The Impact of Managerial Credibility on Affective Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Study in the Sport Sector of Iran

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Abstract

The paper aims to study the impact of credibility of manager on employees' affective commitment. Data were collected using a questionnaire including managerial credibility and affective commitment measures. A sample of 212employeesfrom a number of organizations operating in the sport sector of Iran was used. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and a linear regression analysis were used to test the relationship between managerial credibility and affective commitment. In addition, ANOVA analysis was used to determine the effect of demographic characteristics on perceptions of manager credibility. The findings indicated that the relationship between and affective commitment is positive and significant. Moreover, when people perceive manager credibility, they feel more affectively attached to their organizations, experience a sense of obligation/loyalty towards them, and feel less instrumentally committed. Sampling was one of the limitations identified in this study. The fact that convenience sampling was used meant that results were not immediately transferable to the general working population. If samples were drawn from a wider range of demographics, then the results become more meaningful. By utilizing credibility, managers can promote affective organizational commitment and, thus, individual and organizational performance. It allows them to experience senses of purpose, self-determination, enjoyment and belonging. The paper contributes by filling a gap in the organization and management literature, in which empirical studies on managerial credibility as an antecedent of affective organizational commitment have been scarce until now.

Key words: Credibility; Affective commitment; Employee

INTRODUCTION

Affective commitment, defined as employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organization and its goals (Meyer and Allen, 1991), is considered an extremely important work attitude of employees. Affective commitment has been associated with extra-role behaviors (e.g. Moorman et al., 1993), absenteeism (e.g. Gellatly, 1995), and turnover (e.g. Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Somers, 1995).Numerous antecedents of organizational commitment have been suggested in the earlier studies (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). For example, leadership (Williams and Hazer, 1986) and organizational culture (Trice and Beyer, 1993) were shown to have significant impact on organizational commitment (Lok and Crawford, 1999, 2001). However, the influence of managerial credibility on employee's commitment was not explored. Moreover, a number of researchers have reported that managerial success and subsequent organizational advancement is determined by how managers' credibility is perceived by employees

(Nesler, Aguinis, Quigley, and Tedeschi, 1993). Thus, the present study examines the relationship between managerial credibility and affective commitment. We will look for new bridges between managers' credibility and employees' commitment by answering two questions: To what extent managers and hence managerial credibility affect the subordinates' affective commitment? Does managers' credibility advance followers' affective commitment? The answer to these questions is one of the objectives of this paper. The rest of this paper is organized as below. First, we provide a review on the literature related to affective commitment and credibility. Second, we introduce hypothesis. Next, we describe the research methodology and discuss the statistical results. Finally, we summarize the findings and discuss the implications for both research and practice.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational commitment refers to the employee's attachment to the employing organization – namely, the commitment to the entire organization as the employee perceives it (Morrow, 1993) and the organization's support for the employee (Zaitman-Speiser, 2005; Whitener, 2001). Meyer and Allen (1991) defined three types of commitment as part of organizational commitment – affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Since affective commitment is more likely to reflect primary feelings and attitudes toward the job and its components, it dominates the organizational commitment literature. Affective commitment is related to the employee's sense of belonging, attachment and loyalty to the organization (Mueller et al., 1992). Employees who are committed tend to remain in the organization, (Meyer et al., 1990). These researchers claim that affective commitment can develop out of positive experiences and encounters within the organization, experiences that communicate to employees that the organization supports and treats them fairly. Moreover, employees can develop a sense of personal capability and self worth when the organization knows how to value their contribution and so reinforces their affective commitment. In addition, affective commitment can also develop from psychologically rewarding experiences. That is, an employee develops affective commitment only to the extent that the organization lets him or her feel at ease, be it by satisfying needs, meeting expectations or enabling the attainment of the employee's goals (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Wallace, 1997).Affective commitment develops when the employee becomes involved in, recognizes the value-relevance of, and/or derives his/her identity from the association with the organization. For example, employees tend to be affectively committed if they feel that the organization treats them in a fair, respectful and supporting manner (Rego and Cunha, 2008). Weisner (2003), who examined affective commitment in the

