

# THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE HUMAN RESOURCES'S COMMITMENT LE ROLE DU SOUTIEN ORGANISATIONNEL PERÇU DANS L'IMPLICATION DES RESSOURCES HUMAINES

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## Abstract:

This article aims to analyze the link between perceived organizational support (SOP) and the commitment of human resources. We conducted a quantitative study among Sonatrach employees, we set a sample of 526 employees and executives and the response rate was 78% or 412 individuals. Our results confirm the existence of a positive influence between the SOP and the affective and normative implication and a negative influence between the SOP and the calculated implication.

**Key words:** perceived organizational support, organizational commitment.

## Résumé :

Cet article vise à analyser le lien entre le soutien organisationnel perçu (SOP) et l'implication des ressources humaines. Nous avons mené une étude quantitative auprès des employés de la Sonatrach, nous avons fixé un échantillon de 526 employés et cadres et le taux de réponse était de 78% soit 412 individus. Nos résultats permettent de confirmer l'existence d'une influence positive entre le SOP et l'implication affective et normative et une influence négative entre le SOP et l'implication calculée.

**Mots clés :** soutien organisationnel perçu, implication organisationnelle

## 1- Introduction

The present challenge of organizations is to adapt itself to different changes due to increased international competition, market globalization, new social values and new technological development. In such an organizational environment, the companies are called on to redefine their way of stimulation, develop and support their key resources, i.e. the human resources. Thus, more than ever, organizations must understand the fundamental factors that guarantee the adequacy of those resources to the new organizational reality.

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In this regard, it seems like it is increasingly admitted that the engagement of organizations in favour to its human resources is a trigger and a prerequisite to its commitment. The purpose of this article is to highlight the link between perceived organizational support and the commitment of human resources. Furthermore, this study is in line with a research which suggests that the support of the organization and the superior in particular constitute the determinants to organizational commitment. The hierarchical superior is the major player in the building of employees' perception concerning organizational support. On one hand, because he represents "humanely" the organization, and on the other hand, because he maintains a privileged relationship facilitating the expression of the emotional support (Ray & Miller, 1992).

Finally, we believe that each of these concepts (organizational support and organizational commitment) is capable of producing a pertinent information and complement each other.

We will try to answer the following problematic: **how the organizational support influences the commitment of human resources?**

Our research hypotheses are presented as follow:

**H1:** the perceived organizational support influence positively the affective involvement toward the organization.

**H2:** the perceived organizational support influence negatively the calculated implication towards the organization.

**H3:** the perceived organizational support influence positively the normative implication towards the organization.

## **2- Literature Review**

### **2-1. The Perceived Organizational Support**

By identifying their relation to the organization, employees build perceptions related to the actions of the latter toward them, which they judge favourable or not. According to Levinson (1965) this personification is encouraged by the social, moral, legal, and financial responsibility of the organization. It is also contingent to the values, norms and the practices conveyed by the employer.

According to the theory of the organizational support developed by Eisenberger and his collaborators (1986, 1990), the perceived organizational support depends mainly on the attribution process performed by the employees regarding the organization. The latter will attribute certain attention to the organization according to the perceived favourable or unfavourable treatment (Rhoades et Eisenberger, 2002 ; Kurtessis et al, 2015). The perceived organizational support can be defined as the assurance that the employee possesses about the fact that the help provided by the organization will be available when it is needed to do his job effectively and to manage stressful situations (Eisenberger et al, 2002).

This theory is an application of the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) between the employer and the employee. Indeed, when the employee received the expected support, he will feel obliged to help the organization to achieve its objectives.

### **2-2. Organizational Commitment**

There has been so much research about the topic of "organizational commitment" that it is still complicated to define.

Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) defined the organizational commitment as *"the relative importance of the identification and involvement of an individual in a particular organization"*. The same authors defined commitment as *"a behaviour or attitude characterised by a strong belief in the aims and values of the organization, by the willingness to provide significant efforts that will be beneficial for it and a strong desire to remain one of its members."*

The majority of authors propose to envision the organizational commitment as a construct composed of various dimensions. Meyer et Allen modal remains one of the most widespread and validated modal in the empirical research (Meyer et al., 2009 ; Vandenberghe et al., 2009). For that matter, this modal will construct the reference framework on the basis that will support the operationalization of the organizational commitment concept, in the present research work. It conceptualize the organizational commitment under three dimensions: the affective, normative and calculated implication.

