

## **Employees' Commitment to Planned Change in Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka: An application of Three Component Change Model**

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### **Abstract**

*The successful implementation of planned change efforts are still challenging. Many planned change efforts fall short without achieving intended results due to lack of employee commitment. Following this problem, the study aimed to find out the level employees' commitment to planned change with special reference to three component change model developed by Herscovitch and Meyer in 2002. Three component change model suggest that employee's commitment has three dimensions namely affective commitment to change, continuance commitment to change and normative commitment to change. The respondents of the study were machine operators those who work in the recently planned change implemented apparel organizations in Sri Lanka. Data were collected through a standard and validated questionnaire survey. Results suggest that employees have low commitment to planned change implementation in apparel industry in Sri Lanka.*

**Keywords:** Commitment to Change, Affective Commitment to Change, Continuance Commitment to Change, Normative Commitment to Change

### **Background of the Study and Research Problem**

Managing a successful planned change is very difficult (Burnes, 2004) and it is one of the most difficult challenges faced by managers in all organizations (Mc Greevy, 2008; Piderit, 2000). Employee commitment is receiving greater attention in achieving change goals (Kalyal & Saha, 2008; Machin & Bannon, 2005; Meyer, Srinivas, Jaydeep & Topolnytsky, 2007) since it has become an important determinant of success change implementation (Armenakis, Harris & Field, 1999; Buchanan, Fitzgerald, Ketley, Gollop, Jones, Lamont, Neath & Whitby, 2005; Jacobs, 2002; Kalyal & Saha, 2008; Lewin, 1951; Machin & Bannon, 2005). Planned change efforts are more likely to be succeeding if employees are committed to it (Harris & Ogbonna, 1999). For an example ...“employees who are committed to change will put forth more, and better, effort towards implementing it” (Jaros, 2009, p.316). Therefore, ultimately employee commitment decides success implementation of the change (Armenakis et al., 1999).

The most part of the change literature highlights failed change projects are highly affected by lack of employee commitment (Lewin, 1951; Machin & Bannon, 2005; Roberto & Levesque, 2005). Many planned changes still face resistance and ultimately end with failures (Aladwani, 2001). Evidence suggest that, about two third of change projects fall short (Beer & Nohria, 2000) without achieving intended results (Gilmore, Shea & Unseem, 1997). Planned change efforts fail to achieve its intended results due to various reasons

(Armenakis, et al., 1999). According to Conner and Patterson (1982) the most prevalent factor is *lack of commitment of employees* (Italics added).

According to Kotter (1996) if managers cannot obtain subordinates' commitment to new practices there will not be a successful change implementation. Though, managers play an important in a change initiative, lower level employees often responsible for the actual implementation (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Patra et al., 2005). Managers are assumed to be implicitly committed to a change and working for it since they understand the desired end result. However, manager's commitment alone will not produce a successful change as employee's commitment is crucial since they actually execute the activities during the implementation (Hansson et al., 2002). As a whole most part of the change literature emphasizes the difficulty of gaining ground level employees' commitment to a planned change (Lamsa & Savolainen, 2000).

Although commitment plays a significant role in change there are a small amount of studies which focused on the issue of employee commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). By considering the above facts, research problem can be written as;  
What is the lower level of employees' commitment to planned change in organizations in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka?

Though, some researchers (e.g. Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Lau & Woodman, 1995) tend to conceptualize commitment to change as a unidimensional construct, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) argue it should be a three dimensional construct.

Certainly studies on commitment to change have followed the argument of them (e.g. Cunningham, 2006; Kalyal & Saha 2008; Machin & Bannon, 2005; Meyer et al., 2007; Parish, Cadwallder & Busch, 2008; Shum et al., 2008). The resulting construct, commitment to change is defined as "a force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative" (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). These dimensions are affective commitment to change (AC2C) which refers to "a desire to provide support the change based on its inherent benefits (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p.475). Continuance commitment to change (CC2C) is "recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide the support for the change" (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p.475). Normative commitment to change (NC2C) is "a sense of obligation to provide support for the change" (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p.475). Moreover, it has been accepted that the ultimate commitment is developed through interplay among all the three components of commitments (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007).

