

# **PREDICTING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: THE ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY AND ETHICAL IDEOLOGY**

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## **Abstract**

This article aims to investigate the relationships between religiosity, ethical ideology, and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has received enormous attention from researchers in the management field. However, few studies in a Muslim context, have explored this organizational attitude from both religious and ethical perspective. The purpose of this research is to investigate the link between Islamic religiosity (Islamic intrinsic religious motivation), ethical ideology (idealism versus relativism), and the three components of organizational commitment. More particularly, it seeks to show that religiosity and ethical ideology affect these three components differently. It is hypothesized that people with high Islamic intrinsic religious motivation will be more idealists and less relativist. Additionally, they will have higher normative commitment and lower continuance commitment than people with high extrinsic religious motivation. It is also hypothesized that idealists engage more in normative commitment and less in continuance commitment than relativists. Regarding affective commitment, it is postulated that the relationships between religiosity, ethical ideology, and affective commitment depend strongly on organizational factors. A conceptual model is proposed to show the relationships between these variables.

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**Keywords:** Religiosity, Islam, Ethical Ideology, Organizational Commitment

## **Introduction**

The competitive nature of global economy has placed an urgent demand on organizations to remain productive and effective. Thus, organizations are constantly seeking to improve the quality of their processes and products and to increase their earnings and performance. Besides, organizations are aware that their greatest asset is the effectiveness of their

human resources. Indeed, successful organizations need employees who continually adopt positive attitudes and behaviors at work. Therefore, many researchers continue to investigate the factors that contribute to these beneficial attitudes and behaviors. In this respect, organizational commitment is sought by organizations because it generates a positive symbiotic relationship between the employee and the organization.

Organizational commitment is a concept extensively studied in human resources and organizational psychology because it has an impact on keeping workers in their jobs. Furthermore, it also helps in understanding the psychological processes by which individuals choose to identify and engage with their organization. Individuals who are highly committed to their organization have less intention to leave; have a strong desire to contribute significantly to the growth of the organization; are less absent; more productive; make significant efforts in favor of their organization; and they have a strong desire to remain members of the organization.

Yet, few researches have focused on the impact of religion on organizational commitment. Indeed, studies on the influence of religion attest to its important role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of people. “Religion is an important cultural factor to study because it is one of the most universal and influential social institutions that has a significant influence on people’s attitudes, values, and behaviors at both the individual and societal levels” (Mokhlis, 2009, p. 75). Delener (1994) argues that religiosity is an important value in the cognitive structure of the individual, which can influence the behavior of an individual. Religiosity has an influence on both human attitudes and behaviors (Clark and Dawson, 1996; Weaver and Agle, 2002). Hence, religiosity has been recognized as one of the factors in predicting individuals’ differences in a variety of attributes and behavior (Gorsuch, 1988).

However, religion has not received the attention it deserves from researchers in the field of organizational management. Davidson and Caddell (1994) stated that very few sociological researches have been conducted on the nature of religious influence on the business and economic world. Miller and Ewest (2010) argued that "religious values have impact on and in the workplace, as was suggested earlier by Weber (1905), and that these impacts are still existing, worthy of continued research, and are possible to measure” (p. 49). Moreover, they added: “Many in American business no longer ask “if” religious values have an impact on employees and companies that comprise the modern economy. Rather, the question for many today is “in what ways” and "how does one measure the impact of religious values on organizations?” (ibid).

Therefore, due to the importance of organizational commitment as an attitude which links an employee to the organization, the purpose of this

paper is to explore at the first step, a potential relationship between individual religiosity and organizational commitment. Whereas some studies investigated the effect of religiosity on organizational commitment with all its components confounded, this research, however, aims to examine how religiosity, specifically Islamic intrinsic religious motivation, relates to each different component of organizational commitment. Our objective is to show that religiosity may affect organizational commitment differently, depending on the strength of religious motivation.

