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## The Impact of Positive Skills Training and Positive Thinking on Organizational Commitment

**Mohammad Shabani<sup>1,\*</sup>, Sohrab Hasan pour<sup>2</sup>, Qmars morovat<sup>1</sup>,  
Mohamad Khaledian<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Psychology, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of Management, Ghorveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ghorveh, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University, PO BOX 19395 - 3697, Tehran, Iran

\*E-mail address: [Mohammad.shabani18@yahoo.com](mailto:Mohammad.shabani18@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the impact of Positive Skills Training and group Positive Thinking on Organizational Commitment. The population of the study consists of all the adjunct/affiliated/visiting professors of Payam Noor University of Ghorveh in the 2016-2017 academic years. In this research, the sample of the study consisted of 20 adjunct professors that were selected with available random sampling method. The sample of the experimental group included 10 professors that had participated in the positive thinking sessions voluntarily. And the sample of the control group was 10 people who had not participated in the positive thinking sessions (they were also selected by available random sampling method). The research method is semi-experimental with both experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to 7 sessions of positive psychotherapy; each session consisted of 60 minutes, while the control group received none of these therapies. Meyer and Allen questionnaire was used to collect data, and COVARIANCE analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that group positive thinking has a significant effect on enhancing organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** positive skills training, organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen organizational commitment questionnaire, positive thinking

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the main concerns of organizations and management experts is identifying the effective factors impacting the organizations performance, and finding ways to improve the performance of organizations. Diverse attempts have been made, and valuable results have been achieved. One of the effective factors impacting the organizations performance is spirituality which impacts the individuals' performance at different individual, group and organizational levels and in different ways, and finally impacts the organizations positively. Lately, the spirituality status has increasingly attracted the managers, staff and researchers' attention in the organizations and administrative departments, because it is believed that spirituality is significantly important in the interaction between organizations and its staff and the society (Sanei & Hassanpour, 2012). On the other hand, Organizational Commitment is one of the major components of successful organizations. Organizational Commitment is indicative of staff strong disposition for survival in an organization, the staff considers the organizations as his own identifier and wishes to be one of its members. One of the main issues of an organization is its ability to attract and maintain more committed staff and this issue is significantly important and beneficial for the organizations. If the staffs of organizations have higher degrees of job satisfaction and Organizational Commitment, they will have a better understanding of their organization and will try to achieve and fulfill the goals of the organizations (Stewart, 2008). One of the responsibilities of any social institution is to achieve goals that its existential reason forms the institution. The fulfillment of organizational objectives depends on the cooperation and coordination of all factors that their systematic interaction with each other gives significance to the organization. Among these factors, human capital has a more significant role than other factors in all levels of organization development. Human resource is a factor that possesses thinking and reasoning power, material and spiritual needs, individual goals, group and organizational expectations that should be considered attentively. Since human efficiency is not always predictable based on economic calculations, and other various factors resulting from more important human needs at social dimension, respect and self-discovery level are also important, therefore this study is an attempt to survey one major requirements of organizations (organizational commitment). This concept which has an important status in the aforesaid research is mostly affected by the person's belief in the organization, his acceptance of organizations goals, and his efforts to fulfill those objectives. As a result of these two factors, a kind of emotional and psychological dependence is formed in a person that inspires him to stay in the organization. Organizational commitment as a dependent variable, indicated a force that makes a person stay in an organization and work in line with the organization goals, that is, organizational commitment is associated with a series of productive behaviors. A person with a high level organizational commitment, stays in the organization, accepts its objectives, and attempts extensively to achieve its goals, or even dedicate himself to organizations objectives.

Hence, the notion of Qaulan based communication has been adapted in managing the workplace reward system. In a compensation management perspective, communication is often defined as a delivery of information from employees to the organization and from the organization to employees (Azman et al, 2015). Communicating reward information from employees to the organization refers to reward administration analysts, human resource management experts/pay specialists working together with stakeholders to actively seek broad information (e.g., job information, labor market information, performance information,

organizational economic capabilities, and legal requirements) and specific information (e.g., compensation expectations, benefits preferences, administrative preferences and employee equity perceptions) from employees (Henderson, 2009; Milkovich & Newman, 2010).

Conversely, communicating pay information from the organization to the employees refers to the amount of reward information that can be disseminated from the organization to employees will depend on its policy. For example, in a communication openness policy, administrators will clearly expose the value of reward and permit employees' voices in managing reward systems. While, in a communication secrecy policy, administrators will decide or control which suitable information should be openly delivered to employees. These Communication policies are often used by administrators to enhance employees understanding about the policy and procedures of reward system, avoid feelings of inequity, to 2000 (Henderson, 2009).

