

# Reading Organizational Behavior Approaches through Alternative Theories: A Critical Approach

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**Abstract:** Recently, some approaches, or "organizational trends" that are robust in rhetoric but weak in epistemological and factual content, have frequently appeared in organizational behavior literature. The expectation that the employee will continuously sacrifice the organization's favor rather than the scientific explanation of any phenomenon is expressed in pro-organizational approaches. Critically reviewing these explanations, this study aims to analyze the concepts of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors from the "rational choice" and "social exchange theory" perspectives. The pro-organizational approaches attempt to explain and discuss employee organizational behaviors based on sacrifice, but is this the case? Can these approaches be proved or empirically justified by the basic assumptions of psychology, economics, and behavioral economics? Moreover, does the natural world function based on sacrifice? Does the organism maintain its life based on its interests, benefits, needs, or emotional orientation and self-sacrifice? This study significantly draws attention to the necessity of creating literature based on scientific, objective, and factual concepts instead of fictional and rhetorical concepts without any real equivalents in the real world. The study is a critical thematic review based on the variables of organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, rational choice theory, and "social exchange theory." The obtained results consist of assumptions based on the comparative critical analysis of these approaches.

**Keywords:** Organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, social change theory, rational change theory, devotion

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is essential to understand the theoretical value of pro-organizational approaches such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, psychological contract, organizational loyalty, contextual performance, work commitment, identification, organizational belonging, and organizational embeddedness[1]. In this study, "organizational commitment" and "organizational citizenship behaviors" are analyzed within the framework of "rational choice theory" and "social exchange theory" in the field of economics. A mutual reading of pro-organizational approaches and economic theories that contain contradictory assumptions and the questioning of pro-organizational behaviors in theoretical and epistemological terms are necessary for a good understanding of the subject. Here, whether the primary motivation behind human organizational behaviors as claimed by pro-organizational behaviors is the voluntary sacrifice for the organization or the individual's orientation towards his benefit, as in the assumptions of rational choice theory and social exchange theory, explains the issue better.

The classical, neoclassical, and, more recently, behavioral economics and behavioral and evolutionary psychology argue that the primary motive behind human behavior is generally a "need" that leads to rational and motivated behavior, which requires a rational analysis. According to these theories, which attempt to explain human behaviors psychologically within a carrot-stick dichotomy, a person evaluates an imagined future behavior in terms of the "price" she/he will pay or the "benefit" (reward) she/he will receive [1], [2]. If she/he decides that the outcome will favor the behavior, she/he maintains the behavior, otherwise discontinuing it. Furthermore, if the price paid for the reward obtained as a result of the behavior is higher, it turns the person off the behavior who then stops doing it altogether, whereas if the price is lower than the reward, the behavior continues, albeit reluctantly. Finally, some motivational approaches suggest that intrinsic factors push the individual to act [3], [4], [5], [6]. Some motivational approaches

question motivation's main reason[7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. According to the expectation theory from these approaches, a person's motivation in a particular subject depends on three factors. These are the expectation, instrumentality, and "valence." According to the expectation theory, a person should believe that being motivated to be high will be high.

The question that needs to be questioned here is why people's organizational behaviors should be independent of the concept of utility, as the pro-organizational approaches claim. Another fundamental problem is, is it a sustainable situation for an employee to make a voluntary sacrifice in favor of the organization by ignoring his / her benefit? The critical question here is, "Why should people's organizational behaviors be different from those mentioned above?" The pro-organizational behavior literature attempts to explain behaviors in terms of self-sacrifice as expressed by the terms "organizational commitment" and "organizational citizenship" instead of rational attitudes and behaviors characterized by the cost-benefit dilemma. Mainly because of the "social exchange theory," the behavioral, classical, or neoclassical economics deal with the human behavior not based on pro-organizational self-sacrifice reward-punishment dilemma. According to these approaches, although "organizational commitment" plays an essential role in the organizational attitude and behavior of employees, if there is no reason, in other words, no "reward" or "expectation," the reason for the continuation of this behavior in any situation disappears[10], [11]. Pro-organizational approaches that reflect a "wish" rather than a theory explain the event only from the organization's perspective. Another weakness of these approaches is that they expect sacrifice from the individual, not from the organization; however, humans and animals maintain a behavior to the extent that they maximize their benefits is a rule that prevails in nature[7], [8]. Thus, it is essential to answer why employees should be committed to their organization by ignoring the public benefits such as wages, promotions, and awards.

