

An Analysis of Multidimensional Commitment of Salespeople

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Abstract

It is widely believed that the organizational commitment and job satisfaction directly affect employee intention to leave or stay. Duly satisfied and committed employees not only provide competitive edge but also contribute in the success of the organization. This study contributes to the growing literature on the influence of commitment and job satisfaction on propensity to leave. The population of the study comprised the entry level salespeople, therefore the commitment was measured from multiple angle (360 degree) in terms of commitment with the supervisor, peers, customers/clients and sales profession. It provides empirical evidence to support theoretical models that link multidimensional commitment with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Organizational commitment and job satisfaction were further tested with propensity to leave.

With the help of questionnaire survey, 30 responses from each four growing sectors i.e. Banking, Pharmaceutical, Telecom and Automobile were collected through convenience sampling. Findings showed significant relationship and interdependence between independent and dependent variables. However, significant association is not calculated by organizational commitment and job satisfaction on propensity to leave. Managerial implications and conclusions are presented based upon these results.

Keywords: Commitment with Supervisor, Commitment with Peers, Commitment with Sales Profession, Commitment with Customers/Clients, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Propensity to Leave

JEL Classification: M12

Introduction

The economy of Pakistan is growing at fastest rate, comparing other developing economies of the world, as it has reached the size of \$140 billion from a mere \$70 billion a few years earlier. This economic revival is due to the policies of privatization, deregulation and governance reforms that brought per capita income at \$808. The current economy growth stands at 7.3 percent with the contribution of

agriculture, manufacturing and services as 21.6%, 25.1% and 53.3%, respectively (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2006-07). The enormous economic growth has also resulted in creating job opportunities for young and talented people in the labor market. Attractive jobs are now available in all sectors generally but particularly new avenues are opened in progressive sectors such as telecom, banking, health and automobile. Despite better compensation plans from the employers, organizations are facing high turnover and employee commitment problems due to better pay packages offered by rival firms. A myopic view also reflects that sales job has witnessed largest turnover rate comparing others. This assumption provides the basis for the current study regarding measuring the multiple commitment of salesforce.

Salesforce is the group of employees that are responsible for selling products or services. Sales profession is distinctive in nature and associated with key features from employer's point of view. Salespersons represent their company, a prospect doesn't know about the history, financial strength or premises of the firm. The impression is formed on the basis of "how salesperson interact". In the same way, when salesforce is responsible to implement marketing strategies of the firm and emphasis is given on building relationship, commitment of salesforce becomes vital concern of the employer. A salesperson leaving firm, may threaten the retention of old customers.

Sales profession is also treated as exhaustive and tiring, on account of long working hours and plenty of traveling involved which may often be out of city. They deal with variety of people such as gatekeepers, deciders, influencers, users etc, having different roles, personalities and needs (Stanton et al, 2001). In the same way, salespeople play multiple roles. They are often responsible for making sales to new and current customers, providing customer service, assisting with market analysis, and other diverse tasks. Being close to the customer, advocacy to employer is also the responsibility of the salesperson, in many organizations (Dubinsky, et al. 1986).

That is the reason, normally few people survive in the sales environment because sales job require people with specific temperament and personal characteristics. Those having sales aptitude and personality traits not only work comfortably but also succeed in acquiring good career path. According to Dubinsky, et al. (1986), Salespeople must be flexible and innovative because of the non-routine nature of their job. They are mostly physically, socially, and psychologically separated from other line and staff personnel, therefore, this separation tends to lessen social contact resulting from informal group affiliation.

Another key feature of selling profession is "performance based compensation and career advancement". Low performers quit job very early but individuals meeting their goals earn handsome amount of money and progress above the hierarchy in short period of time.

Therefore, for sales profession, employer needs to hire individuals with selling skills, attitude, temperament and personal traits. Further to commitment with sales profession, the commitment of salespeople largely depends on the extent of commitment with customer, co-worker and boss

(supervisor). This 360 degree commitment further leads toward commitment with the organization (Boyle, 1997). Employees committed with their jobs have less quitting intention and add worth to organizational performance (Slattery and Selvarajan, 2005; Shawa et al., 2003; Jaramillo et al., 2005).

literature Review

The concept of organizational commitment OC has gained considerable attention in the past several decades. However, if we trace back the work done on organizational commitment in Pakistan, the worth mentioning contribution is given by Alvi and Ahmed (1987), who examined the commitment of male and female employees to their organizations using a blend of the "exchange" and "role" theories as its basic framework.

