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## EVOLUTION OF COMMITMENT THEORY: GLOBAL APPROACHES

**Abstract.** Commitment is a fundamental aspect of interpersonal relationships that is actively studied across various fields of psychology. This article explores the origins of the phenomenon of commitment within different scientific psychological paradigms, specifically: general psychology, organizational psychology, and economic psychology. Through a theoretical analysis of relevant literature, we compare how these disciplines conceptualize the phenomenon of commitment. In the general psychological perspective, the subjects and objects of study are individuals or groups, with commitment manifesting as either unilateral or reciprocal. In contrast, organizational and economic psychology focus primarily on individuals or groups as subjects, while the objects include economic organizations, their divisions, trademarks, goods, services, consumer habits, and ideas. Commitment plays a crucial role in stabilizing interpersonal relationships, enabling individuals to be predictable for one another and fulfill their responsibilities even when faced with better alternatives or challenging circumstances. In organizational psychology, commitment contributes to employees' positive attitudes toward their employers (organization), reduces staff turnover, and can enhance the efficiency of an organization's economic activities. While the classical concept of commitment is rarely employed in economic psychology and behavioral economics, the term is often applied to brands, companies, products, and services. This interpretation is viewed as a critical factor in establishing long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between economic entities. The article underscores the significance of examining commitment from various psychological perspectives to develop effective strategies for managing interpersonal relationships. Additionally, it considers avenues for future research, including the exploration of cross-cultural differences in commitment formation mechanisms, the stages and characteristics of developing a sense of commitment throughout a

person's ontological development, as well as the relationships, similarities, and differences in the commitment and loyalty of customers across various organizations in their consumer behavior.

**Keywords:** loyalty; commitment; interpersonal relations; consumers; employee satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION / ВСТУП

**Statement of the problem / Постановка проблеми.** The structure of society, along with the methods, approaches, and rules governing its existence in this era of informatization and automation, is undergoing irreversible changes. While the long-term implications of these changes – whether positive or negative – remain to be seen, it is evident that interpersonal relationships, both between individuals and between individuals and organizations, are evolving. Technological progress is driving structural shifts in culture, affecting how relationships are formed and maintained. Commitment is a key psychological mechanism that underpins interpersonal relationships, social interaction, and personal development. A lack of understanding of this phenomenon can hinder effective cooperation among individuals. Therefore, one of the critical issues is the need for comprehensive training in building "non-toxic," mutually beneficial relationships through the cultivation of commitment.

**Analysis of (major) recent research and publications / Аналіз (основних) останніх досліджень і публікацій.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, scientific concepts surrounding the phenomenon of commitment were shaped by the frameworks proposed by H. Kelley (1959) and C. Rusbult et al. (1998) [1], [2], [3], [4]. Notably, in terms of general psychology, significant contributions came from Scott Shpall in 2014 [5] and J. Michael with colleagues in 2016 [6], [7]. Spall suggested that commitment should be viewed through two lenses: moral commitment and rational commitment. Meanwhile, J. Michael and his colleagues described the theory of commitment through three dimensions: motivational (the factors that drive individuals to fulfill commitments), implicit commitment (the understanding that not all commitments arise from formal agreements), and developmental (the evolution of one's perception of commitment throughout the process of aging).

Organizational psychology has further developed the ideas put forth by J. Meyer and N. Allen (1991) [8], who proposed a three-component model of commitment consisting of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. In 2020, N. Hadi and F. Tentama [9] introduced a toolkit for empirical research based on these three dimensions. Following this model, subsequent researchers have interpreted commitment as a psychological bond that

is volitional in nature; when this bond weakens or is absent, it can lead to a loss of trust within the organization, hinder employee development, and ultimately result in decreased performance [10], [11]. Domestic researchers have also contributed to the study of commitment within organizations. Notable scholars include L. Karamushka (2012) [12], I. Andrieieva (2008) [13], O. Romanova (2019) [14], and D. Samojlenko (2016) [15], who focused on factors influencing the formation of commitment, such as leadership styles, corporate culture, career opportunities, and psychological climate in the workplace.

