Current issues in Employee Commitment: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Employee commitment (EC) literature has grown very broad, and there is a need to understand the current issues in this body of literature. This systematic review aimed to examine current issues in EC. The research search in several databases, including EBSCO Business Source Premier (BSP), Business Source Complete (BSC), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Academic Search Complete (ASC), Science Direct (SD), Sage Journals (SJ), Taylor and Francis Online (T&FO), Emerald Insight (EI), Wiley Online Library (WOL) and ProQuest. The search in online databases found 86 studies and through vigorous eight studies was selected for review. After analysing the material, "human resource (HR) policies", "wages/salaries", "management/supervisory and subordinates relationships", "language proficiency", "quality service and units' delivery", "continuous improvement organisations", "emotional empowerment", "job satisfaction" and "leadership dimensions" emerged as important current issues. Also, the review found that there is no relationship between EC and the economic crisis. The researcher concludes that the literature on EC has grown very broad, and the researcher should conduct regular reviews to update future researchers. However, besides the limitation of a systematic process, the current reviewer recommends that more studies should be done to establish the results of this review.

Keywords: Employee Commitment, Current Issues, Systematic Review.

1. Introduction

The body of literature in Employee Commitment (EC) has expanded widely in recent years driven by academics and practitioners. The concept has been developing since earlier studies, for example by Becker, Buchanan, Porter et al., Mowday et al., Cook and Wall, Wiener, Meyer and Allen, Akintayo, Zheng et al., Ahmad and Shaheen, Ayondele et al., and Irefin and Mechanic [1-15]. However, despite this widespread of researches in EC, very little is known about the latest in the subject. Even, Robinson warned that EC should not be treated as a one-dimensional concept that fits in a single human resource policy [16]. With this view, he was implying that the idea of EC has become dynamic and complex in practice. Recently, Machokoto conducted a qualitative study and found exciting concepts within the EC, but his research was on a small scale [17]. Therefore the current issues on EC could be

understudied and remain unknown in literature given the diverging body of research.

Existing literature defines EC as a force of stability that aims to maintain behavioural direction even when the business is not meeting its expectation [18]. Also, it is defined as a force that stabilizes an employee's behaviour under circumstances where that behaviour could be attempted to change [19]. Mowday et al. said EC is a relative attitude an individual can identify self with the running of the organisation [4]. O'Reilly and Chatman suggested EC is an emotional attachment that is felt by an individual towards the organisation to the extent of adopting characteristics of that organisation [20]. Allen and Meyer mentioned that EC is a psychological state that brings personal attachment to the organisation [9].

Previous researchers categorised EC into affective, continuance and normative commitment [21, 9, 10, 14, 22]. Affective Commitment is defined as an emotional attachment to the organisation [21]. Affective commitment can again be seen in four ways, which are individual experiences, individual characteristics, structural/organisational characteristics, and work-related characteristics or work experiences [21]. These arguments were also supported by some researchers, such as Rhodes and Steers, who suggested that work experiences, fairness in the distribution of equity and reward, and taking part in decision-making meetings [23]. Glisson and Durick pointed to role clarity and free from conflict, including supervisor reflection, as the drive to EC [24]. Meyer and Allen found that fairness in rewarding employees according to their performance as an enhancement to affective commitment [8]. O'Reilly and Caldwell saw organisations with transparent development systems correlate with the higher emotional commitment of employees [9]. Therefore this further categorisation of this type of commitment could be now creating more challenges to

follow in literature. Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Allen and Meyer have argued that affective is the most important commitment to the success of the business [10].

Continuance Commitment is referred to as continuing with activity in fear of a "perceived cost" due to losing employment and less available other opportunities [10, 11, 15, 23]. Hence some researchers, such as Stebbins, and Meyer and Allen referred to continuance commitment as costs-based commitment [26, 7]. Some researchers, for example, Mugo et al. related continuance commitment with the family business, where an individual would see continuous commitment as saving costs [27]. With some researchers suggested that measures such as inducing good wages may increase this type of commitment [28]. However, this thinking was squashed by some scholars, for example, Meyer and Allen, who argued that the introduction of monetary benefits enhances affective rather continuance commitment [7]. Besides, continuance commitment is about the worry of what could happen in future if engagement is discontinued [1, 29, 30]. However, Stebbins engaged in the debate and said continuance commitment is not leaving the job because of financial problems that fall into an individual [26]. Therefore these debates could prove challenging to understand what could be continuous commitment.