Organizational commitment is the attitude held by individuals toward the entire organization. High levels of organizational commitment are associated with acceptance of the organizational values and willingness to expend effort on its behalf (Greenberg and Baron, 1990). According to Mowday et al. (1979) *organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization.* Allen and Mayer (1991) distinguished three components of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. The employee remain a member of the organization because he/she "has to", "wants to" and "ought to". Affective commitment (AC) is the employee's positive emotional attachment that strongly identifies with the goals and desires to remain a part of the organization. Continuance commitment (CC) is continued membership in the organization because of two main reasons: first economic losses (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) that would have to be given up. Normative commitment (NC) is internalized pressure or feeling of obligation to continue employment due to world culture and other socially accepted norms. (Allen and Mayer, 1996; Mowday et al. 1979; Kanter, 1968; Becker's, 1960). In many studies, these three variables remained key concern and the relationship between affective, continuance, and normative commitment were hypothesized with withdrawal cognitions, staying intentions, organizational support, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) etc. (Cohen and Kirchmeyer, 1995; Gellatly et al. 2006; Cohen, 2006; Cohen and Freund 2005).

At contrast, extensive review of the literature reveals that commitments from multiple perspectives were investigated in different settings keeping in view the nature of organization and commitment demands. For example, Redman and Snape (2005) conducted research to know the association between commitment with boss, customers, co-workers, union-reps and union with global commitment (commitment to organization and management).

Vandenberghe, et al. (2004) conducted three different longitudinal studies to investigate the distinctive nature of affective commitments to the organization, the supervisor, and the work group. Results showed that affective commitments to these entities were factorially distinct and related differentially to their theorized antecedents. Later, Redman et al. (2006) also concluded that the organization, supervisor, and co-

workers constitute separate commitment which was called as "multiple constituencies of commitment".

Baruch and Winkelmann-Gleed (2002) examined different work related commitments such as the work group, organization and occupation with intention to stay. Nearly same study was carried out by Boshoff and Mels (2000) to know the impact of four constituent specific commitments such as commitment to organization, job, profession and supervisor on intention to resign.

The sales job is different in nature and the performance of salespeople depends on, role variables, skill, motivation, personal factors, aptitude, and organizational/environmental factors (Churchill et al., 1985). Salespeople interact with customers and often need to work in the form of team. Same like other jobs, support and commitment with supervisor is imperative to be successful in sales environment. Success further depends on those having passion and dedication for sales profession, all it requires multiple loyalties with supervisor, peers, customers and sales profession. The construct of multidimensional or multiple commitments used in this study is all about *commitment of employees with their boss, co-workers, and customers and to the profession they are working* (Boyle, 1997). Keeping all these in view, our first hypothesis was formed, as;

- H1: Multidimensional commitment has positive impact on commitment to the organization.
- H1a : Commitment to Supervisor is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
- H1b : Commitment to Peers is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
- H1c : Commitment to Customers/Clients is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
- H1d : Commitment to Sales Profession is positively related with the commitment to the organization.

According to Locke (1976), *job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experience* (Lui et al. 2001). Previous researches showed different findings about the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction refers to a workers' general attitude towards his or her job. As the study of Curry et al. (1986) and Currivan (1999) reveals no significant causal relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Same is true with the study of Geenberg and Baron (1990), in which both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are found distinctive types of work related attitudes, affecting important aspects of organizational functioning. The principal view is that job satisfaction is an antecedent to organizational commitment (Igarria and Guimaraes (1993); Slattery, and Selvarajan, 2005), but there are also some evidences regarding reverse causal ordering, that is organizational commitment as an antecedent to job satisfaction (Cramer, 1996). But in this study, impacts of the multidimensional aspects of commitments were evaluated along with organizational commitment.

