

The Relationship Between Employee Motivation and Organizational Commitment

Dr. Ritu Chandna

Assistant Professor in Commerce

Sant Mohan Singh Khalsa Labana Girls College, Barara(Ambala)

Abstract

Employee motivation and organizational commitment are two fundamental concepts in human resource management and organizational behaviour. Motivation concerns the psychological forces that initiate, direct, and sustain employees' efforts toward the achievement of individual and organizational goals, whereas organizational commitment reflects the degree to which employees identify with an organization, accept its goals and values, and desire to maintain membership within it. The relationship between these constructs has considerable theoretical and managerial importance because motivated employees may be more willing to invest effort in their work and develop stronger attachment to organizations that provide meaningful rewards, recognition, supportive leadership, opportunities for development, and favourable working conditions. This paper provides a theoretical examination of the relationship between employee motivation and organizational commitment. It discusses major theories of motivation, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, McClelland's theory of needs, expectancy theory, equity theory, and self-determination perspectives. It further examines affective, continuance, and normative dimensions of organizational commitment and explains how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can influence each dimension. The paper proposes that motivation and commitment are related but conceptually distinct constructs. Motivation primarily concerns the willingness and energy to perform work, whereas commitment concerns attachment to the organization. The relationship may be influenced by job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, leadership, organizational justice, rewards, career development, employee empowerment, work-life balance, and organizational culture. The paper concludes that organizations can strengthen commitment by developing motivational environments that satisfy employees' economic, social, psychological, and professional needs. However, motivation alone cannot guarantee commitment because organizational commitment is also shaped by organizational experiences, values, relationships, and perceptions of fairness.

Keywords: Employee motivation, organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, job satisfaction, human resource management.

Introduction

Employees represent one of the most important resources available to an organization. Financial resources, technology, infrastructure, and information become productive organizational resources only when employees possess the willingness and capability to use them effectively. Consequently, understanding employee attitudes and behaviours is essential for organizations seeking sustained productivity and effectiveness. Among the many factors influencing organizational behaviour, employee motivation and organizational commitment have received considerable attention in human resource management and organizational psychology.

Employee motivation refers broadly to the forces that influence the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's work-related behaviour. A motivated employee is generally willing to invest effort in accomplishing assigned responsibilities and achieving desired outcomes. Motivation can originate from internal factors such as interest, achievement, responsibility, learning, and personal growth, as well as external factors such as salary, promotion, recognition, job security, rewards, and working conditions.

Organizational commitment, in contrast, refers to an employee's psychological attachment to the organization. A committed employee is not merely present at work but may identify with organizational values, feel emotionally attached to the organization, perceive costs associated with leaving, or feel an obligation to remain. Commitment is therefore concerned with the nature and strength of the employee's relationship with the organization.

The relationship between motivation and organizational commitment is important because organizations require employees who are both willing to perform and willing to remain psychologically connected to the organization. An employee may be highly motivated to complete a particular task because of a financial incentive but may not necessarily feel committed to the organization. Similarly, an employee may feel committed to an organization but demonstrate relatively low motivation if job responsibilities are poorly designed or organizational resources are inadequate.

The distinction demonstrates that motivation and commitment are related but different constructs. Motivation is primarily concerned with effort and goal-directed behaviour, whereas organizational commitment focuses on attachment and the employee's relationship with the organization. Nevertheless, motivational conditions can contribute to the development of organizational commitment when employees perceive that the organization provides meaningful work, fair treatment, recognition, growth opportunities, supportive relationships, and rewards consistent with their contributions.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the relationship between employee motivation and organizational commitment. The discussion examines major motivational

theories, dimensions of organizational commitment, mechanisms connecting the two concepts, and organizational factors that may strengthen or weaken their relationship.

Concept of Employee Motivation

Employee motivation can be understood as the psychological process through which individuals are encouraged to initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behaviour. Motivation determines not only whether employees exert effort but also where that effort is directed and how long it is sustained.

Motivation is influenced by individual needs, expectations, perceptions, values, rewards, organizational conditions, leadership, and job characteristics. Different employees may respond differently to the same motivational practices because individuals differ in their needs and preferences.

