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## Organisational and professional commitments: The influence in nurses' organisational citizenship behaviours

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**Abstract** The way an employee behaves in his work can be influenced by the organisational and professional commitment. Nurses are professionals who are guided by organisational and professional goals and values. Among nurses, professional commitment may be an important antecedent of organisational citizenship behaviours.

The study shows how organisational and professional commitment is related with nurses' organisational citizenship behaviours. Data from a sample of 420 nurses working in two hospitals – the Hospital of St. Marcos, Braga and the Hospital Centre of Alto Ave, Guimarães and Fafe units were collected. The main findings are as follows: (a) organisational commitment and professional commitment contribute to the explanation of nurses' organisational citizenship behaviours, (b) affective organisational commitment, continuance organisational commitment – personal sacrifice, affective professional commitment and continuance professional commitment explain 28.6% of variance of organisational citizenship behaviours.

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The research of organisational citizenship behaviours has proven that this class of behaviours has contributed for the increase of the organisational effectiveness and for the improvement of the organisational environment and the relationships in work context (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Paine, 1999; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1997; Podsakoff, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2009; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2006). The organisations hardly would survive if they counted only on

the contribution of the employees' tasks that are obligated to carry out. In a competitive context marked by the turbulence of the markets, while demanding fast, innovative and flexible answers to meet the requirements of the market, it is necessary that the employees cooperate among themselves, be conscientious in the fulfilment of their professional duties and defend and protect the organisation (Rego & Cunha, 2006). The hospital context is no exception to this reality.

The literature revision shows scarce specific and simultaneous studies related on the relation between foci and

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dimensions of commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours. Most of the research attribute to personality, leadership and satisfaction the leading role in the explanation of the organisational citizenship behaviours (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin, & Lord, 2002). Less attention has been paid to the relation of the commitment with the organisational citizenship behaviours.

The prevailing paradigm in management literature has neglected the effect of professional commitment on organisational citizenship behaviours. Cohen (1999), based on a sample of nurses, found a negative relationship between professional commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours. Individuals may adopt behaviours that are important to their profession and their professional development, but not necessarily to the organisation, as is the case of organisational citizenship behaviours (Cohen & Kol, 2004). Nursing is a profession. Truly important for the development of this profession was the emergence of the *Code of Practice for Portuguese Nurses* (1996) and the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (1998), which dictate the principles of this profession. These normative tools refer the nurses' duty to help other colleagues and maintain a high standard of personal conduct in order to dignify the profession. These behaviours appear to be coincident with the behaviours that the literature refers as organisational citizenship behaviours. In addition, the hospital is a professional organisation, so the values and goals that it advocates have a higher chance of being in line with the values and goals of the nursing profession. Those appear to be reasons to believe that both organisational commitment and professional commitment may explain the nurses' organisational citizenship behaviours.

The aim of this research is to analyse the relationship between organisational commitment and professional commitment, and their dimensions, and organisational citizenship behaviours in a sample of Portuguese nurses.

This study analyses two foci of commitment: the organisation and the profession, based on a multidimensional perspective. The interest in using a multidimensional approach lies in the fact that each dimension of commitment can explain in a different way organisational citizenship behaviours. Few studies have examined the various foci of commitment, and their dimensions, and their influence on explaining organisational citizenship behaviours (Randall & Cote, 1991).

The study was conducted in the Portuguese population. The empirical evidence outside the American context is still scarce (Chen & Francesco, 2003; Cohen, 2006; Gautam, Van Dick, Wagner, Upadhyay, & Davis, 2005; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002). Although not specifically addressing the relationship between organisational commitment and professional commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours, Rego and Cunha (2010) have studied some antecedents of organisational citizenship behaviours, such as organisational justice. However, the authors did not study nurses samples.

This paper is organized as follows. We start by carrying out a review of studies addressing the relationship between commitments and organisational citizenship behaviours and draw the hypotheses. Then we show the method and the sample and measures used in this study. Finally, we present and discuss the results and we present some limitations and future avenues for research of this study.

## 1. Organisational and professional commitments and organisational citizenship behaviours

In their review of the organisational commitment literature, Meyer and Allen (1991) identified three distinct themes in the definition of commitment: commitment as an affective attachment to the organisation, commitment as a perceived cost associated with leaving the organisation, and commitment as an obligation to remain. Employees with a strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to, those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they need to, and those a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so.

Allen and Meyer (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) argued that it is more appropriate to consider affective, continuance and normative commitments as components of organisational commitment, and not as different types of organisational commitment, because the relationship of the employees with organisation may reflect varying degrees of all types of commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1997) have taken the multidimensional nature of organisational commitment. They designed measures for the dimensions of commitment: the scale of affective commitment, the scale of normative commitment and the scale of continuance commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) found that their model was the one to date that had greater empirical validation. Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorf (1994) found support for the model of the three components of Allen and Meyer (1990). Meyer and Allen (1997) emphasized the superiority of their model, justifying it with the fact that their theoretical model incorporating the results of a large number of previous studies and use other measures that others developed to test their models. The empirical validation of their model has been extended to other countries (see for example, Cheng & Stockdale, 2003; Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2001), which only strengthens the tridimensional vision of commitment.

Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) presented the multidimensional perspective of professional commitment (affective, normative and continuance dimensions) and extended the tridimensional model of organisational commitment to the profession. Employees with a strong affective commitment remain with the profession because they want to, those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they need to, and those a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so. The model validity was confirmed by Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) in a sample of various professions.

Organisation citizenship behaviours are defined as those behaviours which are not formally prescribed, but yet are desired by an organisation (Organ, 1988). Examples include punctuality, helping others employees, volunteering for things that are not required, making innovative suggestions to improve a department, and not wasting time (Bateman & Organ, 1983).

Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) presented seven organisational citizenship behaviours: helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self development. Rego (1999) found in a Portuguese

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