This theoretical study's primary purpose is to question the assumptions of pro-organizational approaches based on volunteerism through rational choice theory and social exchange theory. The current study adopts the critical review methodology following a thematic review approach[12]. For this purpose, the original research's basic assumptions and general theoretical framework on pro-organizational approaches and the semantic, notional, connotational content of the "social exchange theory" and "rational choice theory," as two opposed theories, were analyzed comparatively. As such, this thematic study attempts at synthesis by comparing contrasting approaches at the hypothetical level. This comparative analysis questioned the scientific value of the pro-organizational misconceptions and tried to show the benefit of bringing a deeper understanding of an intertextual perspective.

## **II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Organizational Commitment and Its Basic Assumptions**

The concept of commitment means a heartfelt embracement of any object, phenomenon, or value felt and act unselfishly in favor of commitment. On the other hand, organizational commitment refers to being sensitive to an organization's mission and vision, aims and objectives, and interests. Organizational commitment is one of the fundamental approaches to pro-organizational behaviors, which means that the person shows self-sacrificial behavior against her/himself but in favor of the organization he/she works. In industrial and organizational psychology, organizational commitment is related to the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization. Wiener defines organizational commitment as "all internalized normative pressures to behave in a manner that meets organizational goals and interests."<sup>[13]</sup> Allen and Meyer define organizational commitment as "the degree to which employees remain part of the organization and integrate with their organization"<sup>[18]</sup>. Commitment to the organization is a concept that suggests that the employee's job satisfaction, motivation, and performance are related to various psychological factors, and its content is built based on self-sacrifice<sup>[15]</sup>.

In developing the concept of organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen based their assumptions mostly on Mowday, Porter, and Steers<sup>[17]</sup>. Different loyalty models and dimensions have been developed to determine organizational commitment. One such model is the organizational commitment model developed by Meyer and Allen. However, Meyer and Allen's model has been criticized for being solely based on theoretical assumptions, not supported by empirical findings, and not empirically confirmed<sup>[13]</sup>. The common point in the definitions of organizational commitment is that the individual establishes a relationship of mutual interest with his/her organization and performs his/her work with a high sense of loyalty and devotion. "Organizational commitment," which refers to the employee's desire not to be psychologically connected to his/her organization, reflects the degree of identification of the individual with his/her organization.

The classification of commitment commonly used in the literature is the organizational commitment classification developed by Allen and Meyer, which is composed of the "emotional commitment," "normative commitment," and

continuation commitment dimensions[18]. O'Reilly and Chatman added: "behavioral commitment" to the components enumerated in the classification made by Allen and Meyer[19]. In behavioral commitment, the employee pays attention to the harmony between his/her behavior and the organization's expectations which makes a significant contribution to the organizational commitment approach, explains the dimensions of organizational commitment as follows[20],[21]:

*Emotional commitment.* Mercurio states that emotional commitment is a permanent, sincere commitment that reinforces the employee's sense of belonging to the organization. This type of commitment is central to all forms of commitment[21]. Emotional commitment is a dimension of commitment that strengthens normative and continuation commitment.

*Continuation commitment.* It is a component of commitment to the prevention of labor loss. This dimension is also related to the perception of the employee's possible losses (side-bets) if he/she leaves the organization. According to this hypothesis, the employee acts in consideration of the loss and gain he/she will suffer if he/she quits his/her job. Employee commitment assumes a continued relationship with the organization by considering the economic and social costs (such as friendship bonds). When the concept of continuing commitment is looked at more closely, it is seen that such commitment is not a genuine commitment but a "compliance behavior.

*Normative commitment.* According to this commitment, employees act with a deep sense of responsibility towards their organization. Those with strong normative commitment are willing to follow the rules of the organization voluntarily. Normative commitment involves loyalty, devotion, and a sense of "moral" responsibility. One has an inner desire to show loyalty to his/her organization with this type of commitment. Employees have strong beliefs that those who show normative commitment will be rewarded and increase their normative commitment. Those working in a normatively committed way see the commitment to organizational goals as a moral obligation[22], which refers to complying with the workplace's formal rules, organizational norms, and organizational culture.

What needs to be questioned here is whether pro-organizational behaviors such as "organizational commitment" and "organizational citizenship behavior" reflect employee self-sacrifice or a relationship of interest for the organization. An analysis of the related literature reveals some criteria to find out whether the employee has organizational commitment. We can express these criteria that reflect a wish as follows [23]:

- A strong desire to become a member and maintain membership of an organization,
- Voluntary efforts for organizational benefit,
- Adopting the values, aims, and objectives of the organization,
- Behaving altruistically in favor of the organization by ignoring self,
- Identifying with the organization's future, vision and purpose,
- Demonstrating extra-role (undefined role) behaviors in the name of organizational benefit,
- They are protecting the organization's interests in the business environment and the social environment.

