

## **Exploring Organizational Commitment and Leadership Frames within Indian and Iranian Higher Education Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

The survey investigates relationship between faculty members' organizational commitment and leadership frames of chairpersons. The primary objective of this research was to understand how these contribute in making faculty members committed to a university. It was a comparative study in Iranian and Indian institutions. Questionnaires containing organizational commitment and leadership frames measures were distributed to faculty members employed in Tabriz University and Punjab University. A total of 333 responses were thus obtained. Applying t-test showed significant difference between level of organizational commitment between Tabriz University and Punjab University faculty members. The leadership frames in both cases are almost the same. The difference, however, is that the mean for all the four leadership frames in Tabriz University is more than Punjab University counterpart. Furthermore, this difference was maximum in case of symbolic frame. There were significant correlations among four frames of leadership and organizational commitment and its three components. Tabriz University faculties did not have different means of leadership frames. In Punjab University there was a significant difference among faculties in regarding means of structural, human recourse and symbolic frames.

**Keywords:** Organizational Commitment, Leadership Frames

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### **Introduction**

Organizational commitment has received significant attention in studies of the workplace. This is due to the general recognition that this variable can be the major determinant of organizational performance (Angle, 1981; Ricketta, 2002) and effectiveness (Laschinger, 2001; Miller, 1978). When employees are dissatisfied at work, they are less committed and will look for other opportunities to quit. If opportunities are unavailable, they may emotionally or mentally withdraw from the organization. Thus, organizational commitment is an important attitude in assessing employees' intention to quit and the overall contribution of the employee to the organization.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Many scholars have defined organizational commitment, e.g., Kanter (1968), views organizational commitment as the willingness of

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workers to devote energy and loyalty to an organization. According to Porter et al. (1974) organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization.

The idea for investigation is based on the conceptualization of Meyer and Allen's (1997) three types of organizational commitment model. Figure 1 is a pictorial presentation of Meyer and Allen's three types of organizational commitment.

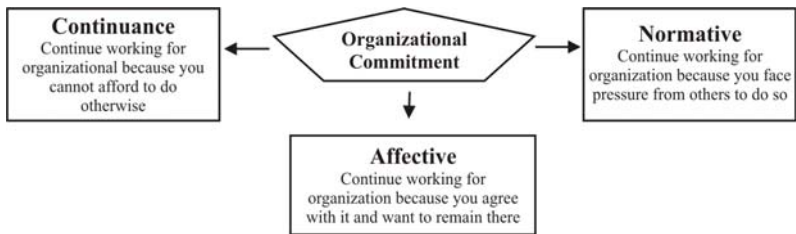


Figure 1: Three Types of Organizational Commitment

As figure 1 shows, Meyer and Allen (1997) identified and represented three forms of commitment: *affective*, *continuance*, and *normative*. *Affective* commitment is an individual's emotional attachment with (i.e. identification with and involvement in), the organization. *Continuance* commitment refers to the individual's recognition of the benefits of continued organizational membership versus the perceived cost of leaving the organization. Finally, *normative* commitment refers to the employee's feeling of obligation to stay in the organization. All three forms of commitment affect not only employees' willingness to remain with an organization, but their work related behavior as well.

Numerous antecedents of organizational commitment such as, organizational culture, leadership have been suggested in the earlier studies (Chen and Francesco, 2000; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Williams and Hazer, 1986). Although factors are involved, commitment to organization is probably most reflective of how employees feel about leaders and the behaviors they exhibit. Research in these areas has involved top management, participatory management, supervisors and supervisory feed back. Leadership was shown to have significant impact on organizational commitment (Williams and Hazer, 1986, Lok and Crawford, 1999, 2001). However, the influence of leadership frames of chairpersons on faculty members' organizational commitment in higher education setting has not been explored much.

## Leadership Frames

Although there have been other more recent and well-known approaches to the measurement of leadership style, the research here employed the framework developed by Bolman and Deal (2003) that divides

theories of organizations into four traditions, which the authors labeled, as *frames*. The concept of frames has many synonyms in the social science literature- schema or schemata (Lord and Foti, 1986), maps (Weick and Bougon, 1986), images (Morgan, 1986), frames of reference, representations (Lesgold and Lajoie, 1991), paradigms (Gregory, 1983), and pictures (Mitroff, 1985). The different labels share an assumption that individuals see the world in different ways because they are embedded in different worldviews. Because the world of human experience is so complex and ambiguous, frames of reference shape how situations are defined and determine what actions are taken.

