

# Employee Commitment Could Be Enhanced in the Healthcare Sector in the UK

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**Abstract:** Performance of an organisation is determined by how much employees are committed to the running of that organisation. Therefore, employee commitment is essential to organisational success. This qualitative interpretative research aims to examine how employee commitment in an organisation can be enhanced, and this would reduce the present staff turnover levels. A total of 8 employees were interviewed at a healthcare facility, and the interviews were audio recorded. Data were initially analysed using a thematic approach before the code extracts were put in frames. The outcome of the data analysis indicated four core themes, trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem. Through these themes, participants were suggesting that employee commitment can be enhanced by increasing trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem. Also, the emerged themes show the interconnection between the earlier suggested types of commitment (affective, continuance and normative). Despite a small sample in this research, the results of this study have a positive managerial implementation, managers should know that; it is trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem that make employees committed. This conclusion could help organisations to reduce staff turnover significantly. However, this researcher suggests that more research is required to establish this outcome since this study is based on a small sample.

**Keywords:** Employee Commitment, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment

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## 1. Introduction

The healthcare sector in the UK has come under scrutiny in recent years, but little is known about Employee Commitment (EC) in this sector. The particular attention in healthcare comes from the conviction that it is one of the pillars of the UK economy, creator of jobs, and a measure of the stable economy [12]. Moreover, the growth through investment in the healthcare system has been the reason why people to live better and for longer [12]. However, it is assumed that EC could be low in the healthcare industry, as evidenced by staff shortages in most healthcare settings, following the recent media reports. The staff turnover is probably high in the healthcare sector. Some researchers found that EC is negatively correlated with staff turnover [2, 9]. This argument implies that when EC is low, the employee turnover is high. Improving EC would maybe reduce the workforce turnover, and organisations gain effectiveness. The focus should, therefore, be on healthcare and those factors that make it grow and effectively. Thus, the justification for

this research on health care in the UK, as it is paramount in the economy.

In the body of literature, EC is regarded as the extent to which the employees feels attached to their organisation [5]. EC was defined as an adequate response to the organisation's programmes and the sense of feeling loyal to the organisation [25]. Zheng et al. referred to EC as the employees' attitude towards their organisations [38]. Therefore, the latter implies that EC is attitude, which could differ from individual to individual, and make it complicated for the managers to align all attitudes towards one organisational goal.

Since the financial crises of 2008, most organisations realised the importance of relying on EC [4, 38]. Mathur argued that the success of the organisation depends on the commitment of the employees [18]. The forward-looking firms keep their employees committed to gain a cutting edge competitive advantage by adapting to employee commitment frameworks, for example, hire employees who are more likely to be linked to the organisation [15]. Ahmad and Shaheen in their study demonstrated that EC causes organisational performance [3]. Hence, the EC is now drawn

the interest of most academics and practitioners [5, 34]. A recent study by Meyer et al. investigated the relationship between employee commitment and economic crisis, and they found that genuine commitment does not get affected by the outside environment [19]. Also, Machokoto, in his systematic review found that affective commitment is positively linked to charismatic leadership that can drive the organisation to performance [17].

Therefore, it is paramount for organisations to know how to increase employee commitment to boost performance, which is the intention of this study. The previous studies, for example, Mowday et al. and Allen and Meyer have considered employee commitment using quantitative methods [6, 23]. Most of the past reviews were not done in the UK, for instance, Irefin and Mechanic, and Mathur [15, 18]. As such, it is essential to study the EC in the UK context. The aims and objectives of this study are to investigate how employee commitment can be enhanced in the healthcare sector. How can a healthcare setting increase individual employee commitment? How do increased employee commitment can be measured?

## 2. Literature Review

EC is not new in the body of literature. Mowday conducted a study to measure organisational commitment [23]. Mowday research developed a questionnaire in an attempt to investigate corporate commitment by assessing the workforce's desire to remain with the institute, motivated and loyal to the company's values and goals [23]. However, Mowday's study was criticised as one-dimensional and limited to worker's affection for the organisation [23]. Mowday's questionnaire studied the emotional commitment to the company, and this was a narrow view of the phenomenon [23]. Then, Meyer and Allen suggested the three themes of commitment; affective attachment perceived costs, and obligation commitment. Later on, in 1990, Meyer and Allen developed the three-component model of commitment; affective, continuance and normative commitment [21]. The affective commitment (AC) is regarded as employee's emotional desire to carry on working with the organisation, due to the reason how they see themselves as the organisation [7, 20, 37]. Continuance commitment (CC) is the continuing working with the organisation because of fear to face a financial crisis and fewer chances of getting another alternative job if someone quits the current position [7, 20, 37]. Normative commitment (NC) is when an employee fails to leave the job because of moral beliefs and responsibilities [7, 20, 37].

