

# WORK-ROLE COMMITMENT OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES: A PROCESS MODEL

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This paper presents a model of the work-role commitment process of Industrial employees. The model is based on a conceptual frame-work of 'Commitment to Work' as a value-orientation of the employee in terms of his work-performance and discipline. The paper has briefly examined, the current conceptual ambiguity about the term 'commitment' and then, presented the model. It is also shown how the model helps to differentiate the concept of 'commitment' from certain other synonymously used concepts like Job-Satisfaction, Job-Involvement, and Morale.

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## *Introduction*

The term commitment has been traditionally used by social scientists in the analysis of both individual and organizational behaviour. However, no clear consensus exists, as to the meaning and definition of the concept. The term has been used to express a varied assortment of ideas at the convenience of the authors and this arbitrary usage has considerably plagued the objectivity and reliability of the commitment studies.

The term 'commitment' has been used in a wide variety of contexts like work (Kerr, 1960; Lambert, 1963; Singh, 1973) religion (Schoenherr, 1974) and Power (Kanter, 1968). However, literature on commitment to work itself is considerable and it mostly deals with the commitment of industrial labour. Therefore, the review of literature in this paper is mostly restricted to the commitment of industrial labour.

In the context of industrial employment, the concept has been normally used in the analysis of the relationship of the worker<sup>1</sup> to his job. As pointed out earlier, different studies have used the term to refer to a wide range of meanings and aspects of the worker-job relationship like continuing in the work-role, stability of the work-force,

worker's attitude towards employer and organization, worker's happiness with the job, worker's devotion to his job and so on. (Seth and Patel, 1979). However, the character and credentials of the meanings are rarely examined. According to some researchers (No. 1 in Table I) commitment to work is merely employee's continuance in a work-role; but it is not clear whether the employee's continuance on the job is because of his positive attitude towards the job or the non-availability of better jobs. The second type of definition in the Table provides an answer to this question by defining commitment as maintenance of membership coupled with a positive attitude towards the job /organization. The third definition was advanced by the authors on the basis of their belief that the Indian industrial workers, in the early years of India's industrialization, were mainly illiterate rural migrants who could not easily adjust to the conditions of industrial employment or to the industrial way of life in general. These definitions find a place even in recent studies, as is evident from the Table. This belief is also reflected in 4 and 5 which look upon commitment as stability and availability respectively, of work force. It is therefore evident that the belief has considerably influenced the con-

1. The term 'Worker' here refers to all categories of people working in the industry.

TABLE I

Sl. No.	Definition / Description	Source
1	The decision to continue participating in a system-role.	March & Simon, 1958, Schoenherr, 1974.
2	The willingness to maintain membership with a strong positive attitude towards the organization.	Alan, Fox, 1971, Sharma, 1974, Steers, 1977.
3	Adjustment to the industrial employment /industrial way of life.	Moore & Feldman (Eds.) 1960, Ornati, 1955, Kerr, 1960. Myers and Kannappan, 1970.
4	Stability of the work-force.	Lambert, 1963, Seth, 1971.
5	Availability of the work-force when needed.	Morris, 1960.
6	Individual and organizational goal-integration.	Argyris, 1964, Singh & Das. 1978,
7	Commitment as an "explanation of consistent human behaviour in a sociological way".	Becker, 1960.
8	Positive 'Involvement'.	Etzioni, 1969.

ceptual thinking of many social scientists about the term 'commitment'. Certain other studies (No. 6) describe commitment in terms of individual and organizational goal-integration; the higher the integration between the two goals, the greater would be the commitment of the individual to the organization. Becker (No. 7), in his eagerness to integrate the concept of commitment with the sociological theory, defines it as an 'explanation of consistent human behaviour in a sociological way'. Etzioni (No. 8) equates commitment to 'positive involvement' when the term 'Involvement' itself does not have a consistent definition/description (Misra, 1979).