Bolman and Deal (2003) provided leaders and manager's new perspectives, or frames to understand and manage organizations. As they defined, frames are both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. Frames help leaders order experience and decide what to do. And frames are tools. The ability to reframe experience enriches and broadens a leader's repertoire. These researchers offered four frames to look at organizations: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic, all generated from a broad knowledge base of social sciences-sociology, psychology, political science and anthropology.

The four frames listed above are not independent of each other. Studies (Bolman and Deal, 2003) show that effective leaders and effective organizations rely on using multiple frames and the use of the multiple frames can assist the leader to see and understand more broadly the problems and potential solutions available. It encourages the leader to think flexibly about their organization and opens various opportunities to the leader to view events from multiple angles. The structural frame risks ignoring everything that falls outside the rational jurisdiction of procedures, policies and organization charts. The human resource frame sometimes has a romanticized view of human nature. The political frame can easily become a cynical self-fulfilling tool. The symbolic frame could be vague and elusive. So choosing a frame involves a combination of analysis and artistry. It summarizes the effective leaders as architects, servants, advocates, and prophets.

Bolman and Deal (1991) have conducted a research to investigate how leaders use leadership frames in US colleges and universities, US public school and public school in Singapore. Results revealed that in all three populations, the symbolic frame was used in fewer than 20 percent of the cases while the structural frame was used in about 60 percent of the samples. Similar research in case of sales and marketing personnel were reported by Villanueva (2003).

Mosser and Walls (2002) in their research about Chairpersons' leadership frames in nursing programs found out that 60 of percent chairpersons were perceived by faculty members to demonstrate or use the behavior as described in one or more of the leadership frames. Faculty

members perceived their chairpersons to use the human resource the most. Research by Chein (2005) also supported the finding.

Researchers have advocated the value of leadership frames. Investigations into the impact of specific types of leadership behaviors reveal varying degrees of effectiveness. Leadership behaviors directly affect organizational commitment. Reichers (1986); Bolman and Deal (1991); Lee (2002); Mosser and Wallas (2002), Bruner (2003), Lok and Crawford (2004), Chen (2005) and Mitcher (2005), have reported close influence of leadership behavior on organizational commitment.

Leadership in a university is more complex than in a business. The mission in a business is clearer and simpler. It has to do with performance and profitability. Academic departments form the building blocks of institutions of higher learning and their function heavily depend upon the department chairperson's leadership ability. The leadership of the department is critical to the success of the teaching, research and service mission of the unit and collaboration between the departmental leader and the faculty. They are responsible for developing an environment conducive to motivating faculty members and encouraging scholarship.

It is important to identify types of leadership that enhance employees' organizational commitment so that managers can work to maximize the productivity of employees. Although a significant amount of research focusing on organizational commitment and leadership behavior in business organizations has accumulated, comparatively little data addressed the role of leadership frames of chairpersons on faculty members' organizational commitment in higher education settings. Yet, higher education organizations, where there is employment relationship between the member and organization represent an ideal context in which to explore the effect of leadership behavior and demographic variables on organizational commitment. There also was very little information to be found regarding these concepts within Indian and Iranian institutions.

## **Aims of the Study**

The aim of the study was to investigate the role of leadership frames as predictors of faculty members' commitment. Another aim of the study was to examine the extent to which nationality acts as a mediator variable for the influence of leadership frames on organizational commitment. On the basis of previous research finding and a consideration of the present research context, a number of hypotheses were proposed. These are:

- There exists no significant difference in faculty members' organizational commitment in Tabriz University and Punjab University.
- There exists no significant difference in leadership frames of chairpersons in Tabriz University and Punjab University.
- There exists no significant difference in leadership frames of

chairpersons with regard to university faculties in Tabriz University and Punjab University.