**The affective implication** represents the most studied form of the organizational commitment, (Vandenberghe, Landry & Panaccio, 2009), encompassing three psychological states of identification, implication and emotional attachment that link the individual to its organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Thus, the employee who shows a strong affective implication towards the organization have the impression to belong to it, by showing a great desire to stay. As mentioned before, the affective implication comes from the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Through the logic of these theories, the social interactions between individuals create reciprocal obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which are based on exchanges about impersonal or socio-emotional resources (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). As such, the worker will display an implication attitude (of affective nature) in exchange with resources which are impersonal (that is to say economical or other) and socio-emotional (that is to say the feeling of belonging, the emotional support and respect, etc.) that the organization is offering and according to the value the worker is attributing to those resources. Therefore, the implication can be perceived as a positive experience, experienced by individuals at work, and which they respond by an affective "currency".

**The normative dimension** from the modal of Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) refers to the feeling of duty that an employee has in regard to his organization. This form of implication is based on Wiener's (1982) work, for whom the organizational commitment relates to a set of normative internalized pressure. According to this researcher, the intensity of these pressures depend on the personality and the needs of each individual, themselves determined by the combined effect of socialization and biological factors. Thus, the development of the normative implication may depends partly on prior factors to the employment relation. The socialization and individual factors constitute only one source of the normative implication development. Indeed, in the context of worker-organization relation, the positive experiences, perceived by the worker as offered by the organization can generate also, through reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), a feeling of duty translated into a normative implication (Meyer et Allen, 1991).

**The calculated implication** reflects the worker's need to remain in the organization, based on the perceived cost if he leaves the organization. This component takes its roots from the investment theory (side-bets) of Becker (1960), under which the implication towards the organization increases depending on investment's magnitude that will be lost if this attitude stops. However, some authors such as McGee & Ford (1987) describe two dimensions linked

to the calculated implication, namely the perceived sacrifices and the absence of alternative solutions in relation to the actual situation. Thus, the perceived sacrifices reflects the benefits and the advantages that the employee will leave behind if he leaves the organization. These advantages can be instrumental or motivational (Vandenberghe et al., 2007), and thus the cost under discussion can be financial or psychological (i.e. the salary, the advantages related to seniority, the position in the organization, etc.). Regarding the implication because of a lack of alternatives, Meyer et al. (2002) showed that the perception of the actual employment choice intervenes directly in the development of the calculated implication. Thenceforth, the employee can perceive, a priori, the difficulty to find a similar job in another organization. It is therefore a “negative perception concerning the opportunities that the external environment conceal” (Vandenberghe et al., 2007), perceptions that can be influenced by some dispositions or personal characteristics of the worker.

### **2-3.Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Commitment: Which Relation?**

The superior possesses a great influence on the organizational commitment of the human resources. For instance, when he admits explicitly and with immaterial means the contributions of his collaborators, they become more capable of adopting extra-professional attitudes or commitment (Tremblay et al., 2000). A study of Trudel and Saba (2007) shows that the organizational commitment is higher when the superiors' management style is more flexible. The open-mindedness of the superior influences the employees' tendency to express their dissatisfaction and therefore to remain involved when there is sources of dissatisfaction (Wils et al., 1998). Cardinal (2006) affirms that the creation of a positive work atmosphere by treating its employees with respect, dignity and equality represents an advantage in a perspective of retention since the employees will see an enjoyable work environment and they will feel valorized by their hierarchical superior.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) indicate that the support of the hierarchical superior is an essential variable. He occupies an important place to create a favourable place to the commitment of his collaborators. He is the guarantor of the organizational climate of his teams and in this respect; he plays a determinant role in the process of organizational socialization of the latter. According to many authors, the hierarchical superior influence the individual performance of his collaborators since he has the power to induce or to facilitate the induction of behaviour that the organization valorize or expect from its employees. Moreover, the justice and the recognition represent two very important notions in employees' perceptions. These two must be expressed wisely, on two levels individual and collective. This condition the perception of individuals about the granted attention by their superior for the deployed personnel or collective efforts.

