

Organizational commitment: an empirical analysis of personality traits

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of five-factor model of personality on organizational commitment in the higher educational institutes of Pakistan.

Design/methodology/approach – Quantitative methodology was adopted to measure the impact of personality on organizational commitment. A structured questionnaire was e-mailed to the faculty members of the social science department of higher education institutes. SmartPLS software was used to run the structural equation modeling technique.

Findings – The findings showed that extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are positively linked to affective commitment (AC), and neuroticism and openness has negative association with AC. Furthermore, extroversion and agreeableness were found to be negatively linked to continuance commitment. A negative link between neuroticism and continuance commitment while no relationship between conscientiousness, openness, and continuance commitment was found.

Research limitations/implications – Results have several implications for the personality and commitment literature. First, study provided comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the dispositional basis of organizational commitment notably; the authors found that the Big Five personality traits as a whole are significantly associated with organizational commitment. Second, the current findings underscore the role of agreeableness in shaping organizational commitment. Agreeableness was the strongest predictor of both AC and continuance commitment. Agreeableness may be especially relevant for predicting employee outcomes that are reliant on strong interpersonal or social exchange relationships. As such outcomes are becoming more and more critical in employee, group, and organizational effectiveness.

Originality/value – In general, findings show that Big Five traits play an important role in understanding employee commitment to the organization. Consistent with previous studies on personality traits in the workplace, practitioners will benefit from considering all of the Big Five traits in their selection systems.

Keywords Structural equation modelling, Organizational commitment, SmartPLS, Big Five personality traits, Higher educational institutes

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In human resource management, not only is organizational commitment one of the most widely studied topics, it also poses a deep concern in organizational psychology due to its link with many employee behaviors and attitudes that has the potential to influence the organization, such as absenteeism (Somers, 1995), turnover (Jaros, 1997; Jehanzeb *et al.*, 2013) and organizational citizenship behavior (Zayas *et al.*, 2015).

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Multiple definitions of organizational commitment have been proposed, they all consider commitment as a psychological state that describes an employee's relationship with their organization and a propensity to continue the relationship with the organization (Hackney, 2012; Meyer *et al.*, 1997). Organizational commitment is commonly defined as a "psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization" (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

Affective commitment (AC) and continuance commitment were the two dimensions chosen among these constructs as the emphasis of the current study as they are most distinguishable from each other, and were discovered to have distinct relations with other relevant variables.

Johnson and Chang (2006) defined AC as an identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization. On the other hand, continuance commitment refers to commitment based on how the employee recognizes the cost related to quitting the organization, such as loss of benefits and fewer alternatives to employment. Basically, employees who have high AC stay with the organization because they want to, as opposed to employees with high continuance commitment who stay with the organization because they have to (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

1.1 Present study

Due to the considerable influence of organizational commitment on employees and organizations, the emphasis of the present research is placed on what causes an employee to commit to an organization. By discovering the reasons behind commitment, organizations will be able to thrive from the task of effectively fostering a working environment with high commitment among employees. Two categories of predictors were proposed based on past research in studying the antecedents of organizational commitment (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006; Meyer *et al.*, 2002); personal characteristics (e.g. gender, age, and employment tenure) and job-related factors (e.g. organizational characteristics, work situations, and employees' work experiences). In this research, the "Big Five" personality traits serve as the focus for personal characteristics (John and Srivastava, 1999).

In studying the findings related to organizational commitment, although the antecedents have been frequently studied, most were conducted in western contexts, particularly in the USA and Canada; thus, the number of studies from other countries are relatively few (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

Therefore, research on organizational commitment in an international setting is both timely and worthwhile for this study. Meyer and Allen (1997) claimed that "a systematic investigation of the meaning and outcomes of organizational commitment across cultures is needed in order to assess the generalizability of research findings" (Meyer *et al.*, 1997). In view of Pakistan's unique cultural traditions and extensive economic restructurings during the past 30 years, the country provides a good research setting to explore employees' organizational commitment. Thus, the aim of this research was to explore the relationship between employees' personality traits and organizational commitment, particularly on AC and continuance commitment in Pakistani higher educational institutes.

2. Literature review

2.1 Relationship between the Big Five and organizational commitment

2.1.1 *Big Five personality traits.* In organizational psychology, there has been a clear resurgence in personality research since the early 1990s (Barrick *et al.*, 1998). One particular focus was on identifying the role personality testing plays in employee selection and applying various personality assessments in the workplace (Sears and Rowe, 2003).

