

## Effects of Organizational Communication on Work Commitment: A Case Study on a Public Agency in Ankara

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### Abstract

*In today's business world, concepts such as technology, diversity, competition, uncertainty and confusion stand out. Businesses that want to succeed by overcoming all of these concepts are required to take into consideration their most important assets - human resources. Human resources, as a distinct concept from other business sources, have psycho-social characteristics, wherefore concepts such as satisfaction, morale, motivation, leadership, commitment and communication gain importance in great deal in the work environment. In this study, two of the aforementioned concepts - organizational communication and work commitment - are discussed and the effects of open communication which has a constructive and closed communication that has a bureaucratic nature on the work commitment of employees are examined. A result is that open communication has a positive effect on work commitment. On the other hand closed communication, contrary to expectations, has a positive effect on commitment towards work as well. According to authors, it seems reasonable that closed communication, with its bureaucratic tone, fits public institutions that also have a more bureaucratic social environment.*

**Key words:** Work Commitment, Organizational Communication, Open Communication, Closed Communication, Turkey.



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### THE CONCEPT OF COMMITMENT

Becker (1960), who is one of the first to examine the concept of commitment, in terms of industrial and organizational psychology, has mentioned that an individual who acts in relation with factors such as any activity, person or position, exhibits behaviors in accordance with cited factors and shows more interest, which in turn, should be named as being a party of / advocating the issue of commitment. However, in order that cited commitment to denote real commitment, same has to occur through internalization and identification. In the light of this definition, commitment can be defined as an attitude germane to individuals shown towards incident to psychological objects foregoing deem of importance on the lives thereof and performance of behavior willingly and with pleasure requested through the relationship of same with the cited psychological subject. The committed psychological subject may be a friend, a manager, as well as organizations such as political parties, trade unions, businesses or even a job. Work commitment has been identified as the subject of examination in this study inasmuch as the subject of commitment is related to work such as a work commitment, an organization, and a manager (Karacaoğlu, 2005).

#### Work Commitment

The term *work commitment* is employed in both empirical and theoretical studies. Most of the empirical studies are related to the possible determinants of work commitment such as employees' perception and noesis. Broadly speaking, in theoretical studies, four different approaches are discussed. These are named as *work and active participation to work* as a central life interest and *work and psychological identification* as a center of self-esteem.

On the other hand Lodahl and Kejner (1965), by integrating the concepts of "moral" and "self-commitment", have created the concept of "work commitment" as a significant organizational issue. Table 1 lists some early definitions about work commitment.

*Insert table 1 here*

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Lawler and Hall's (1970) definition of work commitment is based on the central life interest. According to these researchers, work commitment is "the level of the employment's being in the center of one's self". Another scholar, Allport (1943) approached the subject in the form of *self-commitment*, which is created when the self-esteem of individuals is affected by the success of these individuals in the work context. A prominent scholar, Vroom, posits that self-work commitment is a phenomenon, which increases to the extent that the individual's level of performance affects own self-esteem (Çakır, 2001, p.54). In this study, the accepted definition of work commitment is the one made by Kanungo (1982) as the cognitive state related to an individual's psychological identification with own work.

#### **Relationship of Work Commitment with Similar Concepts**

Given the fact that the phenomenon of work commitment takes place in work life, other concepts that might be relevant to this phenomenon may be mentioned. The issue of work commitment can be used together and may also be confused with concepts such as organizational commitment, career commitment and commitment to working.

*Insert figure 1 here*

Differences, as well as similarities of these concepts associated with commitment in work life in Figure 1 are discussed below.

#### ***Work commitment and organizational commitment***

Porters et al., cited from Çakır (2001), have defined organizational commitment as the individual's acceptance and adoption of organizational goals and values, striving voluntarily to achieve organizational objectives, and feeling a strong desire to continue the organizational membership. Organizational commitment may also be considered as the individual's state of deeming the interests of the organization more superior to the personal interests thereof (Wiener and Gechman, 1977). High level of organizational commitment reveals itself as adoption of organizational goals and values, willingness to show big efforts for the organization and the desire to be within the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Much as these two types of commitments are empirically related to each other, work commitment defines the individual-specific career, the individual is busy with and the psychological identification that individual has established with the work (Hackett et al., 2001, p. 398). These two commitment types may play a mutual role in predicting work-related outcomes, however, organizational commitment has been observed as more related to variables such as absenteeism and employee turnover, while it has been determined that work commitment has a higher relationship with performance (Karacaoğlu, 2005).