An employee may be motivated by financial rewards, while another may place greater importance on recognition, autonomy, meaningful work, professional development, or social relationships. Effective organizations therefore attempt to develop diverse motivational systems rather than assuming that a single reward mechanism will satisfy all employees.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation arises from the inherent satisfaction associated with performing an activity. Employees may experience intrinsic motivation when their work provides opportunities for achievement, learning, creativity, responsibility, autonomy, or personal growth.

Extrinsic motivation arises from external consequences associated with behaviour. Salary increases, bonuses, promotion, recognition, job security, awards, and other organizational rewards can function as extrinsic motivators.

Both forms of motivation can influence employee behaviour. Extrinsic rewards can encourage employees to achieve immediate organizational targets, while intrinsic motivation can encourage sustained engagement with work when employees find their responsibilities meaningful and satisfying.

Table 1. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Dimension	Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation
Primary source	Internal satisfaction	External rewards or consequences
Examples	Achievement, autonomy, learning, creativity	Salary, bonus, promotion, recognition
Main psychological effect	Personal satisfaction and interest	Reward expectation or avoidance of negative consequences
Potential organizational outcome	Engagement and sustained effort	Performance and goal achievement
Relationship with commitment	Can strengthen emotional attachment	Can strengthen perceived organizational support when fairly administered
Major limitation	May vary according to job characteristics	Excessive emphasis may reduce perceived autonomy

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is important because organizational commitment may develop differently depending on the source of motivation. Employees motivated by meaningful work may develop affective attachment, whereas employees motivated primarily by economic rewards may evaluate their relationship with the organization through exchange considerations.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides one of the most widely recognized explanations of human motivation. The theory proposes that individuals possess different categories of needs, beginning with physiological needs and extending toward safety, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Within organizations, physiological needs may relate to adequate compensation and basic working conditions. Safety needs can involve job security and safe working environments. Social needs may be satisfied through relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Esteem may be supported through recognition and achievement, while self-actualization may be associated with challenging work and opportunities for personal development.

From the perspective of organizational commitment, organizations that respond appropriately to multiple employee needs may create more positive employment experiences. These experiences can contribute to stronger attachment and willingness to remain.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors include salary, organizational policies, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and job security. Their absence may produce dissatisfaction, but their presence does not necessarily create strong motivation.

Motivators include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the intrinsic characteristics of work. These factors can generate greater satisfaction and motivation.

The theory provides an important framework for understanding the motivation-commitment relationship. If employees experience poor working conditions, unfair policies, or inadequate compensation, dissatisfaction may weaken organizational attachment. Conversely, opportunities for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement may strengthen positive attitudes toward the organization.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor proposed two contrasting assumptions about employees. Theory X assumes that employees tend to avoid work and require control and supervision, whereas Theory Y assumes that employees can be self-directed, responsible, and motivated when appropriate conditions exist.

Organizations operating according to Theory Y principles may provide greater autonomy, participation, responsibility, and opportunities for development. Such conditions can support intrinsic motivation.

Employee participation and trust may also strengthen commitment because employees may perceive themselves as valued organizational members rather than merely as instruments for completing tasks.

McClelland's Theory of Needs

McClelland identified achievement, affiliation, and power as important human needs. Employees with strong achievement needs may prefer challenging tasks and measurable accomplishments. Employees with affiliation needs may value positive interpersonal relationships, while those with power needs may seek influence and leadership responsibilities.

Different motivational profiles imply that organizations need flexible motivational practices. A workplace that offers challenging assignments may motivate achievement-oriented employees, while team-based activities may be more attractive to employees with strong affiliation needs.

When organizational environments allow employees to satisfy relevant needs, positive attitudes toward the organization may develop.

Expectancy Theory

Vroom's expectancy theory proposes that motivation depends on employees' beliefs concerning the relationship between effort, performance, and rewards. Employees are more likely to exert effort when they believe that effort will result in successful performance, that performance will lead to desirable outcomes, and that those outcomes are valuable.

The theory has important implications for organizational commitment. When employees perceive a clear and fair relationship between their contributions and organizational rewards, they may develop positive perceptions of the employment relationship.