In an organizational behavior perspective, organizational commitment is generally interpreted as an employee is attached to his/her organization. Specifically, it may be defined as an employee's belief in the organization's goals and values, a desire to remain a member of the organization and loyalty to the organization (Azman et al, 2015).

Organizational commitment is a psychological state that describes the relationship of employees with the organization for which they work and that has deductions for their decision to continue with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Organizational commitment is considered as a key determinant of organizational outcomes such as performance (Herrbach, 2006); controllable absenteeism (Meyer et al, 2002) and organizational citizenship behavior (Coyle-Shapiro J, Kessler, 2000). For this reason, employee commitment continues to be one of the most exciting topics for both executives and researchers (Jha, 2009).

Organizational commitment research in the hospitality industry has received interest in the academic arena concerning impacts upon operational output metrics as well as client interactions (Luthans, 1998 ). Noted that job design and managerial style influence the degree of employee commitment, the barrier effect of conflict with superiors in the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment (Janssen, 2004). found that employee empowerment is closely associated with organizational commitment and that commitment exists at both the individual and the organizational level Meyer and Allen (1991). Noted that there are three types of organizational commitment: normative commitment, affective commitment, and continuance commitment. Normative commitment applies to the employee abiding by established organizational values; affective commitment refers to the degree to which the employee internalizes the values of the organization; and continuance commitment relates to the switching costs of maintaining membership or leaving the organization. Out of these three types of commitment, it appears that affective commitment has the strongest bearing to the hospitality industry due to the critical role that employees play in the provision of hospitality services. This growing body of organizational commitment research aligns with the work by Schuler and Jackson (1999). Strategic human resource management, Oxford, England: Blackwell, in that service provision is strongly related to employee organizational commitment, employee turnover, and organizational output. Their findings indicate that human resource feedback systems, construction of learning or performance communities, and delegation of critical service functions to employees are critical to the provision of quality services. More importantly there is evidence that

management can design and implement systems, policies and procedures that enhance worker satisfaction and commitment while improving organizational performance.

Organizational commitment has attracted the attention of researchers for a long time, and since its introduction into the organizational researches, many studies have been done in this regard. Therefore, there are different categories for the organizational commitment, one of which is Balferoksky category in 1996. Basic research in this area has pointed to the one-dimensional nature of commitment concept. Among the three aforesaid attitudes, organizational commitment has been exposed to change more than others. Commitment is defined and measured in different ways. In fact, this lack of consensus on commitment definition is mainly due to the behavior as a multi-dimensional concept. Review of the following definitions show that commitment is 1. A responsibility force 2. Directs behavior. Commitment is a requirement that limits freedom of action. Commitment is a state that links an individual with his behaviors/actions; by this way the person comes to believe that he should continue his activities. Commitment is a responsibility that an individual should value in the face of attitude change (Haghighat Monfared et al, 2010).

At the beginning of 21st century, Seligman and his colleagues tried to redirect the psychological research and considered two totally novel missions 1. Helping people with healthy personalities to enjoy happiness and productivity in life 2. Contributing to flourishing the human potential; as a result, positivism psychology school was generated (Luthans et al, 2007). With the advent of positivism psychology movement, disease-oriented approach changed to positivism and emphasis on positive aspects of behavior. Concepts such as psychological capital came into being which is defined with characteristics such as the person's belief in his abilities to achieve success, having perseverance in pursuing goals, making positive attributions about themselves and enduring problems (Luthans et al, 2004). Trying to achieve success in the face of new responsibilities in life, utilizing cognitive and behavioral abilities in the face of difficult circumstances, and generally healthy adaptation in life depends on optimism and positive expectations and efforts. Seligman defines optimism as an interpretative (descriptive) style that attributes positive occurrences to permanent, personal and pervasive factors, and attributes negative occurrences to external, temporary, and certain circumstances (Seligman, 1998). Positive psychology interventions include therapy methods or major activities in order to promote positive emotions, positive behaviors, positive cognition and understanding, enhance the wellbeing of individuals and their mental health and mental hygiene (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Today, the positive psychology as a new field of psychology, studies on the proficiencies and happiness in human scientifically. The happiness or satisfaction as positive excitements can lead to art and science production or creative problem solving in daily life. The psychological phenomena like happiness, optimism, hope and creativity which resulted from the positive experiences of mind, are focused by positive psychological studies (Zandvakili et al, 2014). The final goal of positive psychology that concentrating on talents and abilities of people rather than their disorders and abnormalities, is to recognize the approaches causing wellbeing and happiness (Naderi et al, 2008). The positive excitements change the mental and behavioral characteristics to positive attitudes (Froman, 2009).