context of satisfaction at work, stresses and perceivable organizational support, found that both satisfaction at work and perceivable organizational support mediated all the relations found between stresses and affective commitment, except for perceivable stress. Wasti (2005) found that when examining the effects of and the relations between the three kinds of commitment, affective commitment is the most strongly related to positive work outcomes, especially when combined with low levels of continuance commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) found a strong relation between leaving and performance and affective commitment, but a weak relation with regard to normative commitment, and practically no relation in the case of continuance commitment. In addition, perceived organizational support is most strongly correlated with affective commitment (Erickson and Roloff, 2007). Affective organizational commitment is theorized to exist when individuals believe that their attachment to the organization will provide access to meaningful rewards that satisfy their needs (Mowday et al., 1979). Vuuren et al. (2007) investigated both direct and indirect relationships between manager communication and employees' affective organizational commitment. They found that communication between manager and employee can influence affective commitment. Since a number of management (leadership) styles are found to be positively related to organizational commitment (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009; Lok and Crawford, 2004; Kim, 2002; Zeffane, 1994; Iverson and Roy, 1994; Smith and Peterson, 1988; Williams and Hazer, 1986; Blau, 1985), it is plausible to assume that managerial credibility (i.e. the degree to which followers perceive that the manager is honest, competent and able to inspire) will be the predictive variable of affective commitment. Politis (2005) showed that a self-management kind of leadership and the credibility of the leader encourages and facilitates the behavioral skills. Further, the management dimension of credibility affects the knowledge acquisition (Politis, 2005). Nesler et al. (1993) study indicated that credibility had a direct effect on power ratings. In addition, a significant interaction of objective power by credibility indicated that objective power had a moderating effect on the relationship between credibility and perceived power. Further, managerial success and subsequent organizational advancement is determined by how managers' credibility is perceived by employees. Sahin's (2011) study indicated the role of managerial capabilities such as managerial credibility in competitiveness of professional service firms. Lee (2011) in an investigation of desired leadership characteristics of South African managers showed that managers most highly ranked the three "credibility" characteristics (competence, honesty and inspiration) prevalent in comparative worldwide studies. Aguinis and Adams (1998) argued that credibility should be evaluated similarly with the French and Raven's (1959) bases of power as long as the managers assessed in the study are

occupying the same organizational position. According to the literature, it is thus assumed that the element of credibility to be the predictive variable of affective organizational commitment.

2. METHOD

2.1 Development of Hypothesis

As mixed findings are observed in prior studies as described in the literature review, it is thus reasonable to predict that the credibility measured by Nesler et al.'s (1993) scale would provide an increase in the level of prediction of the affective commitment measure. Null hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship between the variables:

H1. Managerial credibility is positively related to employees' affective organizational commitment.

2.2 Sample and Procedure

Sample. The study focused in the sport organizations operating in the sport sector of Iran. All respondents were full-time employees of the participating organizations and volunteered to participate in the study. Respondents have known their immediate leader for at least ten months. Questionnaires, written in Farsi, containing items measuring the above dimensions were distributed to 250 employees of the participating organizations. A total of 212 employees returned usable questionnaires; yielding a84.8 percent response rate. The majority of respondents were male employees (80.6%). Further, 61.6 percent of respondents were single and 38.4 percent were married. In terms of education, one-third of the respondents (33.6%) were postgraduate, and 44%of the respondents had bachelor's degree.

Procedures. Surveyquestionnaires were pre-tested, using a small number of respondents (about half a dozen; the pre-test participants did not participate in the final data collection). As a consequence of the pre-testing, relatively minor modifications were made in the written instructions and in several of the demographic items. The revised survey was then administered to the respondents in their natural work settings, during normal work hours. Written instructions, along with brief oral presentations, were given to assure the respondents of anonymity protection and to explain (in broad terms) the purpose of the research. The participants were all given the opportunity to ask questions and were encouraged to answer the survey honestly; anonymity was guaranteed and no names or other identifying information was asked.

2.3 Analytical Procedure

To test the dimensionality of factors, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. In estimating the goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) for measurement and structural models, $\chi 2$ (chi-square) test was used. In addition, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was used as an absolute fit index. The incremental fit index (IFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were used as incremental fit indices. For GFI, RFI, CFI and TLI, coefficients closer to unity indicate a good fit, with acceptable levels of fit being above 0.90 (Marshet al., 1988). For root mean square residual (RMR) and RMSEA, evidence of good fit is considered to be values less than 0.05; values from 0.05 to 0.10 are indicative of moderate fit and values greater than 0.10 are taken to be evidence of a poorly fitting model (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Moreover, a linear regression analysis was employed to test the research hypothesis. Finally, tests of one-way ANOVA were carried out to test whether various individual factors such as age, gender, education, and length of employment influenced credibility perceptions.