In the realms of economic psychology and behavioral economics, research often focuses on loyalty, a concept that is closely related to commitment but not synonymous with it. Pioneers of behavioral economics, D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [16], [17], examined exceptional instances where individuals tend to honor their obligations despite significant changes in circumstances, interpreting such behaviors through the lens of cognitive biases. Other researchers have investigated loyalty by identifying the factors that influence it, including service quality, duration of cooperation, customer satisfaction, and service personalization [18], [19], [20]. To enhance personalization and improve satisfaction, R. Winer (2001) introduced the concept of customer relationship management (CRM), aimed at systematizing data and automating the management of customer interactions. Additionally, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) has gained popularity in the business world, as it is based on the assumption that loyalty correlates with the likelihood of recommending products or services to others [21].

While the phenomenon of commitment has been extensively studied, several aspects still require further investigation and clarification. One key issue is the lack of a unified approach to interpreting the concept of commitment across different scientific paradigms, particularly within psychology. Additionally, it is important to clarify the similarities and differences between the concepts of loyalty and commitment.

## **AIM AND TASKS / МЕТА ТА ЗАВДАННЯ**

**The aim** of our study is to conduct a theoretical phenomenological analysis of the psychological concepts of commitment, examining their historical development and contemporary relevance. We seek to identify both similarities and differences, explore their interrelationships, and determine their role in interpersonal relationships.

In accordance with the specified goal, the following **tasks** are set in the article:

- To analyze existing theoretical and empirical studies on the phenomenon of commitment.

- To explore the essence of commitment and compare its understanding and historical development across different scientific paradigms.
- To examine and identify the factors and structure of the phenomenon of commitment.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ**

The concept of commitment is traditionally understood as a strong desire by an individual in a relationship to maintain, strengthen, and continue that relationship, even in the face of potential difficulties or better alternatives. One of the foundational works in the study of commitment is the interdependence theory developed by H. Kelley and H. Thibaut (1959) [1], [2], which emphasizes the need for effort to ensure relational stability. C. Rusbult (1980) [3], [4] further developed this concept by introducing the ideas of investment in relationships and the evaluation of alternatives as key factors influencing commitment. Researchers in organizational psychology often examine commitment through the lens of human resource management and labor economics, typically focusing on its effects on job satisfaction, employee turnover, and productivity. The three-component model of commitment proposed by J. Meyer and N. Allen (1991) [8] serves as a foundation for this concept, identifying emotional, continuance, and normative commitment. In contrast, economic psychology seldom addresses the concept of commitment directly but frequently employs the notion of loyalty. Loyalty theory is actively utilized in studying consumer behavior by organizations that provide goods and services. Key figures in this field include D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [16], [17], C. Rusbult [3], [4], R. Oliver [18] and R. Winer [20]. While these theories may not serve as foundational for understanding the phenomenon of commitment, they remain relevant and continue to be applied today.

## **RESEARCH METHODS / МЕТОДИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

To achieve the objectives, the following general scientific and specialized methods were employed:

- Literature Analysis: Reviewing and analyzing scientific sources on the phenomenon of commitment.
- Comparative Analysis: Identifying similarities and differences in the characteristics of commitment across various scientific psychological paradigms.
- Historical Analysis: Examining the stages and features of the historical development of scientific concepts related to commitment.
- Systematization: Identifying and characterizing the main components of commitment within different scientific psychological paradigms and theories.

## RESEARCH RESULTS / РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Commitment is a relationship involving at least two individuals: one who makes a commitment and another to whom the commitment is directed. In this context, the former assures that their obligation will be fulfilled, while the latter acknowledges this commitment as valid and deserving of recognition [7].

