

Organizational Commitment Dimensions as Predictors of Employee Communication Behavior in Moroccan Private Organizations

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Abstract

Organizational commitment and employee communication behavior have recently received an increased scholarly attention in the realm of public relations. Previous research has been oriented extensively towards examining the two constructs as antecedents or consequences of other organizational outcomes such as productivity, customer satisfaction and employee retention; however, the association between organizational commitment and employee communication behavior has not been examined. Hence, the present quantitative study purports to make a contribution to the literature by investigating the impact of organizational commitment on employee communication behavior. Specifically, three organizational commitment dimensions, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) were posited as antecedents to two forms of employee communication behavior, viz. megaphoning and scouting (Kim and Rhee, 2011). Using snowball sampling, 378 Moroccan employees who currently work for Moroccan private organizations took part in this study by completing a 27-item questionnaire consisting of demographic questions and items relying on a seven-point Likert scale. By deploying Pearson product-moment correlation and linear regression, organizational commitment, particularly affective and normative commitment were found to be significant predictors of employee megaphoning and scouting behaviors. The findings of this study suggest that highly committed employees are more likely to engage in positive communication behavior in their interactions with external and internal publics by voluntarily disseminating favorable information about their respective organizations (i.e. megaphoning), as well as collecting and sharing strategically useful information with management, supervisors and colleagues (i.e. scouting). Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are addressed.

Keywords: Affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, megaphoning, scouting

1. Introduction

Public relations scholars and researchers have long emphasized the crucial role of employees' commitment and communication behavior in the enhancement of organizational effectiveness. Organizational commitment is defined by Steers (1997) as the relative strength of an employee's identification, attachment and involvement in a particular company. Numerous studies in the literature suggest that employee commitment is amongst the influencing factors for various organizational outcomes. For instance, Phipps (2013) asserts that employee commitment is a strong predictor of organizational productivity. Other studies carried out by Lee (2010), Martini et al. (2018) and Rangriz and Mehrabi (2010) indicate that organizational performance is largely influenced by employees' degree of commitment. Moreover, a plethora of studies (e.g. Putra & Suwandana, 2020; Thakre, 2015; Živković et al., 2021) demonstrated that low turnover rate is a consequence of high levels of organizational commitment. Further, it has been suggested that organizational commitment crystalizes brand image and improves customer loyalty (e.g. Azzam et al., 2021; Garas et al., 2018; Hidayanti & Nuryakin, 2018).

Similarly, employee communication behavior has been shown to have an equal strategic importance to the success of organizations. Kim and Rhee (2011) point out that employees are strategic communicators who informally act as public relations practitioners since they interact with external publics on a regular basis. During such interactions, employees may disperse positive or negative information about their organizations, or gather and share useful information with internal organizational members, including managers, supervisors and colleagues. Center and Jackson (2003) contend that external publics perceive employee messages as being more credible, spontaneous and impartial than sophisticated, formalized and carefully devised messages advanced by professional public relations practitioners. In addition, studies have indicated that employee communication behavior is critical for organizational prosperity. Madsen and Verhoeven (2019) found that employees demonstrate positive communication behavior in their interactions with external publics by promoting and defending their organizations, as well as establishing relationships with stakeholders. Lee (2017) and Vibber and Kim (2021) indicate that employees may act as advocates (or adversaries) of their organizations amidst crisis situations. Additionally, favorable employee communication behavior was found to have a strategic relevance to the strengthening of organizational reputation (Thelen, 2020; Sonne et al., 2018).

Studies in the extant literature concentrated primarily on investigating organizational commitment and employee communication behavior in relation other variables. Nevertheless,

to the author's best knowledge, the relationship between the two constructs has not been examined. To address this gap in the literature, the present empirical study sought to investigate the influence of organizational commitment on employee communication behaviors. In particular, the affective, continuance and normative dimensions of organizational commitments (Meyer & Allen, 1991) were proposed as predictors of the megaphoning and scouting aspects of employee communication behavior (Kim and Rhee, 2011). By doing so, the study aims to provide an insight for managers of Moroccan private organizations into the significance of enhancing organizational commitment as a path towards the cultivation of positive communication behavior. Furthermore, this study targeted particularly Moroccan employees who currently work for Moroccan private organizations. Using non-probability snowball sampling, three hundred and seventy eight Moroccan employees were selected and participated in the study. Besides, it is worth noting that the sample included part-time and full-time employees with an emphasis on all age demographics.