2.4 Measures

Independent variable- Managerial credibility. The measure of credibility was measured using five items from Nesleret al. (1993). Participants were asked to evaluate the managers' credibility on a five-point response scale: 1 = agree; 5 = disagree. We conducted CFA of the managerial credibility items (i.e. 5 items) in order to check for construct independence. Based on the results of a CFA, the data supported the independence of credibility (five items, $\alpha =0.71$).

Dependant variable- Affective commitment. Affective commitment is measured with seven items from Meyer and Allen (1997).The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.95. The results of the CFA supported the independence of five factors. Participants were asked to assess their affective commitment on a five-point response scale: 1 =strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree. Means, SDs, and factor loadings of credibility and affective commitment variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Means, SDs, and Reliability Scores

Constructs and indicators[a]	Mean	SD (σ)	α [b]	λ [c]	t-value
Employee perception of manager credibility			0.71		
Managerial Credibility 1	3.11	1.323		0.235	1.584
Managerial Credibility 2	2.87	1.171		0.775	1.626
Managerial Credibility 3	2.70	1.022		0.858	1.628
Managerial Credibility 4	2.03	0.991		0.854	1.628
Managerial Credibility 5	3.36	0.874		0.119	-
Employee affective organizational commitment			0.95		

To be continued

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Constructs and indicators[a]	Mean	SD (σ)	α [b]	λ [c]	t-value
Affective Commitment 1	3.36	1.104		0.765	13.568
Affective Commitment 2	3.40	1.077		0.850	16.217
Affective Commitment 3	3.32	1.061		0.918	18.817
Affective Commitment 4	3.48	1.095		0.894	17.841
Affective Commitment 5	3.41	1.033		0.859	-
Affective Commitment 6	3.47	1.077		0.779	17.438
Affective Commitment 7	3.51	1.112		0.850	16.246

[a]**Measures were collated in the form of a five-point Likert scale.**
[b]**Cronbach alphas are reported.**
[c]**Factor loadings from completely standardised solution are reported.**

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Characteristics

Of a total sample 212 respondents, 80.7% (171) were male and 19.3% (41) were female. A large majority of respondents (62.3%) were employed between 1 and 10 years. The majority of respondents were 31-40 years old (57.1%). In terms of education, most employees had degree (38.7%) and bachelor's degree (27.8%). Summary of demographic characteristics provided in Table 2.

3.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Cronbach alpha of two main constructs employee perception of manager credibility and employee affective organizational commitment was at acceptable levels ($\alpha \geqslant 0.69$). Completely standardized solutions of the items loaded $\geqslant 0.50$ on their factors, and thus suggestive of convergent validity (see Table 1). However, the factor loadings of two items were below the reasonable threshold of 0.50; therefore, the two items designed for employee perception of manager credibility are relatively weak indicators of this factor and cannot capture the necessary variance. Additionally, Table 3 demonstrates that both measurement models had excellent model fit.

Table 2
Demographical Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	CF (%)
Age group			
30 or Under	65	30.7	30.7
31-40	121	57.1	87.7
41-50	19	9.0	96.7
Above 50	7	3.3	100
Gender			
Male	171	80.7	80.7
Female	41	19.3	100
Education			
Below high school	27	12.7	12.7
High school	40	18.9	31.6
Degree	82	38.7	70.3
Bachelor's degree	59	27.8	98.1
Postgraduate	4	1.9	100
Length of employment			
1-10 years	132	62.3	62.3
11-20 years	31	14.6	76.9
21-30 years	36	17.0	93.9
31-40 years	13	6.1	100

Table 3
Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Summary of Model Fit Indices

	x^2	d.f	p	GFI	CFI	RFI	NFI	IFI	RMSEA	ECVI	RMR	TLI
Employee perception of manager credibility Hypothesized 5-factor 1st order model	6.897	3	0.075	0.987	0.989	0.935	0.980	0.989	0.078	0.146	0.031	0.962
Employee affective commitment Hypothesized 7-factor 1st order model	23.170	11	0.017	0.970	0.991	0.969	0.984	0.991	0.072	0.271	0.020	0.983

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

To investigate the relationship between credibility and affective commitment, the data was subjected to regression and correlation analysis. The results are shown in Table 4 which clearly demonstrates that there is a relationship between the independent and the dependent variable (credibility and affective commitment). The correlation value of 0.262 is significant at the 0.001 level, which supports the study hypothesis (managerial credibility is positively related to employees' affective commitment). The hypothesis is also supported by result shown in Table 4. Furthermore, the model is statistically significant; p < 0.001 and t-value is 3.934. In addition, the F-value is 15.483 and p-value is 0.000 (β=0.085).

