

Leadership, Commitment, and Socialization in the Construction Sector- A Concise Exploration

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[Abstract] The present research is carried out to understand the constructs of leadership, commitment, and socialization in the construction sector. Surprisingly, little work has been conducted on leadership, commitment, and socialization in the construction sector. In this paper, the author reviews the literature on the topic. The literature mentions that the leadership style, which is relevant for construction professionals, is authentic leadership, and authentic leadership has the potential to moderate the relationship between socialization domains and affective commitment. The findings are considered with respect to the relationship between the constructs. This research will provide the groundwork for the construction management scholars to further empirically examine the relationship between the constructs.

[Keywords] leadership, commitment, socialization, authentic, construction

Introduction

Background of the Study

Today, organizations are confronted with a progressively competitive and fast-changing business landscape. Present-day customers have also transformed their consumption patterns. They claim superior quality, consistency, variability, promptness, and accessibility on the goods and services they obtain. They also demand organizations have superior performance criteria, as they have supplementary choices in goods and services, and they alter their requirements and wishes rapidly (Rao, 2005; Thomas, 2000). The construction sector is no exception to such a challenge. Also, employee trends have changed. Employees are anticipated to provide high-quality performance with improved competence and efficiency in practically persistent states of ambiguity and change.

Much research in construction management highlighted various human factors are responsible for project success, namely project manager competency (Ogulana et al., 2002), project manager commitment (Chua et al. 1999), commitment of project participants (Iyer & Jha, 2006), and project manager leadership skill (Jha, 2004) among others. Accordingly, this thesis presents the holistic behavioral framework encapsulating socialization, commitment, and leadership, which is appropriate for the construction sector.

Key Drivers of the Research

There are three significant drivers for this research: 1) describing the critical role of the construction sector; 2) identifying the critical human factors responsible for project success; and 3) developing a

conceptual and empirical framework for socialization, commitment, and leadership.

Role of the Construction Sector

A Global Overview

There have been pieces of evidence about the positive growth of the construction sector globally. The report published in *International Construction* in June 2019 highlighted the growth trajectory of the global construction sector. Some of the international highlights from the report about the construction sector are

IRELAND- the Kildare county council in Ireland has approved planning permission for Intel (Ireland) to construct a new manufacturing fabrication facility. With this move, around 6000 construction workers will be employed in the project.

BRAZIL- Planet Smart City, an affordable housing company, declared the launch of Smart City Natal in Brazil. In the project, the company has invested US\$ 34 million, and it will provide housing facility to more than 15 000 people.

NEW ZEALAND- The government approved US\$4 billion for infrastructure development of the country.

US- The president declared the budget of US\$2 trillion on the development of infrastructure facilities in the country.

An Indian Overview

Since 2014, the Indian government has invested massively in infrastructure projects. Also, as a reelection campaign, the winning party vowed to spend INR 100 trillion by 2024 on infrastructure to further improve the economy and to raise the living standards of the citizens (Brown, 2019). In coming years, India will be witnessing tremendous growth in the construction sector. “Boom in the Construction sector” seems to ubiquitous phrase, and this is also evident from a report published by Invest India, which operates under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It forecasted that by 2025 “Indian construction market is expected to become third-largest globally” and “construction output is expected to grow on an average by 7.1% yearly.” Also, this report highlights that in 2017, the construction sector was the second-largest employer and the second largest FDI recipient sector. Another article published by the Construction Industry Development Council (CIDC) states that this industry plays a critical role in economic development.