In the light of the above explanations research questions of the study can be written as;

- (1) What is the level of lower level employees' affective commitment to planned change implementation in organizations in apparel industry in Sri Lanka?
- (2) What is the level of lower level employees' continuance commitment to planned change implementation in apparel industry in Sri Lanka?
- (3) What is the level of lower level employees' normative commitment to planned change implementation in apparel industry in Sri Lanka?

### **Research Objectives**

- (1) To find the level of lower level employees' affective commitment to planned change implementation in organizations in apparel industry in Sri Lanka
- (2) To find the level of lower level employees' continuance commitment to planned change implementation in organizations in apparel industry in Sri Lanka
- (3) To find the level of lower level employees' normative commitment to planned change implementation in organizations in apparel industry in Sri Lanka

### **Significance of the Study**

Commitment to change is crucial to implement a planned change. Though the phenomenon is important there are only a very few researches have considered on this issue (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Further, Ljungstrom (2005) highlights the issue of lower level employees' commitment to planned change initiatives. Apart from the knowledge contribution the current study provide practical insights as well. For an example, Jaros (2009) explains the importance of targeting employees those who highly affected by the change. This study focuses on lower level employees who are highly affected by a change.

### **Literature Review**

Commitment to change has become a best predictor of a success change implementation than commitment to organization (Hercovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). Skilling (1996) states the uniqueness of the commitment to change as "people want to see the change happen, and will do whatever is necessary to see that it does happen" (p.5). Conner as cited in Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) identifies commitment to change as the glue that provides the essential attachment between people and change goals.

Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) argue commitment to change as a three dimensional construct. The rationale for them to develop the argument is both 'commitment' and 'organizational commitment' being considered as multidimensional constructs in literature. Meyer and Allen (1991) define the general commitment as a mindset or force that binds an individual to a course of action by concerning one or more targets. Further, they explain this force, or mind-set, can take different dimensions: desire towards the target (affective commitment), perceived cost of giving up the target (continuance commitment), and obligation towards the target (normative commitment). This general concept of commitment extended later to the construct organizational commitment with the same dimensions. Hence, organizational commitment is also a three dimensional construct with affective commitment to organization, continuance commitment to organization and normative commitment to organization (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Following this logic Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) reinterpret the commitment to change as a three dimensional construct with affective commitment to change, continuance commitment to change and normative commitment to change.

Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment; identification and involvement with the target (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment to change can be observed through the employee's desire to support the change as a result of his / her understanding about the inherent benefits of change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). This desire towards the change is developed since the employee understands its worthiness to generate positive outcomes to the organization (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). Strong affective commitment is highly correlated with the success change implementation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Parish et al., 2008). Therefore, affective commitment is considered as a crucial form of commitment in a planned change (Cunningham et al., 2002; Swailes, 2004).

Continuance commitment takes place due to lack of alternatives and external pressure to go along with the target (Illes et al., 1996). According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) employees feel continuance commitment to change, when there is no other option than go along with the change (i.e. lack of alternatives). In addition to that, continuance commitment to change is developed due to the fear of losing important rewards (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). As a result of this background continuance commitment involves less commitment than is expected from the employees (Meyer et al., 2007). Therefore, though there are some views to justify the adequacy of continuance commitment it does not sufficient to ensure higher level of support towards a planned change (Machin & Bannon, 2005; Meyer et al., 2007). The possible explanation for this would be continuance commitment is based on external pressure rather than recognizing the benefits of the change or deepest obligation about the change (Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, only affective and normative commitment to change produces more support towards

the change whereas continuance commitment does not provide significant support (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Machin, 2005; Meyer et al., 2007). In simple terms, continuance commitment is less desirable when compared to the affective commitment or normative commitment (Aube et al., 2007).

Normative commitment is highly related to organizational effectiveness (Wiener, 1982). Normative commitment to change involves strong emotional obligation towards the change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Therefore employees are committed to the change because of they want to, have to and ought to support it (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). Higher level of normative commitment fosters the employee to strongly engage in the change hence it involves higher support than is required from them (Meyer et al., 2007). Therefore, it is clear that affective commitment to change and normative commitment to change are more desirable whereas continuance commitment to change is less desirable in success plan change implementation.