- No relationship exists between faculty members' organizational commitment and leadership frames of chairpersons in Tabriz University and Punjab University.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

The sample comprised faculty members who were working at Tabriz University and Punjab University in Iran and India, respectively. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to all concerned faculties for collecting the data that is, 200 for each university. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. Approximately, one *Professor*, one *Reader* and two *Lecturers* were selected from all concerned departments in the Tabriz and Punjab Universities. Three hundred and forty were returned, of which seven were discarded because of missing data. Therefore, the number of usable questionnaires was 333 that is, for Tabriz University (N=183) and Punjab University (N=150). In other words, the response rate was 83.25% that is, 91.5% for Tabriz University and 75% for Punjab University.

### *Instruments*

A questionnaire survey was used to obtain measures of organizational commitment and leadership frames. The survey instrument used in this study contains two established instruments. These are Meyer and Allen's (1997) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire and Bolman and Deal's (1990) Leadership Orientation Instrument. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire is a copyrighted scale and was developed by Meyer and Allen in 1997. The instrument was utilized to obtain levels of faculty members' commitment to their organizations. The responses choices for 18 items were based on seven-point Likert scale; they are: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, but inclined to disagree, undecided, undecided, but inclined to agree, agree, and strongly agree. The second questionnaire, the *Leadership Orientation Instrument* is also a copyrighted scale and was developed by Bolman and Deal (1990) to measure leadership behaviors through four different frames: structural, human resource, political and symbolic. The 32 items questionnaire, which is based on the five-point Likert scale with anchors labeled, (from Never to Always). The instrument consists of eight statements for each of the four frame of leadership. Permission was taken from authors regarding both instruments to using in this research work.

Both the above questionnaires were translated to Persian language. Also, reliability of both English and Persian versions was obtained through Cronbach's alphas. In all cases the reliability exceeded the satisfactory level. That is, Cronbach's alpha for organizational commitment measures ranges between .68 and .80 also, Cronbach's alpha for the leadership frame measures ranges between .875 and .93.

## Statistical Techniques

Data were analyzed using the following statistical treatment:

The Pearson correlation to determine relationship among organizational commitment leadership frames variables, a series of the *t*-test to compare the differences of main variables between the two universities, a series of ANOVA tests to examine differences of organizational commitment and leadership frames among different faculties in each University; SPSS® version 13.0 for Windows was the statistical software program used to perform all procedures.

## Results and Discussion

A comparison of the scores of the organizational commitment variables, between the Tabriz University and Punjab University faculty members was done using a series of *t*-test. The results of these analyses are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Tabriz University and Punjab University Sample on the Variables of Organizational Commitment and Leadership Frames

Main Variables	Punjab University <i>N</i> = 150		Tabriz University <i>N</i> = 183		<i>t</i> -value ( <i>df</i> =331)	<i>Effect Size</i> <i>r</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
	Organizational commitment	84.24	15.74	79.12		
Affective commitment	33.85	7.25	28.58	5.76	7.382**	.38
Continuance commitment	25.96	7.35	27.11	6.22	1.545	-
Normative commitment	30.12	6.30	28.63	6.30	1.935	-
Structural	26.36	8.33	26.36	6.29	1.633	-
Human resource	26.77	8.61	26.77	6.58	1.428	-
Symbolic	24.30	9.02	27.21	6.70	3.37**	.18
Political	26.33	7.42	27.09	5.95	1.037	-

Note: \**p* < 0.05 and \*\**p* < 0.01

### Discussion based on Table 1

Statistically significant differences (at the 0.01 and 0.05 level) between the two samples were found in case of overall organizational

commitment and affective commitment. The Punjab University sample scored significantly higher on the overall organizational commitment and one out of three types of commitment i.e., affective commitment. This means that in the present study as compared to Iranian sample from Tabriz University, faculty members from Punjab University were more emotionally attached to, and identified and involved themselves with their institution.

Also, table 1 shows that the value of *t*-ratio for difference between the means of the two samples under study, namely Tabriz University and Punjab University’s chairpersons in respect of leadership frames variables, were found to be non-significant at the 0.05 level. However, *t*-ratio for symbolic frame was  $t(331) = 3.37, sig. 2tailed, p < .01$ , which conveyed that the two means was different beyond the contribution of chance. It can be inferred that the difference was genuine and that the chairpersons of Tabriz University and Punjab University were different in respect of symbolic frame. For three out of four factors of leadership frames i.e., political and human resources no statistically significant differences between the samples were found. But for symbolic frame, Tabriz University Chairpersons scored higher than Punjab University. Effect size of significant *t*-value for symbolic frame variable was  $r = 0.18$ , therefore, as well as, being statistically significant, this effect is small and dose not represents substantive findings. The effect of nationality accounts for 3.24 % of the variance respectively. Hence, it may be concluded that mean values of structural, human resource, political frame variables in Punjab University were not significantly higher as compared to Tabriz University Iran on the same variable. However, mean value of symbolic frame of leadership variable in Tabriz University  $M = 27.21$  was significantly higher as compared to Punjab University  $M = 24.30$  on the same variable also.