### 2.1. Affective Commitment (AC)

Meyer and Allen called this concept "effective attachment", developing the model, they described the AC as the strong emotional individual attachment, involved in, and membership in the organisation [21]. This type is a common organisational commitment characteristic, in the body of literature, and be interpreted as the EC to the organisation.

This perception of AC, like an emotional attachment to the organisation, was also taken by Kanter, who described "cohesion commitment", as "emotional attachment to the group" (p. 507) [16]. Also, by Buchanan who viewed the "conceptualised commitment", as "effective attachment" to the organisation (p. 533) [10]. However, the previous studies that probably best presented AC by looking at the strength of an individual's identity and the organisation include Mowday and Porter et al. [23, 26, 27]. Porter and colleagues, in these studies, focused on defining personal affection to the organisation. To strengthen their work, Porter and his colleagues, developed a 15-item scale, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), to measure the AC construct [23]. This OCQ is now extensively used in psychometric testing and contemporary research in commitment. Even though psychometrically adequate and stable (PAS) was later established in the UK, as an alternative tool to OCQ, that can be used measure AC, the PAS was among many devices that were not vigorously psychometric evaluated [11].

### 2.2. Continuance Commitment (CC)

The CC was suggested by Meyer and Allen, Ayonle et al., and Wu and Liu [7, 20, 37], as something that can be seen as "perceived costs" [6]. Allen and Meyer then developed the concept of perceived costs further to a conducive concept [6]. Recent cost-based commitment, such as family businesses [24] has been assessed using measurements established by Ritzer and Trice [29]. These measurements are induced to increase the chances for the employee not to leave the organisation, for example, increase the salary and promotion, though some researchers doubt if theses induced measurements indeed reflect costs-based commitment [22, 33]. Thus, Meyer and Allen argued that costs-based commitment measurements might better indicate affective commitment rather than CC [22]. In a sense, commitment refers to engage in continuing activity [8]. CC is based on the fear of loss of financial benefit associated with that activity in the company. In other words, an individual is committed because there is a cost if the attachment is discontinued [8, 13, 30]. For example, a worker may lose benefits connected to being an employee of the organisation. Kanter's view was cognitive CC associated with "profit" obtained when an individual continue working with the organisation, while "cost" is connected to leaving the firm (p. 504) [16]. Ultimately, CC is being aware of the financial problems as a penalty for going the job [33].

### 2.3. Normative Commitment (NC)

The term NC was put forward by Meyer and Allen, Ayonle et al., and Wu and Liu referring to obligation to remain in the organisation for long time [6, 7, 20, 37]. Allen and Meyer viewed NC as the belief in one's responsibility to the firm [6]. Wiener suggested that NC means the internalised attachment to the organisation and seeing obliged to meet organisational goals and interests [35]. Some

researchers, such as Schwartz and Tessler, and Schwartz [31, 32], have identified internalised moral obligation as an important personal behaviour contributor, to terminate the contract or remain with the organisation [28]. However, the only validated measure of obligation-based attachment in the body of literature is the three-item scale established by Wu and Liu [37], where they used the questions with the emphasis on the word "...should...". To measure the obligation commitment. For example, the participants were asked about their personal feeling about whether an individual *should* be loyal to his organisations or not, an employee *should* make sacrifices on behalf of the organisation or not, and an employee *should* not criticise the running of the organisation [36].

## 2.4. The Three-Component Model of Commitment

Allen and Meyer tied together the three concepts; which are affective, continuance and normative commitment [6]. In the process, Allen and Meyer maintained that commitment regards the psychological attachment to the organisation, to lower turnover. The conceptualisation of the three concepts again kept the link between the employee and the organisation, and the link is more comprehensive when all three are considered concurrently; thus, enhancing measuring the commitment holistically. The three-component model of commitment demonstrated that one form of commitment is as useful as another and all critical in regulating turnover. Allen and Meyer predicted that future studies will be able to determine individual employee commitment profiles and how commitment can be increased in organisations, which is the focus of the current research.

The research questions;

1. How can affective commitment be increased?
2. How can continuance commitment an enhanced?
3. How can normative attachment be improved?