### **Methodology**

Survey strategy has been selected as the most appropriate strategy for the study. According to Abraham as cited in Kothari (2007) survey method is a process by which quantitative facts are collected about the social aspect of a community's composition and activities. Further, survey strategy is versatile, practical and economical in many instances (Saunders et al., 2003). It is widely used method in social researches where experiment is not easily possible (Kothari, 2007).

Data for this study were collected within particular time period and there were no subsequent extension of the data collection thus the study is cross sectional in nature. Further, unit of analysis of the current study is individual. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2011) unit of analysis is the level of aggregation of the data during subsequent analysis stage. Unit of analysis can be individual, dyads, groups, industries, organizations, cultures and countries. If the researcher is interested in problem related to the individual employees, then the unit of analysis is individual. The current study focused on the level of commitment to change of employees those who are working in the apparel industry. Therefore, it is clear that the researcher focused on individual level as the unit of analysis rather than the group or organizational level.

### **Scope of the Study**

Planned change initiatives are varied from huge transformations to smaller scale changes such as 5S initiatives (Patra, Tripathy, & Choudhary, 2005). Current study concerns on 5S implementation since it is considered as an important planned change initiative in Sri Lanka also as in the other countries (Ljungstrom, 2005; Silva, Perera, & Samarasinghe, 2011) and drawn increasing attention due to its ability to improve the quality through smaller incremental changes (Patra et al., 2005). Further, 5S helps to maintain orderly and better organizational environment through visual communication and general cleanliness (Ljungstrom, 2005; Moriones, Pintado & DeCerio, 2010; Silva et al., 2011). The context for the present study is the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Apparel industry was selected for the study since apparel industry frequently introduces planned change initiatives such as 5S, TQM and Lean Manufacturing System in order to enhance the productivity (Silva et al., 2011; Withanachchi, et al., 2007). Further, the apparel industry is impressive over the other industries. For an instance, it contributes more than 40% of the annual export income (Central Bank report, 2011). The target respondents of the current study were machine operators due to numerous reasons. First, literature emphasizes the lack of commitment of the lower level employees than the managerial employees. Second, literature highlights the importance of targeting the employees those who are highly affected by the change. According to the discussions the researcher had with the managers it was able to identify that, machine operators directly and highly affected by the change as well as they are the

people who actually implement the change. Finally, machine operators contribute enormously for the development of the apparel industry.

By considering all these facts the current research purposefully selected apparel organizational those who implemented planned change in their organization recently. From those organizations machine operators were selected convenience based as well as their willingness to provide information. Having decided the appropriate sampling technique researcher should decide the appropriate sample size. According to the discussions with the managers, it was able to identify that there are approximately 2000 machine operators are working in the selected five (05) apparel organizations. After considering the response rate and missing values it was distributed five hundred (500) questionnaires among the machine operators those who are working in recently planned change implemented apparel organizations.

### **Method of Data Collection**

This study was totally based on primary data and a questionnaire (Appendix A) was chosen as the data collection method. The questionnaire was selected as the data collection strategy due to organizations in apparel organizations are spread throughout the country hence, it is not possible to meet respondents individually. Therefore, the most practical way was to collect data through a questionnaire from a relatively larger sample. Further, secrecy of the respondents should be considered as very important thing, because they might have the fear of revealing information related to their commitment to change. Therefore, questionnaire was the possible method to collect reliable information while informing the respondents that they cannot be identified from the information they provide.

### *Measures*

Current study used already developed valid and reliable questions to measure the variables of the study. Commitment to change was measured by using Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) eighteen item commitment to change scale. Out of 18 items six items assessed the affective commitment to change, six assessed the continuance commitment to change and six assessed the normative commitment to change. In the questionnaire was consisted with both negative and positive questions which motivate respondents to answer the questions carefully (Saunders et al., 2003). Scores of the items 3, 5, 6, 15 and 18 should be reversed. The authors of three component model cited that Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.94 for affective commitment to change (six items) 0.94 for continuance commitment to change (six items) and 0.86 for normative commitment to change (six items). Further, Kalyal and Saha (2008) cite 0.85 for affective commitment to change (six items) and 0.86 for continuance commitment to change (five items). Findings of Deprez et al. (2012) reveal that, Cronbach alpha is 0.91 for affective commitment to change (six items), 0.72 for continuance commitment to change (six items) and 0.66 for normative commitment to change (six items). Further, participants were asked to rate all the statements on a seven point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly disagree).