- H2: Multidimensional commitment has positive impact on job satisfaction.
- H2a : Commitment to Supervisor is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
 - H2b : Commitment to Peers is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
 - H2c : Commitment to Customers/Clients is positively related with the commitment to the organization.
 - H2d : Commitment to Sales Profession is positively related with the commitment to the organization.

Literature further reveals that job commitment and job satisfaction have predominant effect on propensity to leave, turnover intention and behavior (Steers, 1977; Firth, et al. 2004; Udo et al. 1997). Morgan and Hunt (1994) draw from the organizational behavior literature and define propensity to leave as *a perception of the likelihood that the relationship between employee and the organization would be dissolved in the (reasonably) near future*. Johnston, et al. (1990) conducted a Longitudinal study to assess the impact of selected organizational influences on salespeople's organizational commitment and found that the organizational commitment influences turnover through its significant impact on propensity to leave, while Futrell, and Parasuraman (1984) found direct positive relationship between job satisfaction and propensity to leave with moderating effects of salespeople's performance. These contentions develop our third hypothesis.

- H3: Commitment to the organization has negative impact on propensity to leave.
- H4: Job Satisfaction has negative impact on propensity to leave.

Research Methodology

Objectives / Aims of the research study

The aim of the study was to know the impact of multidimensional commitment on organizational commitment and job satisfaction of salesforce. The multidimensional commitment was taken from multiple perspectives as commitment to supervisor, peers, profession and customers (Boyle, 1997). It was further tried to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment of salesforce with their propensity to leave.

Population;

Salespeople working under Banking, Telecom, Pharmaceutical and Automobile sector constituted the population of the study. Marketers divide salesforce into two broad categories. (1) Inbound (2) outbound. Only outbound/outdoor salespersons were treated as the population of this study.

Sample;

For sampling, stratified and convenience sampling approaches were used. At first, by adopting stratified sampling method, the whole population

was divided into four stratum; and each sampling unit was selected on convenience basis. For equal representation, at least 30 responses from each stratum (Banking, Telecom, Pharmaceutical and Automobile) were collected.

Research Instrument;

Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections. Section-I was designed to know the demographics of the respondents and section-II to identify the factors leading towards organizational commitment and satisfaction. To measure salesperson commitment from multidimensional perspective, the scale developed by Boyle (1997) was used with the measure of organizational commitment, incorporated from Porter et al (1974). Job satisfaction was measured by a precise and customized version of Job Description Index (JDI), on five point likert scale, which was originally developed by Smith et al. (1969). To measure propensity to leave a single item was given in the questionnaire, as no standard multi-item instrument was available, therefore PTL was measured with the question, as "to what extent are you presently seeking to change jobs?" taken from the study of Futrell and Parasuraman (1984).

The responses for questions made use of different methods like tick-boxes, circling answers and inserting their own comments and suggestions. Demographic section was based on tick-boxes while others were based on five point likert scale ranging from 1. Strongly disagree, to 5. Strongly agree, developed by Renis Likert to enable respondents to answer questions according to the intensity of their attitude. Initially, for pilot testing 15 questionnaires were floated to evaluate the reliability and validity of questionnaire. Then it was distributed to target group of respondents.