In the same perspective, ethics has become a very highly discussed topic in both public and private organizations. After the recent corporate scandals and the raise of unethical behaviors, many researchers tried to look deeper in the predictors of moral judgment, ethical decisions, and behaviors. Yet, individual ethical ideology is a significant predictor of moral judgment. Considering that organizational commitment (especially the normative and the continuance components) may be the result of moral reasoning, we aim to examine the relationship between ethical ideology and organizational commitment and to show that the difference in ethical ideology may result in different type of organizational commitment, especially in an Islamic context.

Previous research has focused on identifying factors that contributes to organizational commitment. The review of the current literature reveals a lack in the literature which considers the relationship between religiosity, ethical ideology, and organizational commitment in a Muslim context. Therefore, this paper concentrates on this gap. It focuses on religiosity and ethical ideology as antecedents of organizational commitment and proposes a conceptual model that highlights the relationships between these three constructs. To follow Allen and Meyer (1990) recommendation “that further attention should be given to the development of the normative component of commitment” (p.14) and their acknowledgement that “Unfortunately, there is little in the literature upon which to base predictions regarding the antecedents of normative commitment” (ibid), this paper proposes intrinsic religious motivation and moral values as variables to illustrate engagement in either normative or calculative commitment.

## **Review of Literature**

This chapter reviews the literature on organizational commitment, religiosity, and ethical ideology that is pertinent to the study. It focuses especially on Allen and Meyer’s tridimensional model of organizational commitment, Hoge’s conceptualization of religious motivation derived from Allport and Ross’s concept of religious orientation, and finally concentrates on Forsyth’s two dimensions of moral judgment i.e. idealism versus relativism.

## **Organizational Commitment**

All organizations desire that their employees remain within the organization and become productive. The concept of organizational commitment is the subject of most research in the field of organizational behavior, human resources, and organizational/industrial psychology. Studies reported that organizational commitment has a strong effect on employees' behaviors within the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) reported several studies (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin & Jackson, 1989; Allen & Smith, 1987) that emphasize this effect. However, other studies (Porter and al., 1974, 1976; Koch and Steers, 1978; Angle and Perry, 1981; Batemen and Strasser, 1984) also assert this relationship.

Although different definitions of organizational commitment exist, most of the conceptualizations of this construct evoke a close relationship between the individual and the organization. First, commitment to an organization was viewed as an affective or emotional attachment to the organization. This approach posits that individuals with strong organizational commitment identify, engage, and feel the pleasure to work in their organization. Buchannan (1974) described organizational commitment as a "partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization, to one's role in relation to the goals and values and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth" (p. 533). Kanter (1968) defined *cohesion commitment* as "the attachment of an individual's fund of affectivity and emotion to the group" (p. 507). Hall, Schneider, & Nygren (1970) viewed it as the process of integration between the goals of individuals and those of the organizations.

Mowday, Steers, and Porter's affective component approach was considered as the most significant in this area. They defined organizational commitment as "a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership" (Porter et al., 1974, p. 604). Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulin (1974) conceived affective commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). Porter *et al.* (1974) defined organizational commitment as the sense of identification that an individual has to a specific organization and the relative intensity of identification that the individual has in comparison with other people. They also presented three characteristics of commitment: (1) Members of an organization believe in and accept the objective and value of the organization. (2) They are ready to make full efforts for the organization. (3) They are desirous of maintaining the membership of the organization. Porter et al. (1974) developed the

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure organizational commitment through the affective component.

However, others visions of this concept have resulted in the expression of new components of organizational commitment which are related to interests, costs, benefits, and obligations that individuals evaluate and which influence the degree of their organizational commitment. These dimensions are highlighted in several definitions of this concept. The calculated commitment originates in Becker's theory of "side-bets". Becker (1960) defined commitment as a phenomenon which takes place when a person, by making a side-bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. Consequently, the commitment to an organization based on the evaluation of interests, costs, and benefits was later underlined by Kanter (1968) who defined *cognitive-continuance commitment* as that which occurs when there is a "profit associated with continued participation and a "cost" associated with leaving" (p. 507). For Stebbins (1970), continuance commitment is the "awareness of the impossibility of choosing a different social identity . . . because of the immense penalties in making the switch" (p. 527). The commitment centered on the sense of obligation towards the organization was put forward by Wiener (1982) who defined commitment as the "totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests" (p. 471).