The questionnaire was included some demographic variables to understand the nature of the sample. In particular, gender, age and marital status were included as the demographic variables. Gender was coded as male (1) and female (2). Marital status was scored as either married (1) or unmarried (2). The number of years the employee had been with the company (i.e. tenure) was scored as less than 1 year (1), 1-2 years (2), 3-4 years (3) and more than 5 years (4).

### **Translation of Measures**

All the measures were originally developed in western context in English language. However, the target respondents of the current study (i.e. machine operators in apparel industry in Sri Lankan context) are not in a position to understand the original measures. As a result, all the measures were translated into

Sinhala. The back translation method was done according to the instructions of Brislin as cited in Chen and Wang (2007) in order to ensure the similarity of the measures in the Sinhala and English versions.

#### *Data Analysis Techniques*

Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations had been used to measure the level of each commitment dimension. Further, reliability was measured by using the Cronbach's alpha. The current study used already developed measures to test the model. In such circumstance Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) recommend to carry out a separate confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to assess the validity of the measures. Amos 16 was used to do the confirmatory factor analysis.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The survey resulted in 163 usable questionnaires, which resulted in a response rate of 32.6%. The final sample averaged 26.18 years (SD = 4.0) of age. Eighty five percent (85%) were women. Within this sample 34.36% employees worked less than one (1) year, 37.42% worked 1-2 years, 19.02% worked 3-4 years and the remaining 9.2% worked more than five (5) years. More detail of the sample distribution is given in table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Sample distribution*

Variable	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	24	15%
Female	139	85%
<b>Age</b>		
< 19 years	4	2.5%
20-29	136	83.4%
30-39	20	12.3%
> 40 years	3	1.8%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	88	53.99%
Unmarried	75	46.01%
<b>Tenure</b>		
< 1 year	60	37%
1-2 years	59	36%
3-4 years	30	18%
> 5 years	14	9%

Note: N = 163

#### *Internal reliabilities of the measures*

Internal reliabilities of the measures (Cronbach's alpha) are shown in table 2. All the variables reported good internal consistency which exceeds the minimum threshold of .70 (Nunnally as cited in Kalyal & Saha, 2008).

**Table 2***Reliabilities of the measures (Cronbach's alpha)*

Construct	No.of items	Cronbach's alpha reliability
Affective Commitment to Change	6	.87
Continuance Commitment to Change	6	.91
Normative Commitment to Change	6	.95

**Validity of the measures**

Current study uses already developed measures (i.e. affective commitment to change, continuance commitment, and normative commitment to change). Therefore, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed by using AMOS 16.0 according to the instructions of Arbuckle (2007b) to ensure the validity of the measures. CFA results yield numerous indices (Hair et al., 1998; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Some of the frequently used indices are chi-square to degrees of freedom/ normed chi – square ( $\chi^{2/df}$ ), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker - Lewis Index (TLI). Hence, one or several fit indices of the specified model should be compared with the threshold values recommended by the experts in the field (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Results of the CFA and threshold requirements are shown in table 3.

**Table 3***Summary of model fit indices of commitment to change*

Index	Threshold value	CC*
$\chi^{2/df}$	Less than 2 (Kline, 2005)	1.56
RMSEA	Less than .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.06
CFI	More than .9 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.96
NFI	do	0.91
TLI	do	0.96

Note: CC\*- Commitment to Change

**Convergent validity**

If the items load on their respective constructs well it proves the convergent validity (Prabhu, 2007). According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988) this can be evaluated by examining the statistical significance as expressed by the t-value associated with each loading. Bagozzi and Yi (1988) stated that factor loadings greater than 0.7 provide evidence for convergent validity. Table 5.6 shows that all factor loadings were greater than 0.7 except affective commitment to change 6 (i.e. 0.62). However factor loadings greater than 0.5 is also considered as fairer (Hair et al., 1998). Factor loadings of the measures are given in table 4.