Normative Commitment, in literature, is seen as engagement that is pushed by the feeling of obligation to remain in the organisation for a while [10, 11, 15, 23]. Allen and Meyer described normative commitment as an individual's belief as one responsible for the running of the organisation [10]. Also, Wiener had suggested that normative commitment is an internalised attachment to the organisation's goals and interests [6]. Besides, some researchers, such as Schwartz and Tessler and Schwartz [31, 32] described the internal obligation as a critical individual

attribute that stops someone from leaving the organisation, thus by terminating the contract [33]. Following these arguments for and against the perceived types of commitment in literature, understanding EC itself appear further confusing. Nevertheless, Allen and Meyer in their discussion appeared they were consolidating all kinds of commitment in an attempt to understand EC [10].

According to the present body of literature, there are several benefits associated with EC. These advantages include reduced absenteeism [34, 35], fewer intentions to seek another job opportunity [34], and increased job satisfaction among committed employees [35]. Again, EC has advantages of improving job performance [37], reduced intentions of leaving the job [38], increased business' sales [35], and reduced workforce turnover [39] and lastly, increased returns for shareholders [40]. Machokoto argued that EC means organisational performance [18].

This review aims to explore the current issues in EC literature; how has Employee Commitment been defined? What are the present types of Employee Commitment? How has Employee Commitment been operationalised? And evidence of levels of Employee Commitment in literature, including suggested antecedents and consequences of Employee Commitment. Also, the paper includes how individual differences influence Employee Commitment? How is Employee Commitment linked to work perception? And to what extent Employee Commitment is related to employee emotional being? Furthermore, the study explores how does workforce is associated with Employee Commitment? How can Employee Commitment be enhanced, and management involvement in Employee Commitment?.

2. Methods

2.1 Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

The researcher discovered that 'Employee Commitment' (EC) and 'Organisational Commitment' (OC) are concepts that are being used interchangeably in the literature. Using the keywords "*employee commitment*"(EC) and "*organisational commitment*" *(OC),* the researcher examined published and peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, conference papers, and working papers that are relevant to EC. The review targeted studies that were published from 2015 Worldwide. The material was obtained through on-line journal databases, including EBSCO Business Source Premier (BSP), Business Source Complete (BSC), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Academic Search Complete (ASC), Science Direct (SD), Sage Journals (SJ), Taylor and Francis Online (T&FO), Emerald Insight (EI), Wiley Online Library (WOL) and ProQuest (see *Figure:1* below). The inclusion criteria considered primary studies published in English-language and with full access, to enable the researcher to read through the whole essay and understand the arguments.

EC, 46 = OC). The researcher also searched on Google Scholar and got 12 articles (8 = EC, 4 = OC). Therefore a total of 98 studies were selected for further processing. *Figure 1.1.1* above indicates that the majority of the relevant studies were obtained through Emerald Insight (EI). And a minimal amount was obtained from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Wiley Online Library (WOL). Other databases gave the almost same amount of articles during the searches. . This finding displays that the majority of researchers favoured EI rather than DOAJ and WOL. Therefore this directs future researchers to where the EC literature is published. A further vigorous selection process on studies found included reading articles' titles and abstracts and removed duplicates, reviews and irrelevant studies.

A new total of 8 articles were chosen for review. The examiner used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to choose the last pack of studies for the review (see Figure: 2 below)

Databases	Search	Results
Business Source Premier (BSP)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	11
Business Source Complete (BSC)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	11
Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	4
Academic Search Complete (ASC)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	6
Science Direct (SD)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	6
Sage Journals (SJ)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	5
Taylor and Francis Online (T&FO)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	6
Emerald Insight (EI)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	22
Wiley Online Library (WOL)	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	4
ProQuest	Employee Commitment & Organisational Commitment	11