Within the last 20 years, the Big Five or five-factor model of personality emerged one of the most extensively established frameworks used to describe the most striking aspects of

an individual's personality (Digman, 1990; Judge *et al.*, 2002). Empirical evidence across different theoretical frameworks, measures, occupation, cultures, and sources of ratings had strongly support its validity (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Liao *et al.*, 2004; Matzler *et al.*, 2008).

The Big Five model advocates that nearly all personality traits can be reduced to five broad factors, which are often called extraversion (sociable vs introverted), agreeableness (cooperative vs competitive), conscientiousness (organized and conscientious vs disorganized and careless), neuroticism (emotional stability vs instability), and openness (intellectual curiosity vs preference for routine, Judge *et al.*, 1999). Smith and Canger (2004, p. 468) highlighted several reasons for the importance of this model: "(1) it permits the sorting of personality characteristics into meaningful categories, (2) it provides a common framework and vernacular for doing research, and (3) it is supposed to cover virtually all of the personality space."

More precisely, according to Ehrhart (2006) and Bozonelos (2004), extraversion includes attributes of sociability, affiliation, and gregariousness along with the degree to which individuals are assertive, dominant, and experience positive affect. Agreeableness encompasses characteristics such as altruism, cooperation, and warmth, whereby those high in this trait are more oriented toward serving and helping others. One of the main characteristics of conscientiousness is dependability. These individuals normally possess a sense of duty, and are organized and efficient. Individuals who tend to interpret experiences in a negative light fall under the neuroticism dimension, though this is often referred to in the light of emotional instability. Its characteristics include excessive worry, low confidence, and pessimism. Finally, openness encompasses the extent of an individual's reflectiveness, curiosity, creativity, originality, imagination, unconventionality, independence, and acceptance of diversity.

In literature, a large number of past studies have shown that the Big Five personality traits have a strong relation to job-related attitudes and behaviors (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Judge *et al.*, 2002; Tett *et al.*, 1991). For example, Barrick and Mount (1991) discovered that extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have a correlation with job performance, and that the strongest and most valid predictor across all work groups and job-related criteria is conscientiousness. In a more recent study, Farrukh *et al.* (2016) found a positive association of extroversion, openness to experiences, and emotional stability with intrapreneurial behavior, while a negative impact of conscientiousness, agreeableness on intrapreneurial behavior was recorded (Farrukh *et al.*, 2016). Past research has also found the link between extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism with career success (Judge *et al.*, 1999). Additionally, neuroticism was previously found to have a significant link to an individual's intention to staying in organization (Morrison, 1997). In more recent study, extraversion, openness to new experiences, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness have been found to have significant effects on employee job satisfaction (Kiarie *et al.*, 2017).

Although many fields of job-related attitudes and behaviors had been researched in the light of the Big Five model, the understanding of the model's relation with organizational commitment had been given minimal attention. The next two sections focus on the correlation between the Big Five, AC and continuance commitment, and highlight the hypotheses of the present study.

2.1.2 Big Five and AC. AC refers to "an emotional attachment to an organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization" (Allen *et al.*, 1990). Thus, employees who remain with an organization because they want to are identified to have a strong AC (Allen and Meyer, 1996). For employees, enhanced feelings of devotion, belongingness, and stability are among the positive factors influencing this type of commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 1993).

Extraversion. The characteristics of individuals high in extraversion are sociableness, gregariousness, assertiveness, talkativeness, and being active (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Extraversion can be related to the idea of affectivity, which is “an emotion-based trait dimension (Watson *et al.*, 1988) that creates a cognitive bias through which individuals approach and understand experiences and may affect how they experience and evaluate jobs” (Naquin and Holton, 2002). Affectivity has two directions: positive and negative. Positive affectivity refers to the tendency to experience positive emotional states, whereas alternatively, negative affectivity is the tendency to experience negative emotional states (Naquin and Holton, 2002).