This paper begins by an in-depth exploration of the concepts of organization commitment and employee communication behavior. Next, the methodology adopted in this study, including research design, data collection and analysis procedures, and reliability analysis are detailed. Subsequently, the research findings are presented. Finally, implications, study's limitation and recommendations for future inquiry are discussed.

2. Organizational commitment

The concept of organizational commitment has received a wide attention by scholars and researchers in the realm of internal public relations. It stems from the revelation that employees develop feelings towards their employing organization and its underlying goals and core values (Baruch, 1998). Commitment is generally defined by Becker (1960) as a disposition to engage in "consistent lines of activity" (p. 33). Elizur and Koslowsky (2001) view organizational commitment as the psychological connection between an organization and its workforce that can influence the employees' behavior and attitude. According to Ferris (1983), attitudinal commitment is reflected in (1) employee's identification with the organization by embracing its goals; (2) employee's involvement in the organizational endeavors; and (3) employee's demonstration of positive affectiveness and loyalty to the organization. Behavioral commitment, as suggested by Mowday et al. (1979), rests on employee's willingness to exert substantial efforts for his or her organization, as well as on a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (p. 4). Such commitment is manifested not only by employees'

expressions of viewpoints and beliefs, but also through the active participation in organizational effectiveness.

Organizational commitment can be better comprehended by means of tracing its evolution over the course of three main eras, namely the early era, the middle era, and the multi-dimensional approach era (Ghosh and Swamy, 2014; WeiBo et al., 2010; Cohen, 2007). Each period is predicated on behavioral and attitudinal notions of commitment. The early era is characterized by the side-bet theory which was originally introduced by Becker (1960). This theory constitutes one of the first attempts to put forward a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding the commitment concept (Cohen, 2007).

Becker's theory proposes that committed employees remain in the organization due to vested interests and investments; hence the term side-bets. Becker (1960) further points out that particular costs accumulate over a certain period of time which renders the disengagement from maintaining membership in the organization difficult. Meyer and Allen (1990) provide a concise illustration of Becker's theory, suggesting:

Consider for example, employees who invest considerable time and energy mastering a job skill that cannot be transferred easily to other organizations. In essence, they are 'betting' that the time and energy invested will pay off. Winning the bet, however, requires continued employment in the organization...the likelihood that employees will stay with the organization will be positively related to the magnitude and number of side-bets they recognize (p. 4).

Dispensing with these investments as well as a perceived paucity of alternatives greatly forces individuals to commit to the organization. In addition, the core principle of side-theory had been alluded to by March and Simon (1958) when described commitment as employee's consent to attach themselves to the organization in an exchange of certain payments or material rewards from the organization. In addition, Becker (1960) emphasizes the significance of recognizing the cost related to the discontinuation of an action. Thus, side-bets represent the attitudinal component of organizational commitment. Moreover, Powell and Snellman (2004) contends that making side-bets increase the costs of discontinuing in a course of action, which is remaining in the company in the context of organizational commitment.

The middle era - sometimes referred to as middle affective-dependence period - was originally promoted by Porter et al. (1974) and grounded upon the psychological attachment approach. The emphasis of commitment transitioned from mere concrete side-bets to psychological bonds

developed by employees towards their organizations (WeiBo et al., 2010). Steers et al. (1977) describe commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (p. 226). In this case, commitment is delineated by a strong acceptance and belief in the organization’s goals, norms, values, and the intention to demonstrate considerable effort for the sake of the company’s prosperity and well-being (Mowday et al., 1979). In addition, Gosh and Swamy (2014) point out that organizational commitment consists of three primal constituents, viz., strong acceptance, participation and loyalty to the organization.

The third era was characterized by an advancement from the single-dimensioned theories of Becker (1960) and Porter et al. (1974) to a multidimensional approach to organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen’s (1984) and O’Reilly and Chatman’s (1986) suggest that the degree to which employees are capable of adopting and adapting to the attributes and beliefs of the organization manifests the psychological attachment people feel towards the organization. Such psychological affiliation depends on the level of congruence between the organizational and personal principles and values. Hence, organizational commitment is fundamentally psychological contract between individuals and their employing companies.