Drawing on the works cited above, Meyer and Allen developed the three-component model of organizational commitment considered as a dominant model in organizational research. However, Meyer and Allen (1991) support that organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct with three distinctive components: affective, continuance, and normative.

***Affective Commitment:*** Meyer & Allen (1997) define affective commitment as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (p. 11). In fact, employees with a strong affective commitment will remain in the organization because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

***Continuance Commitment:*** Continuance commitment refers to one's awareness of the costs associated with leaving the present organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) define continuance commitment as the "awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization" (p. 11). In fact, employees with strong continuance commitment will remain in the organization because they need to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Reichers (1985) stated that continuance commitment includes factors such as years of employment or benefits that the employee may receive and that are unique to the organization.

**Normative Commitment:** Normative commitment is associated with the feelings of obligations to remain in the organization based on one's personal norms and values. Researchers characterized this feeling as *generalized value of loyalty and duty*. Meyer and Allen (1997) define normative commitment as "a feeling of obligation to continue employment" (p. 11). In fact, employees with strong normative commitment to the organization remain in the organization because they feel they ought to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Like most authors, Meyer and Allen link organizational commitment to turnover intention. Studies on this concept give evidence that organizational commitment is a negative indicator of turnover. Employees with strong commitment are less likely to leave the organization. Furthermore, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found a strong association between organizational commitment and the intention to leave. Hence, turnover intention is a good indicator of organizational commitment. Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) consider that the three types of commitment are different psychological states. In addition, Allen and Meyer (1990) developed the Allen and Meyer's organizational commitment scale to measure these three dimensions.

## **Religiosity**

Religiosity symbolizes individuals' identification with and commitment to the values and principles of a religion. According to Park and Smith (2000), religiosity refers to a set of behaviors that show the worth of one's religion or faith. Religiosity can be defined as a belief in God accompanied by a commitment to follow certain principles set by God (McDaniel and Burnett, 1990).

However, it was found that despite the fact that people adhere to a religion and some are even devout practitioners of this religion, this does not prevent them to behave in opposition with the precepts of their religion. This fact emphasizes that religious practices are not adequate to measure the degree of religious engagement of people. Allport's approach is in this sense, very interesting because it enlightens this controversy. The work of Allport and Ross (1967) helped to conceptualize two types of religious orientations: extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation. The essential distinction between the two approaches lies in the way individuals see their religiosity. Despite the conceptual and psychometric difficulties of these two orientations, they have gained wide acceptance.

According to Allport and Ross (1967), extrinsic religious orientation describes a model of religious involvement marked by the interest of an individual to get something out of his religious affiliation. Religion becomes a tool for achieving the objectives, such as safety and comfort, sociability

and distraction, status and self-justification, or promoting and improving the financial situation of a person. Thus, the religious faith is used for specific purposes and is viewed as instrumental and utilitarian.

The intrinsic religious orientation considers religion as an end in itself. People with this type of religious orientation tend to refer to religiosity in all their life. Therefore, they find their main motivation in religion. These people have strong religious beliefs they internalize and respect. They are not likely to change them according to situations or to get benefits; instead, they model their actions according to the doctrines and religious teachings. In other words, "the extrinsically motivated individual uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated individual lives his religion" (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434).

Allport's theory of religious orientation (Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967) is derived from his theory of mature and immature religious feelings (Allport, 1950). His writings show a clear trend towards a conceptualization of these religious orientations based on religious motivation (Gorsuch, 1997; Hunt & King, 1971; Kirkpatrick and Hotte, 1990). O'Connor and Vallerand (1989) stated that "recent studies, however, indicate that the individual's motivation toward religion activities is an important factor that may help resolve some of the inconsistencies in the literature" (p. 53). Donahue (1985) reported that the individual's motivational orientation towards religion is considered a more precise indication of religiosity than an actual behavior. According to Hoge (1972), Hunt and King analyzed Allport's "intrinsic religion" and "extrinsic religion" and found that "that the intrinsic-extrinsic phenomenon is clearly a measure of motivation for religious behavior rather than the behavior itself" (p.370).