Positive emotionality is considered as the core of extraversion in affectivity research (Erdheim *et al.*, 2006). This means that extravert individuals have the tendency to use positive emotions to express them. Because AC primarily signifies an employee’s positive emotional reaction to the organization (Thoresen *et al.*, 2003), the logical assumption is that high extraversion should be linked to higher AC compared to low extraversion. There are several empirical findings which agree with the above assumption (Choi *et al.*, 2015; Erdheim *et al.*, 2006; Syed *et al.*, 2015). Thus, based on the above arguments, it is hypothesized that:

H1. There is a positive relationship between extroversion and AC.

Agreeableness. Agreeableness is an interpersonal factor which refers to the quality of relationships through cooperation and trust (Judge *et al.*, 1999). The tendency to be forgiving, courteous, and flexible in dealing with others is among the characteristics associated with individuals high in this factor. Organ and Lingl (1995, p. 340) argued that agreeableness “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationship.” Thus, agreeableness should be linked to emotional warmth. This emotion may encourage their sense of belonging and identification with the values and goals of the organization, which influences the social identity of the employee with their work environment. Some empirical findings have supported this assumption. For example, Morrison (1997) reported that agreeableness was significantly correlated with overall organizational commitment ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$). In a more recent study, Choi *et al.* (2015) discovered a positive association between agreeableness and AC.

Based on these arguments, it may be assumed that individuals high in agreeableness will have high AC. Thus, the following hypothesis was examined in the present research:

H2. There is a positive relationship between agreeableness and AC.

Conscientiousness. Dependability, industriousness, and efficiency form the basic components of conscientiousness, and those high in this dimension may tend to be persevering, hard-working, and achievement oriented (Ciavarella *et al.*, 2004). The assumption that conscientious individuals may be more likely to experience high AC may be due to several reasons. First, past research had discovered an association between conscientiousness and a generalized job involvement tendency (Organ and Lingl, 1995). Therefore, it is likely that conscientiousness may increase the degree of employee involvement in the organization through engagement with their job; thus they are more likely to be affectively committed to the organization.

As previously defined, conscientiousness is related to characteristics such as hard work, achievement orientation, and perseverance (Digman and Takemoto-Chock, 1981; Peabody and Goldberg, 1989). These are comparable to the components of AC, which focus on identification with, and emotional attachment to, the organization. Past studies had also empirically confirmed the positive correlation between conscientiousness and AC (Choi *et al.*, 2015; Matzler *et al.*, 2011).

Based on the discussion above, this research tests the following hypothesis:

H3. There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and AC.

Neuroticism. Like extraversion, neuroticism is a prominent trait in personality psychology, as highlighted by its presence in nearly every measure of personality (Costa and McCrae, 1988; Judge *et al.*, 1999). The trait includes attributes such as pessimism, excessive worry, low confidence, and tendencies to experience negative emotions (Bozionelos, 2004). Due to its fundamentally negative nature, it was argued that individuals high in this factor are more likely to “develop negative attitudes and behaviours towards their work” (Bozionelos, 2004, p. 70). Neuroticism was identified as the main source of negative affectivity in past affectivity research and both can also be used interchangeably both in theory and measurement (Wong *et al.*, 2015). As van den Berg and Feij (2003, p. 327) stressed, “The affective dispositions of negative and positive affectivity can be best compared to neuroticism and extraversion, respectively.” Past studies had recognized the negative link between neuroticism and AC (Kumar and Bakhshi, 2010). In a study of national differences in organizational commitment, Gelade *et al.* (2006) also discovered that nations with lower neuroticism had higher AC. In summary, this study posed that:

H4. There is a negative relationship between neuroticism and AC.

Openness. “Openness is related to receptivity of new ideas, inventiveness, multiplicity of interests, flexibility of thought, and the tendency to develop idealistic ideas and goals” (Bozionelos, 2004, p. 71). Openness was the only factor that commonly displayed very weak connection to occupational outcomes compared to other Big Five dimensions (Matzler and Renzl, 2007). Based on this finding, DeNeve and Cooper (1998, p. 199) explained that “openness is a double-edged sword” that “predisposes an individual to feel both the good and the bad more deeply, leaving its directional influence on affective reactions like affective commitment unclear.”

