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**Psychological Contract and its Relationship with
Organizational Commitment An Applied Study
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**By
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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between psychological contract (**PC**) and organizational commitment (**OC**) of the academic staff of Ain Shams University. In such a framework, the objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the employee- employer relationship through focusing on exploring such variables of psychological contract, and organizational commitment and their relationship with each other.

Methodology: An applied study was conducted to collect data from the academic staff of Ain Shams University, and (375) questionnaires have been analyzed. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques were used.

Findings: Based on correlation and regression analysis, the research results show positive relationship between **PC** and **OC**- as a total score, and also positive relationships with **OCX** dimensions.

Keywords: psychological contract (**PC**), organizational commitment (**OC**)

1. Research Introduction and Problem:

The employer-employee relationship has become the center of many studies thanks to its impact on the effectiveness of the organization, the employee attitudes and satisfaction, and the quality of work life. The

relationship between employees and their organizations has often been described as an exchange relationship; employees pledge their services to their employer, commit themselves to their jobs, engage in their work, and undertake the obligations of employment. In return, the employees expect the employer to provide them - in addition to their economic benefits- adequate support and fulfill the psychological contract. As such, the psychological contract provides an explanatory framework for understanding employee-organizational linkages. Committed employees are valuable resources to the organization, that is, they are considered as a form of competitive advantage to their organizations (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Rashid *et al.*, 2003; Yu and Egri. 2005, cited in Meijen, 2007 & Arshadi, 2011). This research aims at examining the relationship between psychological contract (PC) and organizational commitment (OC) with application on a sample of academic staff of Ain Shams University.

The research problem can be expressed in the form of the following questions:

- What does psychological contract mean, and what is its importance at the workplace?
- What does organizational commitment mean, what are its dimensions, and consequences at the workplace?
- Is there a relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment?

2. Literature Review:

2.1. Psychological contract (PC):

Organizations frequently rely on contracts as a binding agreement between the employee and the employer. Psychological contract is an unwritten expectation mutually held by both parties in the employment relationship (cited in Dijk, 2004). This matches the definition that was set by Schein. as he

described psychological contract as "The unwritten expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization... Each employee has expectations about such things as salary or pay rate, working hours, benefits and privileges that go with a job... the organization also has more implicit, subtle expectations that the employee will enhance the image of the organization, will be loyal, will keep organizational secrets and will do his or her best" (cited in Wellin, 2007, p. 19).

Psychological contract describes an individual's beliefs about their employment relationship. These beliefs are based upon promises that are either expressed or implied by the parties in the employment relationship. If the employee is confident that the employer will reciprocate and keep its promises, psychological contracts will motivate workers to keep their end of the bargain and encourage them to fulfill the commitments they made to the organization (Rousseau, 2004. cited in Dijk, 2004, p.6).

Based on work by Rousseau & Tijoriwala (1998) and Guest & Conway (2002), psychological contracts are defined as "a set of reciprocal obligations or promises related to the employment relationship between an organization and an individual", and so by definition, a psychological contract is an individual perception". "The primary focus of the psychological contract is therefore the employment relationship at the individual level, between the employer and employee' (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, Guest & Conway, 2002, cited in Richard el el, 2009, p.819).

It has been argued that, under the new psychological contract, employees will continue to learn and adapt while improving their performance, and in exchange the organization will offer meaning and purpose, developmental relationships, and rewarding benefits (Rousseau, 1995; Baruch. 1998: Bruel & Colson. 1998; Roehling et al., 1997, 2000; Feldman. 2002; cited in Dijk, 2004)

How the psychological contract is formed: Rousseau (2001) proposed that psychological contracts are grounded in an individual's schema - a schema is defined as a cognitive structure that represents organized knowledge about a given stimulus - person or situation - as well as rules that direct information processing (Fiske and Taylor, 1984; Aggarwal, & Bhargava, 2009)- of the employment relationship. This schema develops early in life when individuals develop generalized values about reciprocity, hard work and these values are influenced by family, school, peer group and interactions with working individuals (Morrison & Robinson, 2004). Before individuals first employment experience, they have developed assumptions about what they should give and receive in an employment relationship and it is this schema that influences how an individual interprets the cues and signals from the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall, 2008).