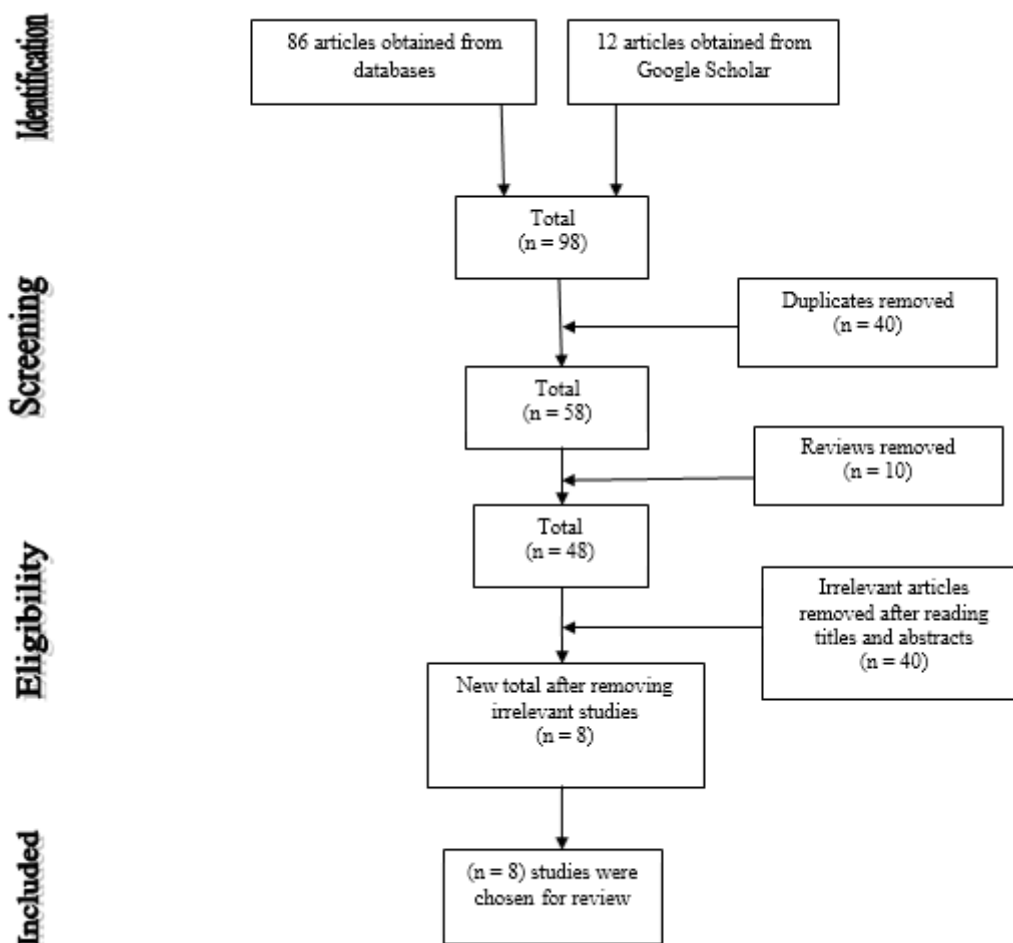**Figure. 1 Databases Search Strategy**
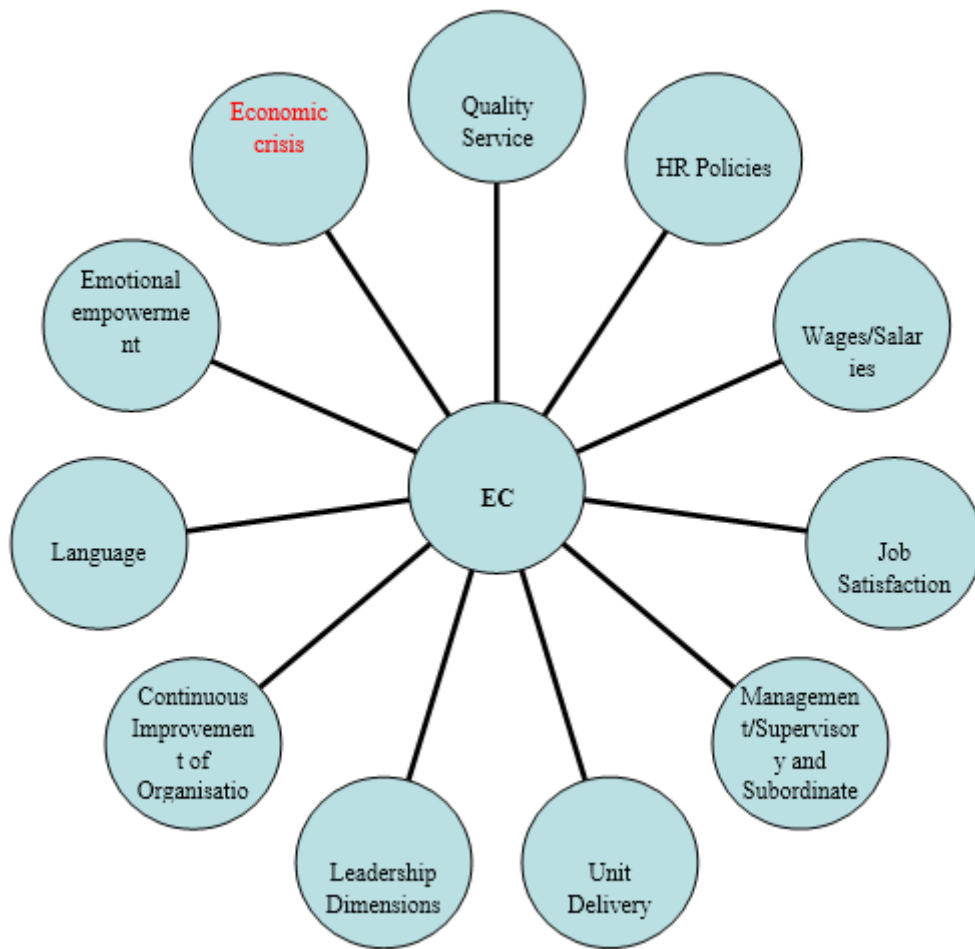