On the other hand, Lounsbury *et al.*, discovered a significant link between openness and work drive ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$). “Work drive” is defined as “an enduring motivation to expend time and effort to finish projects, meet deadlines, be productive, and achieve success [...] [it included] elements of similar constructs: work values, protestant ethic, job involvement, work involvement, and work centrality”. Based on the logic regarding open individuals’ inclination to participate in work projects, it may be assumed that individuals may develop higher feelings of commitment to projects they own or projects that had their ideas considered. Thus, it is likelier for openness to affect the degree of employees’ AC to their organization. Several recent studies also supported this concept (Choi *et al.*, 2015; Syed *et al.*, 2015). On the basis of above discussion, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H5. There is a positive relationship between openness and AC.

2.1.3 Big Five and continuance commitment. An employee’s consideration of the costs connected to leaving an organization is termed as continuance commitment (Erdheim *et al.*, 2006). This describes employees who stay with the organization due to material benefits or feeling they need to do so (as opposed to wanting to do so) (Meyer *et al.*, 1993). Consequently, employees who observed fewer available practical alternatives will have a stronger continuance commitment to their organization.

Extraversion. Because of extravert individuals’ inclination to be more socially active, they may develop more social networks compared to those low in this dimension (Erdheim *et al.*, 2006; Zimmerman, 2010). There are empirical findings which recognizes that extraverts possess higher levels of networking intensity (the frequency and scope of using networking behaviors) (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, individuals who score high in extraversion are expected to establish more social networks with other organizations (Zimmerman, 2008). These contacts are then able to assist them to develop

more alternate employment opportunities compared to introverts (Watson and Clark, 1997). As discussed, continuance commitment is linked to the employee's perceptions of possible alternatives. Continuance commitment becomes weaker to the organization when employees discover more employment alternatives. Therefore, it may be reasonably assumed that individuals who score high in extraversion will have low continuance commitment. The following hypothesis is thus proposed:

H6. There is a negative relationship between extraversion and continuance commitment.

Agreeableness. Erdheim *et al.* (2006, p. 962) proposed that even though individuals who are characterized by high agreeableness often display proper and respectful work-related behaviors (e.g. cooperation, friendliness, modesty, eagerness to help others); these appropriate behaviors are doubtful to be rewarded as they are expected behaviors. This leads to a decrease in the costs linked to quitting an organization. In a research by Erdheim *et al.*, this argument was stressed by further demonstrating that agreeableness was not related to continuance commitment ($r=0.02$, $p > 0.05$) in a sample of American employees. Another study (Khiavi *et al.*, 2015) discovered a negative link between agreeableness and continuance commitment, thus, in the light of these past researches, we proposed following hypothesis:

H7. There is a negative relationship between agreeableness and continuance commitment.

Neuroticism. It is expected that employees scoring high in neuroticism have higher continuance commitment. Past studies have shown that neurotics are highly motivated by and are attracted to hygiene factors, such as job security (permanent job), benefits (good vacation, sick leave, etc.), pay (the amount of money that is paid), and work conditions (comfortable and clean) (Furnham *et al.*, 1999). These employees remain with organizations because of the "side bets" they have invested in the organization (Becker, 1960), which may include remuneration, specificity of skills, work security, and work friends; this additionally serves as the fundamental reasoning for continuing employment. All this would be lost if they make the decision to quit. Hence, it is expected that there is a positive relation between neuroticism and continuance commitment.

There is also empirical evidence on the tendency for neurotic individuals to experience more negative life events compared to other individuals (Magnus *et al.*, 1993), partially because they identify themselves with situations that result in negative affect (Emmons *et al.*, 1985). These findings are directly linked with continuance commitment, which may result from an employee's dread of the costs of moving on to a new job or organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). In other words, neurotics may experience higher anxiety about facing a new work environment that may lead to harsher experiences when negative events occur in their jobs (Erdheim *et al.*, 2006). From the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8. There is a positive relationship between neuroticism will and continuance commitment.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness refers to the hard-working, responsible, and achievement-oriented characteristics in an individual (Ciavarella *et al.*, 2004). Conscientious individuals were discovered to have a link to generalized job involvement due to their positive nature toward every role they assume (Organ and Lingl, 1995). In other words, high conscientiousness in individuals tends to result in higher work involvement. Due to this increased job involvement tendency, as Organ and Lingl (1995) highlighted, it is more likely for conscientious employees to obtain satisfying work benefits, both formal (e.g. promotions, pay) and informal (e.g. respect, recognition, feelings of personal accomplishment). It may also be reasonably assumed that these conscientious individuals

will have higher degrees of continuance commitment due to their tendency to receive such rewards, as it will also increase the costs of leaving the current organization. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H9. There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and continuance commitment.