**Table 4***Factor loadings of the measures*

Measures	Factor Loading	t - value*	Measures	Factor Loading	t - value*
ACC1	0.78	n/a	ACC2	0.76	9.88
ACC3	0.74	9.91	ACC4	0.77	10.20
ACC5	0.75	9.78	ACC6	0.62	8.08
CCC1	0.73	n/a	CCC2	0.78	10.06
CCC3	0.79	10.17	CCC4	0.81	10.43

*Table 4 continued**Factor loadings of the measures*

Measures	Factor Loading	t - value*	Measures	Factor Loading	t - value*
CCC5	0.86	11.03	CCC6	0.80	10.31
NCC1	0.80	n/a	NCC2	0.84	12.54
NCC3	0.89	13.74	NCC4	0.93	14.81
NCC5	0.91	14.24	NCC6	0.86	13.31

\*All factor loadings are significant at  $p = .05$ **Descriptive statistics: measure the levels of each commitment dimensions****Table 5***Means and Standard Deviations of the each commitment to change dimension*

Variable	M	SD
Affective Commitment to Change	3.19	0.89
Continuance Commitment to Change	5.09	1.01
Normative Commitment to Change	2.01	1.19

As shown in table 5 mean value of affective commitment to change (3.19) and normative commitment to change (2.01) are at a low level. However, the level of continuance commitment to change appeared to be higher than the other two dimensions with a mean value of 5.09. Since continuance commitment to change is just a cost based commitment instead of the willingness to support the change it is not a good indicator to explain the commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

**Discussion and Conclusion.**

The present study examined the level of commitment to change among the machine operators within the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Study found that lower level employees have less affective and normative commitment to change while more continuance commitment to change. Affective commitment to change and normative commitment to change are found to be crucial forms of commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). However, continuance commitment to change is less desirable in the success implementation of a planned change (Machin & Bannon, 2005; Meyer et al., 2007). High level of continuance commitment to planned change implementation reveal that employees are committed to planned change since they are compelled to do so. However, that provides less behavioural support for the planned change implementation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). Hence, concluding lower level employees in the apparel industry have less commitment to planned change implementation.

### Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research.

Some limitations exist in this study. Firstly, data for this study were collected from apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Hence, it would obstruct the generalizability of the findings to the other contexts. Secondly, current study has undertaken the non probability sampling due to inability to define the sampling frame precisely. However, this also limits the generalizability of the results to a larger population on statistical ground. Future research can be conducted to capture the commitment to change by longitudinal data to observe whether the results are different in a longitudinal study. Similarly, this study could be replicated by comparing data across cultures.

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## Appendix

### A – Survey Instrument: Questionnaire

#### Questionnaire

#### Please read the following information before answer the questionnaire

- Try to complete questions at a time when you are unlikely to be disturbed. Also, do not spend too long on any question. Your first thoughts are usually your best. Even if you feel the items covered may not apply directly to your working life please do not ignore them.
- Your support is necessary and very important for me to fill this questionnaire to conduct the research successfully. It should take you only about 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire
- You can not be identified from the information you provide. Also, all the information you provide will be treated in the strictly confidence.

#### Part I

Please read the following statements and put the  $\checkmark$  & in the relevant cage.

1. Tenure in this organization

i	Less than 1 year	
ii	1-2 years	
iii	3-4 years	
iv	More than 5 years	

2. Gender

i	Male	
ii	Female	

3. Age( Years

4. Marital Status

i	Married	
ii	Unmarried	

**Part III**

Please read the following statements and put the  $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$  & next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I believe in the value of 5S							
2	I consider 5S is a good strategy for this organization							
3	I think that management is making a mistake by introducing 5S							
4	I consider that 5S serves an important purpose							
5	I believe that things would be better without 5S							
6	I believe that 5S is not necessary							
7	I believe that I have no choice but to go along with 5S							
8	I feel pressure to go along with 5S							
9	I have too much at stake to resist 5S							
10	I feel that it would be too costly for me to resist 5S							
11	I think that it would be risky for me to speak out against 5S							
12	I think that resisting 5S is not a viable option for me							
13	I feel a sense of duty to work toward 5S							
14	I do not think it would be right of me to oppose 5S							
15	I would not feel badly about opposing 5S							
16	I think it would be irresponsible of me to resist 5S							
17	I would feel guilty about opposing 5S							
18	I do not feel any obligation to support 5S							