

EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Employee commitment is a concept that has generated heated debates among scholars and human resources managers. This paper identified the main conceptual issues in each of the approaches that were dominant within the periods that were reviewed in this study. It also criticized the various approaches in order to identify the gaps as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their argument which necessitated the emergence of the next era. The research concluded that there were conceptual and methodological challenges with the two dominant approaches in the fourth era, hence there is need to reexamine the approaches and apply them to a real life situation. Hence, this research recommended that there is a need to develop the fifth era based on the weaknesses of the approaches in the fourth era which will begin from 2014 till date.

Key Words: *Employee Commitment, Employee Turnover, Early Era, Mid-Era.*

Introduction

Employee commitment is a concept that has been widely used irrespective of the size, structure and line of business of the organization involved. The concept has evolved over the years to mean several things to several scholars. The scholars approached the concept from year to year based on the trending issues that underline commitment in those eras. According to Kashefi, Adel, Abad, Aliklayeh, Moghaddam and Nadimi (2013) employee commitment is the employee's inner attitude towards their organization, job or group which affects their judgments, performance and loyalty to the organization. Therefore, it is crucial for the management of organizations to put in place adequate

machinery to improve their employee's inner attitude towards their job and the organization as a whole which is the trending issue at this period. In addition to improving this ensuring that they work towards improving this attitude, they must also ensure that they sustain it because its sustenance will go a long way to boost the overall organizational performance and also reduce the rate of employee turnover. The aim of this paper is to critically review the development of the concept and measurement of employee commitment. It is more of an historical review. The review was carried out from covers four eras which spans from between 1960 - 2014. This study becomes necessary in order to know

what has actually changed in the concept and further suggest better ways of approaching the concept in the nearest future.

1. The Early Era (Side-Bet Period)

The early era can be traced to 1960's and the dominant approach used in explaining employee commitment was the side-bet theory. That is why several scholars (Zheng, Sharan & Wei, 2009; Irefin & Mechanic, 2014) referred to this early era as the side-bet period. Becker who propounded the side-bet theory explained that the concept of employee commitment is based on loyalty to the respective organization. Defining the concept, Becker explained that employee commitment is the disposition of an employee to engage in consistent line of activities. Consistent line of activity implies that the employee is still willing to remain a member of the organization (Becker, 1960). Porter et al (1974) explained employee commitment in terms of affective commitment which involved identification and involvement with the respective organization. Mowday, et. al (1982) supporting the conceptual definition of the employee commitment as presented by Becker, defined it as a behaviour "relating to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and how they deal with this problem".

According to Becker, the side-bet approach was explained based on the existing relationship between the employee and the employer (Becker, 1960). The theory posited that employees are only committed because of their investments (time, ideas, etc.,) which were referred to as "side-bets". It was based on the threat of losing their investment along a perceived lack of alternatives to replace or make up for the loss of them that commits the employee to the organization (Cohen & Lowenberg, 1990). Similarly, WeiBo et al., (2010a) posited that some employees do not show withdrawal tendencies or even leave the organization because once they display such

attitudes, or attempt to leave their opportunity to claim their investments may be reviewed or forfeited. Corroborating the positions, Alutto, Hrebiniak and Alonso (1973) noted that employees remain committed to the organization as long as the reward for their investment is guaranteed, irrespective of the stress and working condition. However, if they are offered any alternative benefit that commensurate or surpass that of their present position they may be willing to leave the organization.

This attitudinal aspect of employee commitment is explained through calculative and normative commitments. Becker's approach claimed that there exists a close connection between organizational commitment and employees' voluntary turnover behavior. In fact, it identifies organizational commitment as a major predictor in the explanation of voluntary turnover. From the literatures available for this research, the methodology adopted by Becker the population and the sample size coupled with the method of analysis was not available only the instrument was mentioned and the instrument adopted by him was the Ritzer Trice Scale (RTS). This made it difficult for me to criticize the methodological approach. However, other research (Cohen & Lowenberg's 1990, Ritzer & Trice 1969; Alutto, Hrebiniak & Alonso, 1973) that have tested and retested the approach suggested that the approach had methodological issues that; the indexes in the instrument were inadequate to measure cumulative investment, the 11 items the instrument focused more on turnover rate rather than reasons for turnover.