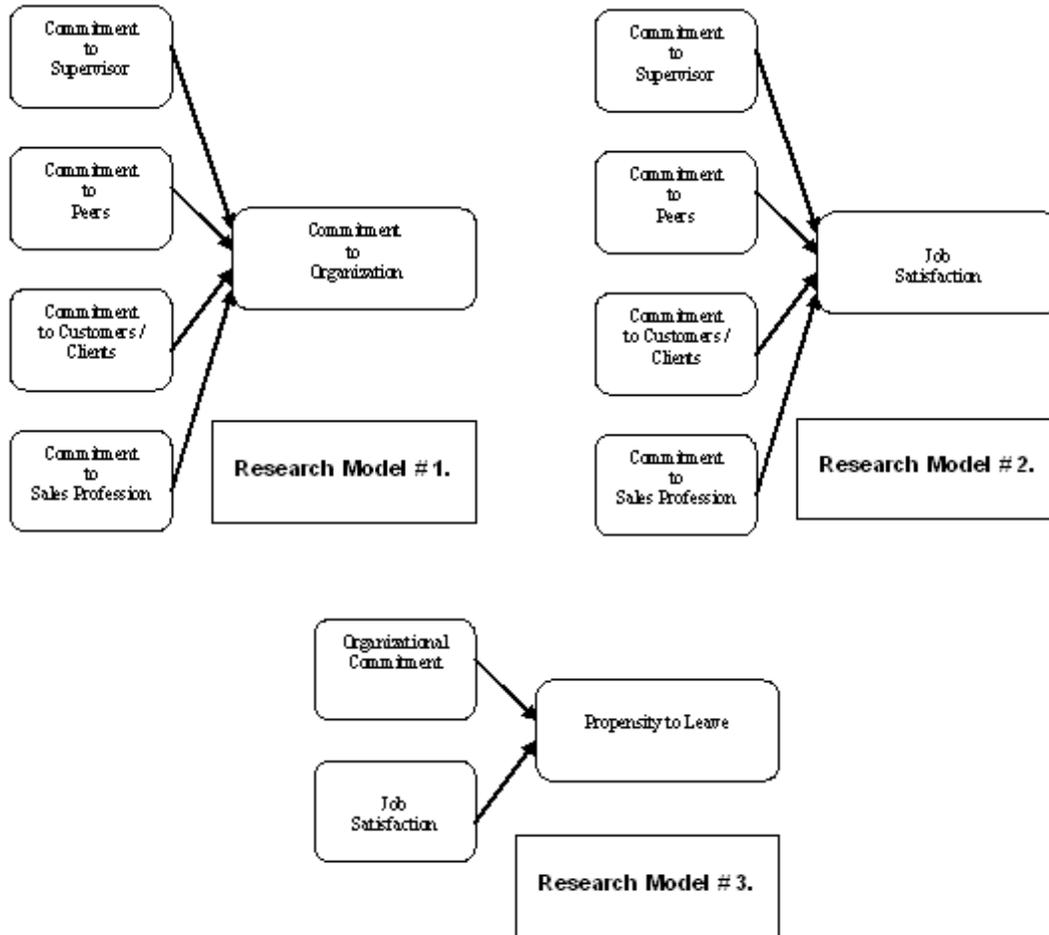
Survey Method (Distribution and Response);

The effort was made to collect primary data, through questionnaire survey from outbound salespersons. Though it was difficult task to collect sufficient responses from outbound salesforce of four different sectors, in timely and cost effective manner.

Therefore total of 300 questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaires also contained brief background information about the purpose of the study and measures for confidentiality. Initially response rate was low, therefore individuals were personally approached and wherever required, they were briefed about the importance of research and how to fill in questionnaire in true spirit.

By taking such steps, total responses received were 171 which became 57 % of total. But nearly 51 questionnaires were rejected on different grounds giving 120 responses. Ultimately, responses of 40% of distributed questionnaires were analyzed.

Figure 1: Research Models



Research Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey respondents include 96 male (80%) and 24 females (20%). Majority of the respondents are between 21 years to 30 years of age showing 77% of whole sample. 48% of the respondents are having bachelor level of education while 35% has master level of education. Below than bachelor education are very low (17%). Only the responses from the outdoor salespeople 120 are collected for the study, therefore their contribution is 100% (n=120). It is also found that the monthly earning of majority of employees (48%) working in telecom sector is in between Rs. 11,000 to Rs. 20,000. nearly, 30% earn more than Rs. 30,000 salary per month. 63% respondents have 1-5 years of experience while the other significant figure is 24% which have spent less than a year with their respective organization. Since, an equal responses from four promising sectors are

collected therefore the response ratio of Banking, Telecom, Pharmaceutical and Automobile sectors are 25% for each.