The phenomenon of commitment is a fundamental aspect of people's social life. Commitment facilitates coordination and ensures the synchronization of joint actions. This integration of efforts relies on the ability to predict each other's behavior in a shared endeavor, even when better alternatives or individual desires are present [6]. Commitment also serves as a driving force for enhancing cooperation, motivating individuals to participate in planned joint actions that they might otherwise be reluctant to join [7].

The concept of commitment is central to the study of interpersonal relationships within society, family dynamics, and consumer behavior. Early research on this phenomenon primarily focused on family psychology, highlighting the significance of investment (in a broad sense) in relationships and the quality of available alternatives. These ideas have gained considerable traction and development in the fields of organizational and economic psychology (see Table). Research has shown that commitment significantly influences employee satisfaction and employee turnover rates. Fostering commitment can be achieved by enhancing interpersonal relationships within teams, promoting healthy relationships with management, and cultivating a positive organizational culture. In the realm of economic psychology and behavioral economics, researchers tend to focus more on concepts like loyalty and cognitive biases rather than the phenomenon of commitment itself.

*Table*

### **Comparative analysis of the main aspects of the phenomenon of commitment across different scientific psychological paradigms**

General psychology [1] – [5], [7]	Organizational psychology [8]	Economic psychology [16], [17], [21]
1	2	3
<i>The use of the term "commitment" in its classical or approximate meaning</i>		
Yes	Yes	No
<i>The essence of the phenomenon and its features</i>		
A strong and enduring desire to maintain interpersonal relationships with someone, even in the face of better alternatives or challenges	Economic psychology and its counterpart, behavioral economics, focus on maintaining economic relationships through concepts such as loyalty and satisfaction	



*Table continuation*

1	2	3
<i>The subject of commitment</i>		
A person or social group that demonstrates commitment to a particular object		A person or social group that makes consumer/financial choices
<i>The object of commitment</i>		
Another person or social group	Organization or work performed by a person	Trademarks, organizations/individuals providing goods and services, goods or services, individual consumer decisions, habits and ideas

After analyzing the literature, we can identify several scientific dimensions in which the study of commitment has evolved: the general psychological interpersonal dimension (person-to-person relationships), the organizational dimension (person-to-organization relationships), and the economic dimension (person-to-organization/brand/product/idea relationships). Next, we will explore in detail the development of scientific understanding regarding the phenomenon of commitment.

*General psychological and interpersonal aspects.* Commitment is one of the key concepts in the psychology of interpersonal relationships. In 1959, H. Kelley, and J. Thibaut [1] were among the first to highlight the phenomenon of commitment as a subject of research. In their work, they developed the concept of interdependence in interpersonal relationships, asserting that commitment is crucial for relationship stability. They later refined their Theory of Interdependence in their 1978 publication, *Interpersonal Relations: A Theory of Interdependence*. The authors emphasized the importance of mutual reliance in relationships and the need to "invest in the relationship" to maximize individual satisfaction while ensuring overall relationship fulfillment.

In 1980, Caryl Rusbult [3], while experimentally studying commitment in relationships, concluded that commitment is influenced not only by the quality of interpersonal relationships but also by the absence of better alternatives and the amount of investment already made. In other words, the level of commitment grows in direct proportion to the investment made in the relationship and decreases in proportion to the availability of better alternatives. For instance, in their 1998 joint paper titled *The Investment Model Scale: Measuring Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Quality of Alternatives, and Investment Size*, Caryl Rusbult and her colleagues proposed a toolkit for assessing the level of commitment in a relationship, focusing on three main factors: satisfaction, investment size, and quality of alternatives.

S. Stanley & H. Markman 1992 [22] examined commitment from a different perspective and identified two separate constructs: personal dedication and constraint commitment.

In our view, the most effective and intriguing classification is that of Halbert Clarke [23], which relates to the recipient of commitment. According to Clarke, commitment can be made to oneself (self-commitment) or to another person (interpersonal commitment). Interpersonal commitment can be either unilateral (when one person takes responsibility for another) or reciprocal (when two or more people take responsibility for each other).