Research conducted by Ritzer and Trice (1969) and Alutto, Hrebiniak and Alonso (1973) at this period emphasized that commitment should be measured based on reasons why employees leave their organizations. This became very necessary because at the peak of this era, the concept of

employee commitment was approached differently by Ritzer and Trice which made it necessary to develop general indicators (education, pay, gender, perceived job, mobility, age and tenure) that would be used to measure the perceived employee commitment.

Being the first to test the theory Ritzer & Trice (1969) used RTS (Ritzer Trice Scale) to measure employees' perceived loss. The quantitative research in which questionnaire was administered on 64 introductory psychology students while the data collected was analysed using two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) found out that there was no relationship between employee commitment and the side-bet indicators (Age and tenure) as initially presented by Becker. This finding cannot be justified, looking at the category of people Ritzer and Trice sampled. Since Ritzer and Trice were conducting the research on employees, using student was a wrong decision they would have used employees because even the concept clearly identified the categories of respondent to be employees and not students (employee commitment and not student commitment). Moreover, using a sample of 64 respondents out of a total population of 713 in a school was not that significant because there were other courses and classes which would have been added to the sample to make it significant. Also using stratified random sampling to select the student from a single class may have been a good idea to him but it should have been used to select classes or courses or courses at different levels instead of just using it for just two groups; male and female.

In order to revalidate Ritzer and Trice's claim, Alutto and Hrebiniak (1973) adjusted the instruments RTS (Ritzer Trice Scale) to HAS (Hrebiniak Alutto Scale) and then conducted a quantitative research. In the research 229 full time employees of Canadian University were sampled and a structured questionnaire was administered on them. The data was analysed

using two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). Their findings showed that there was positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and the side-bet indicators.

However, Alutto and Hrebiniak's finding is more significant to that of Ritzer and Trice because the right category of respondent (employees) were selected and the sample size was much. Also, the initial instrument used by Becker could not adequately measure employee commitment until some indicators were added (education, pay, gender, perceived job, mobility) by Alutto and Hrebiniak so that all the items that made the concept of employee commitment similar to employee turnover were removed. In addition, the reason for the ill structured instrument of Becker was because Becker did not identify some indicators in the instrument which ought to show that side-bet accumulates over a period of time as it was suggested when presenting the concept of commitment.

2. The Mid-Era (Affective dependency Period)

The second era was ushered in by the weaknesses that characterized the dominant theory of the first era which was the side-bet theory (side-bet period) in the 1970's. The second era was referred to by scholars (Zheng, Sharan & Wei, 2009; Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Sayani & Swamy, 2014) as either the mid-era or the affective dependency period. The dominant theory at this period was the Affective dependency theory. This theory was advanced by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). The theory assumes that employee's commitment is not only dependent on economic factors but also influenced by affective factors such as motivation, anxiety etc. It was based on this assumption that they were able to define employee commitment as; "...the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a

particular organization..." (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). This explains why the concept of employee commitment was founded upon the employee's consideration of the extent of the alignment between their own values and goals and that of the organization. The linkage between the two parties was the basis of their commitment.

Furthermore, Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) argued that employee commitment has three main components which are "Strong Acceptance", "Participation" and "Loyalty". They advanced their argument by saying that employee commitment was an alternative construct to employee turnover (as initially noted in the first era) and job satisfaction. Jernigan, Beggs & Kohut, (2002) argued that employee commitment is not an alternative for employee turnover or job satisfaction and that they should be treated independently from each other. Similarly, Feinstein & Vondrasek, (2001) posited that "Job satisfaction is a form of reaction to a particular work-related subject, whereas employee commitment is more of a universal response". Feinstein & Vondrasek, (2001) further argued that the level of satisfaction predicts employee commitment, hence they cannot be used interchangeably as suggested by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). The various scholarly arguments against the assertion of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) further strengthened the argument of Gaertner (1999) which established that job satisfaction is the basis of organizational commitment but not an alternative construct. A quantitative research was adopted to test for the validity of Mowday, Steers and Porter's instrument. The instrument which was developed by Mowday et al., (1979), was known as the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and it contained 15 items. The instrument was administered on 2563 employees of nine divergent organizations and was tested using correlation which was able to justify its reliability and also

served as a justification for their earlier assertion; that commitment was an alternative construct to job satisfaction, which dominated this affective dependency era. The result also showed that the instrument followed the three-dimensional definition as posited by Mowday et al., (1979) that, "employee commitment; is a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, is a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and is a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization".