Hence, one important single dimension that usually emerges from all the models of religion is the religious motivation. Very religious people generally have a strong sense of commitment to their belief system, and therefore they are required to behave according to the standards set by their religion. Religious motivation is the most fundamental level of religion. It is based on religious beliefs that are the content of what someone believes. It is a set of ideas or ideological commitments, strong opinions, acceptance, and confidence in religion. It is maintained through different types of religious practices, religious knowledge, and religious effects. As reported by Stark and Glock (1968), "the heart of religion is commitment" (p.1). According to Allport (1950), intrinsic motivation is the dynamic nature of the mature religion. Thus, individuals with this type of trait value the religion itself (Allport, 1937, 1950; Gorsuch, 1994).

Intrinsic religious commitment is the motivation for experiencing and living one's religious faith for the sake of the faith itself. The person's

religion is an end in itself, and is a goal pursued in the absence of external reinforcement (Gorsuch, 1994). Hoge, drawing on Hunt and King's work, conceptualized intrinsic religious motivation as a fundamental dimension of religiosity. Conceptually, intrinsic religious motivation is derived from Allport and Ross's religious orientation concept. Hoge's contribution is to consider that intrinsic and extrinsic faiths are two different ends of the same dimension and not two separate dimensions as proposed by Allport and Ross. Hence, it avoids the radical separation of individuals into either intrinsically or extrinsically religiously motivated, but rather considers individuals as being either highly intrinsically religiously motivated or lowly intrinsically religiously motivated (extrinsically religiously motivated). For this reason, in this research, religiosity is represented by Hoge's intrinsic religious motivation concept.

### **Ethical Ideology**

In the last few years, ethics have received a growing amount of attention in the organizational field. Organizations have become aware that unethical practices and behaviors negatively affect their performance and their brand image. However, ethical intentions and behaviors depend on individual differences. However, one of the important factors that play a prominent role in ethical decision making and moral judgments is individual ethical ideology. Schlenker (2008) defines ethical ideology as "an integrated system of beliefs, values, standards, and self-assessments that define an individual's orientation towards matters of right and wrong" (p. 1079). According to Barnett, Bass, and Brown (1994) and (1999), it is important to learn about the individual's ideology and moral philosophy in order to understand moral judgments and behavior in situations when the individual is faced with the need to solve an ethical dilemma and make a decision. Indeed, Barnett et al. (1994) demonstrated that ethical judgments of employees depend on their moral ideology. Ethical ideology derives from individual moral philosophy. In addition, it relates to several dimensions, such as utilitarianism, altruism, narcissism, Machiavellianism, absolutism, opportunism, etc. However, idealism and relativism are two of the most significant constructs of ethical ideology. Forsyth (1980) points out that individual variation in approaches to moral judgment and behavior may be conceptualized in terms of two basic dimensions: relativism and idealism.

Idealism is defined by Forsyth (1980) as the degree to which individuals "assume that desirable consequences can, with the right action, always be obtained" (p. 175). Relativism, on the other hand, is defined by Forsyth (1980) as "the extent to which an individual rejects universal moral rules when making moral judgments" (p. 176). Idealism and relativism are independent constructs. Thus, individuals can be high or low in both



dimensions (Forsyth, 1980). Idealists believe in the existence of universal standards and universal ethical rules, while relativists reject universal principles. Also, idealists have individuals' moral codes that emphasize humanitarian and moral ideals; they assume, for example, that harming others should be avoided and that lying should never be tolerated. They have fundamental concerns for the welfare of others, while relativists believe there is no universal standard and that moral principles depend on the situation which is likely to change. Relativists think that harming others is sometimes necessary to produce good (Forsyth, 1992). They believe that situations differ to a large extent and that all current circumstances need to be considered before a decision is made. However, idealists emphasize that right action is the moral action; while relativists emphasize that moral absolutes should be rejected.