Over the past two decades, the leading approach to examining organizational commitment has been the one advanced by Meyer and Allen (1984) who specified three dimensions of the construct, namely affective, continuance, and normative. They devised scales that have been extensively used in empirical studies that attempted to measure organizational commitment in various geographical and cultural contexts, and have consistently demonstrated reliable psychometric properties. **Mayer and Allen’s dimensions help identify motifs and reasons for which employees opt to continue working for their organizations.**

Specifically, affective commitment is associated with the employees’ involvement and emotional attachment to their company (Kaplan & Kaplan 2018). It is emphasized as the highest and most sincere form of commitment (Cohen, 2007). “Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Meyer and Allen (1984) developed an affective commitment scale as a tool for gauging the degree to which individuals demonstrate the desire and will to maintain membership at the organization owing to an involvement in and attachment to the organization. Continuance commitment refers to the employee’s perceived cost of leaving the company (Mayer & Allen 1987; Baruch, 1998). Employees with continuance commitment maintain membership owing to the lack of better alternatives (**Kaplan & Kaplan 2018**).

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), “continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so” (p. 67). Moreover, Cohen (2007) hold a slightly different perspective in that he believes continuance commitment emphasizes an employee’s perception of the associated benefits of remaining in the organization, rather than the cost of terminating membership. Furthermore, the influence of Becker’s (1960) side-bet theory is evident in the conceptualization of continuance commitment. However, Meyer and Allen (1991) contend that the continuance dimension was developed as an enhanced representation of Becker’s (1960) side-bet approach to measure the degree to which a person feels committed to his or her organization due to the awareness regarding the related costs of ending the employment relationship.

In 1990, Meyer and Allen proposed another commitment component, viz. normative commitment. The latter is manifested by virtue of employee’s desire to stay a member of the organization because of a feeling of obligation and debt owed to a co-worker, superior or the organization as a whole. Employees with a level of normative commitment feel that they *ought to* remain with the organization. For instance, an employee is likely to develop strong normative commitment to the organization if significant others such as spouse, siblings or parents work for the same organization and have been long-term employees. Wiener (1982) points out that individual’s normative commitment is likely to be influenced by his or her experiences before and after joining the organization. In this respect, Cohen (2007) suggests that commitment developed over two stages, namely pre-entry and post-entry. With respect to the former, it is proposed that employees enter the organization with their previous experiences and already establish personal beliefs, values and expectations pertinent to the job before their engagement in the organization. These particular attitudes are widely referred to as commitment propensity (e.g. Pierce et al., 1987; Lee et al., 1992; Cohen 2007). Post-entry commitment, on the other hand, is related to the employee’s actual experience with the specific organization after he or she already entered (Pierce et al., 1987). Therefore, normative commitment is better viewed as a pre-entry commitment propensity which develops amidst the socialization and interaction of individuals with their culture, family and communities prior to joining an organization (Cohen 2007). That is, normative commitment stems from an employee’s conviction that a person has a moral obligation to demonstrate genuine loyalty to the organization for which he or she works, as it is the case for one’s family, country and so on (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Furthermore, normative propensity is an inclination or natural tendency to be committed and the belief that

commitment is in fact a personal value (Brown, 1996). However, normative commitment propensity becomes less relevant after individuals enter the organization as the affective commitment begins to emerge and develop. Conversely, the relevance of affective commitment becomes more evident as a deeper sense of commitment to the organization develops on the basis of feelings of psychological connection and pride in belonging to a given organization or occupation (Cohen, 2007). Additionally, Meyer and Allen (1991) made it clear that affective, continuance and normative commitments must be considered as components, rather than as types since the latter indicates mutual exclusivity. They point out that it is more reasonable to expect that an individual can simultaneously experience all the forms of organizational commitment to varying degrees. Meyer and Allen further illustrate that an employee may feel both a great desire and a deep need to remain, but little obligation to do so. Similarly, another employee might feel a little desire, a moderate need, and a strong obligation to stay. Therefore, each component of organizational commitment reflects one three broad themes, namely affective attachment, perceived costs (continuance) and obligation (normative).