Despite the fact the results showed the strength of the instrument that was developed by Mowday et al., (1979), O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) insisted that the first component focuses on the psychological basis for attachment, while the latter two are consequences of commitment rather than antecedents which was the reason why they could arrive at such assertion. O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986) advanced their argument by saying that some of the items in the OCQ scale dealt with turnover intentions or with performance intentions and that all of the statements are more reflective of behavioral intentions than attitudes.

In order to lay to rest the criticisms on the instrument and the concept of employee commitment as presented by Mowday et al., (1979), Iverson (1999) and Becker and Wilson (2000) suggested that the items in the OCQ should either be reduced to 12 or 9. By this they implied that in order to effectively measure employee commitment and not job satisfaction or turn over, the 3 items focusing on turn over intentions should either be removed or the 6 negatively phrased items must be removed and still tested on the same sample using correlation method of analysis because the sample size was significant.

In view, of the obvious flaws found in the dominant approach in the first and second eras which were all related to weak content validity of the instruments adopted, scholars

like O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) specifically advanced a conceptual and operational alternative to the OCQ in the third era while Meyer and Allen (1984) developed a methodological paper aimed at an improved examination of the side-bet approach using scales more appropriate for this goal in the third era.

3. The Third Era (Multi-Dimensional Period)

The third era signaled the end of the single dimensional approach that characterized the first two eras which were dominated by Becker's (1960) and Porter's (1974) theories, and the beginning of the multi-dimensional approach to employee commitment. This era was advanced by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and Meyer and Allen (1984). Their approaches were dominant in the 1980's and 1990's.

O'Reilly and Chatman's Approach

O'Reilly and Chatman's approach was developed in 1986 by O'Reilly and Chatman. Their approach was founded on the problematic state of commitment research which was evident in Affective dependency period where the approach did not differentiate among the antecedents and consequences of commitment, and the basis for attachment. It was in order to address this issue that O'Reilly (1989) gave a conceptual definition of employee commitment to be an "employee's psychological bound to the organization, including a sense of job involvement, loyalty and belief in the values of the organization". Similarly, Miller and Lee (2001) explained the concept of employee commitment from a similar point of view to "mean employee's acceptance of organizational goals and their willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization". By this they meant that an employee's psychological attachment to the organization is predicated upon their level of conformity to the rules and regulations regulating their extrinsic reward, desire for affiliation and

congruence between employee's and organizational values.

The conceptual definition of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) made a clear distinction between instrumental exchange and psychological attachment. They further argued that compliance dimension represents the instrumental exchange process, this according to them often result in employee's shallower attachment to their organization. On the other hand, two other dimensions, namely; identification and internalization dimension constitute the psychological attachment that leads to deeper attachment.

In addition, they were also able to contribute to the ongoing argument to establish the relationship between the organizational commitment and outcome. It would be recalled that the two previous approaches emphasized commitment as an important determinant mainly of turnover, yet O'Reilly and Chatman were able to advance the argument that psychological attachment can lead to other behaviors such as punctuality which he tested in in the quantitative research conducted on 395 respondents which included MBA and Accounting students in the selected organization, using correlation. Even though the result seems be relevant in this research, the two categories of respondents used; MBA and accounting students seems to be in appropriate because the focus of research on employee commitment ought to be on the employee of the organization and not students in the organization. This shows that the sample for the research was wrong.

At this juncture, it must be observed that the identification scale applied by O'Reilly and Chatman was of less significant contribution to the research he claimed to have conducted because it only emphasized the areas (i.e job satisfaction, turnover intentions, etc) that were already captured by OCQ. Similarly, a critical look at internalization and identification dimensions shows that they

both have similar focus and the compliance dimension does not actually reflect psychological attachment (emotional attachment) to the organization as expected.

Meyer and Allen Approach

As earlier noted, due to the unclear methodology of O'Reilly and Chatman's approach, Meyer and Allen approach became an approach to be reckoned with in the 1980's.