Openness. As discussed, openness is a comprehensive dimension of personality linked to the level of an individual's unconventionality, curiosity, independence, reflectiveness, creativity, originality, imagination, and acceptance of diversity (Cui, 2010; Moss *et al.*, 2007). No encouraging or definitive evidence were found in past literature on the link between openness and work-related attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction). However, there was a positive link found between openness, turnover (Mayende and Musenze, 2014; Salgado, 2002; Sarwar *et al.*, 2013) and career search (Boudreau *et al.*, 2001). These negative behaviors seem to reduce the degree of an employee's continuance commitment.

It is more likely for individuals high in openness to experience to focus on the rewards of exploring new opportunities and downplay the costs of leaving their quitting positions. A recent meta-analysis by Fuller and Marler discovered that extraversion and openness to experience have a strong link to proactive personality. These individuals actively search for a variety of new opportunities and more stimulating and complex work experiences; they thus tend to focus on the rewards of getting a job in a new organization as opposed to the costs linked with leaving their current job (Dragoni *et al.*, 2011). Because lack of employment alternatives is a significant factor of continuance commitment, it is plausible to hypothesize that:

H10. There is a negative relationship between openness will and continuance commitment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The target population is the deans of faculty/schools, professors, associate professors, and assistant professors of state run institutions of higher education located in Islamabad, Pakistan. The sampling procedure is important for insuring the validity of the collected data as well as representation of the population in order to draw generalized conclusions on the entire population (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991). This study utilizes a university faculty/school as a sampling frame which is the list of ultimate sampling entities. The sampling frame has been obtained from 14 state run universities. The survey questionnaires were sent to more than 500 faculty members. A total number of 306 responses were given by the respondents which made the response rate around 61.2 percent.

3.2 Measure

Affective and continuance commitment were measured using two six-item scales that construct the 12-item – two component scales developed by Meyer *et al.* (1993). This scale has been extensively used in numerous geographical and organizational contexts and has been well accepted for representing high reliability and validity. After deleting items that did not comply with the quality criteria requisite, six-item measure of AC was used.

Sample items for AC included “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization,” “I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.”

A six-item measure for continuance commitment developed by Meyer *et al.* (1993) was utilized to measure continuance commitment level of the employees working in HEIs.

Sample items for continuance commitment, includes, “Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave this organization now.”

To elicit the information about personality traits we used Big Five model of personality measure (Goldberg, 1990). Responses were made on five-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

3.3 Data analysis

The current study utilized structural equation modeling. The research used the partial least square (PLS-SEM) tool for the assessments of measurement and structural model with the help of SmartPLS2.0 software (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Big Five personality traits and organizational commitment were formulated as first order reflective constructs.

Evaluation of the model by SmartPLS involves two steps. In the first step, internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of measurement model are assessed.

In according to Hock and Ringle, accepted value of CR is 0.60 or greater. Average variance extracted (AVE) is another criterion for the assessment of the measurement model and accepted value of AVE is 0.5 or greater.

The quality criteria given in Tables I and II showed that all the required values were achieved, thus, our measurement model is fit for further processing.

Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
<i>Personality traits</i>				
agree1	0.7662	0.5345	0.8129	0.7966
agree3	0.8345			
agree4	0.8284			
agree5	0.4195			
consic1	0.8044			
consic2	0.7922	0.6611	0.854	0.7452
consic3	0.8419			
extro1	0.7128			
extro2	0.7781			
extro3	0.8632			
extro4	0.6057	0.5564	0.8316	0.7349
neuro1	0.9314			
neuro2	0.9143			
neuro3	0.9001			
neuro4	0.9132			
open1	0.6842	0.6639	0.8868	0.8294
open2	0.8782			
open3	0.8686			
open4	0.8135			
<i>Organizational commitment</i>				
ac1	0.7204	0.5638	0.8853	0.8437
ac2	0.7797			
ac3	0.7775			
ac4	0.8471			
ac5	0.7117			
ac6	0.6825	0.6825	0.704	0.7967
cc1	0.704			
cc2	0.7967			
cc3	0.6255			
cc5	0.7984			

Table I.
Quality criteria
of model

3.4 Discriminant validity

To assess the discriminant validity we used Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. Discriminant validity is the degree to which items differentiate among constructs or measure distinct concepts. From Table II, we can see that the values given in diagonals are higher than their correlations with other variables thus providing evidence that discriminant validity is established.