3. Employee communication behavior (ECB)

Employee communication behavior has become one of the hot topics in the realm of public relations. Employees are thought to informally undertake the role of public relations practitioners as they constantly interact with external publics (Kim and Rhee, 2011; Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019; Andersson, 2020). This is evident in that people outside the organization perceive messages they receive from employees to be neutral and organic in comparison with sophisticated public relations messages (Center & Jackson, 2003). **Scholars in industrial psychology, business management and marketing have indicated that employee communication behavior plays a vital role in influencing customer satisfaction (e.g. Kurdi et al., 2020; Jeon & Choi, 2012; Martínez-Tur et al., 2017). Consumers and customers are more likely to trust information they obtain from employees about a company, rather than depend on carefully and deliberately designed messages from media. Hence, companies are presented with the opportunity to reap vast benefits by relying on the word-of-mouth network, including interactions between employees and customers (Kim and Rhee, 2011). In this sense, employees take on a dual role in the organization by constituting a unique set of public, and acting as a liaison between the organization and its external publics.**

Based on Grunig's (1997) situational theory¹, Kim and Rhee (2011) have coined two fundamental dimensions of employee communication behavior, namely megaphoning and scouting. "The two concepts refer to employees' voluntary efforts to collect and circulate information related to the organization externally and internally" (p. 245). Employee communication with external publics may involve disclosing confidential details or downgrading management's decisions and practices. It is possible that this form of employee communication negatively influences the company's reputation, image and how it is perceived by external publics. In contrast, employees may disperse positive reports pertaining to the organization in their interactions with external publics. Kim and Rhee (2011) define this negative or positive external communication behaviors as *the megaphoning effect*. It is associated with the employee's propensity to forward or share information related to the organization's strengths and accomplishments, or its weaknesses and issues with people outside the organization. In particular, the notion of information forwarding refers to the deliberate, self-propelled information offering to others, while information sharing is the disclosure of information reactively only when someone outside the organization requests an employee's opinion, idea, or expertise about the a certain organizational problem (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Megaphoning is also the act of refuting external publics' biased viewpoints about the organization (Thelen, 2020). In this sense, positive megaphoning effect is especially paramount during crisis situations in that employees serve as advocates of their organization by dismantling false criticism and inform management about potential threats, while also looking for opportunities to maintain company's reputation (Jin, 2021). Lee and Kim (2017) assert that when employees consider the organization's issues and crises as being their own problem, they demonstrate positive communication behaviors by disseminating favorable information about the organization. Conversely, employees may act as adversaries of their organization by engaging in negative megaphoning. In this case, employees tend to distance themselves from the company or empathize with people who are attacking and opposing the organization, which ultimately results in exacerbating the situation. Thus, it is suggested that external publics may judge an organization largely, and sometimes solely, on the basis of what employees say about their company (Helm, 2011, cited in Mazzei et al., 2019).

Some scholars pointed to the idea that employees must be viewed as ambassadors for the organization (e.g. Andersson, 2019; Brockhaus et al., 2020; Pillai, 2014) since positive

¹ Introduced by Grunig (1997), the situational theory of publics provides an explanation for when and why individuals actively engage in communication behaviors, including information seeking and processing.

employee communication behavior is likely to crystalize the brand's image (Erkmen, 2018). Moreover, Lee (2021) added the term "internal megaphoning" which focuses on employee communication behaviors that takes place within the organization, and includes conversations with internal members about the company's performance and the overall working conditions. While the concept of megaphoning focuses on employees' external communication behaviors about organizational achievements or issues, scouting behavior refers essentially to "employees' voluntary communication efforts to bring relevant information to the organization (Kim & Rhee, 2011, p. 248). The fundamental idea is that employees use various informal and formal communication channels to acquire important information that is likely to be useful for organizational improvement (Lee, 2021). Scouting is not confined merely to acquiring information by employees in their formal and informal interactions with strategic publics, it also includes the transmission of that information to organizational members such as supervisors, management and/or colleagues. Hence, scouting is conceptually grounded on two communicative actions, including information seeking and information forwarding (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Employees can undertake an informal boundary spanning role by engaging in discretionary environmental scanning behaviors for their organization (Lee, 2021). Additionally, Park et al. (2014) point out that employee scouting efforts play a strategically important role for businesses in that information gathered and shared by employees (i.e. scouting) enables companies to enhance their efficiency and better adapt to their environment. The concept of scouting is rooted in Dozier's (1986) notion of environmental scanning. He defines environmental scanning as "the gathering of information about publics, about reactions of publics toward the organization, and about public opinion toward issues important to the organization" (p. 1). Two forms of environmental scanning were identified by Dozier (1990), including formal (scientific) and informal. Kim and Rhee (2011) suggests that the literature on environmental scanning (e.g. Dozier, 1986; Lauzen, 1995; Okura et al., 2008) has emphasized that the scanning of an organization's environment is systematic, formal, continuous and happens at the department or function level. However, the reliance on employee scouting efforts could supplement and complement formalized and systemized environmental scanning in that it is likely to reduce the cost and expand the scope of information gathering, as well as improve the quality of information since each employee has a propensity to locate information related to his or her own areas of expertise. Hence, information gathered by employees through their external contacts is as critical as formal environmental scanning procedures. Furthermore, Lee (2021) argues that employee communication behaviors, namely megaphoning and scouting are