The main argument of the paper which was a test on side-bet approach was that the scales developed by Becker's followers (Alutto et al., 1973; Ritzer & Trice, 1969) was not capable of measuring side-bets, and that items on the instrument only measured attitudinal commitment and nothing more. Meyer and Allen (1984) therefore, suggested that in order to effectively measure side-bet, individual's perception of the magnitude of side-bets should be assessed". Meyer and Allen (1984) further argued that in order to measure commitment effectively as earlier observed, the interrelationship among several common scales must be ascertained. In order to do this, they developed two scales; the first scale contained items that were capable of testing for affective commitment (an improved version of the OCQ) while the second scale contained items that were capable of testing for continuance commitment. The development of these scales were based on the way they conceptualized employee commitment. Meyer and Allen (1984) defined the concept of employee commitment from two dimensions namely, affective and continuance. Meyer and Allen (1984, p 375) defined the first dimension, namely affective commitment as "positive feelings of identification with, attachment to and involvement in the work organization", and they defined the second dimension, namely continuance commitment as "the extent which employees feel committed to their

organization by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving".

The third scale was latter developed after a couple of years. Allen and Meyer (1990) noted that the third scale is the normative commitment scale which was used to measure normative commitment. This therefore brings the scale for testing employee commitment to three. This was how they arrived at the three dimensions of employee commitment. In view of this, they conducted a quantitative research in order to test the validity of their instrument. Based on the materials that were available, the sample size and the location of the research were not mentioned only the type of test conducted was mentioned; correlation. The findings reviled that the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) was between 0.58-0.82 and that Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) and Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) are highly correlative/interrelated (0.75-0.85) which means that there is a positive relationship between antecedents and outcomes.

Despite the fact that these three scales have been evaluated for 'psychometric properties, discriminant validity and relationship with antecedents and outcomes' and yielded a positive result (Hackett, Bycio & Hausdorf, 1994), Ko et al. (1997) argued that the instruments were developed based on the shallow conceptual definition of employee commitment which did not capture a detailed attribute of the three components which made it difficult to test for the psychometric properties as earlier suggested by Mayer and Allen. Ko et al. (1997) further argued that only CCS has a better content and discriminant validity, while the index point remained unstable between 0.58-0.82 and that ACS and NCS are highly correlative/interrelated (0.75-0.85). Corroborating this argument, Vandenberg and Self (1993) used the instrument provided by Meyer and Allen for the three component approach to test for the effectiveness of the instrument and the

approach. In doing this Vandenberg and Self (1993) selected points at work; first of which was the first day at work, the second was the third month at work while the third was the sixth month at work. The finding revealed that within those three periods, there were cases of instability among the components, most especially the affective component and the continuance component. The result implied that the newcomers do not possess enough information about the organization and the components that constituted commitment which made it difficult for new employees to understand and effectively relate with the items on the instrument. Also, they noted that “psychological state” was common with the three component but it was not clearly stated what psychological state actually meant.

It was noted that the theory was not able to provide a detailed explanation of the intricate relationship that existed among the three components having psychological state reflect in the three component does not substitute for the intricate relationship. Therefore, the approach needed a rework in order to provide a basic explanation for the intricate relationship as well as better instrument with more stable index by reducing the items in the normative scale to six. This served as the basis for the emergence of the fourth era.

4. The Forth Era (New Development Period)

The Fourth era was characterized by more complicated approaches. The era was dominated by Cohen (2007)'s Four Component Approach and Somers (2009)'s Combined Influence Mechanism Approach. Their approaches were dominant in the 2000's because they were able to provide another component of employee commitment in order to meet up with some contemporary conceptual argument that arose in the 21st century.

Two Dimensional Approach

The two Dimensional approach was developed by Cohen in 2007. It was from the two dimensions that he was able to present the four components of employee commitment. But before developing the dimensions, Cohen first developed a conceptual definition for employee commitment. Cohen (2003) gave a conceptual definition of employee commitment to mean a force that binds an employee to a course of action that is of relevance to the goals of the organization. Similarly, the definition of Cohen was also supported by Arnold (2005: 625) as the “relative strength of an employee's identification with and their involvement in an organization”. This conceptual definition formed the basis for their arguments in this era. The figure below explains Cohen's approach to employee commitment.