Psychological contracts initially emerge at the time of pre-employment negotiation. That is, not only are specific transactional agreements discussed, but also the nature and extent of obligations. The socialization period seems to be particularly important in terms of organizational influences in shaping an individual's psychological contract. As such, the PC develops within a dynamic environment in which the individual is often interacting with multiple organizational agents who may each be sending a variety of messages both verbal and nonverbal (Shore & Tetrick, 1994, p.95-96). That is; Expectations also are formed during interactions regarding future patterns of reciprocity can constitute a psychological contract for an individual who is a party to the relationship. More generally, it is argued that when individual employees believe they are obligated to behave or perform in a certain way and also believe that the employer has certain obligations toward them, these individuals hold a psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990; and Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall, 2008).

DeVos, Buyens and Schalk (2003) found that newcomers changed their perception of employer obligations based on the inducements they had received and also, newcomers changed their perceptions of what they had promised based on what they had contributed. Dulac, Coyle- Shapiro and Delobbe (2006) showed that newcomer proactivity and socialization tactics were important in influencing newcomer evaluation of their psychological contract during the first year of employment (cited in Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall, 2008).

Psychological contracts rarely remain static and can change without any formal efforts made on behalf of the organization. Robinson, Kraatz and Rousseau examined how psychological contracts change over time. They found that during the first two years of employment, employees came to perceive that they owed less to their employer while their employers in turn owed them more (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)

When a major adjustment in the form of the psychological contract is needed, it follows four stages: the reasons for change have to be perceived, understood and interpreted as legitimate (challenging); the old contract is unfrozen and efforts are made to reduce and offset losses (reframing); a new contract becomes solidified and replaces the old one (generation); and finally acceptance only occurs as the terms and nature of reciprocity in the new deal become tested enough to be relied upon (testing and reliance) (Sparrow & Cooper, 2003).

A majority of the studies on psychological contract have focused on the effects of contract breach on employees attitudes and behaviors (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino. 2002). *Contract breach has been defined as* "an employee's belief that the organization has failed to fulfill its obligations to the employee" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Morrison and Robinson (1997) noted that contract breaches might occur due either to deliberate violations of the contract's terms by the employee or organization (reneging) or to a

misunderstanding between the employee and organizational representatives concerning the nature of the other's mutual obligations (incongruence). In addition, Rousseau (1995) suggested that contract breaches might occur because circumstances outside the organization's control prevent employees or organizations from fulfilling their obligations (disruption) (cited in Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

Following a contract breach, increased negative effect, decreased trust in the organization, and downgraded obligations to the organization would reduce employee efforts to help the organization. Supporting this contention, contract breach has been found to be related to decreased self-reported in-role performance, supervisor-rated in-role performance, and various kinds of self-reported extra-role behaviors carried out on behalf of the organization. Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), the greater the failure of the organization to fulfill its obligations to the employee, the more the employee would lower her perceived obligations to the organization (Coyle- Shapiro & Kessler. 2002: Turnley & Feldman. 2000: Robinson et al, 1994; Shore & Tetrick. 1994, cited in Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

2.2. Organizational Commitment:

Many decades ago. Organizational Commitment (OC) has become a very popular topic of organizational behavior and human resources management investigations. Commitment has been found to be related to a variety of attitudinal and behavioral consequences among employees such as. motivation level, organizational citizenship, and absenteeism and turnover rates (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Committed employees, who are highly motivated to contribute their time and energy to achieve organizational goals, are recognized as important determinants of organizational effectiveness. They provide the intellectual capital that, for many organizations, has become their most critical

asset (Stewart. 1997, cited in Jaros, 1997; Robertson. Lu. & Tang. 2003; and Rocha. Cardoso. & Tordera, 2008).

In early writings, there are many organizational commitment definitions developed. Hall, Schneider & Nygren (1970) define organizational commitment as the "process by which the goals of the organizations and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent". Sheldon (1971) defines organizational commitment as "an altitude or an orientation towards the organizations, which links or attracts the identity of the person to the organizations". Salancik (1977) defines organizational commitment as "a state of being in which an individual becomes bound by actions to beliefs that sustains activities and involvement". Porter. Steers, Mowday & Boulian (1974), define organizational commitment as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization", in terms of values and goals (cited in Sowmya, & Panchanatham, 2011)

According to Steers, Mowday & Boulian (1974), Stevens, Beyer, and Trice 1978; and Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979), a high level of organizational commitment is characterized by a (1) strong belief in the organization's goals and values. (2) willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. These beliefs and desires are developed in a process that involves "evaluating the investments and costs" of remaining with a specific organization (cited in Michaels. 1988; Javadi & Yavarian, 2011; and Sowmya & Panchanatham, 2011).