An equally important classification was proposed by Scott Spall in 2014 [5] in his work *Moral and Rational Commitment*, where he differentiates between moral and rational commitment. Moral commitment is based on ethical principles, considerations, and norms, focusing on categories like "right" vs. "wrong" or "good" vs. "bad." Rational commitment, on the other hand, has a pragmatic or logical foundation and is aimed at maximizing efficiency in decision-making.

J. Michael and colleagues (2016) [7] build on previous research to explore what they consider to be key aspects in their paper:

- Motivation: The factors that drive people to uphold their commitments, even when facing difficult situations or more appealing alternatives.
- Implicit Commitment: Many commitments are formed informally, without formal agreements or explicit verbal promises.
- Development: A person's sense of obligation evolves as they go through different stages of personal development.

The three aspects identified by J. Michael and colleagues will be shaped by an individual's personal experiences and will align with the group principles and cultural norms they are part of. In this way, the level of an individual's actual motivation will align with the expectations of others regarding their motivation [7].

Some researchers have closely connected the concepts of commitment and attachment, suggesting that commitment can mitigate the negative effects of anxious attachment. High levels of commitment in a relationship can transform potentially threatening behaviors into constructive solutions [24].

*Organizational aspect.* Richard M. Steers [25] was one of the first scholars to apply commitment theories in an organizational context, and his contributions are highly significant. In 1974, along with colleagues L. Porter, R. Mowday and P. Boulian. [26], he published the paper *Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover among Psychiatric Technicians*. They examined how levels of commitment changed over the course of an employee's time with an organization and after their departure. The authors concluded that employees' attitudes toward the organization become most significant at the

time of dismissal, with their connection to the organization intensifying as their departure approaches. They also noted that organizational commitment differs more significantly between those who have left and those still employed than between various aspects of job satisfaction.

In our view, R. Steers' (1977) [25] significant contribution to the study of commitment lies in his empirical evidence showing that, overall, commitment is not directly linked to productivity but is strongly related to an employee's desire to remain with the organization and moderately associated with employee turnover rates. In the same article, he argues that commitment to an organization is influenced by an employee's personal traits and work experience. His findings suggest that while organizational commitment is important for reducing employee turnover, it must be balanced with performance. After all, a loyal but inefficient employee is not beneficial for the organization.

The most well-known and influential researchers on the topic of organizational commitment were J. Meyer and N. Allen [8]. In 1991, building on the work of their predecessors, they developed a three-component model of organizational commitment:

- Desire (Affective Commitment) – This refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organization. It allows them to feel like part of a unified team, and their decision to stay is driven by personal choice rather than obligation.
- Need (Continuance Commitment) – Commitment in this aspect stems from the employee's investments in the organization, such as time, effort, and emotions. They remain because they feel that leaving would result in losses that outweigh the available alternatives.
- Obligation (Normative Commitment) to maintain employment in an organization – Commitment is driven by a sense of moral duty and loyalty to the organization.

Their model clearly differentiates between attachment based on emotional factors, various forms of investment in the organization, and moral obligation. This leads to the conclusion that commitment represents a more advanced form of attachment, as we discussed in detail in our paper, *Evolution of Attachment Theory: From Infant Psychology to Organizational and Economic Psychology. Global Approaches* [27]. That is, the emotional level is complemented by physical investments, such as time or creativity, and a sense of duty that has already been formed. In the early 21st century, several scholars defined commitment as a voluntary psychological bond that reflects a sense of responsibility toward a specific goal [10]. Recent research supports this, showing that a poorly structured organizational culture and the perception that employees lack potential for growth can undermine



their trust and commitment. This, in turn, hinders effective collaboration, innovation, and honest relationships [11].