Figure 1: Cohen's Approach to Employee Commitment

EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT DIMENSIONS		Basis of employee commitment	
Timing	<i>Before entry into the organization</i>	<i>Instrumental Attachment</i>	<i>Psychological Attachment</i>
	<i>a</i>	<i>Instrumental Commitment</i>	<i>Normative Commitment</i>
	<i>After entry into the organization</i>	<i>Propensity</i>	<i>Propensity</i>
	<i>a</i>	<i>Instrumental Commitment</i>	<i>Affective Commitment</i>

Source: adapted from Cohen (2007)

This approach identified two dimensions of employee commitment which were Timing

and Basis for commitment. The timing of employee commitment is examined at two

different periods, the first period being the period before entry into the organization; this explains that before an employee joined the organization, he/she must have had an impression about the organization which influences his/her level of employee commitment to the organization. The second period was referred to as the period after entry into the organization; this is the period after which an employee has been employed by the organization. His/her daily interaction with other employees would enable the employee to ensure that their level of commitment conforms to what is obtainable in the organization. These two periods explain the commitment propensity based on time/periods. Similarly, the second dimension explains the basis of employee commitment. It explains employee's commitment as either instrumental attachment or psychological attachment. Therefore, the approach made attempt to distinguish between instrumental attachment and psychological attachment on one hand, and before entry into the organization and after entry into the organization on the other hand.

This two-dimensional approach formed the basis of the four component theory of Cohen (2007). As identified in the figure above, showed the two commitment propensities. It explains that the employee's perceptions are influenced by their personal beliefs, values, expectations about the job and prior experiences. Earlier studies conducted by Mowday (1982); Pierce and Dunham (1987); Ashford, Walsh, and Mowday (1992) that applied meta-analysis also established that the above attitudes are commitment propensity. Based on this, it can be further explained that before an employee enters into an organization his/her commitment is referred to as either instrumental commitment propensity or normative commitment propensity. The instrumental commitment propensity is the general expectation of the employee about the quality of exchange that

is dominant within the organization. It is part of the motivational process.

According to Cohen (2007), the quality of exchange in the context of this approach refers to the types of benefit and the nature or rate of reward an employee is expecting to receive from their organization. The top-right cell in figure 1 shows the normative commitment propensity explains the general moral obligations of the employee towards the organization before they gain entry into the organization. Therefore, in the light of this improved perspective of normative commitment which is now advanced as normative commitment propensity, Cohen (2007) defined it as the belief that one has a moral obligation to demonstrate loyalty and duty in all social situations in which one has a significant personal involvement. This slightly negated Allen and Meyer's (1990) argument in the sense that a committed employee does not retain membership in the organization because they are determined to do so or for personal benefit, but rather, it is based on their believe that such a behavior is "right" and expected of them. Therefore, the basis of the disparity between the conceptualization of normative commitment of Meyer and Allen (1991) in the third era and Cohen (2007)'s normative commitment propensity in the fourth era was the 'timeframe' that was introduced by Cohen (2007).

Furthermore, the instrumental form of commitment was classified as the lower level order of commitment while the normative form was classified as higher level of commitment. Hence, the term higher versus lower level order of commitment similar to the distinctions made in management theory and industrial psychology for other constructs such as motivation and leadership. Two examples of such theories are Herzberg (1959) Two-factor motivation theory and Bass (1998) leadership theory; transactional leadership and transformational leadership.

Also, the other two cells below refer to the basis of employee commitment after their entry into the organization. They are instrumental commitment and affective commitment. Instrumental commitment refers to the employee's perception of the quality of exchange. This time, the quality of their exchange refers to the relationship between their contribution to the organization and the reward they receive. The fourth cell in the figure 1 which is the last is the affective commitment which refers to the employee's psychological attachment to the organization. This can be seen in their identification with the organization, their emotional involvement and a sense of belonging.

This approach to employee commitment was able to solve two major problems in the last era most especially in the dominant approach of that era which was Meyer and Allen. The first problem it was able to solve was the high correlation between affective commitment and normative commitment that was between 0.75 and 0.85. This was achieved through the time dimension that was introduced while testing the two components. Therefore, Cohen's approach argued that the high correlations in Meyer and Allen occurred because normative commitment is a propensity to be committed which ought to be examined before entry into the organization, not after entry, as earlier identified. The second problem that the approach was able to provide a solution to was the discrepancies that characterized the definition and measurement of continuance commitment in the three eras. This resulted in the weak relationships between the determinants and the outcome. In order to resolve this, Cohen (2007) introduced the instrumental commitment which clearly portrays the idea of exchange. It was easier for Cohen to do this because he gave the concept an attitudinal approach the same way some previous theories approached it, which made it easier to prevent the overlapping relationship

between intentions and outcome variables of behavior that served as a challenge in the previous eras.