### **The Antecedents of Organizational Commitment**

In this paper, the focus is on the multidimensional construct identified by Meyer and Allen and expressed in the following three forms: continuance commitment (instrumental evaluation of organizational membership), affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), and normative commitment (perceived moral obligation to remain in the organization). Allen and Meyer (1990) suggested that these three components are distinguishable components rather than types of attitudinal commitment. Therefore, employees can experience each of these states to varying degrees and each of them develops somewhat independently of the others as a function of different antecedents.

*The Antecedents of Affective Commitment:* Building on Mowday and al.'s works on the antecedents of affective attachment to the organization, Allen and Meyer (1990) maintained that these antecedents fall into four categories: personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences, and structural characteristics. They also pointed out that affective component is strongly linked to work experiences especially "those experiences that fulfill employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable within the organization and competent in the work-role" (p. 4). Indeed, work experience has been widely accepted as the most determinant of affective commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; McDonald & Makin, 2000; Myer et al., 2002). For example, it was found that supervisor support was positively associated with affective commitment (Dixon et al., 2005). Job-related factors, such as job satisfaction (Cetin, 2006; Simmons, 2005) and job challenge (Dixon et al., 2005), improves affective commitment as well. Others studies showed positive relationships between organizational ethics (Fritz et al., 1999; Valentine et al., 2002), human resource management practices (Meyer & Smith, 2000), and affective commitment. Carlson (2005)

found that higher perceived leader integrity is related to a higher level of affective commitment. Thus, most studies focus on aspects of work experiences and organizational characteristics as antecedents of affective commitment.

*The Antecedents of Continuance Commitment:* According to Becker (1960), individuals make side-bets when they take an action that increases the costs associated with discontinuing another related action (cited in Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 4). From the theoretical works of Becker (1960), Farrell & Rusbult (1981), and Rusbult & Farrell (1983), Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed two factors as antecedents of the continuance component of organizational commitment: the magnitude and/or number of investments (or side-bets) that individuals make and a perceived lack of alternatives.

*The Antecedents of Normative Commitment:* Wiener (1982) suggested that such commitment may develop as the result of socialization prior to entry into the organization. This can be seen given the example of employees whose parents had stressed upon the importance of organizational loyalty and socialization following the entry into the organization, and given the example of employees who have been led to believe - via various organizational practices - that the organization expects their loyalty (cited in Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 4). Like Wiener (1982), Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed that the normative component of organizational commitment will be influenced by the individual's experiences both prior to familial/cultural socialization and following organizational socialization entry into the organization. Wiener (1982) maintained that employees with strong normative commitment feel like they have a moral obligation to the organization. Wiener also argued that the stronger the employee's commitment is, the more his or her actions will be guided by internalized normative standard rather than by consideration of the consequences of the actions. In other words, individuals with strong normative commitment choose to continue working for their organizations not because they perceive the benefits of doing so, but because they believe strongly that doing so is the "morally right thing to do" (Wiener, 1982, p. 421).

### **Hypotheses Development and the Conceptual Model**

In this section, we will discuss the relationships between the variables and show that religiosity and ethical ideology can predict organizational commitment via the strong adherence to moral values. Hypotheses are formulated based on the literature review. In addition, a conceptual model is presented which outlines these relationships.

## **Religiosity as Antecedent of Organizational Commitment**

Like Mowday and Porter, Allen and Meyer maintained that personal characteristic is one of the antecedents of organizational commitment. There is evidence that religiosity belongs to personal characteristics. For instance, Chusmir and Koberg (1988) found that religious convictions become part of one's personality. King and Williamson (2005) found that religiosity can be viewed as dispositional. Hence, it is proposed that religiosity could predict organizational commitment. Few studies examined religiosity (including Islamic religiosity) to be affecting organizational commitment, such as Jamal and Badawi (1993), Ntalianis and Raja (2002), Kutcher, Bragger, Srednicki, & Masco (2010), and Veechio (1980) and York (1981). However, this paper seeks to investigate how religiosity, specifically Islamic intrinsic religious motivation relates to each of the three components of organizational commitment. Our approach is based on the relation between religiosity and morality.

