

Daniel Cruz

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/daniel-p-cruz-47632625>

danielcruz489@gmail.com

Dissertation title

Emotional intelligence, learning style, experience, and gender as predictors of organizational commitment.

Mentor and committee members

Mentor: Dr. Angela Bruch, Psychology Department, Capella University

Committee member: Dr. Deborah Vogle Welch, Psychology Department, Capella University

Committee member: Dr. Bruce Fischer, Psychology Department, Capella University

Research topic

Organizational commitment is simply defined as the level of commitment that an employee has for his or her employer (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Gaining a new employee's organizational commitment is vital to the success of any organization (Tufail, Zia, Kahn, & Ifran, 2012; Vandenberghe, Panaccio, & Ben Ayed, 2011). This study seeks to understand emotional intelligence (EI), learning style, gender and years of experience in the information technology (IT) industry and how they can be used as possible predictors of organizational commitment in remote IT employees. Remote employees are employees who work 100% of the time from home or other location outside of the home office.

Literature review

Gaining employee organizational commitment is an on ongoing issue for employers. It is a challenge that all employers face at some point. Identifying the factors that have a direct impact on an employee's willingness to commit to an organization provide implications in employee

retention efforts. There are many variables that have been measured for possible correlation with organizational commitment. The findings of these studies are discussed below.

The foundational article for the approved dissertation is provided by the Meyer and Allen (1991) three factor model of organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) took previous research that, at the time, seemed to be a mixed bag of confusion for anyone interested in using the information. The purpose of their research was two-fold: first, they to provide a way to interpret the current findings in the research, and they attempted to provide a framework for future research in the organizational commitment field (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) used existing research to identify three common themes: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Meyer et al. defined affective commitment as the desire to stay with an organization because work experiences lead to feelings of comfort and personal competence. Employees feel like part of the team. Continuance commitment was defined as the result of an employee needing to stay with the organization based on the costs associated with leaving (Meyer et al., 1993). For example, needing to pay bills and buy food. Employees who feel an obligation based on loyalty norms or feelings that they owe the company something exhibit normative commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). Meyer and Allen (1991) recommend further study of the processes that foster organizational commitment and how it translates into behavior. The approved dissertation topic has committed to researching the links between the chosen variables and organizational commitment in hopes that implications of the study will help organizations more easily identify early in an employee's tenure how willing they are to commit.

Motivation and Organizational Commitment.

Motivation theory was discussed in exam question one, and is an important theory that helped to identify organizational commitment theory as the framework for the approved dissertation topic and the variables to be used. Meyer's later work led to the integration of motivation theory and organizational commitment. Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004) are credited with combining research from motivational theory and organizational commitment theory with the purpose of their research being to help researchers from both fields utilize the work of each other's fields to move their own field forward (Meyer et al., 2004). Meyer et al. produced results that introduced four new or modified concepts: goal regulation, commitment to social foci, goal commitment, and the bases for commitment. This article provided more validation that the current study should focus on researching the connection between the underlying contributors to motivation theory and their impact on organizational commitment.

Learning Style and Organizational Commitment.

One possible avenue that was explored was the idea that learning style may have an impact of organizational commitment. Customizing training modules based on an employee's preferred learning style is one of the practical applications of the learning style theory. However, Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer and Bjork (2008) provide a literature review of available studies on learning style, and insist that the findings of their review ultimately conclude that there is not enough data to support this application of learning style theory, and that it needs to be proven empirically if it is to continue being used in the field. The conclusion from this article is that if the theory is being applied even without the support of data to back it up, there is still opportunity for research to find statistically significant data that explains this theory's success in the field.

A follow-up study, taking the advice of Pasher et al. (2008), conducted an empirical study to see if a correlation between learning style and instructional method exists (Rogowsky, Calhoun, & Tallal, 2015). Based on the findings of their empirical research study, Rogowsky et al. suggest that there is no significant relationship between the two. The conclusions of these two articles hint at the potential for further research investigating the potential relationships between learning style and method of delivery used in training.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment.

Srivastava (2013) provides more interesting research on the impact of job satisfaction on organizational commitment. More specifically, Srivastava wanted to know what the relationship was between trust and locus of control and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This is relevant to the current approved dissertation topic as job satisfaction has been shown to be strongly correlated with organizational commitment (Srivastava, 2013). Srivastava concluded that trust and locus of control moderate job satisfaction and organizational commitment. What could not be ascertained was the impact of gender on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in regards to trust and locus of control. Srivastava indicated that this provides grounds for future research.

Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment.

According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008), emotional intelligence is “a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking” (p. 503). Mayer et al. suggest that emotional intelligence can be broken into four branches: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Research by Joseph, Jin, Newman, and O’Boylee (2015) suggests that there is a strong relationship between self-reported

emotional intelligence and job performance. This evidence helps expand the foundation of the link between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, leaving plenty of opportunity for future research to find a common link between the two.

Deepening the research on emotional intelligence in hopes of creating further understanding of how to apply emotional intelligence in the workplace, a study by Shooshtarian, Ameli, and Aminilari, (2013) helped shed some light on the current literature. Shooshtarian et al. conducted a cross sectional study of 350 employees, age 20-56, from different industries in Fars Province, Iran. Shooshtarian et al. used the Persian version of the Modified Emotional Intelligence Scale (MSEIS) to measure emotional intelligence, and the Grikson Questionnaire to measure job satisfaction. Commitment data was collected using the questionnaire developed by Allen and Meyer (1991). The focus of the study was to identify any relationship that might exist between employee emotional intelligence (EI) levels and their job satisfaction, job performance, and their organizational commitment (Shooshtarian et al., 2013). Shooshtarian et al. expressed concern that since the measurements used in the study were adapted to fit Iranian culture there would be some bias, however, the measurements were assessed by a panel of psychology and management experts to ensure content validity.

The results of the study indicated that an employee's emotional intelligence was positively correlated with job satisfaction, and a significant relationship exists between EI and job performance. However, the study showed that there was no relationship between EI and commitment (Shooshtarian, 2013). Shooshtarian et al. provide evidence of a positive correlation between EI and job satisfaction, and Srivastava (2013) provides evidence that job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment. It is the gap between the two that the current approved dissertation study seeks to help add knowledge to. Having identified a gap in the

literature, attention now turns to a specific industry that could use possible implications from the research findings of the approved dissertation topic.

Synthesis of the research findings

The literature review to this point highlights two current areas of study in the industrial and organizational psychology field. The first is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, as defined by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008), “is the ability an individual has to carry out sophisticated information processing about emotions and emotion-relevant stimuli and to use it as a guide to thinking and behavior” (p. 503). Being able to handle emotions in the workplace is an important skill to understand and master. The second major area of study currently seen in the field is that of organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) provide the foundational knowledge for this field with their three factor model of organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen highlight three forms of organizational commitment: affective (want to stay), normative (need to stay), and continuance (obligated to stay).

Implications in the literature are that job satisfaction is positively correlated to emotional intelligence (Shooshtarian et al., 2013) and organizational commitment (Srivastava, 2013) independently. However, according to Shooshtarian et al., there is no direct correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. Taking another angle on connecting the two, Wong and Law (2002) suggest that employees who hold jobs that require low levels of emotional labor, but have high levels of emotional intelligence, and are not given the chance to use their emotional intelligence at a high level, may be less willing to commit to the organization and are a greater risk for leaving. As previously stated this is the area that the current dissertation research will seek to add knowledge to the gap in the literature.

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