## **3- Quantitative Study**

### **3-1. Method of the enquiry**

The targeted population of the study is composed of executives occupying diverse positions in this company such as analysts, financiers, accountants, judges, computer scientists, and administrative staff. Considering the nature of the enquiry the sample is non-probabilistic even if all the salaried executives of the company has been invited to participate. It should be noted that some exclusion criteria has been applied by selecting only the executives with 12 months

of seniority (new recruits) and those who were absent more than one year because of leave of absence were not included in the study. Thus, 526 employees and executives received an invitation to fill in the questionnaire. 412 of the participants answered the questionnaire which represents a great ratio with 78% of answers.

### 3-2. Presentation of the Results

The link between the superior and every dimension of the organizational commitment is examined here:

#### 3-2-1. The link between the superior's support and the affective implication:

Pearson's correlation permitted to obtain the following results:

**Table 01: The link between the superior's support and the affective implication:**

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Pearson's correlation | superior's support |
| affective implication | ,658**             |
| Sig (bilateral)       | ,000               |
| N                     | 400                |

\*\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,01 (bilateral)

From this table results a positive and significant relation between the superior's support and the affective implication ( $r = ,658$  and  $p < 0,01$ ). The hypothesis 1 who predicted that a positive relation between the superior's support and the affective implication is confirmed.

In order to have a better explanation of the nature of this relation, we judged that it is wise to expose the obtained results in detail.

|                                  | SUPPORT1 | SUPPORT2 | SUPPORT3 | SUPPORT4 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>AI1</b> Pearson's correlation | ,548**   | ,789**   | ,689**   | -,798**  |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000     | ,000     | ,000     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>AI2</b> Pearson's correlation | ,603**   | ,845**   | ,650**   | -,142*   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,001     | ,000     | ,000     | ,002     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>AI3</b> Pearson's correlation | -,312*   | ,145     | -,510*   | -,465**  |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,025     | ,312     | ,012     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>AI4</b> Pearson's correlation | ,416*    | ,541*    | ,654**   | 0,087*   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,016     | ,021     | ,001     | ,035     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>AI5</b> Pearson's correlation | -,501**  | -,654**  | -,121    | ,462**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000     | ,000     | ,062     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>AI6</b> Pearson's correlation | -,654**  | -,201    | -,665**  | ,788**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,001     | ,052     | ,000     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |

\*\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,01 (bilateral)

\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,05 (bilateral)

Reading this table, results various positive and significant relations (and some negative and significant relations for the reversed items) between the superior's support perceived by the salaried executives and their affective organizational commitment.

For instance, the correlation is positive between the variable AI2 "for me the company has a great personal signification" and the variable SUPPORT2: "my superior worried about my well-being" ( $r = ,845$  and  $p < 0,01$ ). Also, the relation is positive between the variable AI4 "I really feel the problems of this company as if it was mine" and the variable SUPPORT3: "my superior takes into consideration my aspirations and values". ( $r = ,654$  and  $p < 0,01$ ).

**3-2-2. The link between the superior's support and the calculated implication:**

Pearson's correlation permitted to obtain the following results:

**Table 02: The link between the superior's support and the calculated implication:**

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Pearson's correlation  | superior's support |
| calculated implication | -,705**            |
| Sig (bilateral)        | ,000               |
| N                      | 400                |

From this table results a negative and significant relation between the superior's support and the calculated implication ( $r = -, 705$  and  $p < 0,01$ ). The hypothesis 2 who predicted a negative relation between the superior's support and the calculated implication is confirmed.