If employees repeatedly observe that high performance does not result in recognition, advancement, or appropriate rewards, motivation may decline and their attachment to the organization may weaken.

Equity Theory

Equity theory emphasizes employees' perceptions of fairness. Employees compare their inputs and outcomes with those of other individuals and evaluate whether the employment relationship appears equitable.

Inputs may include effort, experience, skills, education, and time, while outcomes may include salary, recognition, promotion, and other benefits.

Perceived inequity can create dissatisfaction and reduce motivation. It may also weaken organizational commitment because employees may conclude that the organization does not value their contributions appropriately.

Fairness is therefore an important bridge between motivation and commitment.

Self-Determination Perspective

Self-determination theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as important psychological needs. Employees are more likely to experience high-quality motivation when they feel capable, have meaningful choices, and experience positive relationships with others.

Autonomy can be supported through employee participation and discretion. Competence can be

strengthened through training, feedback, and opportunities to master challenging tasks. Relatedness can develop through supportive relationships with colleagues and supervisors.

When these psychological needs are satisfied, employees may experience stronger intrinsic motivation and more positive relationships with their organizations.

Table 2. Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Commitment Dimension	Basic Meaning	Employee's Main Reason for Remaining
Affective commitment	Emotional attachment and identification	"I want to remain."
Continuance commitment	Perceived costs of leaving	"I need to remain."
Normative commitment	Sense of obligation	"I ought to remain."

The three dimensions illustrate why motivation can have different implications for commitment. Intrinsic motivation may be especially relevant to affective attachment, while economic rewards and perceived employment alternatives may influence continuance considerations.

The relationship between employee motivation and organizational commitment can be explained through the broader employment exchange. Organizations provide employees with rewards, support, opportunities, recognition, meaningful work, and career development, while employees contribute effort, knowledge, skills, loyalty, and performance.

When employees perceive this exchange as positive and fair, they may develop stronger attachment to the organization.

The relationship can therefore be conceptually represented as:

Motivational Conditions → Positive Work Experience → Satisfaction and Trust → Organizational Attachment → Organizational Commitment

This relationship is not necessarily automatic. The type of motivation, quality of leadership, organizational fairness, individual values, job characteristics, and organizational culture can influence the strength of the relationship.

Table 3. Motivational Practices and Potential Commitment Outcomes

Motivational Practice	Employee Response	Potential Commitment Effect
Fair compensation	Perceived economic security	Stronger employment attachment
Recognition	Feeling valued	Greater affective attachment
Career development	Future orientation	Greater intention to remain
Autonomy	Sense of control	Stronger intrinsic motivation
Training	Increased competence	Greater organizational investment perception
Participation	Sense of importance	Stronger identification
Supportive supervision	Trust and security	Greater commitment
Meaningful work	Personal significance	Stronger affective commitment
Job security	Reduced uncertainty	Greater retention tendency

Leadership plays an important role in creating motivational conditions. Supportive leaders provide feedback, recognition, guidance, participation opportunities, and encouragement.

Transformational leadership in particular emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Such leadership can stimulate intrinsic motivation and strengthen identification with organizational goals.

Autocratic or excessively controlling leadership may weaken autonomy and intrinsic motivation, particularly among employees who value participation and independence.

Leadership therefore acts as an important contextual factor in the relationship between motivation and commitment.

Integrated Model of Motivation and Commitment

Table 4. Integrated Model

Organizational Input	Motivational Process	Commitment Mechanism	Expected Outcome
Fair compensation	Extrinsic motivation	Perceived exchange	Retention
Recognition	Psychological reinforcement	Feeling valued	Affective attachment
Autonomy	Intrinsic motivation	Psychological ownership	Engagement

Peer Reviewed

Organizational Input	Motivational Process	Commitment Mechanism	Expected Outcome
Career development	Growth motivation	Organizational investment	Commitment
Supportive leadership	Social motivation	Trust	Organizational identification
Participation	Autonomy and empowerment	Ownership	Commitment
Training	Competence development	Reciprocity	Loyalty
Meaningful work	Intrinsic motivation	Value alignment	Affective commitment
Justice	Reduced dissatisfaction	Trust and fairness	Stronger commitment

Discussion

The theoretical analysis demonstrates that employee motivation and organizational commitment are strongly interconnected, although they should not be treated as identical concepts. Motivation primarily concerns the forces that encourage employees to invest effort in their work, while commitment concerns the employee's psychological relationship with the organization.