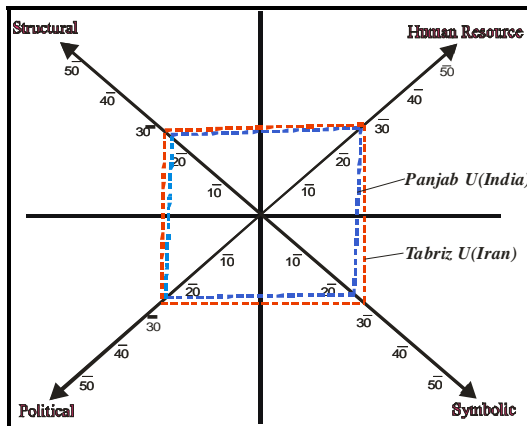


Figure 2: Profile Chart of Tabriz University and Punjab University Based on Leadership Frames of Chairpersons

### Discussion based on Figure 2

Profile of the leadership frames in both Tabriz University and Punjab University has been presented as a whole, vide Figure 2. The leadership frames in both cases are almost the same. The difference, however, is that the mean for all the four leadership frames in Tabriz University is more than Punjab University counterpart. Furthermore, this difference was maximum in case of symbolic frame.

A comparison in respect of university faculties using ANOVA was done based on four frames of leadership viz. *structural, human resource, symbolic and political* in Tabriz University and Punjab University separately.

Table2

Comparison of University Faculties based on Leadership Frames in Tabriz University

Faculties	Structural <i>M</i>	Human R. <i>M</i>	Symbolic <i>M</i>	Political <i>M</i>
Arts	28.67	29.07	28.49	27.73
Sciences	27.00	27.51	26.29	26.73
Education	29.00	28.92	28.83	27.58
Languages	29.79	30.50	29.71	29.71
B.M. & C	25.31	23.62	25.15	23.77
Engineering	27.82	26.88	27.24	28.29
Laws	30.15	30.38	27.23	27.46
Other	26.17	26.22	25.00	25.11
<i>F-value</i>	1.106	1.50	1.214	1.721
<i>df.</i>	7	7	7	7

Note: \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < .01$ , B.M. & C = Business, management and Commerce

### Discussion based on Table 2

In table 2 the means of leadership frames of faculties in Tabriz University were presented. The result of ANOVA tests showed non-significant *F* ratio for all four frames in Tabriz University. It indicates that the faculties in Tabriz University have almost similar leadership frames as perceived by faculty members.

### Discussion based on Table 3.a.

Table 3.a. shows that means of leadership frames among faculties of in Punjab University were significantly different. That is, regarding *structural frame* faculty of Laws has the highest mean. Also, concerning political, symbolic and human recourse frames, the highest means belong to the faculty of Languages, Education and Arts, respectively. The *F* ratio for structural frame  $F(7) = 2.502$ ; human resource,  $F(7) = 2.503$  and symbolic  $F(7) = 2.699$ , were significant at .05 level. That is, means of these frames in Punjab University significantly different. Having established that the



ANOVA for leadership frames based on faculty was significant, *Post Hoc*<sup>1</sup> test was conducted.