The table is by no means comprehensive; the term commitment has also been interchangeably used with a variety of other terms like 'Job-satisfaction', 'Job involve-

ment', 'morale' etc.<sup>2</sup> These concepts have been defined or explained in terms of 'Work Values'.<sup>3</sup> Job satisfaction has very often been conceptualized as a function of both work values and job rewards (Locke, 1969; Kalleberg, 1977). There are studies indicating that persons who believe in 'Protestant Ethic' would be more satisfied with their jobs (Blood, 1969). On the other hand, Robinowitz and Hall (1977) point out that a work-involved individual is a believer in 'Protestant work Ethic' which emphasizes the importance of work in order to get ahead. Similarly commitment has also been explained in terms of work values (Morris, D. Morris, 1968. Shoenherr, 1974). This poses many problems in classifying and clarifying the whole family of images involved in the idea of commitment as used by various studies.

2. The term 'Job Involvement' has been used interchangeably with a variety of other terms, namely 'attachment to work', 'central life interest', 'Commitment to work', 'intrinsic motivation', 'ego-involvement', 'morale' etc. (Misra, 1979).
3. "The concept of 'Work Value' may be regarded as a special usage of the general concept of 'Value' and may be defined as the conceptions of what is desirable that individuals hold with respect to their 'work activity' (Kalleberg, 1977).

### *Factors in Commitment*

Studies on 'commitment' have identified different factors (correlates) which are supposed to be responsible for generating commitment among the industrial workers. It was thought that these factors influenced the entire work-force, but the effect of these correlates on the individual worker was largely overlooked. For example, the earlier Indian studies attributed the lack of commitment among the Indian industrial workers to the low state of industrial development of the country, characterized by the presence of illiterate, low caste, rural-migrant labour-force (Ornati, 1955; Moore and Feldman, 1960; Kerr, 1960). Similarly the recent studies, like their western counterparts, have identified certain job organizational factors like job-satisfaction, organizational culture, supervisory styles, job technology etc., which are supposed to inculcate commitment in workers as a whole (Sharma, 1974; Prabhu, Singh *et al*, 1975; Singh and Das, 1978). However, the individual differences, especially in terms of their value-orientations<sup>4</sup>, seem to have been overlooked by the researchers, though values are considered to be highly instrumental in shaping one's attitudes and behaviour.

An approach which seeks to define 'commitment' in terms of the value-orientation of the individual and which also helps to differentiate the concept of 'commitment' from certain other synonymously used concepts, has been attempted by Punekar and Haribabu (1976). According to them a com-

mitted worker is one who possesses in him the two values, namely, the 'value of performance' and the 'value of Discipline', which are explained as follows.

### *The Value of Performance*

A person is said to have 'the value of performance' if he finds satisfaction in performing his role-responsibilities well.<sup>5</sup> He does his best in the occupation he enters not because some one wants him to perform well or not even for monetary incentives; he does his best in his job out of his own volition, that is, as a result of the values inculcated in him and not merely because he is satisfied with the objective rewards of the job.

### *The Value of Discipline*

A person who has the 'value of discipline' in him, abides by the rules and norms of the organization out of his own free will and finds satisfaction in doing so.<sup>6</sup> He conforms to the expectations of his role without any external pressures, though he may find that the rules and regulations of his organization are too harsh.

The 'Value of Performance' and the 'Value of Discipline' form the two components of commitment and these values are inculcated in a person through the process of socialization in his family, school and peer group. It is to be noted that these values are personal character values which are different from the work values discussed earlier.

4. The term, 'Values' is used here in the sense of 'personal-character' values which are different from the 'Work Values' described in note 3.

5. Recent research tends to support the view that where a positive association between Job-satisfaction and Job-performance exists, it is due to good performance giving satisfaction to the worker rather than satisfaction leading to work performance (Lawler & Porter, 1967; Locke, 1970; Slocum, 1970).

6. Morris D. Morris (1960) strikes a similar note when he says that "a committed worker requires less of supervision and his identification with the work and the values associated with it, results in better job performance."