The theoretical and operational weaknesses are evident when the assumptions above are evaluated in epistemology and practice, not rhetorical style. The inconsistency in the organizational commitment literature stems from moral commitment and interest-based commitment or side-bet commitment. Organizational commitment is handled in terms of individual expectations that are contrary to the meaning of organizational commitment. According to Becker, side-bet loyalty is one's persistent attitude about not leaving the organization by being aware of the cost[24]. In such a commitment, the person evaluates the situation in terms of reward and cost. If the cost of leaving the organization is high, he continues to stay in the organization. Otherwise, his intention to quit becomes more assertive, and he turns to another organization that he believes will satisfy him more. This definition is not a committed relationship but a necessity or an obligation to lack a better alternative. The calculative or "interest-based commitment" focuses on meeting the needs of the individual, and there is a commitment situation arising from a benefit-cost (reward-punishment) dilemma established between the individual and the organization[25], [26]. When we consider human beings' basic tendencies and ongoing practices in life, it is clear that organizational commitment is understood as side-bet and interest-based.

In general, pro-organizational behaviors, especially loyalty and organizational citizenship behaviors in organizations, are expressed by the terms "good soldier syndrome," "proactive behavior," "prosocial organizational behavior," "organizational commitment," "organizational spontaneity," "organizational loyalty," and "organizational identification." Such behaviors are described as "Good Soldier Syndrome" or "Behavioral Citizenship Behavior," by

Organ & Ryan[27], "Organizational Improvisation" by George and Brief [28], "Extra- Role Behavior" by Van Dyne et al.[29], "Positive Social Behaviors in the Business Environment" by George[30], and "Contextual Performance" It was expressed as "Contextual Performance" by Motowidlo and Van Scotter[31]. As can be seen, organizational commitment is not an agreed-upon in terms of definition and meaning. There are various problem areas in explaining the behavior of people from business life.

The main factor that makes the individual feel connected to his/her organization is job satisfaction, which depends on the way the job itself, wage, promotion opportunity, management approach, organizational climate, colleagues, organizational structure, management structure, employees' communication/ interaction with each other, and social support are perceived[32]. It can be argued that organizational commitment is a bad imitation of the "social contract" theory developed by Rousseau[33], which has no operational value for organizations. Also, pro-organizational approaches are against the equality theory, which says that if Adams sees a situation in his favor, his motivation increases, and otherwise, his motivation decreases, especially when compared to the performance of Adams's reward for individual effort[34].

While Meyer and Allen developed the concept of organizational commitment, they based their assumptions primarily on Mowday, Porter, and Steers [17]. However, Meyer and Allen's model has been criticized because experimental findings do not support it, are empirically verified, and are based on theoretical assumptions[13]. The common aspect of the definitions of organizational commitment is that the individual establishes a union of interests with his / her organization and does his / her work with high loyalty feelings and self-sacrifice.

According to organizational commitment's basic assumptions, employees with high organizational commitment show extra-role behavior and desire to continue their membership. They show voluntary commitment to comply with the organization's goals and values. The subject that should be focused on here is the concept of "volunteerism" in organizational commitment. The concept of volunteerism constitutes the main objection point of this research, and it is questioned whether it is possible for the human being to constantly sacrifice in favor of the organization without his individual "benefit." According to many researchers working on the subject, although organizational commitment has been a popular research topic in recent years, there are various problems regarding the content of the concept and how it should be applied in the organizational context. As social exchange theory suggests, whether people who have positive thoughts about their organization expect reward/benefit makes the basic assumptions of organizational commitment controversial[17], [18], [35]. As with continuance commitment, the employee's conscious act shows that one sees events within the reward-price dilemma framework, as the social exchange theory suggests.

Organizational commitment forces the employee to take a series of actions to meet the requirements of commitment. Unlike voluntary commitment, this compulsion is a requirement of the contract one makes with the organization. Organizational commitment is the organization's reputation, the obligation to meet the person's needs, the pleasure of success, job security, and career. It is not independent of opportunities and other benefits. Those who show commitment to the organization show emotional loyalty due to some characteristics, such as wage, career opportunity, working relations, promotion, job satisfaction, and human relations[20], [33]. These features all the factors are directly related to either the material or psychological needs of human organizational commitment, in short, with benefit. As the exchange theory suggests, it shows that man exchanges organizational commitment for his material or moral interests.

## **2.2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Its Basic Assumptions**

Organizational citizenship behavior is self-sacrificing behaviors other than the formal behavior required by the job description. The employee's self-sacrificing behavior favors the organization with his undefined role behaviors[36], [48]. Organizational citizenship behavior; is expressed in various ways, including sacrifice, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and conscientiousness. This behavior includes helping colleagues, innovating, volunteering, and careful behavior to avoid unwanted behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior is an employee's "in-role" behaviors as required by the job description and "extra-role" behaviors that are out of job descriptions and self-sacrificing[37], [38].