3.5 Structural model assessment and findings

The second step in PLS-SEM is structural model assessment. The relationship of structural model is determined by the path coefficient among the construct of the study (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Critical values for two tailed and one tailed are 1.96 and 1.65, respectively. By the use of bootstrapping function of SmartPLS 2 we calculated the *t* statistics with 5,000 re-sampling as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2016). Results of bootstrapping in Table III revealed that all other hypotheses except *H5*, *H8*, *H9*, and *H10* are supported. In *H5* and *H8* a positive association between the variables was hypothesized, however, results showed a negative association, possible reasons of this negative association is discussed in the Discussion section. While for *H9* and *H10* *t*-statistic is lower than the threshold value of 1.96 for two tailed *t*-statistics to support a hypothesis, therefore, these hypotheses were not supported.

3.6 Discussion

As discussed previously, the Big Five model of personality proposes all personality facets to fall all under five broad factors, namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Costa and McCrae, 1989; Judge *et al.*, 1999). Empirical findings in past studies have directly and indirectly shown that the Big Five personality traits have a link to AC (e.g. Erdheim *et al.*, 2006; Matzler and Renzl, 2007; Naquin and Holton, 2002; Thoresen *et al.*, 2003).

Table II.
Discriminant validity

	AC	CC	agreeabl	consic	extro	neuro	openness
AC	<i>0.7569</i>						
CC	0.3651	<i>0.7879</i>					
agreeabl	0.073	0.0851	<i>0.78441</i>				
consic	-0.0218	-0.0062	0.0888	<i>0.84416</i>			
extro	-0.0288	-0.142	0.0718	0.2488	<i>0.8041</i>		
neuro	0.0511	0.1279	-0.166	-0.5308	-0.4933	<i>0.7813</i>	
openness	0.3052	0.0981	0.1472	0.1585	0.2007	-0.158	<i>0.71169</i>

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the other entries represent the squared correlation

Table III.
Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	<i>t</i> statistics	Decision
<i>H1</i>	extro → AC	0.2561	0.057	4.6028	Supported
<i>H2</i>	agree → AC	0.3835	0.067	5.777	Supported
<i>H3</i>	cons → AC	0.3142	0.065	4.800	Supported
<i>H4</i>	neuro → AC	-0.3278	0.049	4.219	Supported
<i>H5</i>	openness → AC	-0.1973	0.048	2.560	Not supported
<i>H6</i>	extro → CC	-0.2103	0.043	2.774	Supported
<i>H7</i>	agree → CC	-0.2461	0.049	2.812	Supported
<i>H8</i>	neuro → CC	-0.1737	0.047	2.566	Not Supported
<i>H9</i>	cons → CC	-0.0461	0.042	0.235	Not supported
<i>H10</i>	openness → CC	0.1021	0.032	0.451	Not supported

For the first hypothesis, a positive link between extroversion and AC was expected, and empirical findings supported this claim because positive emotionality is fundamental of this personality dimension (Watson *et al.*, 1988).

The second hypothesis sought to examine the positive link between AC and agreeableness. Statistical test endorsed this association ($\beta = 0.3835$, $t = 5.777$). Agreeableness, as defined before, is an interpersonal factor which examines the quality of a relationship through cooperation and trust (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Judge *et al.*, 1999). High scoring on this factor “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationships” (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 340). Erdheim *et al.* (2006) argued for agreeableness to be connected to emotional warmth, which may positively influence an employee’s social identity with their work environment. This will therefore encourage their sense of belonging and identification with the values and goals of the organization. As hypothesized, it was found that agreeableness has a significant relationship with AC in the current study ($\beta = 0.3835$, $t = 5.777$). This may be due to the influence of Pakistani culture, in which harmony, reciprocity, and loyalty has a high emphasis due to its collectivist culture (Earley, 1989; Warner, 1993). Certain collectivistic values, such as human heartedness (forgiveness, courtesy, kindness, and patience) and integration (solidarity, harmony, and tolerance) (Yu and Egri, 2005) are fundamental traits of agreeableness (Judge *et al.*, 1999). To a certain degree, Pakistani collectivism is characterized by values that build collaboration and trust among individuals. This refers to the positive influence of employees to identify themselves by organizational membership (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) internalization of organizational values and goals (Traindis *et al.*, 1990), and linking organizational interests to personal gains (Fijneman, 1996). Due to these collectivistic values, it was likelier for highly agreeable Pakistani employees to exhibit higher levels of AC.