interrelated in that one can be the consequence of the other. Therefore, it is important to recognize the integral role of employees in bridging an organization with its external publics.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

The present study was conducted with a quantitative research approach. Creswell (2014) asserts that a quantitative design is used by enquirer to investigate the association between independent and dependent variables. Specifically, Pearson product-moment correlation was initially used to examine the statistical relationship between the organizational commitment dimensions (affective, continuance and normative) and employee communication behaviors (megaphoning and scouting) amongst employees of Moroccan private organizations. Subsequently, a series of linear regression analyses were performed in order to determine whether employee communication behaviors (defined as dependent variables) could be predicted by organizational commitment (defined as independent variables). Furthermore, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to perform both the product-moment correlations and regression analyses.

4.2. Hypotheses

The current study sought to examine six hypotheses which were formulated as follows:

- H₁** Affective commitment is positively associated with megaphoning behavior.
- H₂** Affective commitment is positively associated with scouting behavior.
- H₃** There is a positive relationship between continuance commitment and megaphoning behavior.
- H₄** There is a positive relationship between continuance commitment and scouting behavior.
- H₅** Megaphoning behavior is significantly related to normative commitment.
- H₆** Scouting behavior is significantly related to normative commitment.

4.3. Participants

This study targeted in particular Moroccan employees who work for Moroccan private organizations across various economic sectors, viz. tourism, retail, education, etc. Participant were selected by means of snowball sampling. It is one of the non-probability sampling methods where respondents assist in locating other respondents by contacting people who may be willing to take part in the study (Kothari, 2004). This sampling method is widely used by researchers in the social sciences for its cost-effectiveness and convenience. It is also deployed for its

capacity to help obtain questionnaire results is a relatively shorter period of time, and ensure a high response rate.

Consequently, a total of 378 Moroccan employees completed and returned the questionnaire. 48% of them were males ($n=184$), while 52% were female employees ($n=194$). As to the participants' age, 18% were under 20 ($n=68$), 51% were between 20 and 29 ($n=193$), while 31% were in the 30 and 39 age range ($n=117$). Regarding the educational level of participants, only 4% of respondents had High School degree ($n=16$), 15% hold Associate degree ($n=59$), 27% were Bachelor's degree holders ($n=102$). 41% obtained their Master's degree ($n=155$), and 12% completed their Ph.D. ($n=46$). Furthermore, 35% of respondents work part-time ($n=133$) in their companies, while 65% were full-time employees ($n=245$).

4.4. Instrumentation: questionnaire

The data collection procedure involved inviting participants to complete a questionnaire that was designed by utilizing Google Forms Online Survey. Participants were sent a link that redirected them to the questionnaire page; a process that allows for an extremely cost-effective and convenient distribution of research instrument. The use of questionnaire as a data collection tool permits respondents to indicate their genuine opinions knowing that their identity was not to be disclosed. This incentivized participants to fill out the questionnaire without the reluctance and fear associated with having their thoughts about their employing companies and jobs revealed. The questionnaire consisted of demographic variables such as gender, age, and employment status. Other variables and measurement scales that constituted the questionnaire are detailed in the subsequent subsection.