In order to overcome the weaknesses of previous therapies, Seligman introduced the positivism psychology approach in the clinical psychology. In the first sight, in comparison to the main trend of clinical psychology, Positivism psychology may be considered secondary. Positivism psychology considers even the most disconsolate and distressed people as a series

of destructive habits, different tastes and interests, childhood conflicts, and brain dysfunction. Positivism psychology investigates more important factors in these individuals, factors like intact abilities, wishes, positive experiences of life, and personality capabilities, and how these (positive) factors can act as an obstacle to disorders and can act as a treatment. Man is a social being. Only a small part of the positivism is related to the loneliness and isolation. Other people are the best antitoxin and most reliable ecstasy of hard times in life. Positive relationship with colleagues has a great impact on our well-being. A life, in which there are enough positive relationships, is called a life full of successful relations. Therefore, without having a positive and successful relation with colleagues, a good and happy life is not usually fulfilled. Positive psychotherapy is divided into three sections: in the first section, treatment is focused on the positive abilities of an individual from different aspects. These capabilities can be put into practice based on the personal objectives of the client. The middle part of treatment focuses on alleviating positive emotions and dealing with negative memories. The final section of treatment includes fortifying positive relations, feeling of meaningfulness and purposefulness in life. Relationship therapy is one the most rehabilitating factors in psychotherapy. In positive thinking, the individuals are asked to identify their special capabilities through completing the values in practice scale. Then the therapist helps the client to find ways to employ his capabilities and solve the related problems. The client is motivated to get to the practical reason which helps him to identify the capabilities that can help him in solving his problems and then transform these capabilities into practical and clear actions or behaviors. One of the common instances of mental disorders is the person's inability to effectively self-evaluate and his inability to regulate and manage his emotions in different situations. Positive psychotherapy trains the clients to use the negative and positive aspects of their lives appropriate to the context of their lives. In this way they can manage the negative emotions of themselves and increase their own self-evaluation in different situations. Some positive psychological interventions, such as appreciation/acknowledgment and enjoyment boost positive emotions during the treatment. For instance, the studies have shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between gratitude, self-confidence and positive emotions. In positive psychotherapy using person's capabilities continues, while in this section it is focused on the meaning and purposefulness and the methods of using capabilities to serve a person and/or thing that is beyond oneself. There are lots of evidence which show that the feeling of meaning and purposefulness can rapidly save the person from misery, and can be an obstacle to feeling of disappointment and lack of control in life. Unlike the name of positive psychotherapy, the main focus of this method is not on the positive aspect of human experiences. Investigating the life of a person is not possible without surveying his negative experiences. Meanwhile, the clients in the therapy sessions are more inclined to talk about the negative aspects of their lives, because they think talking about negative aspects is more effective. Positive psychotherapy does not overlook negative emotions, nor do they encourage the clients to be too optimistic about life matters. These emotions are considered to be valid in positive psychotherapy, at the same time the clients are encouraged to draw out the potential positive dimensions from these negative events. The result of previous research has shown that this positive way of thinking about negative occurrences leads to psychological development and growth of the clients. During the psychotherapy, the clients learn how to face and these negative happenings and how to reconstruct them to make them more useful and contributing. The results of Kurdmirza Nikoozadeh research (2011) entitled as "the effect of positive psychology intervention program and Adler group-therapy on alleviating the

tolerance of addicted people" showed that positive psychology is effective in enhancing the tolerance power of addicted people. The results of Khakpour et al (2014) entitled as "the effect of positive thinking skills training on first grade high-school female students' assertiveness" indicated that positive skills training increases and enhances the assertiveness of the examinees in the experimental group. The results of Rostami et al (2014) research entitled as "investigating the effect of the positive skills training-based psychiatric rehabilitation on the happiness of hard of hearing teenagers" show that the positive thinking skills has a significant effect on increasing the happiness of hard of hearing teens. Kar (2006) showed that by inducing a positive mood (such as an unexpected gift, reading positive self-expressions, remembering a positive event, or listening to music), experimental studies has shown that these induced moods lead to more creativity, thought and flexible behaviors. In a study conducted by Seligman et al (2005), they have imposed the treatment interventions on depressed people for a week, to increase their happiness and decrease their depression symptoms. The studies have shown that hopefulness has an important role in recovering from different psychological disorders (Young, 1994). Mascaro and Rosen (2005) showed that the existential sense plays an important role in increasing hope. In addition, they showed that the existential sense has effects on the prevention of depression symptoms. Many studies have shown that the positive psychological interventions have effect on improving the well-being status, employing the experiences, and personal abilities, and reducing the depression level (Green et al, 2006).