## 3. Method

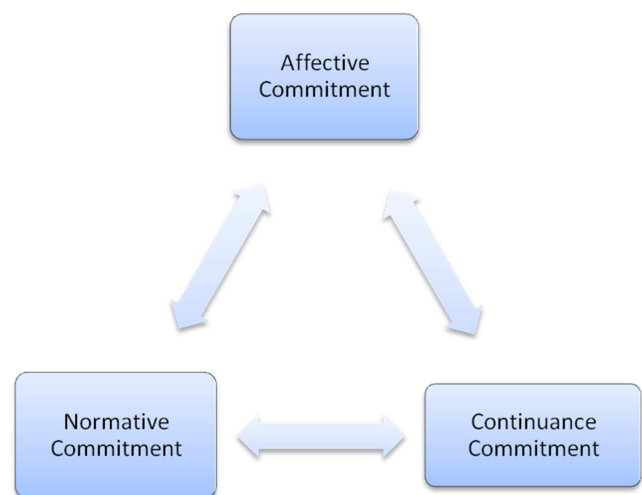
### 3.1. Sample and Procedure

The participants were recruited from a healthcare setting in the South West of England after the researcher was granted permission by the organisation management. The company gave the researcher the list of names and email addresses for 40 employees who work as full-time support workers. A quota sample of 10, made of 5 females and five males, was drawn from the pool at random and the researcher sent a recruitment email with the study information to the selected potential participants. Eight employees (4 females and four males) responded and were invited for a 20 to 30 minutes interview at the healthcare facility, on the days they were working. This work was an interpretative study focusing on employee perception. The meetings were arranged and took place in two weekends during the day. Interviews were semi-structured and audio recorded, and the recordings were transcribed soon after each interview and transcripts kept in

the secure computer.

### 3.2. Measurement

Allen and Meyer's measurement of commitment model was used in this study [6]. Even though Allen and Meyer's questionnaire was in quantitative form, the researcher adopted the questions from their affective, continuance, and normative commitment scales and these were used in in-depth interviews. The first questions were set to find out how affective commitment can be possibly enhanced in their workplace. Example of problems, *"How could your management make you very happy to spend the rest of your career with this organisation?"*... *"How could the management make you enjoy discussing your organisation with people outside the organisation?"*... and *"How could the management make you feel a strong sense of belonging to your organisation?"*. The second set of questions was focusing on continuance commitment and how it could be increased in the organisation. For instance, *"How much are you not afraid of what might happen if you quit your job without having another one lined up?"*... *"Is it not very hard for you to leave your organisation right now, even if you wanted to?"* moreover, *"Is it not too costly for you to leave your organisation now?"*. The third questions were asking for a normative commitment. For example, *"do you think that people these days move from company to company too often? How do you think this can be resolved in your organisation?"*... *"Do you believe that an employee must always be loyal to his/her organisation? How do you think this can be increased in your organisation?"* Moreover, *"Do you think wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore? How do you think this can be achieved in your organisation?"*.



Allen and Meyer 1990 [6]

Figure 1. Framework.

This study used the view of Allen and Meyer that the three concepts can be simultaneously joined for the benefit to the organisation [6]. However, the research focused on how ideas can be increased in the healthcare sector. The investigator

assumes the three-component model forms an equilibrium framework and this was a tool established to measure the relationship between affective, continuance and normative commitment, and then how to increase the frame together.

After transcribing the interview audios, the transcripts were coded according to the framework above. The quotations were thrown into each box representing each concept on the frame, according to the perceived meaning. All relevant excerpts were then independently verified by another researcher to gain face validity. Subsequently, the analysis and classification were later discussed with the participants as a group to again check the arguments for correct or incorrect placing quotations in each box. However,

the participants' group was divided on some, and further discussions with a group of researchers were prompted, and the debate was managed until consensus was reached. This last stage concluded and confirmed the framework this study established.

## 4. Findings

The study aimed to investigate how to increase affective, continuance and normative commitment to an organisation. Below is the table of results; quotations in each concept column emerged from the data analysis of the study.

*Table 1. Findings.*

Affective	Continuance	Normative
Trust, taking part in meetings, rewarded for what I do, continuing with duties, motivation, sense of belonging, fairness, voice, tie, safety and protection, self-esteem, an individual, loyal, obligation, engagement, participation, in charge.	Trust, taking part in decision meetings, rewarded better, in charge, continuing with the job, motivation, sense of belonging, fairness, voice, tie, safety and protection, self-esteem, considered, respect, engagement, participation, obligation, commitment.	Trust, responsible for decisions made, My reward, continue working, obligation, motivation, sense of belonging, fairness, voice, safety and protection, self-esteem, considered, loyal, in charge, engagement, participation, commitment.

From the complex data collected the following interconnected themes emerged after thematic analysis. These themes emerged from the coded transcripts under each core subject, as represented above.

### 4.1. Theme 1: "Trust"

Trust is a strong belief in the ability, truthiness and reliability of another person or relationship. This theme describes the evidence of coordinating feelings among all employees that trust should be at the centre stage of all the relationship between employers and employees. Trust illustrates confidence between the relationships; for example, participants expressed "taking part in meetings" as a sign of trust by the employers. Also, taking part in decision-making meetings and being responsible for decisions made can be preserved as a trust by employees.