4.5. Variables and measures

Organizational commitment: The participants' commitment to their employing companies was examined by adapting scale items originally developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) and then shortened by Elele (2010). The organizational commitment scale consisted of three subscales, each of which was aimed at measuring one of the commitment subconstructs, viz. affective, continuance and normative commitment. The affective subscale comprised of five items such as: *"I really feel as if the organization's problems are my own,"* *"The organization has a great deal of meaning to me"* to assess participants' emotional attachment to their respective companies. Regarding the continuance subscale, it also consisted of five items which were used to measure participants' perceived cost of leaving their current companies. A sample of items includes *"Too much life interruption would happen if I decided to leave this company,"* *"I cannot leave this organization due the scarcity of alternatives."* Finally, the normative

commitment subscale was made up of four items. For example: *“I feel it is not right to leave this organization,” “I feel the organization deserves my loyalty.”* These items evaluated the respondents’ level of feeling obligated to remain in their organizations. Responses were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=7).

The employee Communication behavior (ECB) scale evaluated the communication actions that employees engage in with internal and external publics. This scale was developed by incorporating items originally devised by Kim and Rhee (2011) who introduced two dimensions of the construct, namely megaphoning (Information that employees reveal to external publics about the organization) and scouting (employees’ locating and sharing information with internal organizational members). The megaphoning subscale in this study consisted of six items borrowed from Kim and Rhee’s (ECB) scale. A sample of the used items includes: *“I write positive comments or advocating posting for my organization on the Internet,” “I say good things to friends and neighbors about positive aspects of the management and company,”* and *“I attempt to persuade people who have negative opinions about my organization.”* The scouting subscale comprised of seven items. For instance: *“I voluntarily check people’s feedback on organizational events,” “I meet people who work for similar businesses and check rumors and news about organization or business,”* and *“I start conversation or give information to relevant colleagues about new trends or unusual signals related to work.”* These items were also adopted from Kim and Rhee’s (2011) OCB scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 indicated strong disagreement, while 7 demonstrated strong agreement.

4.6. Reliability analysis

Analyzing the scales for internal consistency is a vital and necessary step that precedes the official questionnaire’s distribution. Although the reliabilities of the used scales have already been established in the literature, it was important to run reliability tests since some items were modified. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to ensure that the internal consistency of each scale was maintained. Table 1 presents the number of items in each scale as well as the Cronbach’s alpha values.

Table 1. Reliability analysis of the scales

Names of scales	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Affective commitment	.82	5
Continuance commitment	.84	5
Normative commitment	.86	4
Megaphoning	.94	6
Scouting	.87	7

Looking at table 1, the questionnaire consisted of 27 items in aggregate. The affective scale comprised of five items, continuance commitment was assessed on a five-item scale, while normative commitment scale consisted of four items. The reliability analysis results showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .82, .84, and .86, respectively. As to the employee communication behavior, the megaphoning subscale was made up of six items, while seven items made up the scouting behavior subscale. The Cronbach's alpha values were .94 and .87, respectively, indicating satisfactory to high internal consistency of all the incorporated measures in this study.

5. Results

Prior to conducting the regression analyses, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted in order to investigate the association between the organizational commitment dimensions (affective, continuance and normative) and those of employee communication behavior (megaphoning and scouting) amongst Moroccan employee working for Moroccan private organizations. The *p*-value was set at 0.05. Table 2 below shows the correlation results.

Table 2. Correlations of organizational commitment and employee communication behavior

		Megaphoning	Scouting
Affective commitment	Pearson Correlation	.662**	.634**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	378	378
Continuance commitment	Pearson Correlation	.654**	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	378	378
Normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	.707**	.756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	378	378

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in table 2, the correlation coefficients indicated affective commitment was positively and significantly associated with megaphoning ($r = .66, p < 0.01$) and scouting ($r = .63, p < 0.01$) behaviors. Similarly, a positive relationship was found between continuance commitment and employee communication behaviors, including megaphoning ($r = .65, p < 0.05$) and scouting ($r = .56, p < 0.05$). Moreover, normative commitment was also strongly and positively related to megaphoning and scouting, $r = .71, p < 0.01$ and $r = .75, p < 0.01$, respectively.

To further examine the association between the organizational commitment construct – defined as independent variables - and dimensions of employee communication behaviors – defined as dependent variables, a series of linear regression analyses were performed. An analysis of the linear regression assumptions such as autocorrelation and multicollinearity was performed and confirmed the normal distribution of data. Therefore, it was safe to proceed with the examination of the proposed hypotheses.