#### ***Work commitment and career commitment***

Career Commitment is considered as an attitude towards the carrier in the form of acquiring information to develop skills, in order to better-perform the duties in own career and to open the gates to higher steps of career (Çakır, 2001). This *better-performing* implies that there should be positive relationships between work commitment and career commitment. While most studies in the literature confirm this relationship (For example Aryee et al., 1994; Carson and Bedeian, 1994), there are also some studies (for example Blau, 1986) that cannot relate these two.

The point where career commitment is different from work commitment is related to the importance of the "career" and the central position of career in an individual's life as a result of that individual's works to gain specific skills and expertise in a specific branch (Karacaoğlu, 2005).

#### ***Work commitment and commitment to working***

Commitment to working and work commitment are two distinct concepts. Commitment to working generally means the commitment to being linked with someone else for work intentions, along with trust (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2000). This type of commitment may apply to organizations, not only to individuals (Huxham and Vangen, 1996) and looks for long-term relationships between the parties for common competitive advantage (Tate, 1996). On the other hand, work commitment is between the individual and own work, and it is the extent to which the individual dedicates oneself to own work (Koponen et al., 2010).

#### **Some Approaches about the Commitment Types**

The literature mentions some models related with the commitment types, explained under the prior title. One of such is the Direct Relationship model that covers the concepts of organizational commitment, work commitment, commitment to working and career commitment altogether. According to the model,

there are no direct relationships among these four commitment types, as put by Blau (1986), there exist indirect relationships via such subjects as absenteeism and turnover.

Another model is proposed by Randall and Cote, as cited from Cohen (2000, p. 393) and the model posits that the ethics of the work group and the business play a vital role on the work commitment. The ethics acts an important motivator on the individual, and therefore, the individual feels incumbent to show the highest level of own ability thanks to ethics.

Morrow (1993) has also created a model for explaining relationships between the types of commitment by increasing the number of types to five. Morrow, in the model thereof, assumes that the types of commitment should be emotional commitment, continuance commitment, and work commitment, commitment to working and work commitment ethics. Morrow shows these components as concentric circles. The innermost circle belongs to commitment to working.

#### **Relationships between Work Commitment and Some Indicators**

As mentioned before, the phenomenon of work commitment is a condition that may occur when the individual is engaged in any activity germane to work, implying that the work itself lies on the basis of this phenomenon. The individual creates an inner (cognitive) commitment to the work only in the existence of positive factors towards own (Blanch and Alujan, 2010). Positive factors regarding work context help the realization of the individual's expectations. This realization may result with the satisfaction of the individual (Rutherford et al., 2009), and thus, it becomes appropriate to mention the concept of "job satisfaction" of the individual. Job satisfaction that is generally defined as the happiness the worker gets from own job (Ayrancı, 2011) is also associated with the work commitment. It is suggested that high job satisfaction leads to greater work commitment (Ayrancı, 2011) and job satisfaction shows itself in the form of reactions towards work issues via high or low levels of work commitment (Berry, 1997).

Work performance is also claimed to be related with work commitment. For example, Vroom (1962) finds a strong correlation between the level of performance at the workplace and work commitment. Hall and Lawler (1971) find that in cases where performance is measured on the basis of the evaluations made by superiors of the employees, performance is also considered to be affected by employees' work commitment. There are, however, some studies that reach different results. Studies conducted by Lawler (1988) and Brown (1996) point out that there is no significant relationship between work performance and work commitment. Work performance also causes efficiency and effectiveness to be taken into consideration. The literature overall points out that work commitment leads to higher efficiency and / or effectiveness at the individual (Mühlau and Lindenberg, 2003; Naquin and Holton III, 2002) and group or organizational (Angle and Perry, 1981; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005) levels. On the other hand, reversing the relationship by focusing on the effects of high efficiency and effectiveness expectations from the employees yield that these expectations may damage work commitment (For example Steers, 1977).