In order to have a better explanation of the nature of this relation, we judged that it is wise to expose the obtained results in detail.

|                                  | SUPPORT1 | SUPPORT2 | SUPPORT3 | SUPPORT4 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>CI1</b> Pearson's correlation | -0,548** | -,841**  | -,642**  | ,565**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000     | ,000     | ,000     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>CI2</b> Pearson's correlation | -,454*   | -,354*   | -,566**  | ,687**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,021     | ,012     | ,009     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>CI3</b> Pearson's correlation | -,653**  | -,678**  | -,563**  | ,501**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000     | ,000     | ,002     | ,003     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>CI4</b> Pearson's correlation | -,598**  | -,798*   | -,702*   | ,012     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,001     | ,015     | ,035     | ,056     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>CI5</b> Pearson's correlation | ,142     | -,601**  | -,533**  | ,367*    |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,121     | ,000     | ,000     | ,015     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>CI6</b> Pearson's correlation | -,451**  | -,632**  | ,032     | ,692**   |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000     | ,001     | ,076     | ,000     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |

\*\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,01 (bilateral)

\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,05 (bilateral)

Reading this table, results the majority of variables related to the superior's support which are highly correlating ( $r > 0,5$  et  $p < 0,01$ ) negatively with the calculated implication.

We can find the explanation of this negative correlation in the disrespect of the fulfilled engagements. When the superior do not live up to the expectations (communication, open-mindedness, respect, and availability, etc.) and he is incapable of fulfilling his promises, the salaried executive will feel that he is not “rewarded for his efforts” from his commitment it develops; this feeling that has an effect on the calculated implication.

3-2-3. The link between the superior’s support and the normative implication:

Pearson’s correlation permitted to obtain the following results:

**Table 03: The link between the superior’s support and the normative implication:**

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Pearson’s correlation | superior’s support |
| normative implication | ,769**             |
| Sig (bilateral)       | ,000               |
| N                     | 400                |

From this table results a negative and significant relation between the superior’s support and the normative implication ( $r = ,769$  et  $p < 0,01$ ). The hypothesis 3 who predicted positive relation between the superior’s support and the normative implication is confirmed:

In order to have a better explanation of the nature of this relation, we judged that it is opportune to narrate the obtained results in detail. Here it is about the analysis of correlation between the different determinants of the normative implication for one side, and for the other side the superior’s support.

|                                  | SUPPORT1 | SUPPORT2 | SUPPORT3 | SUPPORT4 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>NI1</b> Pearson’s correlation | -,448    | -,354    | -,142    | ,874     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,002**   | ,036*    | ,210     | ,000**   |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>NI2</b> Pearson’s correlation | ,562     | ,702     | ,544     | ,102     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000**   | ,002*    | ,001**   | ,112     |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>NI3</b> Pearson’s correlation | ,652     | ,541     | ,631     | ,321     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000**   | ,000**   | ,000**   | ,045*    |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>NI4</b> Pearson’s correlation | ,458     | ,501     | ,145     | ,455     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,015*    | ,002**   | ,003**   | ,001**   |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>NI5</b> Pearson’s correlation | ,854     | ,478     | ,452     | ,566     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,000**   | ,017*    | ,002**   | ,001**   |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |
| <b>NI6</b> Pearson’s correlation | ,756     | ,698     | ,578     | ,584     |
| <b>Sig (bilateral)</b>           | ,001*    | ,000**   | ,000**   | ,000**   |
| <b>N</b>                         | 400      | 400      | 400      | 400      |

\*\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,01 (bilateral)

\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0,05 (bilateral)

The found results of the inter-correlation highlights the existence of a positive and significant relation between the superior’s support and the normative implication, between various

variables, for example: the variable SUPPORT2: "*my superior worried about my well-being*" is positively correlating with the NI2 variable "*the company deserves my loyalty*" ( $r = ,702$ ,  $P < ,01$ ). Another positive correlation is noticed between the variable SOUT4 "*my superior is not concerned a lot about me*" and the variable NI1: "*I don't feel compelled to stay in this company*" ( $r = ,874$ ,  $P < ,01$ ).

### **3-3. Analysis and Recommendations**

In our study, we highlight the strong presence of the human element. The professional interactions between the salaried executives and their hierarchical are independent and sequential. In general, the superior who offers a peaceful atmosphere to his subordinate and maintain a mutual constructive dialogue will create in them a feeling of duty. These salaried executives can develop a sense of duty according to the norm of reciprocity of Gouldner (1960) and can be involved in behaviours of organizational affective implication. This sequence of exchange, repeated with success, is supposed to create a relation of high quality exchange.