N. Hadi and F. Tentama defined organizational commitment as employees' psychological loyalty and attachment to the company they work for. In 2020, they developed a toolkit for empirical research on organizational commitment, highlighting three key aspects: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

In contrast, in 2021, L. Chénard-Poirier et al. [28] placed the leader and their social power at the center of their commitment model. By studying the leader's influence on employees' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, they developed a five-factor tool for assessing organizational commitment. These factors include: reward power ("My supervisor can increase my pay level"), coercive power ("My supervisor can make my work difficult"), legitimate power ("My supervisor can make me feel obligated to fulfill commitments"), expert power ("My supervisor can offer valuable technical advice"), and referent power ("My supervisor can make me feel important").

Among Ukrainian scholars, L. Karamushka (2012) [12], I. Andrieieva (2008) [13], O. Romanova (2019) [14], D. Samoilenko (2016) [15], and others have explored this topic extensively. They examined the factors that influence commitment and demonstrated the link between employee commitment and leadership styles, corporate culture, career prospects, and psychological climate in the workplace. The authors argued that these factors impact commitment, which in turn affects professional motivation and productivity.

*Economic aspect.* Economic psychology, along with its counterpart, behavioral economics, does not typically address the concept of commitment in its classical sense. Most studies in these fields focus on specific aspects related to attachment and commitment, such as loyalty, cognitive biases, and emotional influences.

In the scientific field of behavioral economics, D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [16], [17], who were key figures in its development, without focusing on theories of commitment or attachment, demonstrated in their groundbreaking work, Prospect Theory, that people often stick to their previous decisions, even when objective factors change or contradict the original circumstances. The authors explored people's tendency to stick to their previous decisions through various cognitive biases. The two most significant are the endowment effect and the framing effect. The endowment effect refers to the emotional attachment people develop toward an object over time. D. Kahneman and A. Tversky define the framing effect as the distorted way people assess alternatives, leading to inaccurate cognitive perception during the decision-making process.

Assuming that ideas from two different scientific paradigms can be compared, particularly in the context of the psychology of behavioral economics, it's worth

noting the similarities between the endowment effect and the ideas proposed by H. Kelley, J. Thibaut [1], [2], Caryl Rusbult (family psychology) [3], [4] and J. Meyer & N. Allen [8] (continuance commitment theory). They all highlight how various investments – whether financial, emotional, or time-based – can influence commitment. Additionally, the framing effect complements Caryl Rusbult's conclusions about how people evaluate alternatives when making decisions.

Some highly specialized psychological fields, such as marketing and consumer behavior psychology, often focus on customer loyalty, which is frequently used as a synonym for commitment. Researchers in the customer loyalty paradigm explore the factors that influence or shape it. For example, R. Oliver (1999) [18] identified factors like customer satisfaction, service quality, and the length of the relationship between the consumer and the brand. J. Avery, S. Fournier and J. Wittenbraker (2014) [19] also highlighted the importance of building long-term relationships between brands and customers. They stressed the need to understand the types of interactions that help organizations foster greater loyalty, and how this knowledge can be applied when developing new customer engagement strategies.

To effectively analyze factors and develop a successful strategy for engaging with customers, organizations need to systematically manage customer data. One solution to this challenge is the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). These systems are designed to facilitate personalized service, ultimately enhancing customer loyalty [20].

One of the most popular concepts currently being implemented in Ukrainian businesses is the Net Promoter Score (NPS), created by F. Reichheld (2003) [21]. This concept connects customer loyalty to the willingness to recommend a brand to friends, family, and acquaintances.

Recently, many organizations have started to introduce specialized loyalty programs to boost customer loyalty. These programs are particularly effective when they are flexible and personalized [29].

In summary of our brief overview of the research on commitment, we can conclude that most advancements have been made in general and organizational psychology, while economic psychology has yet to fully explore this phenomenon in its studies.