Absenteeism is also related with work commitment. Similar to the relationship between performance and work commitment, it is generally posited that there is a direct positive relationship between employees' willingness to continue working and their work commitment. An example includes the study of Steel and Rentsch, cited by Çakır (2001, p.81), which finds out that the employees with high work commitment have a low rate of absenteeism while another example that belongs to Siegel and Spirit represents that there is not a relationship between absenteeism and work commitment. Though these examples reach different conclusions, the literature generally draws a frame claiming that work commitment changes adversely with absenteeism (For example, Farrell and Petersen, 1984; Luchak and Gellatly, 2007; Hausknecht et al., 2008).

#### **COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

Communication is one of the concepts defined in many ways in the literature. For example, Hoben et al. (2007) consider communication as a whole concept comprising of speech and verbal symbols thereby constituting an exchange process, while according to Kekelis and Andersen (1984), communication denotes the process when the parties understand each other. On the other hand Bozdoğan (2003, p. 50) cites that Gordon considers communication as a process that commences when the individual makes own needs meaningful to rectify the state of imbalance that occurs within oneself and relay it to outer world. Schramm (1954) simply calls communication as the exchange process between two or more parties and

Barnlund (2008) explains that communication is the exchange process in which the parties send and receive messages simultaneously. Despite these different definitions, the main point in communication lies within *sharing*. It is, therefore, the process of sharing emotions, thoughts and information between two or more parties and thus, uncovering common meanings (Karakütük, 2011).

After this brief introduction to communication, it would be appropriate to revert to the concept of organizational communication. Organizational communication denotes the communication occurring in organizational environment and the main objectives thereof are to communicate organizational policies, establish a continuous coordination among organizational members, solve the organizational problems and share information (Karakütük, 2011). According to Price (1997), the delivery of information to organizational members of another organization denotes organizational communication. In another study, it is seen that organizational communication is defined by a number of different approaches (Elving, 2005):

- According to *internal approach*, intra-organizational communication is the process regarding the transfer of a message about the organization to a recipient of that organization.
- According to *social structure approach*, organizational communication is a common language that social structures such as human groups, working groups and teams have developed in order to interact with each other.
- In the *traditional approach*, organizational communication denotes the total of receiving, sending, storing, and processing vital organizational information.

These different definitions bring forth different types of organizational communication. As Kocabaş (2005, p. 249) has cited, Neski refers to four different types of organizational communication:

- *Bureaucratic Communication*: Only official information is exchanged and is usually in the form of superior-subordinate relationship.
- *Manipulative Communication*: In this way of communication, only selected information is exchanged, and thus, some information is hidden or changed.
- *Democratic Communication*: All information can be exchanged mutually in an objective way.
- *Disproportionate Communication*: All required information cannot be received or the received partial information is fully utilized.

The direction of the organizational communication may also be used to list the types. In this case, communication can be vertical (from superior to subordinate or from subordinate to superior), horizontal (between those in equal levels) and diagonal (between those in different levels of hierarchy as well as in different units) (Varol, 1993). Another approach would be to use the nature of the network the parties form in order to communicate (Erogluer, 2008; Guetzkow and Simon, 1955):

- *In the wheel model*, only the highest manager has the decision-making authority and communication must comply with the chain of command.
- *In the chain model*, the parties are arranged side by side, like the rings of a chain and the parties in the farthest positions can communicate directly only in one direction, while the parties inside can make a two-way communication directly.
- *In the star model*, the parties must get aid or permission from some other parties that assume the role of "concierge" in order to communicate with a particular party.
- The parties are arranged as the rings on a circle *in the circle model* and each party has the opportunity to have two-way communications directly.

A fifth way, which is more advanced and more democratic than these mentioned is *open communication*. Open communication denotes flow of information and news in a free and healthy way from the uppermost level to the lowermost level and if necessary, in the opposite direction through more than one channel (Dutton, 1998; Sarıkamış, 2006). The opposite is the *closed communication* in which the information flow is partially restricted or directed, a formal tone is usually preferred while communicating, and employees' active participation in the communication process is not considered (Buchholz, 2001).