The most critical factor responsible for project success is a team effort (Assaf et al., 1995). On similar lines, Leung et al. (2004) highlighted the importance of the commitment of all the stakeholders of the construction project. In another study conducted in Egyptian construction, projects revealed that different actors (mainly contractors, clients, and consultants) involved in construction projects are blaming each other for the cause of delay (El-Razek et al., 2008). Doloi et al. (2012) highlighted that one of the most significant factors of delay in construction is the lack of commitment. Research in construction management highlighted various human factors responsible for project success, namely project manager competency (Ogulana et al., 2002; Chua et al. 1999; Kog et al. 1999, Sayles & Chandler 1971), project manager commitment (Chua et al. 1999; Kog et al. 1999), commitment of project participants (Iyer & Jha, 2006; Chan et al. 2001; Baker et al. 1983), owner competence (Iyer & Jha, 2006), top management support (Jha, 2004; Cleland & King, 1983; Martin, 1976) and project manager leadership skill (Jha, 2004; Ogulana et al., 2002) among others. Henceforth, researchers strongly believe that the success of construction projects

largely depends upon behavioral/human factors.

Behavioral Paradigm in the Construction Sector

With increased importance for success factors in construction projects, organizations are now preferring construction professionals with better people management skills and leadership skills rather than technical skills (Dulaimi, 2005). This argument is valid, especially for Indian construction professionals, as work dynamics, such as client, contractor and consultants working together for a single project, in a construction projects are highly complex, involving multiple parties. Hence project leaders/decision-makers are facing challenges in implementing project goals in the real world. Liu (1999) supported the importance of the commitment of construction professionals for accomplishing the project goals. Other researchers have highlighted the same postulate (Leung & Chan, 2005; Doloi et al. 2012a; Gunduz & Yahaya, 2018). Mohyin (2011) suggested that both attitudinal and behavioral components will shape the overall commitment of construction professionals.

Steers (1977), Arnold *et al.* (2005) and many other researchers highlighted three factors to predict commitment: (1) personal characteristics; (2) job characteristics; and (3) individual experience. Further, Mohyin (2011) opined that the most robust model of commitment is of Arnold et al. (2005). The researcher also accepts Mohyin's viewpoint, as Arnold's model consists of "organizational characteristics" as an additional factor to predict commitment, which is the most important factor for shaping commitment in the complex environment of construction. The study of organizational characteristics as a standalone factor is missed in Steers's model. The researcher, therefore, attempts to study organizational socialization, one of the essential organizational characteristics encompassing different domains, namely training, understanding, co-worker support, and future prospects (Taormina, 1997).

Training is considered to be an essential domain in construction as a trained and skilled workforce is responsible for project success. Understanding is the ability to comprehend and apply knowledge on the job and is also considered as an essential dimension in construction, as it helps the construction professionals have a complete understanding of the clauses written in the contract document. The accomplishment of the construction project is teamwork, which consists of clients, contractors, and consultants working together for a single project. Therefore, coworker support is undoubtedly a critical facet in any organizational setting, especially in construction. Future prospects, as defined by Taormina (1997), is the degree to which employees expect to have a rewarding career within the organization. This dimension is also a critical factor for predicting commitment in the construction sector — the higher chances of being rewarded, the higher the organizational commitment.

To reinforce commitment in the construction professionals, leaders play a vital role. Turner and Muller (2005) reported that the project management literature generally ignores the competence (leadership capabilities) of the project manager in project success. Effective leadership is a crucial element in the construction industry (Muda et al., 2016; Ofori et al., 2012). The scale of construction projects is significant, and it directly impacts the economic development of any country, especially a developing country such as India. Therefore, the success of such projects must be inevitable, as it has severe consequences for the nation. Daniel and Daniel (2018) established that the factors of complexity and uncertainty are closely associated with project success. Lloyd-Walker and Walker (2011) earlier proposed that authentic leadership is essential in such unstable environments. Authentic project leaders develop trust in the work environment

and are capable of motivating people to accomplish the exigent task (Toor & Ofori, 2008). They further advocated the development of authentic leadership in construction managers to capitalize on positive outcomes and to accomplish authentic organizational performance.

Therefore, inspired by the viewpoint of Toor and Ofori, we attempt to explore the interrelationships between the three constructs of socialization, commitment, and authentic leadership, which are believed to be the critical ones in construction.