In the third hypothesis, it was assumed that there is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and AC. Bootstrapping results (Table III) approved this hypothesized relationship ($\beta = 0.3142$, $t = 4.800$). Highly conscientious individuals are characterized as being dependable, careful, organized, hard-working, and achievement oriented. Conscientiousness has been defined as “a generalized work involvement tendency (i.e. a liking for rule-governed behaviour that probably is more characteristic of work in organizations than in other life domains)” (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 341). For this reason, it is more likely for conscientious individuals to develop affective bond with work organizations. In fact, conscientiousness had been previously suggested to be a dispositional root of organizational commitment (Hochwarter *et al.*, 1999). Conscientious employees were identified as both good performers (Barrick and Mount, 1991) and good citizens (Chiaburu *et al.*, 2011).

The fourth hypothesis of this study assumed negative relationship between neuroticism and AC. The results of statistical analysis identified negative relationship between neuroticism and AC ($\beta = -0.3278$, $t = 4.219$). Neuroticism refers to the lack of emotional stability, which means individuals scoring high in this dimension always view things negatively. As opposed to emotional instability, it is likely for individuals high on emotional stability to develop positive exchange relationships with exchange partners (e.g. supervisors, co-workers) and experience less interpersonal conflicts (Spector and Jex, 1998). These positive interpersonal relationships help to strengthen the affective bonds to the organization that provides the relationships. Additionally, it is also more likely for individuals high in emotional stability to gain higher performance evaluation scores and rewards (Barrick and Mount, 1991), as well as social support from others (Côté, 2005). According to social exchange principles, the increased identification with and involvement in the organization shows how employees reciprocate this support. Finally, individuals high in this dimension are capable of handling their emotions in various exchange contexts. Thus, it is less probable for them to view the organization through a negative and cynical lens and to have negative reactions even to seemingly unfair organizational decisions (Skarlicki *et al.*, 1999). Consequently, they are more

likely to have a positive emotional attachment to the organization in comparison to those with emotional instability.

In the fifth hypothesis, a positive link between openness and AC was expected; however, this concept was not supported in the findings as a negative association was found ($\beta = -0.1973$, $t = 2.560$). One potential reason why openness was negatively linked with AC is the link between openness and turnover behavior. In a research of turnover motives, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) argued that individuals high in openness value switching jobs and are therefore be more likely to quit an organization. The positive relationship between openness and turnover was confirmed by Salgado (2002). Additionally, Zimmerman (2008) explained that an open individual may view turnover from a positive light, such as to gain more experience and for personal development. This divergent thinking may reduce the degree of an open employee's emotional bond and identification toward their organizations. The results of the findings which show openness as a significant predictor of AC further stress this argument. Therefore, this research proposes the need for organizational managers to incorporate the crucial organization goal of paying attention on enhancing open employees' AC.

The sixth hypothesis empirically tested the impact of extraversion on continuance commitment. The findings supported the hypothesis in which there was a negative link between these two variables ($\beta = -0.2103$, $t = 2.774$). As discussed, individuals high in extraversion have the traits of sociableness, gregariousness, assertiveness, talkativeness, and are active (Barrick and Mount, 1991). The current study presumed that Pakistani employees who are more extraverted are more likely to have low continuance commitment. The reason for this hypothesis was due to the assumption that extraverts would have higher degrees of network activities, which also means they will develop more networks with other organizations, which could assist them to discover additional substitute employment opportunities compared to introverts.

The seventh hypothesis aimed to investigate the association between agreeableness and continuance commitment. Statistical findings revealed a negative association between the both variables ($\beta = -0.2461$, $t = 2.812$). As previously defined, agreeableness is an interpersonal factor which refers to the quality of relationship through cooperation and trust (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Judge *et al.*, 1999). High scoring on this factor "involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationships" (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 340). Based on this argument, it is expected for agreeable individuals to develop more pleasant and satisfying relationships with employees or managers at other organizations. These relationships seemed to assist them to develop more substitute employment opportunities compared to their counterparts, which leads to low continuance commitment. Cheung *et al.* (2001) discovered the existence of several overlaps between agreeableness and extraversion. In the Pakistani context, the original five factors are not as well defined, and some aspects of agreeableness may be viewed as characteristics of extraversion. Katigbak *et al.* (1996) argued that warmth, gregariousness, and the positive emotion facets of the extraversion domain and the trust, altruism, and tender mindedness facets of the agreeableness domain be combined to form a factor. Thus, it is likely for individuals high in agreeableness to be extraverted and have a wider range of networks at other organizations compared to introverts. As a result, these social networks could assist them in developing other employment opportunities, which leads to a reduction in their continuance commitment to their present organization.