Descriptive Analysis

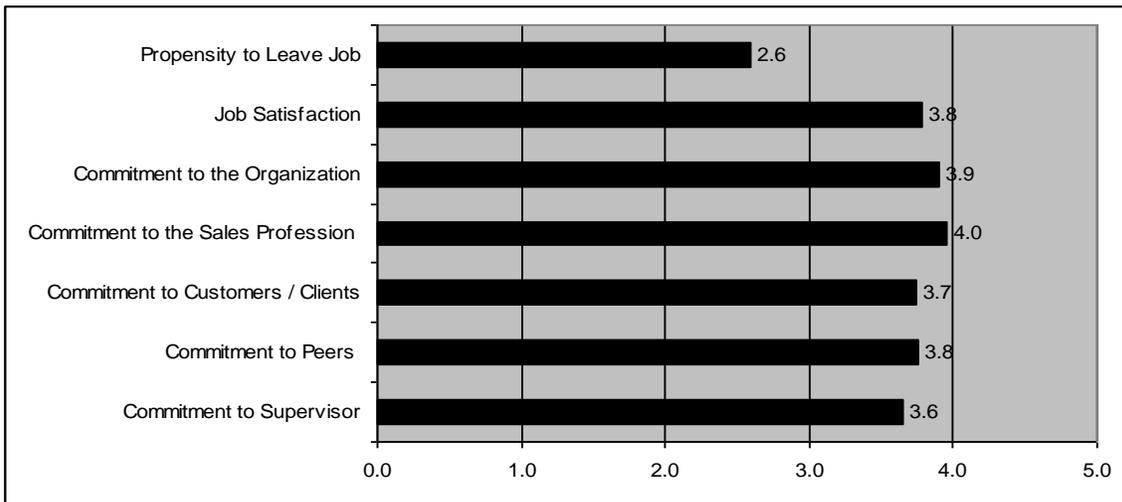
Descriptive results reveal positive trend of each variable i.e. commitment to the supervisor, peers, customers/clients, profession and commitment with the organization as whole and job satisfaction. Propensity to leave (potential tendency to quit the job) is also very low. Likert scale helps to explain the positive or negative feelings of sales employee about their multidimensional commitment, job satisfaction and propensity to leave.

The highest calculated mean of "commitment to sales profession" (independent variable) 4.0 indicates that most of the individuals working in selling because of their passion towards sales and likeliness with its distinctive nature. The mean value of 3.8 shows high commitment towards peers. Nearly mean value of each independent variable is high as reflected by figure-2.

The aggregate mean value 3.9 of dependent variable "commitment to organization" of Model-1, specify the overall commitment and the association of the employees with the organization. The dependent variable of Model-II "job satisfaction" provides the mean value of 3.8, indicating significant satisfaction level towards job of salesforce working in different sectors such as Banking, Telecom, Pharmaceutical and Automobile, .

The mean value of propensity to leave, a dependent variable of Model-III is 2.6, which lies in between "to small extent" and "to some extent" of the scale. Which indicates that either sales employees are not willing to quit the job, or if they do, it is to some extent.

Figure 2: Calculated Means of Independent and Dependent Variables



Correlation Results

Correlation of all variables is shown in Table-1. As concluded in previous researches, significant positive correlation amongst the independent and dependent variables was found.

Especially the analysis shed light on the strong relationship of all independent variables on dependent variables as per our three models. According to model-1, the correlation values are 0.75, 0.82, 0.78 & 0.78, for commitment with supervisor, peers, customers/clients and profession, respectively with commitment to organization. It shows that if salesperson feel a sense of loyalty with supervisor and customers; Peers are like his own family members and take sales profession as pride, then all it forms feelings of attachment with his/her respective organization.

Correlation results for Model-II provides the values as 0.78, 0.80, 0.73 & 0.76 of commitment with supervisor, peers, customers/clients and profession, respectively with job satisfaction, which makes it clear that if supervisor is treated as a role mode, peers as a team, customer/clients as source of intrinsic reward and sales profession as a way of life, then sales employees are generally satisfied with job and take sales goals as source of accomplishment.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

	CS	CP	DD	CSP	CO	JS	PLT
Commitment to the Organization	0.75	0.82	0.78	0.78	1		
Job Satisfaction	0.78	0.80	0.73	0.76	0.79	1	
Propensity to Leave Job	-0.11	-0.11	-0.13	-0.14	-0.25	-0.19	1

Like previous researches, a significant positive correlation is found between job commitment and job satisfaction, which point out that if employees are committed with their jobs and willing to spend rest of their career with respective organization, then infact they are satisfied with all the practices and procedures of the job and the organization.