Literature Review

Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is a process by which an employee develops the knowledge and skills required to contribute as an organizational member (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), transforming from “outsider to full membership” (Feldman, 1981) and learns values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge (Taormina, 1997). There are two main foci in the literature of organizational socialization, emphasizing the process and the content areas. Bauer et al. (1998) highlighted that the socialization process is critical in the organization for three main reasons. First is that the unsuccessful socialization of newcomers leads to employee turnover. This can be costly for the organization, as it has little or no return on investment for the investment made on the selection and initial induction process.

The second reason is that the socialization process has a strong influence on the behaviors and attitudes of the employee in the long run, which, in turn, impact their productivity and commitment. The third reason why socialization process is critical is that through this process, the organizational culture is transmitted to the new employees, and this helps in maintaining a coordinated work environment. Taormina (1997) stated that most of the research in organizational socialization focused on the process rather than the content. The researcher further proposed a four-domain model of socialization (see Fig. 1.2) based on content: (1) training; (2) understanding; (3) co-worker support; and (4) future prospects. The model proposed is a continuous process model consists of overlapping domains fitting with each other, presenting a coherent process.

Organizational socialization reflects the dynamic interaction between the employee and the organization (Reichers, 1987; Jones, 1983). On this assumption, Taormina (1994) conceptualizes organizational socialization process based on four domains, namely, (a) training (TR); (b) understanding (UN); (c) coworker support (CS); and (d) future prospects (FP). Further, Taormina (1997) defined these domains as (a) TR- “the development of job-related skills and abilities”; (b) UN- “power or ability to apply concepts based on having a clear idea of the nature, significance, or explanation of something”; (c) CS- “emotional, moral or instrumental sustenance which is provided without financial compensation by other employees in the organization in which one works with the objective of alleviating anxiety, fear or doubt”; and (d) FP- “the extent to which an employee anticipates having a rewarding career within his or her employing organization.”

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as an emotional state that binds the employees to their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1997) further suggested that organizational commitment is viewed in three broad themes; that is, a commitment which is related to the emotional aspect,

obligation based, and cost-related. The three themes were referred as affective, normative, and continuance commitment. This three-component model of organizational commitment dominates commitment literature (Meyer et al., 2002).

Affective Commitment- Affective commitment is the emotional state of the employee, which defines the attachment with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; English et al., 2010). With this emotional state of commitment, employees stay with the organization because they desire to do so (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees with the higher side of such commitment recognize themselves with the organization and are more committed to pursuing the organizational goals (Darolia et al., 2010). The employees are also willing to engage in interpersonal and citizenship behaviors in the organization (Colquitt et al., 2009; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Normative Commitment- Normative commitment is the attachment to one's organization due to the obligation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees feel that the organization has invested in their development, so they have to reciprocate with the feeling of moral obligation, which is a normative commitment. Colquitt et al. (2009) explained that normative commitment exists when employees feel that it is their right or moral obligation to be an organizational member. This makes the employees feel culpable to leave the organization.

Continuance Commitment- Continuance commitment is an attachment with the organization because of the cost associated with leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees usually compare their existing benefits or advantages of staying in the present organization with that of potential organizations and thereby have a fear of losing such benefits, which is the opportunity cost of leaving the organization. Colquitt et al. (2009) highlighted the reason contributing to higher continuance commitment to the limited job opportunities existing outside the organization.

Among the three components, affective commitment is a higher-order commitment (March & Simon, 1958) and Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) described it as an essential "core essence" of organizational commitment. Therefore, the researcher has considered only affective commitment as a construct to measure the essence of commitment in the present study.

The most commonly used definition of Organizational Commitment is given by Porter et al. (1974); it states that it is the degree to which employees identify with and are involved with their organizations (Lee, 2012). Meyer and Allen (1997) defined it as an emotional state that binds the employees to their organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) further suggested that organizational commitment is viewed in three broad themes; that is, a commitment that is related to the emotional aspect, obligation-based, and cost-related. The three themes were referred to as affective, normative, and continuance commitment. This three-component model of organizational commitment dominates commitment literature (Meyer et al., 2002).