Chester Bernard first used the Concept of Organizational Citizenship in the 1930s to describe informal organizations. Later, in the book "The Social Psychology of Organization," published by Katz and Kahn in 1966[39], the concept described all kinds of formal tasks and non-role behaviors. In the 1960s, Gouldner used organizational citizenship behavior to express gratitude to employers and superiors, ignoring employees' labor[13]. Organ defines organizational citizenship behavior as individual self-sacrificing behaviors that are not directly or explicitly defined

among the employee's official duties are voluntary and promote the organization's functioning [48]. Organ's definition of organizational citizenship behavior reflects three critical characteristics:

- Organizational citizenship behaviors are voluntary behaviors that are not part of the employee's job descriptions and are performed by the employee due to personal preferences.
- Organizational citizenship behavior goes beyond what is described in job descriptions (extra-role behavior).
- Organizational citizenship behavior is voluntary behavior that considers all benefits of the organization and contributes to the overall organizational effectiveness.

Organizational citizenship behavior strives for more than those shown in job descriptions for the organization's benefit, which are not required by the employee's contractual duties. Organizational citizenship behavior, as in organizational commitment, is based on employee self-sacrifice. It means that the employee goes beyond the formal job descriptions and acts selflessly to favor the organization[38]. It is claimed that those who exhibit such behaviors voluntarily perform all kinds of surplus role behaviors to contribute to the organization that exceeds the specified role requirements and expectations (extra-role behavior). This concept also includes efforts to contribute to the organization's social and psychological environment[37].

When the literature is examined, different dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior are revealed; however, it is seen that the classifications made contain the same or similar behaviors[29], [38],[48]. It is predicted that many dimensions related to organizational citizenship behavior are gathered under seven basic dimensions, and these dimensions can be classified as helping behavior, volunteering, organizational loyalty, organizational acceptance, individual development, civic virtue, and self-development. In this study, organizational citizenship behavior is determined by Organ; it has been examined based on five dimensions: Altruism, Civic Virtue, Conscientiousness, Courtesy, and Sportsmanship[48].

*Altruism:* The concept of altruism means to act altruistically in favor of the Corporation and voluntarily help other employees without any expectation.

*Civic virtue:* Expresses the profound interest of the employee in the interest of the organization. Employees' seeking constructive solutions to organizational problems, participating in and supporting decisions that may favor the organization are civic virtue examples.

*Kindness:* It means the sensitivity of individuals who need to interact with each other due to their organization's duties.

*Conscientiousness:* It means that employees voluntarily participate in organizational activities outside of their job descriptions. According to this assumption, employees with a high sense of conscientiousness exhibit behaviors with a high sense of duty in the organization. It is also a characteristic of conscientiousness that employees internalize its rules, procedures, core values, mission and vision, and regulations.

*Sportsmanship:* Reflects employee tolerance to unfavorable working conditions. Sportsmanship includes the avoidance of any negative behavior that may cause conflict in the workplace.

The concept of organizational citizenship behavior is generally handled in loyalty, sacrifice, and gratitude towards the employee's organization, as in Dennis Organ's work. Dennis Organ generally contributed significantly to organizational citizenship behavior in the present tense [48]. Systemized by Organ, the organizational citizenship behavior literature is based on the following assumptions[41]:

- Voluntary behavior is not part of the job description and is performed by the employee in favor of the organization.
- Organizational citizenship behaviors are willing to go beyond the role specified in job descriptions.
- Employees contribute positively to general organizational activities, even if they are not among their duties.
- Organizational activities are carried out with enthusiasm.
- Employees are willing to help other employees.
- Employees are willing to comply with organizational rules and regulations.
- Employees demonstrate proactive behavior.

Organ has been subject to criticism since the assumptions here are not operational and consist of wishes. Above all, Organ's definition of organizational citizenship behavior is based on assumptions and wishes, rendering it nonoperational. The Organ's organizational citizenship behavior assumptions are far from explaining human behavioral mechanisms in the organization. First and foremost, how could it be possible to determine what is optional without a defined role and behavior? In response to these criticisms, Organ tried to say that researchers working on the subject of organizational citizenship behavior had moved away from the original definition of the concept and thus caused uncertainty[42]. Initially, although researchers only addressed activities that directly supported the organization's output within the framework of organizational citizenship behavior, the critical role of job description began to be realized when the importance of qualified employees in the market conditions was understood, which raised questions about the exact nature of organizational citizenship behavior[43], [44]. Thus, the epistemological and theoretical basis of organizational citizenship behavior turned out to be weak. Later attempts have tried to compensate for this theoretical weakness by drawing on concepts such as "contextual performance," "prosocial organizational behavior," "pro-organizational altruism," "general compliance," and "extra-role behavior" [45]. As can be seen, the concept of organizational citizenship behavior, which is based chiefly on self-sacrifice and altruism, does not go beyond being a metaphoric neology without content.