The linear regression results revealed that affective commitment explained 44% of the variance in employee megaphoning behavior, $F(1, 377) = 293.848, p < 0.05$, with an adjusted $R^2 = .43$. Thus, affective commitment was found to be a significant predictor of megaphoning behavior ($B = .59, p < 0.05$), which supports the first hypothesis in this study. Likewise, affective commitment was shown to have a significant effect on scouting behavior ($B = .71, p < 0.05$) in that the former predicted 41% variability in the latter, $F(1, 377) = 252.488, p < 0.05$. Hence, the second hypothesis stating that affective commitment was positively associated with scouting behavior was accepted.

The third and fourth hypotheses were proposed to find out whether continuance commitment could predict megaphoning and scouting behaviors amongst employees working for Moroccan private companies. The linear regression analysis indicated that 43% of variance in megaphoning was predicted by continuance commitment, $F(1, 377) = 281.443, p < 0.05$. Therefore, continuance commitment was found to have a significant impact on Moroccan employees' megaphoning behavior ($B = .72, p < 0.05$), lending full support to the third hypothesis in this research. Furthermore, continuance commitment was able to explain 31% variance in scouting behavior, $F(1, 377) = 172.218, p < 0.05$. It was therefore discovered that continuance commitment positively and significantly predicted Moroccan employees' scouting behavior ($B = .76, p < 0.05$). This shows that hypothesis four was fully retained.

The last two hypotheses (H_5 and H_6) focused on the association between Moroccan employees' normative commitment and their megaphoning and scouting communication behaviors. It was

demonstrated that 50% of variance in megaphoning behavior was explained by normative commitment, $F(1, 377) = 357.620, p < 0.05$. This indicated that the relationship between the two variables was statistically significant ($B = .72, p < 0.05$). Hence, the fifth hypothesis was fully supported. Finally, normative commitment affected 57% variability in the scouting behavior of Moroccan employees who took part in this research, $F(1, 377) = 500.560, p < 0.05$. Therefore, normative commitment was shown to be a significant predictor of scouting behavior ($B = .96, p < 0.05$). This finding grants full support to the sixth hypothesis that was proposed in the present study. The subsequent section discusses the implications of the indicated research results.

6. Discussion

The present study was an attempt to investigate the association between organizational commitment and employee communication behaviors with a primary emphasis on the context of Moroccan employees who currently work for Moroccan private organizations. The literature on organizational commitment and employee communication behavior describes the two variables as factors or results of other related organizational constructs, including employee performance, customer satisfaction and brand image (e.g. Erkmen, 2018; Gangai & Agrawal 2015; Min et. al., 2015; **Jeon & Choi, 2012**). However, to the author's best knowledge, the relationship between organizational commitment and employee communication behavior as conceptualized by Kim and Rhee (2011) has not been examined. Hence, this study sought to make a contribution to the literature of public relations by investigating the impact of organizational commitment on employee communication behaviors. In this regard, three organizational commitment dimensions, namely affective, continuance and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) were identified as antecedents to two forms of employee communication behaviors, viz. megaphoning and scouting (Kim and Rhee, 2011).

To begin with, it was hypothesized that affective commitment would have a significant impact on megaphoning behavior. The research results confirmed this hypothesis in that affective commitment was found to be positively and significantly associated with the megaphoning behavior. This suggests that Moroccan employees who are emotionally attached to their organizations are more likely to disseminate favorable information about the organization in their interactions with external publics, including saying positive things to friends, acquaintance, and neighbors about the company and management. Affective commitment was also hypothesized to be positively related to scouting behavior. This study showed a positively significant association between the two variables. It is hence implied that employees with

positive feelings towards their organization tend to voluntarily locate useful information and share it with management and superiors. For instance, employee may undertake such voluntary act by meeting with people who are affiliated with other companies to elicit news, information, or even rumors about organizations.