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Socialization Domains and Commitment

Socialization scholars have referred commitment as an "outcome" variable (Fisher, 1986) and management practitioners considered commitment as most desirable employee characteristics (Bauer et al., 1998). The researchers also opined that socialization begins as soon as the employee enters the organization. Even some argued that socialization begins even before the employee enters the organization (Feldman, 1976). Therefore, commitment is considered to be occurring sequentially later than socialization.

Training & Understanding Domain and Affective Commitment. Social exchange scholars believe that the learning and development activities implemented by the organizations directly impact the commitment levels of the employees. Training is one such development activity and is considered to be the critical one in any organization as it leads to a higher level of job satisfaction, and lower levels of business cost (Wesley and Skip, 1999). Bhatnagar (2007) similarly established that organizational learning capabilities are a significant predictor of organizational commitment in the Indian context. Also, Hanaysha (2016) established that both organizational learning and training has a positive impact on organizational commitment. Bartlett (2001) earlier confirmed that the most robust relationship of training exists with affective commitment, and the relationship is moderated by job satisfaction.

Co-worker Support Domain and Affective Commitment. Ducharme et al. (2007) supported that co-worker support was inversely related with the intent to quit. In another study, Woo et al. (2016) established the positive association of perceived social support, which consists of co-worker support, supervisor support, and organizational support with organizational commitment. There exists much research to support the claim that co-worker support is an essential antecedent of job satisfaction and commitment in various organizational settings (Lambert et al., 2016; Paoline et al., 2006).

Future Prospects Domain and Affective Commitment. Martin-Perez and Martin-Cruz (2015) recommend that managers should make an effort to offer a balanced reward system to influence affective commitment in the employees. Gao-Urhahn et al. (2016) conducted a comprehensive study on the long-term development of affective commitment concerning income over six years and revealed that there exists a significant positive effect of change in income on change in affective commitment. Nazir et al. (2016) also established the linkages between rewards and affective commitment. Therefore, employees who

perceive positive and favorable future prospects tend to develop affective commitment.

Leadership

Leadership is defined by McShane and Travaglione (2003) as the process of influencing people to accomplish organizational goals. Other theorists defined it in terms of position, the process of influencing others, responsibility, accountability, a tool to accomplish a goal, the outcome of interaction, behaviors, and many more. So, the meaning of leadership varies for the different researcher (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). Durbin (2004) stated that leadership style is defined as the combination of the leader's behavior and attitude, which results in ascertaining the consistency and expectancy of dealing with others. Many other scholars have studied leadership based on Bass's (1985) Full Range Leadership Theory, which consists of three dimensions-transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. These dimensions are further divided into six sub-dimensions: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration for transformational style; contingent reward and passive management by exception for transactional style; and the laissez-faire approach, which is a non-leadership dimension. There also exist various types of leadership constructs that was highlighted as an emerging theme in leadership literature, namely authentic, aesthetic, charismatic, ethical, spiritual, servant, shared, political, integrative, cross-cultural, and cross-organizational (Toor & Ofori, 2008).

These themes are categorized as positive themes of leadership, which is responsible for the positive organizational outcomes. Moreover, the themes, namely authentic leadership, is considered to be the most relevant and essential for the unstable environment like the construction sector (Lloyd-Walker & Walker, 2011). Authentic project leaders develop trust in the work environment and are capable of motivating people to accomplish the exigent task (Toor & Ofori, 2008). Therefore, in the present study, the researcher has reviewed the literature to examine the role of authentic leadership in the relationship between socialization and affective commitment.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) have supported that leader's probity is crucial in an unstable work environment because authentic leaders will help in maintaining stability by reinforcing ethical values. Walumbwa et al. (2008) argued that authentic leaders promote positive psychological climate at the workplace. The research scholars of authentic leadership establish the same and indicated that authentic leadership reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors, such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, performance (Riberio et al., 2018; Semedo et al., 2016). Taormina (2008) stated that there had been little research on organizational commitment and leadership. In the context of developing countries, Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) also supported the same viewpoint. The studies on socialization, commitment and leadership considering these constructs together are nil in developing countries such as India. In the present study, the researcher, therefore, attempts to find some traces of evidence from the literature, which unfolds the relationship between the three constructs.