This study aims to investigate the effects of positive skills training and group positive thinking on organizational commitment. Therefore, given the importance of positive psychotherapy which aims at preventing mental disorders and alleviating mental health of the clients, it seem essential to use this therapy to help individuals to have a more healthy mental. Given the existent literature, positive thinking effectiveness prepares people to confront the problems, adapt more to society, and to enhance their mental health. Therefore, his study aims to investigate the effects of positive skills training and group positive thinking on organizational commitment and wants to answer to the question: whether positive skills training (positive thinking) have impact on organizational commitment?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This research is semi-experimental design which has pre-test and post-test with a control group. The population of the study consists of all the adjunct/affiliated/visiting professors of Payam Noor University of Ghorveh who were teaching in the 2016-2017 academic years. In this research, the sample of the study consisted of 20 adjunct professors that were selected with random available sampling method. The sample of the experimental group included 10 professors that had participated in the positive thinking sessions voluntarily. And the sample of the control group was 10 people who had not participated in the positive thinking sessions (were selected by random available sampling method). The research method is semi-experimental with both experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to 7sessions of positive psychotherapy; each session consisted of h hour, while the control group received none of these trainings. Meyer and Allen questionnaire was used to collect data and descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (COVARIANCE analysis test) was used to analyze the data.

## Research instruments

Organizational commitment scale is made and validated by Meyers and Allen in 1996. This scale is consisted of 24 questions. 1-8 questions are related to emotional commitment sub-scale. 9-16 questions include continuous commitment scale. Normative commitment also includes eight questions from 17-24. The scoring of organizational commitment scale is as follows: from 1-7 is (1) I totally agree, (6) I do agree, (5) I agree (4) neither agree nor disagree (3) I disagree (2) I do disagree (1) I totally disagree. In Meyer and Allen (1984) and Hacket et al (1994) research, the reliability coefficient of all three scales of organizational commitment has been reported to be 50-88% which shows its acceptability. In order to validate this scale, it is correlated with other scales of organizational commitment. In Meyer and Allen (1984) and Hacket et al (1994) research, the validity of this scale is reported to be between  $r = 0.60$  to  $r = 0.70$  (Asgari and Pourtorab, 2008).

## A review on seven sessions of positive psychotherapy (Rashid and Seligman, 2011)

*First session:* familiarity with group objectives, doing the pre-test.

*Second session:* lack of positive resources like positive emotions, personal strengths, and meaning may bring about generating and maintaining depression and engendering 'empty life'. Assignment: the clients introduce themselves positively in a page (about 300 words) such that he writes a tangible story which shows his best personal strengths and how to make optimal use of them.

*Third session:* the client specifies his personal strengths from his "positive introduction" and talks about the situations that these kinds of strengths has helped him out in the past. Assignment: the clients reply the questions of "test of active strengths in action" online so that personal strengths may be identified.

*Fourth session:* importance of developing positive emotions by writing in a blessing and gift diary and consider using personal strengths.

*Fifth session:* The importance of growing positive emotions through writing to the daily blessing, and review and use of personal strengths.

*Sixth session:* the client is invited to know the strengths of other important individuals. Assignment: the clients are trained to react actively and constructively to the positive events that are narrated by others. The clients determine a time to celebrate the strengths of themselves and the strengths of other important people.

*Seventh session:* conclusion and doing the post-test.

## 3. RESULTS

The purpose of the present research is to consider the effectiveness of Positive skills training (positive thinking) on organizational commitment. Descriptive data of organizational commitment scores in pre-test and post-test in control and experimental groups, result of assumption of slope homogeneity test, and result of covariance analysis test on score mean of pre-test and post-test of the control and experimental groups about organizational commitment are given as follows:

**Table 1.** Descriptive data of organizational commitment at pre-test and post-tests in both experimental and control groups (N = 10)

group	level	experiment		control	
		pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
organizational commitment	Mean	91.01	96.6	90.2	90.5
	Standard deviation	6.16	5.97	5.6	5.75

According to data in Table (1) mean and standard deviation of organizational commitment scale of experimental group in pre-test were 91.01 and 6.16 respectively and in post-test were 96.6 and 5.97 respectively. Also in self-confidence, mean and standard deviation of organizational commitment scale of control group in pre-test were 90.2 and 5.6, respectively and in post-test were 90.5 and 5.75 respectively.