While studying organizational commitment literatures, researchers have categorized organizational commitment to either types or components. For example, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) identify three types of commitment: Compliance, identification, and internalization. Although identification and internalization capture a sense of belonging to the organization and a valuation

of its goals, compliance focuses on the relationship between employee contributions and extrinsic rewards. Similarly, Balfour and Wechsler (1996) suggest three forms of commitment: Identification, affiliation, and exchange. Identification commitment captures an individuals' sense of pride in the organization. Affiliation commitment implies that individuals may feel a sense of belonging and attachment to coworkers and the organization itself. Exchange commitment occurs when individuals believe the organization appreciates their work and effort (Stazyk, Pandey and Wright, 2011).

For more than twenty years, the leading approach to studying organizational commitment has been the three-dimensional (affective, normative, continuance) scale of Meyer and Allen (1984, 1990, 1997). The three dimensions were described as "...distinguishable components, rather than types, of attitudinal commitment, that is, employees can experience each of these psychological states to varying degrees...and that it is important to consider how "the various forms of commitment might interact to influence behavior" (Allen and Meyer. 1990 cited in WeiBo., Kaur & Jun, 2010; Meyer. Stanley, Parfyonova, 2012).

The Three Components Model (TCM) of Meyer and Allen, as its name suggests, is a commitment theory made up of three components: *affective commitment* (AC), *continuance commitment* (CC), and *normative commitment* (NC). Affective commitment refers to emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organization or occupation. Continuance commitment is based upon the costs associated with leaving the organization or occupation, that is, it is the perceived economic value of remaining with an organization. Normative commitment reflects feelings of obligation and commitment is based upon obligatory expectations to the organization or occupation. It also describes an obligation to remain with the organization for moral or ethical reasons (Jaros, 1997: Stowers, 2010, p.26; and Robbins & Judge, 2012, p.41).

Variations in the level of commitment can be attributed to many factors and variables. Personal characteristics such as age (Hrebiniak, 1974; Lee, 1971; Sheldon, 1971), education (Koch and Steers, 1976), gender, marital status and family responsibilities, and central life interest (Dubin, Champoux, and Porter, 1975) have an influence on organizational commitment. Personal characteristics also include factors such as the need for achievement, affiliation and autonomy, as well as higher order needs, which have been found to correlate with organizational commitment (Steers, 1977; Telia, Ayeni, Popoola, 2007; and Stazyk, Pandey and Wright, 2011)

There are other organizational factors and work experiences that work as organizational commitment antecedents; such as, leadership, justice, access to resources, participatory management, organizational dependability and trust (Buchanan, 1974; Hrebiniak, 1974) organizational culture (Sabir, Razzaq and Yameen, 2010), instrumental communication (Lambert, Hogan and Jiang, 2008). Organizational investments in the employee, socialization, and the availability of alternate sources of employment also have proven to have an effect on employee's organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger, van Olffen, & Roe, 2008; Fischer & Mansell, 2009). Research also proves that organizational commitment is strongly linked with occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement (Fischer & Mansell, 2009; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008) (cited in Stazyk, Pandey and Wright, 2011).

Various studies have tackled OC outcomes. Research found organizational commitment to have a direct effect upon such variables as retention, work effort, absenteeism, intent to leave, in-role behavior, and extra-role behavior, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Sutanto, 1999; Neining, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Kauffeld, & Henschel, 2010). Moreover TQM programs and organizational change cannot work well without highly

committed employees (Brooks. & Zeitz. 1999). Not only is organizational commitment believed to be negatively related to turnover (Meyer, Becker. & Vandenberghe, 2004), but is also positively related to productivity and other on-the-job behaviors.

Besides, as Stowers (2010) suggests, what makes employee's organizational commitment an extraordinary value and importance to any organization, is that committed employees are keen to identify needs of the organization and are proactive to take actions in responding to those needs demonstrating more dedication, vested interest, and persistent efforts.