Saks and Ashforth (2000), a renowned socialization scholar, supported that newcomers react differently to similar environments. The scholar further theoretically supported that such interaction was owed to individual and organizational factors responsible for newcomers' work attitudes and behaviors. Song et al. (2015) established that core self-evaluations (individual factor) moderated the relationship between organizational socialization tactics and job satisfaction. Judge et al. (2002) defined positive core self-evaluations as a belief system in which an individual faces complex situations with confidence and in

a self-assured manner.

Joo and Jo (2017) established that constructive organizational factor (perceived authentic leadership), constructive individual factor (core self-evaluations) and constructive work experience (psychological empowerment) have a positive effect on employees' extra-role performance (organizational citizenship behavior). Although very few research exists on commitment and leadership, yet the researcher could able to find indirect evidence of the moderating role of authentic leadership in the relationship between socialization and commitment in the construction sector. Hence, in the present research, the researcher integrated the viewpoints of Saks and Ashforth (2000), Song et al. (2015), and Joo and Jo (2017) and proposed that perceived authentic leadership (constructive organizational factor) have an interacting effect on the relationship with organizational socialization and affective commitment (positive employee attitude). Toor and Ofori (2008) proposed the development of authentic leadership in construction professionals. According to the authors, the authentic project leader is the one who "possess positive values, lead from the heart, set highest levels of ethics and morality, and go beyond their personal interests for the well-being of their followers." Also, Walumbwa et al. (2008) compared the predictive validity of authentic leadership construct with transformational leadership and demonstrated that the former is a better predictor of work-related attitudes and behaviors. After identifying the superficial level of interaction of authentic leadership with organizational socialization on affective commitment, in the current research, the researcher attempted to find out some concrete evidence in the literature concerning the interaction effect of authentic leadership with socialization domains on affective commitment.

Interaction Effect of Authentic Leadership with Socialization Domains

Interaction with training and understanding domains. Social exchange scholars believe that the learning and development activities implemented by the organizations directly impact the commitment levels of the employees. Training is one such development activity, considered to be the critical one in any organization as it leads to a higher level of job satisfaction and lower levels of business cost (Wesley & Skip, 1999). Bhatnagar (2007) similarly established that organizational learning capabilities are a significant predictor of organizational commitment in the Indian context. Also, Hanaysha (2016) established that both organizational learning and training have a positive impact on organizational commitment. Bartlett (2001) earlier confirmed that the most robust relationship of training exists with affective commitment, and the relationship is moderated by job satisfaction. The employee is said to be satisfied with his/her job if the employee is happy at the workplace (Diener et al., 1985).

Rego and Cunha (2008) promotes that perceptions towards authentizotic climate create happiness at the workplace. Therefore, we believe that there exists the interaction effect of authentic leadership with the training and understanding domains of organizational socialization on affective commitment such that higher perceived authentic leadership leads to a stronger relationship between training and understanding domains and affective commitment. Naim and Lenka (2018) also confirmed the moderating role of strategic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and competency development, which, in turn, leads to affective commitment in the Indian context.

Interaction with Co-worker Support. Ducharme et al. (2007) supported that co-worker support was inversely related with intent to quit. In another study, Woo et al. (2016) established the positive association of perceived social support, which consists of co-worker support, supervisor support, and organizational

support with organizational commitment. There exists much research to support the claim that co-worker support is an essential antecedent of job satisfaction and commitment in various organizational settings (Lambert et al. 2016; Paoline et al. 2006). Rousseau and Aube (2010) suggested the importance of considering contingency factors in the study of affective commitment and indicated that job resource adequacy moderates the relationship between co-worker support and affective commitment. Vroom and Jago (2007) in their article on “The role of the situation in leadership,” conceptualized a paradox called as *leadership paradox* and advocated that situations or context plays a significant role in leadership. Karatepe (2012) explored the effects job embeddedness on the relationship between coworker support and turnover intentions and found that job embeddedness moderates the relationship between the two. Erkutlu and Chafra (2017) discovered a significant and positive association between authentic leadership and job embeddedness. Therefore, we have enough reasons to believe that authentic leadership may moderate the relationship between co-worker support and affective commitment.