This study revealed an affective implication highly displayed by some salaried executives. They put forward their good relationships with the hierarchical superiors. This attitude can be partially explained thanks to the interactions with the different representatives of the organization and particularly the hierarchical superiors, the salaried executives receive the superior's support and develop a feeling of accountability that is materialized by their affective implication.

These results are in agreement with previous study results. Thomas et al., (1995) showed, for example, that the support of the two hierarchical levels (I+1 and I+2) influence positively the affective implication.

According to some authors, the perceived support by the workers in relation to their line manager can improve the affective implication at the expense of other forms of implication, and this thanks to the identification of the employees' socio-emotional needs. Observing, these fulfilled needs, by the organization for whom they work; a feeling of belonging to the organization can increase and at the same time, it can lead to its identification (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This identification can determine their affective implication. As a result, they express an active and positive orientation towards the organization, and relatedly, to all its projects (Mowday et al., 1982).

The employee's development of the calculated implication is translated by a total disengagement from the organization.

The managers of Sonatrach are confronted to the issue of how to moderate this calculated implication. The findings of this study show that the superior's support influence negatively this implication. This underlines the importance of monitoring compliance with certain amount of "behaviour rules", not only at the level of management's department but also the hierarchy, if we want to be sure of the worker's commitment: employee's respect, showing a regular communication about the main taken decisions, maintenance of the skills and the integrity of the management teams, etc. Besides the HR practices usually studied (management compensation, the organization's support toward the worker, etc.), furthermore, the superior's behaviour is important in order to temper this undesirable implication. The availability of the superior or the coherence between his statements and his acts are domains where it seems that it is desirable to sensitize the superiors.



In our study, it has been demonstrated that it is important for the salaried executive to feel supported by their hierarchical superior. They expect that their superior will be present when they need him, will guide them and will help them to accomplish the given tasks effectively in the organization. The salaried executives are seeking for managers who can answer their various social and affective needs, in order to contribute to their well-being, and to enable them to achieve the organizational objectives.

Concerning the link between the calculated implication and the perceived organizational support, our results can be interpreted with the psychological contract theory of (Rousseau, 1995). Indeed, it is theoretically conceivable that the feeling of duty associated with the normative implication can be linked to the hierarchical superior's support, by using the framework of psychological contract: *"any psychological contract that is established between the employer and the employee is partially based on tacit reciprocal obligations, of which respect constitutes a moral duty"* (Rousseau, 1995. p.145).

Then, the psychological contract can be perceived as a precious management tool that aims at acting preventively in difficult contexts of readjustment and change as it is the case now in Sonatrach.

The issue of the normative implication of the salaried executives of Sonatrach is nowadays paramount to the extent that it constitutes an essential element of its performance. Thus, feeling the duty to work in the organization is due to the relation co-constructed with it and to the gratitude of having a work and feeling good in it. Also, it is due to the perceived organizational support and to the relationship with the others.

The salaried executive is normatively implicated, because he assumes that it is his duty (Vandenberghe, 2009). Our study revealed that for some salaried executives, the fact that being a member of the organization is a duty, in the sense that for him it is important to do his job correctly for a living and to maintain good relationships with the others.

#### **4- Conclusion**

Our study had the ambition to understand the links between the organizational commitment and the perceived organizational support.

In spite of the various conceptualization and operationalization (Meyer et Herscovitch, 2001), the essence of the concept refers to a psychological state by which the worker acknowledge, accept and share the values and the objectives of his organization. The more the values and the objectives between the worker and the organization converge, the higher is the implication and vice versa (Bentein et al., 2004).

Furthermore, it resulted from this study that the superior's support has a strong impact on the salaried executives. In general, these results allow us to establish a link between the relationships with the organization, specifically through the hierarchical superior, and the organizational commitment. These approaches go beyond the rational aspect of the employment relation considering that individuals get attached to the organization if they perceive an investment from the latter towards them (Steers, 1977). However, this attachment is conditioned by the quality of the relation of the managers. The human relation seems central and the support of the salaried executives by the managers of the organization is strongly present in the collected answers.

Also, our study is part of a bigger drive, which is to understand the effects of the organizational commitment of the salaried executives about their perception of the economic intelligence. Multiple concepts has been mobilised to explain this link, such as: the psychological contract, the social exchange and the organizational support... etc.

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