The subsequent two hypotheses (H_3 & H_4) proposed that continuance commitment would positively predict the megaphoning and scouting behaviors of Moroccan employees. The correlation and regression results lent support to both hypotheses in that continuance commitment would discovered to be have a significant and positive effect on both forms of employee communication behavior. These results indicate that employees' awareness of the cost of leaving and the need to remain in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Cohen 2007) are amongst the factors that influence the desire of employees to exert efforts to gather and forward information to internal and external publics. In this sense, employees may be motivated to make advocating posts for their organization on the Internet (megaphoning), as well as attempt to establish and maintain positive relationships with strategic publics internal and external to the organization (scouting).

Furthermore, it was proposed that normative commitment would be another significant predictor of megaphoning behavior. The study has demonstrated that normative commitment and megaphoning behavior were strongly, positively and significantly associated. The implication of this finding is that employees who feel obligated to remain in the organization due to their propensity to be loyal or a feeling of debt owed to a supervisor or co-worker (Meyer & Allen, 1997) would largely affect the external communication behavior. According to Thelen (2020) employee can manifest such communication behavior by defending the organization against prejudiced and negative opinions and comments about the organization.

Finally, it was hypothesized that employees' normative commitment would have a significant impact of on scouting behavior. The results indicated that normative commitment was found to positively and significantly predict the scouting behavior of employees. Thus, it is suggested that employees who strive to maintain membership in the organization owing to their feeling of intrinsic loyalty demonstrate a propensity to engage in information gathering and forwarding behavior. Employees who are normatively committed to their organizations strive to participate in the enhancement of the organizational effectiveness by voluntarily collecting and investigate the feedback and opinions of strategic publics on organizational actions, events, and decisions. The results indicated by the current study bear significant implications for managers of Moroccan private organizations. Employees should be viewed as strategic mediators between

the organization and its external publics. Kim and Rhee (2011) assert that customers, consumers and clients tend to base their opinions about a specific organization on information they receive from its employees. In fact, what employees say about their organization greatly impacts the way external public judge the organization (Helm, 2011). Moreover, employees' engagement in scouting behavior would allow Moroccan private organization to identify and obtain important information from external publics. This does not imply that organizations need to dispense with implementing public relations strategies such environmental scanning (Dozier, 1986) and focus exclusively on information gathered by employees. Instead, organizations should use employees' scouting efforts to supplement formal and systematic environmental scanning that occurs at the department and function level (Kim and Rhee, 2011). Moreover, employees may gather extremely useful and high quality information in that each individuals tend to acquire information that is relevant to their specialty, leading to a strategic diversity in the kind of information that organization gather over time. Therefore, in order for Moroccan private organizations to take advantage of the vast benefits associated with positive employee communication behaviors, it is important for managers to focus on enhancing their employees' organizational forms of commitment. The study has revealed that affective and normative commitment particularly influence employees' motivation to demonstrate positive megaphoning by sharing and circulating favorable information while interacting with external publics, as well as going out of their way to voluntarily look for information that may benefit and probably inform the organization's decisions and actions. Hence, not only do employees constitute a critical public for an organization, they also act as informal public relations practitioners whose viewpoints about the organization are viewed by external publics as having more credibility than sophisticated messages advanced by public relations messages.

7. Conclusion

Although organizational commitment and employee communication behavior have recently been among the widely research topics in the context of public relations, the relationship between the two construct has not been investigated. Hence, the present study was an attempt to fill this gap in the literature by empirically examining the association between affective, continuance and normative forms of organizational commitments and aspects of employee communication behaviors, including megaphoning and scouting. The results indicate organizational commitments plays a vital role in influencing the communication behavior of Moroccan employees while interacting with publics external and internal to the organization. The study concludes that employees who manifest attributes of organizational commitment such as psychological attachment, identification with, involvement in, and moral obligation to remain in the organization tend to engage in positive external megaphoning and scouting behavior. Positive megaphoning behavior includes writing positive comments about the organization on the internet, praising management, and defending organization against biased and prejudiced viewpoints. Committed employees demonstrate scouting behavior by locating and sharing vital information with internal organizational members.

Important limitations and opportunities for future research should be addressed. To begin with, the study focused exclusively on Moroccan employees, future studies are recommended to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and employee communication behavior in other cultural and temporal contexts. Moreover, this study was conducted with quantitative design, future researchers can conduct qualitative interviews to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the research problem. Finally, the study employed non-probability sampling; therefore, the generalizability of the findings must be undertaken with caution. Future research may implement probability sampling to increase the extent to which the finding can be generalizable to the population in its entirety.

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