Interaction with Future Prospects. Martin-Perez and Martin-Cruz (2015) recommend that managers should make an effort to offer a balanced reward system to influence affective commitment in the employees. Gao-Urhahn et al. (2016) conducted a comprehensive study on the long-term development of affective commitment concerning income over six years and revealed that there exists a significant positive effect of change in income on change in affective commitment. Nazir et al. (2016) also established the linkages between rewards and affective commitment.

Therefore, employees who perceive positive and favorable future prospects tend to develop affective commitment, and the relationship is stronger when the employee perceives the existence of fair reward policy and authenticity in the organization. This proposition is in coherence with the social exchange theory that effective exchange relationships are established based on mutually beneficial exchanges, which further evolve towards mutual commitment (Blau, 1964). Hence, we may assume the interaction of authentic leadership with future prospects to develop affective commitment such that the association between future prospects and affective commitment will be stronger in the presence of authentic leadership.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the literature review, a research framework is proposed given in Figure 1. This representation shows that P2 (demarcated by the bold arrow and bold font) attempt to identify the interacting effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between the content of organizational socialization and affective commitment. The present study identifies the gaps in the body of knowledge mainly in the three areas: (1) HRM practices; (2) organizational commitment; and (3) leadership in construction firms. While there exists extensive work on HRM, commitment and leadership in management literature, but there exist relatively lesser studies, particularly in the construction sector. Moreover, the studies based on HRM practices, commitment and leadership are conducted in isolation.

The researcher failed to identify the study that integrates the three concepts in the Indian construction industry. The three constructs are found to be the most relevant behavioral themes for the construction sector. Turner and Muller (2005) reported that the project management literature generally ignores the competence (leadership capabilities) of the project manager towards project success. Effective leadership is a crucial element in the construction industry (Muda et al., 2016; Ofroi et al., 2012) as leaders play a vital role to reinforce commitment among the construction professionals.

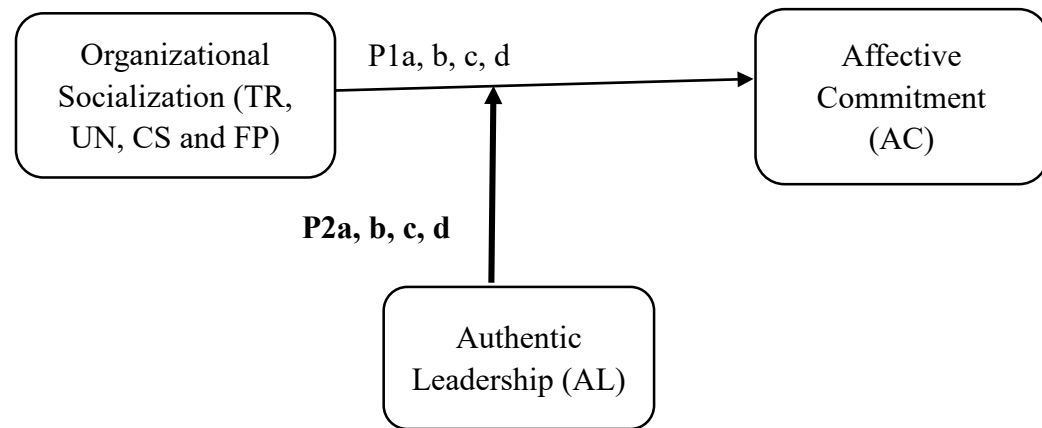


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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