Since the concept of organizational citizenship behavior has been used, there has been much research into the causes. These studies focus on organizational citizenship behavior's factors[19], [27]. Research on contextual causes or antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior[23]. According to these studies, high organizational citizenship behavior contributes to increased productivity, quality of service, and customer satisfaction[38]. However, the main problem to be focused on here is why employees will show altruistic behaviors in favor of the organization, as in organizational commitment.

Another point is that the employee who sacrifices organizational citizenship behavior is the organization that is the permanent winner. The actions required by the organization in the face of these altruistic behaviors of the employee are constantly neglected[43], [46]. This situation weakens the theoretical basis and operational value of the organizational citizenship approach.

When the relevant literature is analyzed critically, and within the framework of the usual flow of business life, the organizational citizenship behavior approach has become the subject of significant research in recent years. However, discussions continue on the validity of the concept[47], [48]. Discussions generally focus on organizational citizenship behavior means nothing but the presentation of old wine in a new bottle. Organizational citizenship behavior focuses on collective and organizational interests, by neglecting individual interests makes the approach questionable.

### **2.3. Social Exchange Theory and Its Basic Assumptions**

The social exchange theory is a social psychological theory that explores the primary motive behind the parties' behavior, applying cost-benefit analysis to determine effort and benefit. The social exchange theory asks whether relationships between people work within the cost-benefit analysis framework or romantic relationships such as self-sacrifice, altruism, and devotion. The social exchange theory assumes that relationships between people work within the exchange framework[49]. The social exchange theory was initially developed by researchers such as American social psychologists John W. Thibaut and Harold H. Kelley, American sociologists George C. Homans, Peter M. Blau, and Claude Levi-Strauss. The theory inquires the basis on which exchange, the change of all kinds of material or immaterial benefit, proceeds[50]. After George C. Homans established the theory, especially Peter M. Blau and Richard M. Emerson, developed the concept to include a sociological perspective in the current sense.

Homans, who carried out important studies on the social exchange theory, claim that actors establish their relations through cost-benefit analysis during the exchange process. Although there are different forms of exchange, Homans explained it from the cost-benefit perspective. Similar to economic exchange, the social exchange theory mainly deals with interpersonal relations in terms of cost-benefit. People expect to be rewarded for their social exchange price and economic exchange[51]. The social exchange theory asserts that any actor looks at the other party's reaction and accepts that the primary motivation behind all kinds of human relationships is the benefits. It is formulated as follows: the results from an action determine the interest in that action[52], [53]. Homans explains his theory from a perspective similar to Adams' theory of equivalence and expectation. In particular, Blau's benefit-oriented approach assumes that human behavior can be explained through the punishment-reward dilemma.

Social exchange theory deals with change in terms of both economic and social consequences. Blau performed the microeconomic analysis of the theory. From his perspective, each individual tries to maximize his/her earnings. Blau argues that this concept holds not only in terms of production relations but also in friendly relations. The significant difference between social and economic change is the nature of the change between the parties[49], [54]. Unlike the purely economic exchange, the elements of social change are pretty diverse. The models of social change assume that rewards and costs drive human decisions. In the social sharing relationship, both parties take responsibility for each other and are interdependent. In a mutually beneficial exchange, each party assesses the other party's expectations by considering the benefit this party offers. In this relationship, if the person sees a favorable outcome, he/she maintains the relationship, but if he/she sees a negative outcome, he/she weakens the relationship and gradually terminates it. This model can only establish a mutual relationship[54], [55]. It can be argued that the primary determinant in the relationship between a human and an organization and between a human and another human is mutual benefit, which is both more rational and justifiable.

After this brief introduction to the theory, we can list the basic assumptions of the social exchange theory as follows [56]:

*Success element:* Behaviors are reinforced by their positive outcomes, and every behavior that gives a positive outcome repeats.

*Stimulus element:* If the person's behavior is rewarded, the individual maintains his/her behavior.

*Value element:* If the individual assigns a value to the behavior's result, this behavior will repeat; otherwise, there will be no reason to repeat the behavior.

*Deprivation-saturation element:* If an individual receives the same reward repeatedly, the reward's ability to stimulate and motivate the individual will be reduced.

*The value attributed to the reward:* The degree to which the reward motivates the individual is not the price or benefit but the individual's valence.