#### **Relationship of Organizational Communication with Job Satisfaction and Work Commitment**

The literature posits that organizational communication, in the form of open communication, is beneficial for job satisfaction and work commitment. An example belongs to Yüksel (2005), who finds that factors such as openness in communication, receiving feedback and constructive criticism have a direct positive

effect on the job satisfaction. Similarly, Halis (2000) concludes that job satisfaction increases when superiors establish a courteous and continuous communication with subordinates; receive feedback according to the nature of the work performed, and when the participation of the employees to achieve organizational goals are maintained. Pettit Jr. et al. (1997) express that organizational communication significantly affects job satisfaction and an open, positive communication increases the satisfaction. Ayrançı (2011) acts with a different approach and while he chooses the job satisfaction of business owners as his subject, he reveals that communication of business owners with the employees thereof is by itself a job satisfaction factor, and the fact that business owners consider communication as one of the determinants of organizational performance.

The literature reveals that organizational communication has an effect on work commitment in a very similar way. For example, Carriere and Bourque (2009) express that satisfaction from organizational communication is an intermediate variable in influencing work commitment. Chen et al. (2006) find that in organizations where organizational communication is more continuous and open, work commitment is higher. Leiter and Maslach (1988), who consider organizational communication in the form of communication networks, find that subordinates who show a similar degree of work commitment, tend to establish communication networks among themselves and that negative superior-subordinate relationship reduces work commitment seriously. There are, however, some studies that cannot find a relationship between organizational communication and commitment. An example is the one that belongs to Trombetta and Rogers (1988) revealing that organizational communication affects job satisfaction but has no influence on work commitment.

## THE RESEARCH TO ANALYZE THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION ON WORK COMMITMENT

This research aims to determine the effect of Open Communication and Closed Communication on Work Commitment. For this aim, two hypotheses are formed:

**H<sub>1</sub>: Open communication affects work commitment in a positive and significant manner.**

**H<sub>2</sub>: Closed communication affects work commitment in a negative and significant manner.**

The two hypotheses are formed according to the general results given by the mentioned literature. The research population comprises employees of a public institution operating in Ankara. With a 5% of error margin, the sample size is calculated (Sekaran, 1992) as 102 people. As the authors expect some data losses, data are collected from 150 people, but only the data from 103 people are found eligible for the analysis.

The general demographic features point out that 55.3% of the participants are females (n=57) and 68% (n=70) are married. 40.8% (n=42) of the participants hold a college degree, while 44.7% (n=46) have graduate degree. 70.9% (n=73) of the subjects consist of people between the ages of 30-49.

The research facilitates three scales: Open Communication Scale, Closed Communication Scale and Work Commitment Scale. While the reliability of the scales are analyzed with Cronbach's alpha method, explanatory and confirmatory factor analyzes are performed by Amos software.

### Validations of the Scales Used

#### *Open communication and closed communication scales*

Intraorganizational Communication Scale developed by Seashore et al. (1983) is employed to consider open communication and closed communication (similar to Worley et al., 1999) and 12 items of this scale are designed to determine open communication, while 5 items of the same scale are used to determine closed communication. Related items are positioned in a mixed way within the questionnaire. Closed communication is considered via items 1, 2, 4, 9 and 14 on the questionnaire. The responses are to be distributed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). The rest of the items are related with open communication.

Exploratory factor analysis is conducted first in order to test the validity of open communication. As a result of the analysis, it is determined that the data is in compliance with single-factor structure of the scale. However, an item (*We are encouraged to express our capabilities germane to work*) is eliminated from the rest of the analysis because of the low factor loading. As a result of the continuing analysis, factor loadings of the 11-item open communication scale are found to be between 0.50 and 0.77. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin analysis result of the scale is 0.78 and the Barlett's test result is significant (p=.000), meaning

that the data is suitable for factor analysis. The items explain 45% of the total variance. Following this analysis, confirmatory factor analysis is conducted. As a result of this factor analysis, it is observed that the data is again in compliance with single-factor structure of the scale and factor loadings are found between 0.44 and 0.84. Table 2 contains the goodness-of-fit values of all the scales used in this research and this table shows that open communication scale is realistic. Finally as a result of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is found to be 0.88, suggesting that there is internal consistency.

*Insert table 2 here*

The same procedure is applied for closed communication scale. Exploratory factor analysis is conducted first, in order to test the validity of the closed communication scale. As a result of the analysis, it is understood that the data is in compliance with single-factor structure of the scale. The analysis reveals that the factor loadings are ranging between 0.49 and 0.73. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin analysis result of the scale is 0.70 and the Barlett's test is significant ( $p=.000$ ). The scale items explain 42% of the total variance. The next step is confirmatory factor analysis and this analysis shows that the data is in compliance with single-factor structure again and factor loadings are found between 0.40 and 0.68. Table 2 posits that this closed communication scale is also realistic. As the result of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach alpha coefficient is found to be 0.66.