In examining the overall findings, interestingly, this research discovered that agreeableness was a significant predictor of both affective and continuance commitment. This means that Pakistani employees high in agreeableness are likely to show high AC and low continuance commitment. Agreeable employees' desire to remain in the organization is unlikely to change even when they may find more alternate opportunities for employment. This means that the employees stay with the organization because they want to (AC), rather than needing to do so for material benefits (continuance commitment).

In *H8*, this study predicted a positive link between neuroticism and continuance commitment. As opposed to these expectations, a negative link was found between these two variables ($\beta = -0.1737$, $t = 2.566$). Thus, high neuroticism in Pakistani employees shows decreased continuance commitment. As discussed previously, material benefits the organization offers are the strong motivation and attraction factors for neurotic individuals (Furnham *et al.*, 1999). Thus, a positive link between neuroticism and continuance commitment was expected. Also, due to the tendency for neurotic employees to experience more negative life events compared to other individuals, they may fear the costs related to quitting their current position (Meyer and Allen, 1997), which means higher continuance commitment.

An explanation of this involves the need to contemplate conversely when interpreting the nature of neurotics. Because neuroticism is characterized by poor emotional adjustment and experience of negative affect such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility (Boudreau *et al.*, 2001), a positive correlation with turnover (Hough *et al.*, 1990; Salgado, 2002) and job search behavior (Boudreau *et al.*, 2001) was found in some past empirical research, which suggested a more frequent tendency for neurotic employees to leave and search for alternatives. Under these circumstances, the employees will be advised to actively explore other employment opportunities. As previously discussed, employees who believe in better and more practical alternatives will have less continuance commitment. These findings are relevant for Pakistani managers to encourage them to focus on reducing neurotic employees' stress levels to decrease their turnover rates.

In *H9* and *H10*, this study also postulated that continuance commitment is positively associated to conscientiousness and negatively linked with openness. Both factors were not significantly related to continuance commitment in this population of higher educational institutes' employees and their relative contributions were not prominent. This means that these two personality factors are not the determinants of the continuance commitment for Pakistani employees to their organizations. Though employees may score low on conscientiousness, or high on openness, their observations of the costs linked to quitting the organizations are unlikely to change.

4. Implications

There are several practical implications for reducing turnover and job search behaviors in higher educational institutes. Turnover costs organizations enormous amounts of money every year in several ways. These include lost institutional knowledge, costs associated with hiring and exit, training, as well as the general disruption in an organization when someone leaves. In addition, job search behaviors are also thought to increase costs because of their association with withdrawal behaviors and actual turnover. Selecting those employees who are more likely to be committed to the organization could decrease those costs. For example, this study also found a positive association between agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness and AC. To some extent, organizations should consider recruiting and selecting some employees who score moderate to high on above motioned traits because they are more likely to have AC than those employees with low score on this personality factor. Similarly, the association between personality and continuance commitment could also be of vital importance for the practitioners.

4.1 Future research

Study contributed to the area of organizational commitment, building a knowledge base and testing a comprehensive model with a Pakistani sample. In reviewing the literature pertaining to organizational commitment, most studies were conducted in western contexts, in particular the USA and Canada, and the number of studies from other countries is still relatively small (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, a systematic investigation of organizational commitment across cultures is needed for future research in order to assess the generalizability of research findings.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the relationship among the personality traits and organizational commitment. This finding adds important information to the literature on this topic and suggests that further research is needed to conclusively determine these relationships. On the basis of this research, we suggest the HR practitioners to take the results of this study into consideration before hiring employees; the finding could help them to save cost of losing talent. Moreover, HR practitioners should motivate the existing employees by introducing some reward and training programs to make them committed to organizations, which will ultimately result in high performance.

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