of studies (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Sheldon, 1971) have noted that there is a positive relationship between employment experience and organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) believed the reason for this relationship is that the longer an employee works with an organization, an attachment to the organization occurs which is perceived as

affective organizational commitment.

Interestingly, women leaders with higher educational qualification manifested a lower level of organizational commitment as compared to the low qualified. Previous research indicated that educated individuals invest their time and effort to advance their careers. Because of their level of training and background, highly educated individuals are in demand and can afford to change organizations based on their needs. The rationale for this prediction is that women with low level of education generally have more difficulty changing jobs and, therefore, show a greater commitment to their organizations (Steers, 1977).

It is interesting to note that the level of education is expected to have a negative relationship with organizational commitment (Cooper et al., 2001). The rationale for this prediction is that people with higher qualification have more employment opportunities and may switch jobs easily, whereas, staff with low levels of education generally have more difficulty changing jobs and therefore show a greater commitment to their organizations. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) conducted a meta-analysis on the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment and found that employees with higher levels of education show less commitment to the organization.

Income is considered as an important factor responsible for determining people's life style and social status in any society. Results of the present study revealed that level of income is significantly related to organizational commitment; particularly CC. Income seems positively associated with the organizational commitment because it directly affects an individual's lifestyle and status.

Previous studies (Al-Kahanti, 2004; Schneider, 2003) found positive relationships between the level of income and organizational commitment. However, studies examining the relationship between salary and organizational commitment have shown a stronger correlation to continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997), which remains consistent with the findings of the current study.

The women leaders' organization continues increases with increase in income. This study found women leaders' marital status significantly related to their organizational commitment, particularly continuance commitment. Similar results occurred in studies by Meyer et al. (2001), and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) that found that marital status was positively correlated with organizational commitment.

Taking the literature and empirical study into account, it is evident that the theoretical and empirical findings largely correspond and the results were in line with the stated hypotheses. The above results of this study also concur with the findings of the other similar researches discussed in the literature review.

Significance of the Study and Recommendations:

The present study is significant in that it provides insight on the organizational commitment of the Woman leaders in KSA. The results of this investigation may provide baseline data for Human Resource Management for considering in hiring women in leadership positions by determining which candidates will be more committed to their organizations and consequently demonstrate better performance.

The study recommends that the companies should create a supportive work environment and look into ways to increase the affective and normative commitment of their women leaders by

providing growth opportunities, equitable rewards and market related incentives at all levels. The roles and responsibilities should be assigned keeping in view the socio-cultural environment of the area. To explore the influence of various demographic variables like age, experience, salary, years in job position in relation to women leaders' organizational commitment, the researcher suggests longitudinal studies. Similarities and differences across women occupational groups and gender also need further investigation.

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Zahiruddin Butt Saudi Aramco, Box: 13988, Dhahran Saudi Arabia 31311, buttzz@aramco.com