Table 3.a

Comparison of University faculties based on Leadership Frames in Punjab University

Faculties	Structural <i>M</i>	Human R. <i>M</i>	Symbolic <i>M</i>	Political <i>M</i>
Arts	27.02	26.98	23.90	26.05
Sciences	26.27	26.67	24.35	26.74
Education	17.75	19.38	17.75	21.75
Languages	27.50	28.17	26.00	27.08
BM & C	25.25	27.38	23.13	26.00
Engineering	24.85	23.77	22.85	24.77
Laws	34.63	33.88	35.38	35.00
Other	25.92	28.08	23.08	23.75
<i>F-value</i>	2.502*	2.503*	2.699*	2.033
<i>df.</i>	7	7	7	7

Note: \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < .01$

Table 3.b

Multiple Comparisons of University Faculties based on Structural frame In Punjab University Using (*Gabriel's Procedure*)

(I) Faculty	(J) Faculty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Education	Arts	-9.27	3.182	-18.69	.14
	Sciences	-8.52	3.144	-17.72	.68
	Languages	-9.75	3.758	-21.61	2.11
	Business M. & C.	-7.50	4.117	-20.56	5.56
	Engineering & Tech.	-7.10	3.700	-18.75	4.56
	Laws	-16.88*	4.117	-29.94	-3.81
	Other	-8.17	3.758	-20.03	3.70

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

### *Discussion based on Table 3.b.*

Table 3.b. shows that faculty of Education in Punjab University is compared to all of the remaining groups with regard to structural frame. For

<sup>1</sup> If sample sizes across groups are different than one can use *Gabriel's* procedure because it has greater power than other post hoc procedures.

each pair of groups the difference between group means is displayed, the standard error of that difference, the significance level of that difference and a 95% confidence interval. The control group faculty of Education is compared to the remaining faculties and reveals a significant difference with faculty of Laws. The  $F$  ratio in the column labeled Sig. is less than .05 for this pair of groups.

Table 3.c

Comparison of University Faculties based on Symbolic Frame in Punjab University Using (*Gabriel's Procedure*)

(I) Faculty	(J) Faculty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Laws	Arts	11.47*	3.353	1.55	21.39
	Sciences	11.02*	3.313	1.33	20.71
	Education	17.63*	4.338	3.86	31.39
	Languages	9.38	3.960	-3.13	21.88
	Busi. Mgt.& Comm.	12.25	4.338	-1.51	26.01
	Engineering & Tech.	12.53*	3.898	.25	24.81
	Other	12.29	3.960	-.21	24.79

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

### *Discussion based on Table 3.c.*

Table 3.c. shows that faculty of Laws in Punjab University is compared to all of the remaining groups in regards symbolic frame and reveals a significant difference with faculties of Arts, Science, Education and Engineering. The  $F$  ratios in the column labeled sig. are less than .05 for these pairs of groups.

Table 3.d. indicated that each faculty of Education in Punjab University is compared to all of the remaining groups in regards human resource frame and reveals a significant difference with faculty of Laws. The  $F$  ratio in the column labeled sig. is less than .05 for this pair of groups. Hence, it indicates that the faculties in Punjab University have different means of leadership frames. It conveyed that the means were different beyond the contribution of chance. This difference cannot be attributed to sampling error or chance error. It can be inferred that the differences were genuine and that the faculties of Punjab University were different in respect of leadership frames.

Table 3.d

Multiple Comparison of University Faculties Based on Human Resource Frame in Punjab University Using *Gabriel's Procedure*

(I) Faculty	(J) Faculty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Education	Arts	-7.60	3.253	-17.22	2.02
	Sciences	-7.29	3.214	-16.69	2.11
	Languages	-8.79	3.841	-20.92	3.33
	Busi. Mgt. & Comm.	-8.00	4.208	-21.35	5.35
	Engineering & Tec.	-4.39	3.782	-16.31	7.52
	Laws	-14.50*	4.208	-27.85	-1.15
	Other	-8.71	3.841	-20.83	3.42

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

### Discussion based on Table 3.d.

In order to study relationships among the dependent variable of organizational commitment and independent variable of leadership frames in Tabriz University (Iran) Bivariate Coefficients of Correlation was employed.