Not only is OC useful and important for the organization, but for the employees themselves as well; organizations value those who show commitment and therefore, organizations may give the employee both extrinsic and psychological rewards that are associated with membership to the organization (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Societies as a whole also benefit from the organizational commitment of employees because national productivity and work quality may increase (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; cited in Meijen, 2007).

2.3. Relationship between PC and OC

There are researches as for example, Lemire and Rouillard's study that discussed the negative relationship between contract violation and affective organizational commitment. Furthermore, results indicated a positive relationship between contract violation and intention to leave, such that an experience of violation strengthened participants' desire to leave the organization. Finally, Lemire & Rouillard also indicate results which show that employees who experience a violation were engaged in less productive behaviors (cited in Kraft, 2008, p.20).

Other studies as Lester et al.. 2002; Turnley and Feldman, 2002, have also proved a significant relationship between fulfillment of contracts and

organizational commitment. Coyle- Shapiro and Kessler (2000) also confirmed the positive effect of PC fulfillment on an employee's organizational commitment (cited in Guchait. 2007; and Aggarwal, & Bhargava, 2009).

3. The present study model and hypotheses:

Studying the effects of psychological contract- with its two sides, has potentially important implications for both employees and organizations. Per se, the *main hypothesis* of this research is:

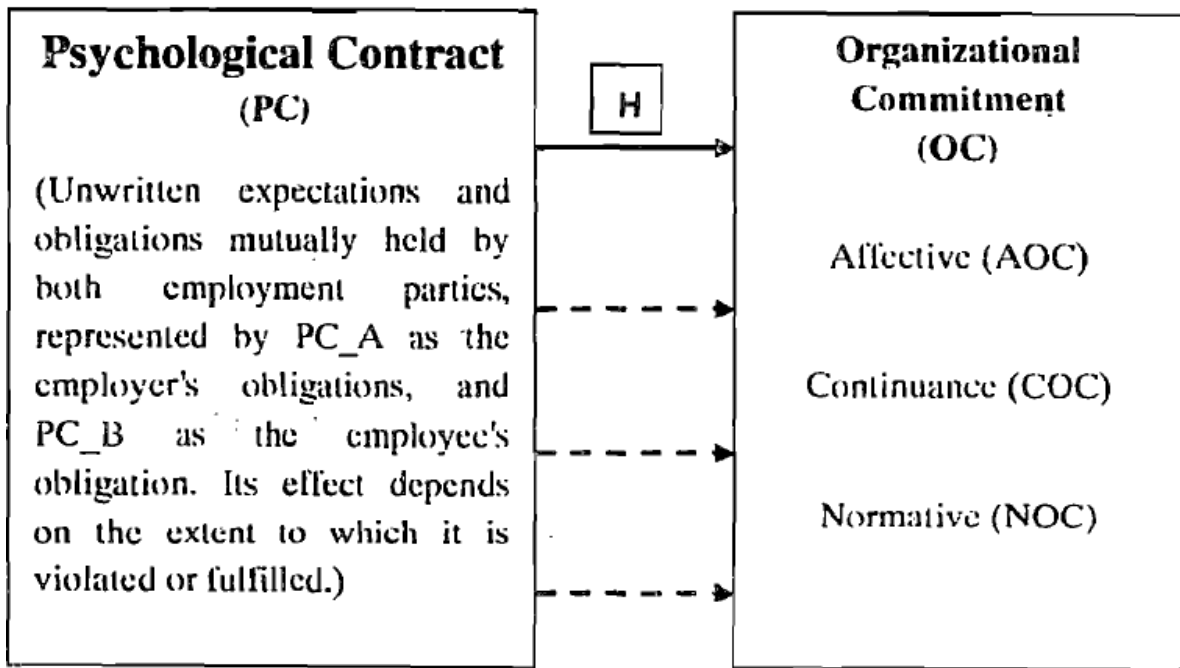
H: *There is a significant relationship between*

Psychological Contract and Organizational Commitment.

This hypothesis can be proved through analyzing three sub- relationships. which are:

- There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC).
- There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Continuance Organizational Commitment (COC).
- *There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Normative Organizational Commitment (NOC).*

Thus the following diagram shows the basic variables of this research; that is. Psychological Contract - (PC) and Organizational Commitment (OC). It also indicates the assumed relationships among these variables tested through the research main hypothesis.



Developed by the researcher

4. Methodology:

. Sample:

The research population is the Ain-Shams University faculties' staff members and their assistants. The researcher got 375 questionnaires valid to be analyzed.