Thibaut and Kelley base their assumptions on social exchange theory on two basic principles: one focusing on human nature and the other defining the nature of interpersonal relations. The researchers' basic assumption is that human beings' selfish nature is the main factor determining human relations' nature. The assumptions of the social exchange theory regarding human nature are as follows[57]:

- People tend to seek reward and avoid punishment,
- People are rational beings,
- The value that people attribute to the evaluation object changes over time,
- The same object of attitude does not mean the same to everyone.

The basic assumptions of the social change theory regarding human relations are as follows[57]:

- Relations between people depend on the principle of mutual benefit,
- Human relations operate based on reciprocity, not momentary, and are connected to a process,
- Social exchange is not unilateral but involves responsibilities of both parties to each other,

The assumptions of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors are in contradiction with the assumptions expressed here. While the organizational commitment and citizenship behavior depends on the employees' self-sacrifice and altruistic attitudes, the social exchange theory suggests that the relations between the parties are based on reciprocity[58]. The basic premise of the social exchange theory is that social relations occur between at least two people. This relationship can continue if supported by material and moral rewards; otherwise, no relationship can be sustained without considering the reward-punishment cost-benefit situations. As Emerson points out, the relationships between people are based on power and dependence, and any power imbalance creates variability in their relationships. Another issue is that both parties should benefit from their relationship in order to maintain their interdependence. In addition to the cost-benefit, moral obligations are also important in maintaining social exchange. Moral norms have an important role in interpersonal relations[59], [60]. A review of the social exchange literature

reveals that social exchange mainly occurs through economic exchange. As Wallace and Wolfpoint out, some people's actions regarding social exchange are carried out to eliminate loneliness and gain social acceptance[61].

As Adams pointed out in his theory of equality, a fundamental theory of motivation, establishing a relationship is not essential; what counts is the equality of mutual benefit for continuing the relationship's motivation. Unequal rewards create discomfort, leading to a lack of motivation to maintain the relationship. According to the social exchange theory's assumptions, people continue to exchange tangible goods and services and obtain intangible benefits such as high social status, a prestigious position, and a good reputation. What matters is not whether the item of exchange is material or spiritual, but its reciprocity. Exchange is either contractual or mutual. Negotiated exchange refers to the mutual benefit of actors. In this type of exchange, both parties cooperate and gain mutual benefit. Economic exchanges between people often occur in this way[62]. People's relations with their organizations are not based on sacrifice but contracted exchange. In reciprocal exchange, actors enter into a relationship that can favor both parties independently of each other without agreeing. In this relationship, one of the actors initiates an exchange for the other's benefit[54], [63].

## **2.4. Rational Choice Theory and Its Basic Assumptions**

The rational choice theory has been increasingly used in non-economic social sciences such as sociology, evolutionary theory, and political science and has been used as an operational theory in questioning the basis of human behavior. Although this approach has turned into a fundamental paradigm in economics, some necessary studies have been carried out in sociology, political science, and anthropology. This theory is highly functional in questioning the scientific value of pro-organizational explanations, as it is a theory that explores the underlying motivation behind interactions between individuals[64], [65]. The rational choice theory developed within the framework of decision-making models created by cognitive psychologist and Nobel laureate economist Herbert Simson explains the basis on which a person maintains his/her relationship with the other. The rational choice theory has fundamentally changed the rationalism paradigm of classical economics[66], [67]. The theory's proponents reject the boundaries between rational and irrational, which affect behavior and decision-making and focus on the subjective determination of rationality. The rational choice theory explains individual actions that can be interpreted rationally through a model.

The rational choice theory, also known as "rational action theory," provides a framework for understanding and modeling human behavior on a social and economic basis. According to the basic assumption of the rational choice theory, people are individual actors who make their own decisions, and in the decision-making process, they decide by rational choice, not emotions. The theory also emphasizes the determinative power of individual preferences in human behavior, arguing that the essential criterion determining which option an individual will choose is the rational choice that she/he thinks maximizes his/her interests[68], [69]. When one tries to act rationally, the result of the behavior is rational or non-rational; however, she/he always acts, taking into account the cost and benefit of the imagined behavior. As required by his/her rational preferences, an individual wants to choose one of the most cost-effective means. According to the basic assumption of the rational choice theory, individual choices vary according to personal interest, but the person chooses by considering what is in their interest[70], [71]. As a "homo-economicus," a person generally tries to increase personal benefit in his attitudes and behaviors.