#### **Work commitment scale**

The scale developed by Kanungo (1982) is employed to determine employees' perception of work commitment. The responses in this 10-item scale are distributed in 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree).

The exploratory factor analysis shows that the data complies with the single factor structure of the scale. However, two items have to be eliminated from the analysis due to low factor loadings (*For me, my career is just a small indicator of who I am* and *I often feel myself indifferent to my career*). It is determined by continuing the analysis that the factor loadings of the remaining eight-item scale are between 0.52 and 0.84. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test value is found to be 0.81, while the Barlett's test value is significant ( $p=.000$ ), meaning that the data can safely be factorized. The items of the scale describe 51% of the total variance. The second step, confirmatory factor analysis, again confirms the single factor structure and factors loadings between 0.55 and 0.85. Table 2 claims that this scale is also realistic. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.86 and so, the scale has reliability.

#### **The Relationships between Work Commitment, and Open and Closed Communication**

It is seen from the prior title that the three scales are validated thus; the relationships among these three should be evaluated. Table 3 shows such relationships.

*Insert table 3 here*

There are statistically significant relationships among all dependent and independent variables in the research as shown in Table 3, wherefore, significant effects between variables can be predicted. To analyze these predicted relationships, a regression analysis is carried out in order to explain the effect of open communication and closed communication on work commitment. Findings of the regression analysis are given in Table 4.

*Insert table 4 here*

According to Table 4, open communication significantly affects work commitment positively ( $\beta=48$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In this case  $H_1$  is supported, open communication affects work commitment in a positive and significant manner. On the other hand, it is observed that closed communication again significantly affects work commitment, again positively ( $\beta=.58$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This effect is not as it appears in hypothesis  $H_2$ , and therefore  $H_2$  is not supported. Closed communication affects work commitment in a *positive* and significant manner.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Today, human resources are the most strategic assets of the businesses. Psycho-social nature of humans affect how human resources can be used effectively and efficiently, and thus may lead to an effect on performance. In this case, an important concept that should be taken into account is work commitment, denoting the employee's identification with the organizational tasks own is incumbent with, and the sense of belonging to the works or performed thereby. In addition, the fact that work commitment is

related to more than one organizational variable increases the importance of this issue. When the study is considered from this point, close relations are observed between a variety of types of commitment (such as organizational commitment or career commitment) and organizational factors (such as performance, productivity and job satisfaction). In addition, organizational communication as mentioned earlier, may have effects on work commitment as an in-house factor.

In this context, organizational communication is discussed in the study and the effect of organizational communication on work commitment is taken as the subject. Open communication with positive or constructive features, and closed communication with a more formal and unparticipative tone were individually examined thoroughly in accordance with the literature and the means of their effects on work commitment were emphasized.

One of the obtained results is that open communication directly affects work commitment positively. In other words, communication with a democratic understanding, access to each and any hierarchical level and a positive tone thereby increases work commitment of the employees. This result is fully in accordance with the literature and the authors' expectations.

According to the authors when the employees can contact managers in a democratic way, this becomes an indicator revealing the fact that words of the employees are taken into account in the organization. Employees, who perceive that they are respected and that their ideas are allowed to contribute to the organization, tend to work more willingly. In addition, thanks to the democratic approach, the employees may have the opinion that they can have communication with different levels of management and such communication allows their ideas to circulate in a widespread manner throughout the organization. In this case, employees are expected to act more carefully and show more sensitive approaches to their works. Authors consider that open communication is important not only in terms of respect and responsibility, but also for problem solving.

The second result, this time, is about the relationship between closed communication and work commitment. The negative impact of closed communication on work commitment, contrary to expectations, was rejected. However, as mentioned previously, closed communication is a form of communication with more bureaucratic nature. Inasmuch as the study covers the employees of a public institution and since a more bureaucratic approach is expected in public institutions, the authors find this result as a natural occurrence.