**Table 2.** Result of report on the rest of homogeneously assumed slopes

variables	Sum of squares	d.f	mean of squares	F	Sig	Eta square
group	12/622	1	12/622	1/457	0/245	0/083
Pre-test	527/24	1	527/24	60/87	0/001	0/792
Pre-test* group	7/82	1	7/82	0/9	0/356	0/053
error	138/59	16	8/66			

Findings of Table (2) show that slope homogeneity at values of  $F(1, 16) = 0.9$  was not significant for organizational commitment. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes has been realized for organizational commitment. Also, test of homogeneity of levene variance in organizational commitment ( $F = 3.74$  and  $P = 0.07$ ) at 0.05 was not significant. So, variance of both control and experimental group at organizational commitment was not significantly different and assumption of variance homogeneity is confirmed. Given the findings of Table (2) and Levene test covariance analysis was used to analyze the given assumption whose result is shown in Table (3).

**Table 3.** Result of analysis test in organizational commitment

variables	Variable source	Sum of squares	d.f	mean of squares	F	Sig	Eta square
organizational commitment	Pre-test	520/5	1	520/5	60/44	0.001	0/78
	group	144/99	1	144/99	16/83	0.001	0.5
	error	146/4	17	8/612			

Data in Table (3) show that value of F ( $F = 16.83$ ) and significant level of 0.001 in group variable show the difference between two groups at post-test. The results suggest effectiveness of positive psychotherapy (positive thinking) for the participants. In other words, positive psychotherapy has been able to increase **organizational commitment** in the participants of the experimental group, namely, college students. The value of  $\eta^2 = 0.5$  is another reason for effectiveness of this method on the given variable.

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of positive skills training (positive thinking) on enhancing the organizational commitment. Given the present research hypothesis and findings it can be concluded that using positive skills training has positive impact on enhancing organizational commitment. This finding is in line with similar researches such as Kurdmirza Nikoozadeh (2011), Khakpour et al (2014), Rostami et al (2014), Young (1994), Mascaro & Rosen (2005), Kar (2006), Seligman et al (2005), and Green et al (2006). These findings show that positive psychology interventions encourage the people to enjoy and be satisfied with daily activities. In one study, when the individuals were practicing optimism and gratitude, had a better interpretation of life events, while no significant change has occurred in their lives. Therefore, in addition to generating positive emotions, one other advantage of positive activities effect is alleviating positive thinking. Thus, positive activities results in the increment of positive behaviors. Positive activities may also lead to alleviating organization commitment through satisfying basic mental needs, such as independence (control), continuity (connection), competence (efficiency).

Therefore, in order to schedule appropriate actions, alleviate mental health services, and generate related policies in universities and society, we need to get acquainted with proper education schedules regarding organizational commitment. Having information about positive skills training can be beneficial in doing psychological processes for people requiring therapy. In this way organizational commitment is enhanced. Since in this research we have investigated the effect of positive thinking skills training on organizational commitment, it can be said that modern societies face new events and challenges that might have not experiences them in advance, and obtaining success in these new circumstances calls for healthy adaptability and compatibility. This important issue can be realized through positive thinking and enhancing organizational commitment, consequently this enhancement results in success in cultural, social and scientific performance.

According to Fredrickson (2003), when a person is exposed to threat, his thinking and action repertoire is limited and may take immediate and fast action. When negative emotions are produced in a person, she may have tendency to show certain reactions, but positive emotions like happiness, optimism, and hope etc. do not happen in threatening situations of life. So, when a person experiences positive emotions, psychological processes which limit thinking and action repertoire of the person and demand immediate and fast response may not be necessary. In addition, by accelerating cardiovascular recovery, positive emotions create a better body conditions for expanding thoughts, focusing on strengths and improving weaknesses. Consequently, by help of positive thinking, a person highlights and focuses on his strengths and make brave attempt to compensate his weaknesses and inadequacy. All of which can be reasonable explanation for our findings.

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( Received 12 January 2016; accepted 24 January 2016 )