Table 4
Regression Analysis (Credibility on Affective Commitment)

	Mean square	r^a(AC)	B	Beta	R^2	Adjusted R^2	t- value	F	Sig.
Credibility	12.999	0.262*	0.336	0.085	0.069	0.064	3.934	15.483	0.000*

Notes: *Significant at the 0.001level (two-tailed), p< 0.001; ^{a}AC, Affective Commitment

3.4 Employees' Perceptions of Credibility

Respondents' perceptions of credibility can also be explained by respondents' age, gender, education, and length of employment. Further results about the impact of demographic characteristics of employees on credibility perceptions are provided in Table 5. The test for ANOVA found that age influences employees perceptions of manager credibility (F =60.876, p< 0.001). Thus, as respondents' age increased they were less likely to perceive that the manager is honest, competent and able to inspire. Employees' gender also influences perceptions of credibility (F =80.56, p< 0.001). Female employees perceived manager more credible than male one. Education did not appear to be a significant demographic factor affecting employees' perceptions of credibility (F =0.866, p= 0.485). Finally, length of employment influences perceptions of credibility (F =68.854, p< 0.001). As length of employment increased they were more likely to perceive that the manager is credible.

Table 5
One-Way ANOVA Results of Variations of Employees' Perceptions of Credibility

Factor	Mean	St. deviation	F	p-value
Gender			80.560	0.000
Male	2.143	0.622		
Female	3.127	0.665		
Age			60.876	0.000
30 or under	3.084	0.687		
31-40	2.042	0.483		
41-50	1.853	0.388		
Above 50	1.714	0.303		
Education			0.866	0.485
Below high school	2.333	0.763		
High school	2.200	0.723		
Degree	2.308	0.696		
Bachelor's degree	2.468	0.816		
Postgraduate	2.200	0.283		
Length of employment			68.854	0.000
1-10 years	2.032	0.489		
11-20 years	2.163	0.484		
21-30 years	3.100	0.663		
31-40 years	3.677	0.592		

4. DISCUSSION

This study has investigated the relationship between managerial credibility and affective organizational commitment in an Iranian sample. To our knowledge, this is the first study that investigates this connectedness. Although replication of all research results is certainly desirable, the current study seems to highlight that there is dimension of Nesler et al.'s (1993) managerial credibility that might influence the process of forming affective organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997) among employees of sport organizations. The results of this study revealed that manager credibility influences employees' affective commitment. This is consistent with studies that have shown that there is strong positive link between leadership style and commitment. Although leadership styles were not measured in the present study, the results suggest that the managers, who are consistently both honest and accurate in their communications with subordinates, viz. possess credibility, are more likely to positively influence employees' affective commitment. Such leaders can be equated to those who are characterized by self-management leadership behavior. It was also found that employee' perception of credibility is affected by age, gender, and length of employment.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary aim of this paper was to examine the relationship between managerial credibility and affective commitment in a number of sport organizations operating in the Iran. The study had demonstrated that credibility has a significant impact on affective commitment. This finding makes several important contributions to the literature on organizational commitment and leadership research and practice. For research, the results contribute an important and previously lacking empirical evidence confirming the value of managerial credibility for organizational

commitment. Management often finds theoretical, qualitative research insightful but is wary of basing decisions on it, fearing the fallibility of the logic and a lack of strong quantified data (Nancarrow et al., 1996). This study represents a small step towards filling the void in empirical data in organizational commitment. By doing so, it is now possible to empirically examine links between constructs such as organizational commitment, leadership types, organization types, and examine antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment behavior and practice. These are all opportunities for future research. For practice, the findings suggest that the credibility of the leader encourages the behavioral skills and affective commitment that are essential to manager success. It is therefore, the credibility and integrity of the leader has an important role in employees' maintenance and organizational development if the enterprise is to take advantage of the available employees in impacting efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and competitive position. Organizations can only strive to provide the best environment for encouraging and fostering credibility.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Sampling was one of the limitations identified in this study. The fact that convenience sampling was used meant that results were not immediately transferable to the general working population. In addition, the sample subjects in this study were mostly employees who worked in the sport sector of Iran; thus, findings could not be generalized. Therefore, future research could look into extending the study population to include collect input from other types of organizations.

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