## **CONCLUSIONS / ВИСНОВКИ**

Commitment is fundamental to maintaining stability in interpersonal relationships and helps predict behavior during collaborative activities. The study of commitment is approached from three perspectives: general psychology, organizational psychology, and economic psychology. In general psychology,

commitment is understood as a stable relationship among two or more individuals united by a common goal, where one party imposes obligations that the other accepts. In contrast, organizational psychology views commitment as the relationship between an individual (employee) and an organization. In this area of study, researchers tend to focus less on formalizing commitment and instead prioritize examining the factors that contribute to its formation. In economic psychology, the concept of loyalty often replaces commitment and is broadly defined as the relationship between a person (client) and an organization. More specifically, it can also refer to relationships such as person-to-brand, person-to-product, person-to-individual store, and organization-to-organization. While these relationships involve different objects and subjects, they share a common structure and framework. Typically, all approaches to understanding commitment can be categorized into three levels: affective level, normative level, and investment level.

Loyalty structurally consists of two main components: an emotional element and obligations. At the first level, emotions and commitments form the foundation of loyalty. At the second level, these components are elaborated through specific factors: the emotional element encompasses satisfaction, attachment, and emotional connection, while obligations are defined by moral principles, social norms, and a sense of responsibility towards others. This structure ensures the stability of relationships, even in the face of changing external conditions.

**Prospects for further research in this direction / Перспективи подальших досліджень у цьому напрямі.** Deepening our understanding of the mechanisms behind commitment formation across various areas of interpersonal, organizational, and economic relationships within different cultural contexts will enable us to develop more effective tools for managing relationships in both business and personal life.

Studying the connections between commitment, loyalty, and attachment, while identifying their shared and unique characteristics, will enhance our understanding of customer needs and improve our ability to meet them more effectively.

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## ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ТЕОРІЇ ВІДДАНОСТІ: ГЛОБАЛЬНІ ПІДХОДИ

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**Анотація.** Відданість є одним із центральних аспектів міжособистісних відносин, який активно досліджується в різних сферах психології. У цій статті розглянуто генезу феномену відданості в різних парадигмах психологічної науки, зокрема: загальній психології, організаційній психології та економічній психології. У світлі цих парадигм здійснено

теоретичних аналіз наукових джерел з метою порівняння розуміння ними феномену відданості У загально-психологічному підході суб'єктами і об'єктами виступають люди або групи людей, їх відданість може бути однонапрямленою так і взаємною. Натомість в організаційній та економічній психології у більшості випадків є люди чи групи людей, а об'єктами є суб'єкти економічної діяльності, їх підрозділи, торгові марки, товари і послуги, споживчі звички та ідеї. В міжособистісних відносинах відданість допомагає стабілізувати стосунки. Бути людям передбачуваними і прогнозованими один для одного, виконувати взяті на себе обов'язки, в тому числі за наявності кращих альтернатив чи негативних обставин і труднощів. В організаційній психології відданість є однією з причин позитивного ставлення працівників до роботодавця (організації), що знижує плинність кадрів і може покращувати ефективність економічної діяльності підприємства/установи. У контексті економічної психології і поведінкової економіки поняття відданості в класичному розумінні практично не використовується, натомість широко вживається дефініція «лояльність» до брендів, компаній, продуктів і послуг та ін., що трактується як вагомий чинник побудови довготривалих взаємовигідних відносин між суб'єктами економічних відносин. У статті підкреслено важливість вивчення феномену відданості у різних аспектах психологічної науки, для розробки ефективних підходів управління відносинами між людьми. Окремо розглянуто перспективи подальших досліджень Серед них виділено: дослідження кроскультурних відмінностей механізмів формування відданості, етапи та особливості розвитку почутті відданості в процесі онтологічного розвитку людини, взаємозв'язки, схожі та відмінні риси відданості та лояльності клієнтів різного роду організацій у їх споживчій поведінці.

**Ключові слова:** лояльність; відданість; міжособистісні стосунки; споживачі; задоволеність працівників.

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