First, the concept of "rationality" in rational choice theory refers to a different meaning from everyday language use. In everyday language, the term "rational behavior" is typically used synonymously with the words "logical," "predictable," "thoughtful," or "reasonable." In the rational choice theory, the concept of "rational" is used and discussed in a narrower sense. A concept is considered rational if it is goal-oriented and consistent in different choice situations at the most basic behavior. These behaviors may be impulsive, conditioned, or imitated. While rationality in this sense does not fully indicate the "rationality of thought," it is used not to control emotions in a specific action. The concept of "choice" or "preference" in rational choice theory is the positive or negative forms of assessment that individuals attach to the results of their actions. If this assessment is positive, the behavior continues; otherwise, its frequency decreases, followed by its complete disappearance[72]. The continuation and frequency of the behavior are determined by the meaning attributed to its results. As is the basic assumption of psychology, "the human is a creature that orients towards his/her needs" and will turn to whatever meets that need without any commitment[68], [73].

In the context of pro-organizational behavior, assumptions of the rational choice theory coincide with the following assumptions of economics:

- As "homo economicus," people make choices to maximize their material or psychological (moral) benefits.

- As a requirement of the law of diminishing marginal utility, people have less interest in what they already have.
- Like the law of supply and demand, people's interest in what is easily accessible and its value decreases.

The concept of rationality in the rational choice theory is a central concept of neoclassical economics. Rationality plays a central role in shaping and determining economic theory. The core of rational choice theory was later developed by the so-called neoclassical economy, which is underpinned by three basic assumptions about human nature and behavior [71]:

- People organize their behavior according to "selfish" preferences,
- The main motive behind people's behavior is to maximize individual "benefits,"
- People do not act upon emotions but upon knowledge and reason.

These assumptions also contributed to the emergence of "behavioral economics." Failure to act in line with these assumptions would mean nothing but creating "cognitive anomalies" that disrupt human life. Based on the assumptions of both classical and neoclassical economic theory, the basic assumptions of the rational choice theory can be listed as follows[73], [74]:

- Human behavior is maintained based on "rationality," and the human is a rational actor,
- Rationality requires rational attitudes and behaviors to be maintained within the framework of cost-benefit,
- Human behavior is not random but based on conscious choices made from among a set of alternatives,
- The person tries to maximize the benefits in all his/her attitudes and behaviors,
- Not all human choices are rational, but they are rational to the actor,
- When all other conditions are equal, the "choice" is based on maximizing material benefit and individual tastes,
- When the choice is contrary to social benefit, the consequences of behavior can be controlled by possible pain or punishment following decision-making,
- Humans maintain their relationship with the "other" through selfish interests,
- In all their behaviors, humans turn to pleasure and avoid pain.
- Individual behavior is maintained in a balance in the reward-punishment dilemma.

The rational choice theory is considered a model of decision-making in economy-related disciplines such as sociology, history, and law and is central to the modern economic theory and related to some subfields of political science. The theory asserts that every "choice" is rational when voluntary human behavior is consistent with the reward-punishment balance. The decision-maker always thinks about what to do and tries to justify the "choice"[74], [75]. Therefore, the rational choice theory is a helpful model in economics and explaining other human behaviors. For example, the rational choice theory has empirically shown that labor productivity increases when an employee's wage increases in an environment where all other things are constant. This is important in demonstrating that motivation may be explained by more material and psychological benefits, not by wishes, self-sacrifice, or self-effacing dedication. Based on the perspective of rational choice, if one expects a benefit from a specific behavior, even at the expense of risk, she/he thinks that there is sufficient rational justification for doing that behavior. When people think that they can benefit, and if the cost of this is lower than the benefit, they will take the risk of committing a "crime" as a requirement of rationality[76].

When people make choices at different times, they can turn to alternatives: the specific time and other environmental conditions that determine rationality. Today's rationale may be different from the past; however, one will not stop being rational in any case. Comparing and weighing each alternative requires time, effort, and mental ability; therefore, "rationality" may be "limited" to one's capacity. However, ultimately it is rational and is the most "rational" behavior for the person. On the other hand, the fact that an individual tries to balance his/her behavior through the reward-punishment dilemma has been confirmed by the experimental results of behavioral economics and experimental psychology and the "expected utility theory," a version of the rational choice theory[74].

### **III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In order for employees to show commitment to an organization or to establish a psychological contract with the organization, there should be some material and moral reasons such as career development opportunities, the attractiveness of the job, financial rewards, appropriate working environment, organizational support, and protection of the dignity of the person in the organizational environment. Otherwise, organizational commitment with rhetorical

concepts such as devotion or volunteerism is not a sustainable situation. The lack of motivational and utility factors mentioned here may cause psychological contract violation; the feelings of organizational commitment weaken and leave the place to the intention to quit[77].