Figure. 2 PRISMA Flow Chart

Figure. 3 Studies Analysis

2.2 Data Analysis

Aladwan et al., Conway and Briner, Lam et al., Ouyang et al., Pyngavil, Yamao and Sekiguchi, Masakure and Gerhardt and Meyer et al. studies were chosen for this review [41-48]. All these studies used quantitative methods to collect and analyse their data, and researches were conducted in China, India, Japan, Jordan, Turkey, UK and USA. The researcher employed content analysis method to review the studies.

The results indicated that EC is associated with quality service and units' delivery [42], and continuous improvement of organisations [43]. The results also show that EC is linked to human resources policies [41], wages/salaries [47], and management/supervisory and subordinates

relationships [43]. Again, the results suggested that EC is corrected to emotional empowerment and job satisfaction [44], language [46], and associated to leadership dimensions [45]. However, the results highlighted that there is no relationship between the EC and the economic crisis [48].

For instance, Conway and Briner conducted a longitudinal unit-level analysis, including EC and customer satisfaction and behaviour; data was drawn from organisational records [42]. They had proposed that there is a connection between unit-level EC and customer attitudes. Though not directly, but mediated by employees' customer service delivery, including time serving and service quality. Results in this study indicated that EC is part of the quality service and units' delivery, but the casual is

not yet clear. Lam et al. lamented continuous organisation improvement has an association with EC [43]. Their study was aimed at addressing the gap in the literature on operations management by examining which influencing methods are best to influence EC in continuous improvement tasks. In the same project, Lam and colleagues examined how influential practices impact on the supervisor-subordinate relationship and the impact of the management to implement continuous improvement. The results showed that there is a link between management/supervisory and subordinates relationship with EC. Nevertheless, Aladwan et al. established that there is a connection between EC and human resource (HR) policies [41]. Their study served to examine the effects of human resources management (HRM) practices on EC in the Middle Eastern countries. And, a year later, Masakure and Gerhardt found that wages/salaries positively influence EC [47]. The two performed a study meant to evaluate the relationship between EC and wages using a theoretical model that initially predicated a complementary association. Ouyang et al. settled that there is a positive relationship between EC and psychological empowerment and job satisfaction [44]. They carried out research intended to define psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and EC of Chinese nurses, and explore the impact of psychological empowerment and EC on nurses' job satisfaction. Yamao and Sekiguchi found that language proficiency plays a role in EC [46]. They directed a project to investigate factors that affect the commitment of the non-English speaking workforce, to the globalisation HR policies of their organisation. However, in contrary, Pyngavil established that there is a negative connection between EC and leadership dimensions [45]. In a study that was set to understand leadership styles being used by SME entrepreneurs and influences of EC. Pyngavi's study found that leadership dimensions such as finance, marketing, HR, technical and production

matters negatively influence EC. Nevertheless, Meyer et al.'s study that was meant to investigate the effect of the economic crisis on EC found that EC was not affected by the economic crisis [48].