. Measures and Procedures:

To measure the psychological contract, the researcher depends on Hutton's (2000) "Obligations At Work Survey". It is used in many other studies due to its high validation, as Harbok (2(X)3) "The Psychological Contracts Of Experienced College Instructors", and others. The survey consists of two parts, as employees evaluated their psychological contracts by assessing the extent to which the organization- university, had made such obligations to them in the first part; PC_A, and in the second part; PC_B. employees assess the extent to which they had made such obligations to their university, each part includes 23 statements with 5 degree likert scale for response.

Organizational commitment was measured using a shortened version of 12-item scale adapted from the scale originally developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) for measuring affective, continuance, and normative commitment towards the organization. Item responses summed accordingly to get respondents' organizational commitment profile -as total- and score of organizational affective commitment, organizational continuance commitment, and organizational normative commitment. The summed results could range from a low organizational affective, continuance, or normative commitment score of 4 to a high organizational affective, continuance, or normative commitment score of 20.

Analyses include descriptive statistics, correlations and regressions.

5. Results:

5.1. Descriptive Statistics:

Table (1) Sample distribution according to Gender:

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	123	32.8	32.8
Valid Female	252	67.2	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

Table (2) Sample distribution according to Age:

	Freq.	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid less than 30	173	46.1	46.1
30 to less than 40	129	34.4	80.5
40 to less than 50	46	12.3	92.8
50 to less than 60	24	6.4	99.2
60 & above	3	.8	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

Table (3) Sample distribution according to Academic Job Degree:

	Frcq.	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Demonstrator	137	36.5	36.5
Teaching Assistant	118	31.5	68.0
Lecturer Ass Prof	68	18.1	86.1
Valid			
Associate Prof	47	12.5	98.7
Professor	5	1.3	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

The following table (4) shows the mean, median, standard deviation (S. D.), the minimum and the maximum values.

Table (4) Descriptive statistics of the research variables:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PC_A	375	23	110	59.81	14.838
PC_B	375	25	115	91.87	13.725
OC_A	375	4	69	15.62	4.502
OC_C	375	4	20	13.81	2.813
OC_N	375	4	20	14.50	3.602
OC	375	16	98	43.94	8.207
Valid N	375				

5.2. Reliability Test:

Usually it is accepted as a statistical base that the value of Cronbach's Alpha to be equal to 0.7. From the following tables it can be said that PC & OC questionnaires satisfied this value.

Table (5) Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	
.89	PC_A: No. of Items 23
.92	PC_B: No. of Items 23
.709	OC N of Items 12

5.3. Correlation Coefficients and Regression Analysis:

Testing the main hypothesis:

"There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract and Organizational Commitment".

The following table shows the correlation coefficients found among the two types of PC and OC.

**Table (6) -Correlation Coefficientbetween
psychological contract and organizational**

	OC_A	OC C	OC N	OC
PC_A Correlation	.235**	.047	.339**	.296**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.072	.000	.000
N	375	375	375	375
PC_B Correlation	.510**	.139**	.431**	.480**
Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	375	375	375	375

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The previous table shows significant positive relationship between PC and OC. manifested in significant positive relationships among all three components of organizational commitment (totaled or separated) with the two aspects of psychological contract, as measured in this study.

Table (7) - Regression Model for the impact of PC on

Model Variables	Coef.	Standard Error	T	Sig.
PCA	0.123	.024	5.10	Sig.
PC-B	0.288	.026	11.1	Sig.
Constant	10.116	2.6407	3.83	Sig.

Model Summary:
Adjusted R² = 0.3064
Standard error of estimate= 6.835
F = 83.61
Significant

The previous table indicates a positive significant relationship and direct impact of psychological contract on organizational commitment as a total score, based on the significance of each of model's F and coefficients' T. In addition, according to the adjusted R², it can be said that psychological contract explains 30.64% of the variance in organizational commitment.

Testing the sub-relationships, Regression analysis of modeling Psychological contract (PC) types impact on organizational commitment dimensions:

- *There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Affective Organizational Commitment (OC_A).*

Table (8) - Regression Model for the impact of PC on OC_A

Model Variables	Coef.	Standard Error	T	Sig.
PC_A	0.04	0.014	2.81	Sig.
PC_B	0.132	0.015	8.54	Sig.
Constant	1.129	1.567	0.72	Insig

Model Summary:
Adjusted R² = .01883
Standard error of estimate= 4.056
F = 44.376 Significant

This model shows a significant impact of PC_A & PC_B on affective OC, with significant coefficients, although the constant will not be included because of its insignificance.