Employees' commitment to an organization or their psychological agreement with the organization must be driven by some incentives such as career development opportunities, attractiveness, financial rewards, appropriate work environment, organizational support, and respect for the individual in the organizational environment. Otherwise, organizational commitment is not sustainable simply through buzzwords like dedication or devotion. The lack of motivational factors mentioned here can lead to a breach of the psychological contract, weakening the sense of organizational commitment, and quitting. The employee adopts an organizational attitude by considering the cost-benefit ratio of the factors listed here[69]. It is a more realistic approach to explain the attitudes and behaviors of the employees towards the organization by using Alderfer's concepts of "existence," "establishing a relationship," and especially "need for development" instead of rhetorical concepts. Of these needs, development is essential because one wants to meet all of these relationships in an organization. A commitment or devotion does not drive the individual to an organization but aims to be healthy, build relationships, and self-develop[78]. It is a correct approach to consider employees' organizational commitment within the framework of how people behave in the face of natural tendencies and needs, not at the desired level, such as belonging, devotion, and loyalty. If a sacrifice is to be made, it must be a mutual act of these parties.

*Social Inferences:* The concepts such as organizational commitment and citizenship derived from Rousseau's "Social Contract" are mere rhetoric without natural substance. Rousseau has always emphasized "reciprocity" in the psychological contract. Indeed, as Rousseau states, the principle of reciprocity is a prerequisite for justice[33]. Organ argues that superiors' fairness enables employees to exhibit organizational citizenship or commitment behavior, and in general, there is an exchange or "reciprocity relationship" between the organization and its employees[48]. Answering the question of "what" the subordinates will obtain in return for their organizational citizenship behavior based on self-sacrifice has no scientific value. Recognizing the weakness of the theoretical basis of the organizational citizenship approach, researchers' later studies on the concept of compulsory citizenship are essential in supporting the ideas put forward here. However, stating that individuals behave according to whatever they put into an exchange with others, Blau's social exchange theory brings a more realistic explanation for the human or even organism behavior [54],[58],[79]. The parties expect to fulfill their obligations in a manner that is fair and mutually beneficial. Otherwise, no relationship will only work through the sacrifice of one of the parties.

*Practical inferences:* The Social Exchange Theory, which has solid epistemological reasons for explaining human behavior, suggests that it should be handled on a rational basis, which means choosing the most appropriate behavior for an individual benefit from among various behaviors, and avoiding harmful or costly alternatives. While the natural behavior of man and the organism, in general, confirms rational choice and social exchange theories, it is crucial to question why people would need to exhibit behaviors like "organizational commitment," "embeddedness," and "dedication." The basic thesis of social exchange theory assumes that human behaviors are driven by the motivation to interact for "mutual benefit"[80], [81]. The exchange's primary purpose is to increase the "benefit" from the interaction, as succinctly expressed by the proverb Lausvirtutisreflexioest (The praise of virtue is action). While this is the case, should a human be a citizen or affiliate of an organization or identify with it? When people interact with any institution and organization, they are generally concerned with mutual gain. So, in a Freudian sense, being so "selfish," why should a human exhibit organizational dedication, organizational embeddedness, organizational integration, or corporate altruism?

Moreover, the basic assumption of the social exchange theory maintains that if the benefit to be gained by the person is equal with or more than the cost and labor they endure, that is, if the exchange relationship is "beneficial" and "profitable," the relationship lasts; otherwise, if there is no reason to maintain the relationship, organizational commitment results in a violation of the psychological contract to quit[82]. If there is no mutual benefit, organizational citizenship behavior results in "compulsory citizenship," followed by "renouncing citizenship" (intention to quit). If an individual cannot imagine himself/herself as rewarded due to the interaction, he/she will give up the exchange relationship. Similarly, according to Adams' theory of equality, the employee compares his/her labor and earnings and others' labor and earnings. His/her motivation increases when she/he observes a favorable situation; otherwise, the motivation drops[83], [84]). What is the basic premise of this theory? The fundamental concepts of the theory, such as perception in favor, perception against, and perception of earnings, indicate nothing but "benefit"[85].

*Limitations and further research:* In this study, only the approaches of "organizational commitment" and "organizational citizenship behaviors" from among the pro-organizational behaviors were examined within the framework of "social exchange" and "rational choice theory." The theory can also be studied together with similar concepts such as organizational identification, organizational commitment, organizational embeddedness, organizational belonging, contextual performance, and good soldier syndrome, which are pro-organizational approaches. It can also be analyzed based on the basic assumptions of classical and neoclassical economics. Furthermore, similar comparative analyses can be conducted on behavioral economics's basic assumptions, gaining popularity[86]. Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods can expand the research focus by establishing that it is impossible to do science with rhetorical expressions. Given that there are so many pressing epistemological, objective and factual issues related to people and society, being careful of conducting so-called scientific activities by using misleading neologism concepts has become more critical than ever to prevent wasting our limited scientific resources.

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