3. Discussions

The current study aimed to examine current issues in the EC literature. The researcher found substantial evidence of nine items that were proved to be associated with the contemporary EC concept. These issues are "*HR policies*", "*wages/salaries*", "*management/supervisory and subordinates relationships*", "*language proficiency*", "*quality service and units' delivery*", "*continuous improvement organisations*", "*emotional empowerment*", "*job satisfaction*" and "*leadership dimensions*" and were observed from vigorously selected studies across the world. "HR policies" being the essential drivers of the organisations' human capital management, these were proved to be influenced by EC [40, 45]. Even previous studies, such as Morris et al., Kinnie et al., Maheshwari and Vohra, and Shipton et al. linked HR policies to EC [49-52]. The review also found that "wages/salaries" are essential to determine EC [47]. Past researchers, for example, Nijhof et al., McPhail and Fisher, and Raj and Julius also considered wages/salaries as linked to EC [53-55]. Hence, the current researcher noticed the significance of *HR policies* and *wages/salaries* in EC recent literature.

Also, this study recognised "management/supervisory and subordinates relationships" as vital to current EC literature [43]. The previous studies, such as Guest, Taylor and Bain, Kim and Rowley, and Meyer et al. also saw a link between workplace relationship and EC [56-59]. "Language proficiency" was also highlighted as necessary in current EC literature [46]. Even past scholars, including Mayfield and Mayfield,

Crystal, Hitlan et al. and Peltokorpi also associate language and proficiency with EC [60-63]. Nevertheless, "quality service and units' delivery" also appeared in the current literature on EC [42]. Previous studies, for example, Little and Dean, He et al. and Elmadag et al. have also found a relationship between EC and service delivery [64-66]. Therefore it is paramount to consider language proficiency, workplace relationship and service delivery in modern EC literature.

Okemwa et al. linked EC with organisational continuous improvements [67-75]. "Emotional empowerment" and "job satisfaction" came up as critical factors of EC in recent literature [44]. Also, past scholars, for instance, Avolio et al., Janssen, Zhu et al., Chen and Chen, Dewettinck and van Ameijde associated emotional empowerment with EC [76-80]. With, Lok and Crawford, Karsh et al., Bhatti and Qureshi, and Dalkrani and Dimitriadis also linked job satisfaction to EC in recent literature [80, 81, 82, 83]. Therefore this review recognises that organisations with higher EC witness even higher job satisfaction, emotional empowerment and have continuous improvements.

However, the current researcher noticed that in the modern literature, leadership dimensions, such as finance, market, HR, technical and production matters, have a negative association with EC [45]. Also, many scholars, such as Walumbwa et al. also found that leadership dimensions have a negative relationship with EC [85]. Though some researchers, for example, Keskes found that leadership styles have a positive connection with EC [86]. Also, the latest literature suggests that EC is not affected by the economic crisis [48]. This position was also confirmed by previous studies, including Chang and Meyer et al. [87, 48].

This current review was immune to strengths and limitations. The first strength of this study is, the selection of studies that were included in this review was a vigorous process that could have included the most relevant studies. Boland et al. mentioned that the robust procedure in a systematic review enhances the reliability and transferability of the outcome [88]. Secondly, the reviewer searched for studies in several databases, including Google scholar, a strategy that could have given all relevant studies a chance to be picked. Boland et al. also suggested that the search strategy should be inclusive to include all related studies [88]. However, the first limitation could be the processing method in this review could be biased because only quantitative studies were picked for review. Bettany-Saltikov and McSherry indicated that in the processing process, there could be a researcher's judgement. Secondly, the vigorous process could have left out some critical studies that have improved the outcome [89].

4. Conclusions

This systematic review was a robust and broad examination of the current issues in Employee Commitment (EC). The research found that there are significant factors in modern EC literature that need to be considered by both academics and practitioners. The researcher concludes that the current essay on EC is covered by concepts of HR policies, wages/salaries, and management/supervisory and subordinates relationships. Also, language proficiency, quality service and units' delivery, continuous improvement organisations, emotional empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership dimensions. This result was supported throughout the recent studies selected in this review and also by previous scholars. This review provided further evidence for current issues in EC's body of literature and showed that the research has grown extensive. The findings also challenged the misconceptions that one may have that the economic crisis could influence EC. Instead, this current study found that there is no relationship between EC

and the economic crisis. The findings of this review are evidence-based and could be necessary to future researchers and practitioners; besides, the current scholar recommends for more similar studies to establish the conclusions of this review.

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