- *There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Continuance Organizational Commitment (OC-C).*

Table (9) - Regression Model for the impact of PC on OC C

Model Variables	Coef.	Standard Error	T	Sig-
PC_A	0.0124	.0097	1.29	Insig
PC_B	0.0424	.0104	4.06	Sig.
Constant	9.172	1.0617	8.64	Sig.

Model Summary:
Adjusted R- = 0.05
Standard error of estimate =2.724
F = 9.97 Significant

The previous table shows insignificant effect of PC_A (employer's obligations) on OC_C; continuance commitment, although of the significant impact of PC_B (employee's obligations) on it.

- *There is a significant relationship between Psychological Contract (PC) and Normative Organizational Commitment (OC_N).*

Table (10) - Regression Model for the impact of PC on OC N

Model Variables	Coef.	Standar d Error	T	Sig.
PC_A	0.070	.01057	6.64	Sig.
PC_B	.1142	.0114	9.99	Sig.
Constant	-.185	1.162	-.16	Insig.

Model Summary:
Adjusted R- = 0.303
Standard error of estimate= 3.007
F = 82.2 Significant

Table (10) shows significant impact of both psychological contract types on nonnative commitment, with R² = 30.3%.

From the previous tables, it can be argued that the psychological contract with its two aspects (employer's obligations and employee's obligations) positively affect the organizational commitment, and this matches with theory and previous studies. *Therefore, the main hypothesis cannot be rejected as there is a significant relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment.*

6. Discussion:

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between psychological contract (PC) and organizational commitment (OC). In order to test such relationship between PC and organizational commitment and its dimensions, the researcher collected data from a sample of academic staff of

Ain Shams university and applied the required statistical analysis in order to reach the research findings.

As stated in the results, the relationship between PC and OC is proven to be significantly positive (PC_A & OC significant correlation coef. 0.296**, and PC_B and OC a significant correlation coefficient of 0.480**), which is consistent with previous studies such as (Lester et al.. 2002; Turnley and Feldman, 2002; and Aggarwal, & Bhargava, 2009). This means that respondents who reported higher organizational commitment were more likely to have stronger psychological contracts. The correlations between continuance commitment and the two aspects of psychological contracts showed significant but weak, and insignificant correlations. Affective and normative commitment have positive significant relationships with both aspects of psychological contract.

When the relationship between PC and OC dimensions was examined, PC was found to correlate positively to affective organizational commitment (significant correlation coef. between PC_A & OC_A is 0.235**; and between PC_B and OC_A is 0.510**), and normative organizational commitment (significant correlation coef. between PC_A & OC_N equals to 0.339**, and between PC_B and OC_N equals to 0.431**) in consistent with earlier studies.

Normative pressures on an individual drive him/her to feel an obligation to respond to their organization, which highly apply to academics who usually morally oriented have a high sense of responsibility. However, a significant relationship between PC and continuance commitment was not proven. Insignificant relationship was found between PC_A and

continuance organizational commitment. Academic staff in public universities are motivated mainly by believing in their mission and social responsibility in educating generations, and affectively connected with the university; thus, the continuance commitment which is based mainly on the economic exchange idea

may not be the driver for more positive beneficial behaviors by the staff members toward their university.

It can be concluded from the research results that the university would need to look for ways and means to fulfill the psychological contracts; i.e. staff expectations and the university obligations. This can be realized by provide more organizational procedural, distributive and informational justice and transparency, appreciating extra efforts, improving the work environment including safety and security, working on improving the university image perceived by its members, and facilitating access to resources required to fulfill their academic teaching at better standards, adopting participative and supportive leadership styles, financing their research tasks. This may lead to increased affective and positive reactions towards the university such as greater work effort, lower turnover and absenteeism, and higher levels of OCB.

Future research may also explore ways to improve academic staff members' commitment through fulfillment of the university facilities obligations toward the staff, and satisfaction of their needs, such as recognition and appreciating citizenship behaviors, providing resources to finance researching tasks and reviewing the system.

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