### 4.2. Theme 2: "Reward"

As reward describes any form of recognition of service or effort or achievement, the reward came up as what drives commitment to the organisation, and this theme was extracted from the majority of participants. For instance, participants view that as long as they get some form of reward for what they do, they remain committed to the business activities. Some interviewees mentioned that the "reward" should be something they expect to continue working for the organisation. Again, the reward should be personalised to an employee, to drive the commitment.

### 4.3. Theme 3: "Motivation"

Motivation describes the incitement to behave profitably in the business. This theme, "motivation", emerged as a factor in many interview transcripts, to remain with the firm. A unilateral feeling of the participants was that they need to be

motivated to feel the sense of belonging to the organisation.

### 4.4. Theme 4: "Self-esteem"

Self-esteem was seen as a theme trending in many transcripts. This theme describes the personal feeling as self-assurance to remain in one organisation. Many participants spoke of self-achievement and self-regard; for example, one participant mentioned that he is committed to the organisation because he feels that his salary is growing and witnessing equal opportunity within the firm. Another interviewee said: she needs to remain with the company because she is happy with the job does, and she is given equal opportunity as a female.

## 5. Discussions

The study aimed to investigate how to increase commitment within an organisation. Through the integration of the coded material arising from the interviews, four themes emerged about what drives employees to remain committed to their organisations. These themes were trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem, and they suggest that employees value these elements as key to commitment.

The participants in this study see trust as something that bonds the relationship between the employer and employees. Hence this trust leads to what Allen and Meyer [6] described as "effective attachment" (p. 2). The researcher observed that some participants were getting emotional during the interviews when they were expressing their commitment to the organisations. This feeling coincides with Allen and Meyer's [6] description of affective commitment and echoing earlier suggestion by some researchers, such as Kanter, who also point at this type of commitment as an emotional affiliation [16]. This affective commitment can be easily measured by tools, such as OCQ (Organizational

Commitment Questionnaire) established by Porter et al. with the aim to find out individual characteristic [26]. Therefore, the amount of trust in the organisation, the employees can continue working for the business, though Meyer and Allen, Ayonle et al., and Wu and Liu argue that perceived financial costs drive the commitment fear [7, 20, 37]. However, the researcher believes that when the levels of trust are high in the company, commitment to that firm becomes normal, perhaps the commitment becomes an obligation, as suggested by [6].

Also, the theme, reward described the return the employees expect for continuing working with the company. Like previous researchers, Meyer and Allen, Ayonle et al., and Wu and Liu suggested, employees, are committed because they fear to lose the income [7, 20, 37]. In other words, individuals would continue working for the inflow of money as income. The researcher argues that the fear of losing an income would force the employee to be emotionally attached to the company, also defined as an affective commitment by Allen and Meyer [6]. Again, the continuity of income and attachment could also be viewed as usual in the organisation; normative commitment [6].

Furthermore, some participants suggested motivation as the push to remain with the organisation. Researcher anticipates that any form of commitment to the organisation is moved by how much employees are motivated. Indeed, this commitment to the firm could be emotional, an obligation and a normal one, as suggested Allen and Meyer [6]. Taking motivation definition from different researchers, such as Abraham Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs [1], the commitment could be driven by the continuation of income as a basic need for employees. Also, the extension of financial benefit can bring psychological satisfaction (Abraham Maslow) [1], regarding security, affection, and trust between employees and employers. Therefore, the commitment could grow to the emotional attachment level where Maslow describes as self-actualisation and possibly linked to affective commitment [6]. Here, employees seek self-assurance within the organisation, and they feel attached to the organisation.

The themes outlined here have management relevance that may help thinking differently about how to manage people. If managers have a responsibility to measure or make employees committed to their organisations, then these themes emerged from this study may mean they have to go back to the basics of building trust, enhancing reward systems, ensure motivation and promote self-esteem. The findings of this study suggest that the level of commitment in the organisation depends on the maximisation of these core theme factors. However, the researcher encourages further studies to establish these outcomes or alternative understandings because methods used in this study allow for some level of biases. The approach used in this study provides sample bias since the interviews were conducted in one small portion of the entire population [14].

## 6. Conclusion

An interpretive approach was used in this qualitative study to investigate how to enhance employee commitment within an organisation. The thematic analysis, followed by framework analysis was employed as an approach to analysing data. Themes emerged of trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem, about employee commitment behaviour. At the core of these themes, were participants' expresses to show that employee commitment can be enhanced by increasing trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem. These core themes were outlined in three types of commitment and were confirmed in the study. Therefore the researcher concludes that there is an interconnection between the three types of commitment that was suggested in the previous literature. The results from this study have a positive managerial implementation; managers should know that; it is trust, reward, motivation and self-esteem that make employees committed. This conclusion will help the businesses to reduce staff turnover significantly. However, the paper suggests that more research is required to establish this outcome.

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