Negative correlation is calculated between commitment to the organization and job satisfaction with propensity to leave the job. It shows that if salespeople are satisfied with the pay, promotion policy, supervision, work, and peers, willing to expend extra efforts to make the organization successful and feel the organization has a great deal of personal meaning for them, all it brings the potential to leave the job at minimum level.

Regression Results

The regression equation is formed to test the interdependence of two variables. According to our research models, with the help of independent variables and dependent variables following three equations are formed:

$$\text{Equation no. 1} \quad Y_1 = \alpha + \beta_1 (x_1) + \beta_2 (x_2) + \beta_3 (x_3) + \beta_4 (x_4) + \varepsilon$$

$$OC = \alpha + \beta_1 (CS) + \beta_2 (CSP) + \beta_3 (CC) + \beta_4 (CP) + \varepsilon$$

Where as :

x_1	=	CS	=	Commitment to the Supervisor
x_2	=	CP	=	Commitment to the Sales Profession
x_3	=	CC	=	Commitment to the Customers/Clients
x_4	=	CSP	=	Commitment to the Profession
Y_1	=	OC	=	Organizational Commitment

$$\text{Equation no. 2} \quad Y_2 = \alpha + \beta_1 (x_1) + \beta_2 (x_2) + \beta_3 (x_3) + \beta_4 (x_4) + \varepsilon$$

$$JS = \alpha + \beta_1 (CS) + \beta_2 (CSP) + \beta_3 (CC) + \beta_4 (CP) + \varepsilon$$

Where as :

x_1	=	CS	=	Commitment to the Supervisor
x_2	=	CSP	=	Commitment to the Sales Profession
x_3	=	CC	=	Commitment to the Customers/Clients
x_4	=	CP	=	Commitment to the Peers
Y_2	=	JS	=	Job Satisfaction

$$\text{Equation no. 3} \quad Y_2 = \alpha + \beta_1 (x_1) + \beta_2 (x_2) + \varepsilon$$

$$PTL = \alpha + \beta_1 (OC) + \beta_2 (JS) + \varepsilon$$

Where as :

x_1	=	OC	=	Organizational Commitment
x_2	=	JS	=	Job Satisfaction
Y_3	=	PTL	=	Propensity to Leave

The regression line expresses the best prediction of the dependent variable (Y), by the independent variables (X). However, there exists substantial variation of the observed points around the fitted regression line. The smaller the variability of the residual values around the regression line relative to the overall variability, the better is the prediction.

Regression outcomes of equation-1 is given in Table-2, which shows the dependence of organizational commitment (dependent variable) on commitment to the supervisor, commitment to the peers, commitment to the customers/clients and commitment to the profession (independent variables). Regression analysis shows the high significance of all independent variables on dependent variables, as we can see 74.71 % of the variation in organizational commitment is explained by four independent variables, while 25.29 % is the inherent variability or remain unexplained. Correlation Coefficients, express the degree to which two or more predictors, independent variables are related to the dependent variable. We have the values of coefficients (CS, CSP, CC & SP)

as, 0.08, 0.37, 0.26 and 0.32, respectively. The values reflect positive relatedness of independent variables with dependent variable. Especially, commitment to peers is significantly related with organizational commitment comparing other explanatory variables.

Table 2: Model 1		Table 3: Model 2	
SC, PC, CC & SP (X) to OC (Y)		SC, PC, CC & SP (X) to JS (Y)	
Commitment to Supervisor	0.0810	Commitment to Supervisor	0.2756
Commitment to Peers	0.3686	Commitment to Peers	0.3344
Commitment to Customers / Clients	0.2572	Commitment to Customers / Clients	0.1063
Commitment to the Sales Profession	0.3168	Commitment to the Sales Profession	0.3064
Multiple R	0.8693	Multiple R	0.8504
R Square	0.7556	R Square	0.7231
Adjusted R Square	0.7471	Adjusted R Square	0.7135
Standard Error	0.5353	Standard Error	0.5857
Table :4 Model 3			
OC & JS (X) to PTL (Y)			
Commitment to the Organization			-0.3504
Job Satisfaction			0.0161
Multiple R			0.2514
R Square			0.0632
Adjusted R Square			0.0472
Standard Error			1.3948

Table-3 shows the regression analysis of equation-2, wherein 71.35 % of the variation in job satisfaction is explained by four independent variables, while 28.65% is the inherent variability or remain unexplained. We have the values of correlation coefficients (SC, PC, CC & SP), as, 0.28, 0.33, 0.11 and 0.31, respectively, expressing the degree to which two or more predictors, independent variables are related to the dependent variable.