Table 4

Inter-correlation Matrix between organizational commitment and leadership Frames of the Study in Iranian Sample (Tabriz University)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- Org. Comm.	79.1	13.6	1	.71**	.816**	.79**	.31**	.35**	.39**	.31**
2- Affective	28.6	5.77		1	.378**	.345**	.16*	.177*	.27**	.144
3- Continuance	27.1	6.22			1	.49**	.24**	.24**	.23**	.21**
4- Normative	28.6	6.31				1	.3**	.37**	.38**	.32**
5- Structural	27.7	6.29					1	.8**	.77**	.80**
6- Political	27.1	5.95						1	.83**	.80**
7- Symbolic	27.2	6.70							1	.81**
8- Human Re.	28	6.58								1

Note: \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$

### Discussion based on Table 4

There were significant correlations among four frames of leadership and organizational commitment and its three components. The highest coefficient can be seen between symbolic frame and organizational commitment ( $r=0.39, p<0.01$ ). Regarding affective commitment significant correlations were found with symbolic frame ( $r=0.27, p<0.01$ ) structural frame ( $r=0.16, p<0.05$ ); political, ( $r=0.18, p<0.05$ ); however, no any significant relationship with and human resource was found. About

continuance commitment, statistically correlations were found for all four frames of leadership including: structural frame ( $r=0.24$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); political, ( $r=0.24$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); symbolic frame ( $r=0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and human resource ( $r=0.21$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The highest coefficient was between structural and political with continuance commitment. Because all four coefficients extracted from matrix were relatively equal thus, it can conclude that continuance commitment has correlation with all frames of leadership. Regarding normative commitment, significant correlations were found for all four frames of leadership including. The highest coefficient was between symbolic and political with normative commitment. Because all four coefficients extracted from matrix were relatively equal therefore, it can concluded that normative commitment have correlation with all frames of leadership.

Table 5

Inter-correlation Matrix among Main Variables of the Study in Indian Sample (Punjab University)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- Org. Comm.	84.2	15.7	1	.74**	.66**	.84**	.263*	.144	.21**	.17*
2- Affective	33.8	7.25		1	.119	.62**	.17*	.136	.113	.13
3- Continuance	25.9	7.35			1	.30**	.135	.023	.123	.034
4-Normative	30.1	7.71				1	.29**	.175*	.24**	.23**
5- Structural	26.4	8.53					1	.82**	.89**	.86**
6- Political	26.3	7.43						1	.85**	.76**
7- Symbolic	24.3	9.02							1	.87**
8- Human Re.	26.8	8.62								1

Note: \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$

### Discussion based on Table 5

Table 5 shows that significant correlations were found among all frames (except for political frame) and organizational commitment variable. The highest correlation was found between organizational commitment and structural frame ( $r=.263$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Affective commitment had low but significant relationship at .05 level only with structural frame ( $r= 0.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Continuance commitment did not correlated significantly with any of the significant correlation with all frames of leadership. Normative commitment has significant correlation with all four frames, the highest one has been seen for structural frame ( $r=.29$ ,  $p<.01$ ) the second high correlation was with symbolic frame ( $r= 0.24$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

## Conclusions

Punjab University faculty members were more committed to their organizations than Tabriz University counterparts. Significant differences between Punjab University and Tabriz University in case of affective commitment were found. Mean of the symbolic frame of leadership was significantly higher in Tabriz University than Punjab University. However, the differences between structural, human resource and political frames of leadership were not significant between Tabriz University and Punjab University. Tabriz University faculties did not have different means of leadership frames. In Punjab University there was a significant difference among faculties in regarding means of structural, human recourse and symbolic frames. Graphical presentation shows no major difference between Tabriz University and Punjab University as a whole in leadership frames, although, in all types of leadership frames, higher means were found in case of Tabriz University.

Significant and positive relationships was observed between all the three components of organizational commitment (affective, normative and continuance) and three out of four frames of leadership (structural, political and symbolic). No relationship was found between human resource frames and affective commitment.

For sample from Punjab University organizational commitment had positive correlation with leadership frames (except for political frame) that the strongest was between organizational commitment and structural frame. There exists significant correlation between organizational commitment and symbolic frame. There exists significant correlation between affective commitment with symbolic frame; continuance commitment with structural frame; as well as normative commitment with symbolic frame.

The present study has implication for university authorities. Universities should more often engage Chairpersons in related research projects to enhance their professional development skills and strengthen their skills in effectively serving as department leaders.

Stakeholders should consider the result of this study and conduct similar research on organizational commitment to engage chairperson in effective organizational functioning to enhance their leadership abilities.

The result of this investigation exhibit, that Indian faculty members tend to be more committed to their organization as compared to their Iranian counterpart. Thus, Iranian authorities should examine the Indian leadership and administration policy with regards to faculty members' welfare.

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