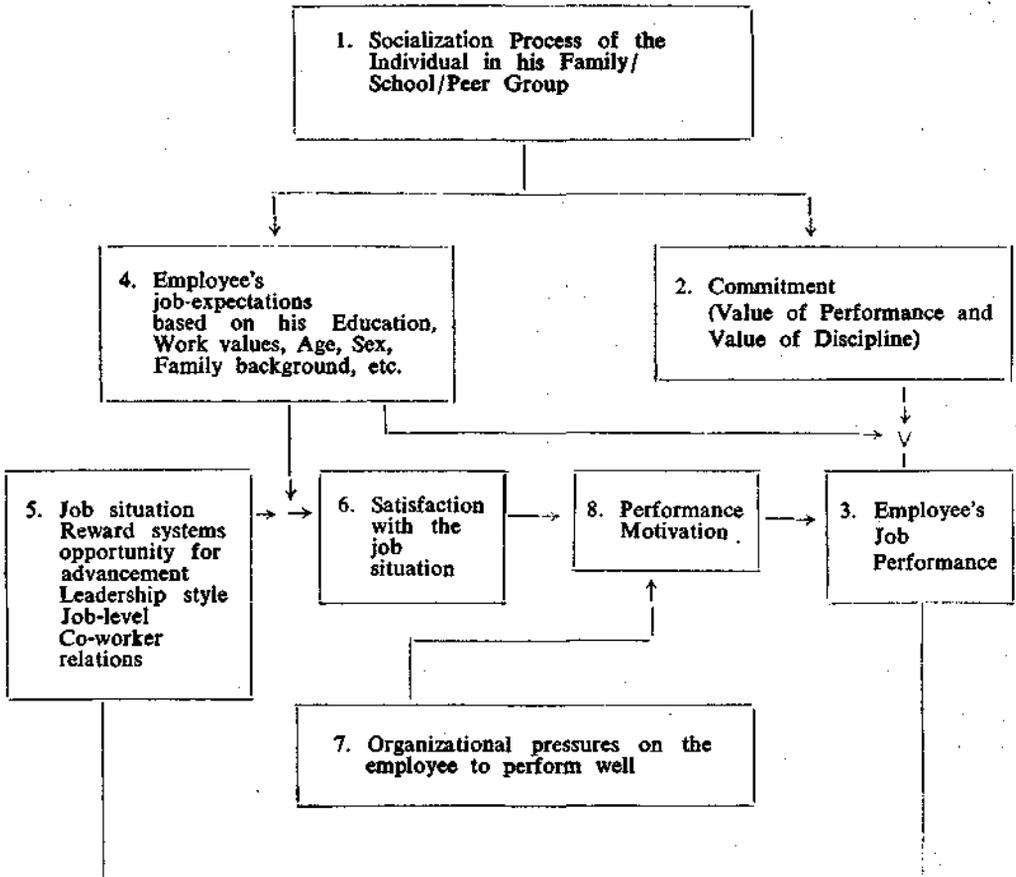
*The Conceptual Model*

Based on the conceptualization of commitment in terms of the values of performance and discipline, a process model for the work-role commitment of Industrial employees is proposed (Figure 1). The fundamental premise of the model is that the values of performance and discipline, which comprise commitment and are inculcated in a person through the process

of his socialization, get expressed in the form of good work-performance and self-discipline at one's job.

In the figure, block 1 shows the socialization process of the individual in his family, school and peer group, through which is inculcated 'commitment' (Block 2). When the person enters a job, 'commitment' gets manifested in the form of good work-performance and self-discipline<sup>7</sup> (Block 3). The expression of 'commitment' as work-perfor-

FIGURE 1  
'COMMITMENT — A PROCESS MODEL



7. Since self-discipline, an employee's conforming to the rules and norms of the job out of his own free will, is conducive to good performance, it suffices to say that the two values get expressed in the form of good work-performance.

mance is, however, influenced by certain contextual factors. A major influence on the transformation of the values into good work-performance is that of the extent of fulfilment of the employee's expectations from his job. A person comes to work with certain expectations based on his socio-personal background and work-values and it is desirable that these expectations are reasonably fulfilled by the job/organization for the commitment to be manifested in the form of good work-performance (Block 4).

The model also gives certain other salient influences on work-performance. They are (a) employee's satisfaction with the job-situation<sup>8</sup> (Block 6) which is a function of his expectations from the job (Block 4) and the actual conditions of the job situation (Block 5) and (b) various organizational pressures on the employee to perform well on the job. But according to the premise of the model, only those employees, who show good work-performance on their jobs because of the values of performance and discipline in them, can be called 'committed' to their work and not others who may show good work-performance because of their satisfaction with the job situation and/or the pressures on them to perform well. It is, therefore shown that the core of the commitment process is represented by the diagram comprising the blocks 1, 2, 3 and 4 only.<sup>9</sup> Even though, the model of commitment process has been discussed only in the context of industrial employment, it can imaginatively be extrapolated in non-industrial work situations as well.