The regression results of equation-3 are given in Table-4. It shows that explanatory variables that is organizational commitment and job satisfaction, capture only 4.72% of the variation in propensity to leave is explained by, while 95.28 is the unexplained variability. The values of correlation coefficients (OC & JS) are -0.35 & 0.02.

Conclusion

Statistical analysis shows significant impact of multidimensional commitment (commitment to the supervisor, commitment to the peers,

commitment to the customers/clients and commitment to the profession) on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. However, significant results are not received for our Model-3, where organizational commitment and job satisfaction were tested on propensity to leave the job. Propensity to leave is the degree to which employee is willing to leave the organization in near future (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Reason lie with the labor market which has started growth but still employees are not prone to take risk to go for any other job. The regression analysis shows high relatedness and interdependence of explanatory variables on dependent variables of model-1 and model-2. It appears that within the perspective of multidimensional commitment, salespeople have an association with their supervisor, working environment is like a team where each salesperson take the problem of his colleague as his own, furthermore customers are also given due importance. It is not necessary only to sell the product rather to build long term relations with customers. Salespeople don't join this profession as others, rather having special aptitude towards sale. The utmost effort of the salesforce is to make the organization successful further to their own success. Moreover in such situation, salesforce feel satisfaction towards each HRM practice such as pay, promotion policy, supervision, work, and co-workers and having either no or weak intention to quit the job. They have the willingness to spend rest of their career in the same organization and consider the problems of the organization as their personal problem. Keeping in view the significance of multiple or multidimensional commitments, a firm should keep following key points into account to increase propensity to stay;

1. The supervisor or manager needs to be cooperative and supportive in managing affairs. His leadership style should be effective enough so that subordinates follow him not because of his rank but due to his traits and character. In this way salesperson would take him as role model and follow him in even achieving hard task.
2. Team spirit must be fostered within the group. Working as a team gives the sense of shared values and goals and all team members put utmost efforts not only to achieve personal goals but team goals. In such situations, a salesperson already met with his targets strives to help other team members to achieve their targets for consistent team growth.
3. In the present scenario, when customers are treated as king. A deep sense of association with customers/clients is necessary. Competition is getting stiff by passing every day, therefore organizations are trying to retain existing customer further to add new. For better retention of existing customers, salesperson play key role by solving his problem rather selling product only. Satisfying the needs of customers becomes a source of intrinsic reward of the job.
4. The distinguishing nature of sales profession is obvious. It has been observed in Pakistan, turnover rate is quite high in this particular profession as compare to others because salespersons are normally hired without following any defined procedure and policy. Sales jobs are target oriented and their performance evaluation as well as future retention is based on goal achievement. Therefore salespeople achieving their objectives easily grow and acquire good career path in this profession. Reverse is also true, if the salesperson is not achieving goals, he will have to leave the job either voluntarily or fired by the manger. But selling is not simple; it needs specific

skills and aptitude towards selling. Both these can be built if a salesperson is loyal, committed and ever aspired to be part of sales team. The managers need to take care of their temperament as well as personality traits while hiring individuals in this profession. Those already working but lack commitment with sales profession should be provided proper training to develop positive attitude and loyalty otherwise it would certainly have negative impact on their personal and organizational growth.

5. A truly committed salesperson with the supervisor, peers, customers and profession has a sense of loyalty to and identification with the organization, the work and the group to which one belongs (Greenberg and Baron, 1990).
6. The 360 degree commitment also leads toward an individual's positive emotional reactions to a particular job. An affective reaction to a job that results from the person's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired, anticipated, or deserved (Oshagbemi, 1997).
7. Taking such measures may enhance the feelings of emotional attachment with their respective organization. Salesforce take the organization a great deal of meaning for them and put extra efforts beyond that normally is expected, in order to help this organization to be successful. It further provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction toward job. Certainly a well committed and satisfied salesperson normally have less quitting intentions and intend to build long term career with his organization.

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