At this point, some suggestions for future research may be given. To start with, future studies may subject the mentioned relationships at private businesses. Comparisons of public and private sectors may also be made concerning this issue. In addition, comparisons may be made between sectors by also clustering industrial and service businesses. This study explained four types of commitment regarding work context but only subjected work commitment. Future studies may form and evaluate more advanced models including these commitment types simultaneously. Unlike this study, future studies may also focus on the possible interactions between work commitment and organizational communication types. Even a more advanced step may be to blend the four types of commitment and types of organizational communication with an assumption that they all affect each other. As commitment and communication are in fact psycho-social subjects, a convenient approach is to consider the effects of demographic features of the employees and the organizational culture.

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**Table 1. Some Early Definitions of Work Commitment**

Brooke et al. (1988)	A cognitive belief reflecting degree of a person's establishment of psychological identification with the job thereof.
Dubin (1956)	The status indicating to what extent the work and things related to the work of an employee has been replaced in the center of the foregoing person's life.
Dubinsky et al. (1986)	The status indicating to what extent the employee is integrated with and committed to the own work.
Elloy et al. (1991)	The amount of job satisfaction relevant to conspicuous needs of the employee.
Igbaria and Siegel (1992)	The status indicating to what extent the individual can define oneself psychologically with own work.
Kanungo (1982)	The cognitive state related to an individual's psychological identification with own work.
Lawler and Hall (1970)	The status of a person incident to own perception of the work as an important part of own life, and consider it of significant importance in own life.
Lodhal and Kejner (1965)	Degree of identification of a person with the work thereof or the work's having an important place in the life of the person.

**Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Values of the Scales as a Result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Scales	$\chi^2$	df	CMIN/DF (Acceptable value must be greater than 5)	GFI (Acceptable value must be greater than .85)	AGFI (Acceptable value must be greater than .80)	CFI (Acceptable value must be greater than .90)	NFI (Acceptable value must be greater than .90)	TLI (Acceptable value must be greater than .90)	RMSEA (Acceptable value must be smaller than .08)
1. Open Communication	97.2	35	7.2	.92	.86	.93	.92	.92	.07
2. Closed Communication	5.8	5	7.1	.96	.90	.94	.91	.91	.06
3. Work Commitment	44.2	17	2.6	.91	.81	.94	.92	.93	.08

**Table 3. The Averages, Standard Deviations and Correlations of the Scales**

	Average	Standard deviation	Work Commitment	Open Communication	Closed Communication
<b>Work Commitment</b>	2.69	.71	(.86)		
<b>Open Communication</b>	3.43	.58	.48**	(.88)	
<b>Closed Communication</b>	3.18	.60	.60**	.82**	(.66)

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01.

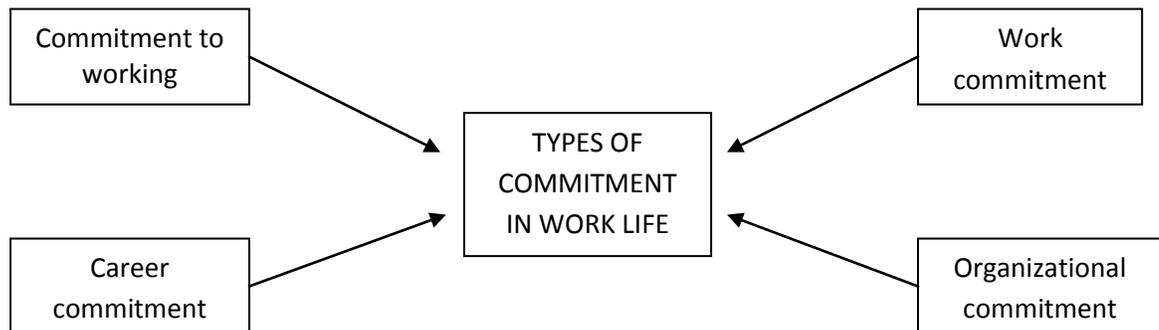
**Table 4. Results of the Regression Analysis about the Effect of Open and Closed Communication on Work Commitment**

Independent Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	ΔF	β	Durbin-Watson
Open Communication	.22	.21	28.7***	.48***	1.98
Closed Communication	.34	.33	52.6***	.58***	1.90

Dependent Variable: Work Commitment.

\*\*\* p<.001.

**Figure 1. Types of Commitment in Work Life.**



Source: Çakır, Ö. (2001). *The Phenomenon of Work Commitment and Affecting Factors*. Ankara, Turkey: Seçkin Publications, p. 37.