Intrinsic motivation appears particularly relevant to affective commitment because meaningful work, autonomy, achievement, and personal development can create positive emotional associations with the organization. When employees experience satisfaction from their work and believe that the organization enables them to grow, they may develop stronger emotional attachment.

Extrinsic motivation also plays an important role. Compensation, job security, promotion, and recognition can influence employees' evaluation of the employment relationship. Fair rewards may strengthen perceptions that the organization values employee contributions. However, excessive dependence on external rewards may create a transactional relationship in which employees remain primarily because of financial benefits rather than organizational identification.

Perceived fairness emerges as a critical factor. Employees who believe that rewards, procedures, and interpersonal treatment are fair are more likely to develop trust in their organization. Fairness can therefore connect motivational practices with commitment.

Leadership is another important contextual factor. Supportive leaders can strengthen intrinsic motivation by providing autonomy, feedback, recognition, and developmental opportunities. Leaders can also

strengthen commitment by communicating organizational values and demonstrating concern for employees.

The relationship between motivation and commitment can further influence retention. Employees who are motivated and committed may be less likely to seek alternative employment. However, organizations should distinguish between employees who remain because they genuinely want to stay and those who remain because leaving is costly. Affective commitment is therefore particularly valuable because it represents genuine psychological attachment.

The analysis also suggests that motivation should be considered as part of a broader employee experience. Compensation, career development, organizational justice, work-life balance, meaningful work, empowerment, leadership, and organizational culture interact to influence employee attitudes.

Conclusion

Employee motivation and organizational commitment are fundamental components of effective human resource management. Although the two concepts are theoretically distinct, they are closely related because the conditions that motivate employees can also influence the nature and strength of their relationship with the organization. Motivation primarily concerns the forces that stimulate effort and persistence, whereas commitment concerns psychological attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and feelings of obligation toward the organization.

The theoretical examination demonstrates that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can contribute to organizational commitment. Intrinsic motivation generated through meaningful work, autonomy, achievement, learning, creativity, and responsibility may be particularly important for affective commitment because these experiences can create positive emotional connections with the organization. Extrinsic motivation through compensation, job security, promotion, benefits, and recognition can strengthen the employment relationship when rewards are perceived as fair and appropriately connected to employee contributions.

The relationship is also influenced by job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, leadership, organizational justice, employee empowerment, career development, communication, and organizational culture. Employees are more likely to develop positive organizational attitudes when they feel respected, fairly treated, supported, recognized, and provided with opportunities for growth.

The three dimensions of organizational commitment further demonstrate that motivation may influence commitment in different ways. Affective commitment reflects genuine emotional attachment, continuance commitment reflects the perceived costs of leaving, and normative commitment reflects a sense of

obligation. Organizations should ideally cultivate affective commitment rather than relying primarily on economic costs or obligations to retain employees.

Ultimately, sustainable commitment cannot be created through isolated motivational interventions. Organizations need integrated human resource systems that combine fair compensation, recognition, meaningful work, supportive leadership, career development, participation, autonomy, training, and employee well-being. When employees perceive that their organization provides both material and psychological value, motivation can become an important foundation for organizational commitment. Strong motivation combined with strong commitment can contribute to employee engagement, retention, organizational citizenship behaviour, productivity, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

References

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(1), 1–18.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Dessler, G. (2011). *Human Resource Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The Motivation to Work*. New York: Wiley.
- Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396.
- McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.
- McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61–89.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., & Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates, and consequences.

Journal of Vocational Behavior, 61(1), 20–52.

Porter, L. W., Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., & Boulian, P. V. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59(5), 603–609.

Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and Motivation*. New York: Wiley.

Wiener, Y. (1982). Commitment in organizations: A normative view. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(3), 418–428.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. New York: Academic Press.

Armstrong, M. (2010). *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page.

Cascio, W. F. (2010). *Managing Human Resources: Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Luthans, F. (2011). *Organizational Behavior: An Evidence-Based Approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.