### *Commitment and Other Related Concepts*

This model can be advantageously used to differentiate the concept of 'commitment' from some other concepts like 'job satisfaction', 'job-involvement' and 'morale', which are often used more or less synonymously.

### *Commitment and Job Satisfaction*

An individual's positive attitudes towards his job can be treated as conceptually equivalent to Job Satisfaction. Vroom (1964 : 99) defines Job satisfaction as "affective orientations on the part of the individuals towards work roles which they are presently occupying"<sup>10</sup> and according to him when a person is satisfied with a job, the job has a positive 'Valence' for the person. Similarly, a 'Committed' person can be said to have a positive 'Valence', though not in the sense of affective orientations, for his work. Moreover, commitment, conceptually has a positive relation to work-performance while there is a strong indication that job satisfaction does not lead to performance (Brayfield and Crocket, 1955; Vroom, 1964).

### *Commitment and Job Involvement*

'Job-involvement' is usually conceptualized as the degree to which a person identifies himself psychologically with his work (Ladahl and Kejner, 1965) and according to Robinowitz and Hall (1977), it is related to a set of three variables; personal

8. According to Punekar and Haribabu (1976), an employee's satisfaction with the job-situation promotes his adjustment to the industrial employment which is one of the 'correlates' of commitment.
9. The authors are presently engaged in the empirical verification of this model.
10. Three main approaches viz. (1) Attitudinal approach (2) Factorial approach, and (3) Need satisfaction approach are discernible in the theoretical and empirical studies on job-satisfaction (Singhal, Sushila, 1973). Out of these, only the attitudinal approach, which interprets job-satisfaction as individual's affective orientation to his job resulting from the job conditions, is considered here, since the studies of this approach have often been confused with commitment studies.

TABLE II  
COMMITMENT AND OTHER CONCEPTS

CONCEPTS				
Properties	Commitment*	Job satisfaction	Job involvement	Morale
1. Attribute	Individual attribute.	Individual attribute.	Individual attribute.	Group attribute.
2. Orientation	Value-orientation of the individual to 'work'	Affective orientation of the individual to the job.	Psychological identification of the individual with the job.	Group attitude held by individual members.
3. 'Valence'	'Valence' of the individual for the work.	'Valence' of the job for the individual.	Cognitive (belief) state of the individual.	'Valence' of the group for the individual.
4. Causative factors	In itself a personal character value.	Job-factors and work values.	Work values and job factors.	Not known.
5. Association with work performance	Positively associated with work-performance.	No definite relationship to work-performance.	No definite relationship to work-performance.	No definite relationship to work-performance.
6. Association with self-discipline	Positively associated with self-discipline.	Not known.	Not known.	Not known.

\* The properties of the concept of 'Commitment' relate to the conceptual model presented and are under empirical verification.

characteristics, situational characteristics and work outcomes. Job-involvement is therefore a more complex variable than commitment which is only a personal character value. But as in the case of job-satisfaction, there is an indication that job involvement is not related to job performance (Saal, 1978).

### *Commitment and Morale*

Morale is yet another concept which is synonymously used with commitment. Parker and Kleemier (1951), as cited by Pestonjee and Singh (1977), define morale as "the attitude held by the individual members of a group which makes them put the achievement of group goals ahead of their personal goals". It is therefore, a

group phenomenon, unlike 'commitment' and is generated by an individual's group membership. It is usually assumed that high morale is positively related to high performance. However, "the available evidence does not substantiate the general assumption that high morale and high productivity (performance) go hand in hand" (Dwivedi, 1979; 224).

Table II summarizes the above points which differentiate the concept of commitment from other concepts.

The conceptual perspective of the term 'commitment' explained in this paper would help in clearing the prevailing ambiguity in the usage of the term and some other terms used in the study of worker-job relationships.

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