However, based on the studies that were gathered for this research, there have not been a scholarly application of this approach neither was there any criticism. Hence the approach has not been validated. However, similarly, the instrument adopted for this theoretical approach was not identified in the literature that was consulted hence this made it difficult to really effectively substantiate and validate his argument.

Combined Influence Mechanism Approach

This approach was developed by Somers (2009). The crux of the argument of this approach was that employee commitment should focus on the combined influences of AC, CC, and NC on work outcomes. In a research conducted on 288 hospital nurses in Korea, commitment profiles were compared to job search behavior, turnover intentions, job withdrawal tendencies (absenteeism and lateness) and job stress. Somers hypothesized that there are "eight commitment profiles in organizations that include: highly committed, affective dominant, continuance dominant, normative dominant, AC-CC dominant, AC-NC dominant, CC-NC dominant and uncommitted. Five of the eight commitment profiles were reproduced using empirical clustering methods (the AC dominant, AC CC dominant and NC dominant profiles did not emerge)" (WeiBo, Kaur & Jun, 2010:17). The result showed that there was an association between positive work outcomes and affective-normative dominant profile (such as lower turnover intentions and lower levels of psychological stress). The findings of Somer (2009) becomes questionable because based on all the materials that were available for this research none of them presented his methodology, neither did any of them explain

the instrument used as other approach did where they mentioned the use of ACS, OCS, etc., which made it difficult to justify their position. Just like the previous approach in this era, there is need for validation.

Furthermore, the argument of Somers (2009) which suggest that employee commitment processes may be more complex than previously thought by other scholars in the previous era may have no justification and it seems that the complexity is in his own research approach which is more complex to be measured clearly.

Also, this approach suggested that the levels of an employee's commitment often affects the way they are psychologically committed to the organization. Therefore, high affective commitment and normative commitment often have a negative (weakening) effect on continuance commitment. This in real life situation translate to the fact that whenever, an employee's affective or normative commitment increases, employee's tendency to stay with the organization is weakened. This again is contrary to the initial approaches that were earlier considered and Somer should be able to provide a more concise explanation for this argument which he has not actually done.

This, further implies that the beneficial patterns of commitment to organizations are likely to go beyond just the affective commitment to other components. All the studies of Somers were aimed at just exploring the combined influence of commitment on outcome variables especially those associated with employee retention and citizenship behavior which means that the scope of his work was defined, however, I think there is need for him to come up with a clear conceptual definition so as to clearly understand his position.

Summary

Between 1960 and 2014, employee commitment had pass through four different

eras. All these eras have different approaches to explaining the concept of employee commitment. The approaches have made significant contribution to creating a better understanding of the concept. The approaches in the early era and mid era explained the concept from one perspective (early era – investment while mid- era – affective factors) while the approaches in the third era and fourth era explained the concept from more than one perspective.

The major challenges of the approaches were in their methodology. Some of the approaches selected the wrong sample size when compared with the total population of the study as in the case of early era. While testing one of the approaches, one of the research used students as against employees which was in appropriate result. Also, there were slight differences between the way the concept was approached and the instrument developed. This resulted into the development of inadequate instrument. Even though the instruments were improved upon after they were tested by other scholars their weaknesses led to the development of newer approaches.

Furthermore, the weakness of the approaches in the fourth era that are related to the instrument and the unidentified methodology is a great challenge and this has constituted a constrains to adopt this approach. Hence if this approach is tested by scholars the argument of the propounders can be established.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, the research concluded that almost all the theoretical approaches to the study of employee commitment from the first era to the fourth era have potentially contributed to both the understanding and the development of the concept. The criticisms leveled against these approaches were what paved way for the re-conceptualization of the concept of employee commitment as well as the improvement on

the instrument; the scale and the items. However, this research recommends that the approach of Cohen and Somer in the fourth era should be validated. For Cohen, there is need to apply the theory to a real life situation, in an organizational context. There is need for scholars to test the theory. Similarly in the case of Somer there is also a need to revalidate the instrument by also applying the

instrument to in an organizational context in order to affirm that the right indicators were used. Furthermore, employee commitment should be well conceptualized. I think the validation and criticism of these two approaches in the fourth era can serve as the basis for another approach which would set the pace for the fifth era which would span from 2014 till date.

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