On one hand, there are some scholars who found that religiosity does not necessarily imply morality. For instance, Wright (2009) argues that although people frequently try to explain their actions through appeals to the Bible or the Koran or other religious texts, the actual causal force is more situational (Bloom, 2012, p. 195). Bloom (2012) argued that although religion stresses morality, there is little evidence that it is connected with the moral conducts of people. "Although it is often claimed that the moral ideas encoded in the world's religions have an important effect on our moral lives, there is little evidence for this popular view" ( p. 196). Some researchers argue that effects of religiosity on ethical attitudes are situational (Saat et al., 2009) and that high religiosity does not always mean high ethical values (Rashid and Ibrahim, 2008). Allport (1954) pointed out that "the role of religion is paradoxical; it makes prejudice, and it unmakes prejudice" (p. 444). Roundy (2009) hypothesized that individuals high in religiosity (and religious involvement) will have lower affective, continuance, and normative commitment than less religious (or non-religious) individuals. Thus, this relationship is moderated by the organizational spirituality.

On the other hand, most of researchers show positive relationship between religiosity and moral attitudes. The literature for instance gives evidence that religiosity is associated with morality as it is often considered that religion emphasizes morality and moral values. Delener (1994) and Pargament et al., (1988) pointed out that those who are strongly committed to their religion are both attitudinally and behaviorally capable of making decisions that are consistent with moral conscience.

Our thesis is that religion calls people to act morally, but this does not mean that all religious people have good conducts. Religion makes moral claims, but people's views about right and wrong may differ according to the

strength of their religiousness. As mentioned before in this study, there are two types of religious motivation: intrinsic religious motivation and extrinsic religious motivation. However, each type of religious motivation predicts different moral attitudes.

Religiosity and religious commitment may influence normative commitment through religious values and morality. Religiosity teaches loyalty, sense of duty, responsibility, and in general a set of values that make individuals to be committed to their work. As a result, highly religious individuals (with high degree of intrinsic religious motivation) have a high moral sense and tend to adopt attitudes, behaviors, and decisions based on their moral values. Consequently, they are more likely to be committed morally to their work and place significant value on spiritual rewards and benefits. Since people engage in normative commitment because “they believe it is the “right” and moral thing to do” (Wiener, 1982, p. 421), highly intrinsically religious motivated people are more likely to engage in a normative commitment. Indeed, this hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that Islam lays great emphasis on moral values.

The Quran, for instance, advocates rules and regulations which stresses on morality. Islam calls for moral behaviors. The Sunnah supports this call. Prophet’s Muhammad life was governed by moral rules and principles. All along his life, he preached good ethics and moral behaviors. God has regarded the morals of Prophet Muhammad as great: “And truly you (Muhammad) possess great morals” (Quran, 68:4). And also: “The Messenger of God is certainly a good example for those of you who have hope in God and in the Day of Judgment and who remember God very often” (Quran, 33:21). Prophet Muhammad used to give a lot of importance to moral behavior by saying: “The best of you are those who have the best morals” (Al-Bukhari, Authentic Hadith) and “I have been sent to complete the best morals” (Al-Bukhari, hadith authentic). Aicha, the prophet’s wife was asked about the character or morals of Prophet Muhammad and she said, “His morals were the morals of the Qur’an” (Muslim, Authentic Hadith). Regarding morality in the workplace, Islam considers that working is an act of ibadah (worship) that has to be discharged with justice, commitment, and honesty. In Islam, every individual will be held accountable and questioned about how he earned his wealth and how he spent it. Thus, Islam places a greater emphasis on duties and obligations. Islam further encourages individuals to work on the basis of “*ihsaan*” (proficiency and efficiency). That is to do more than the minimum requirement: “Verily, God command that you establish justice and be efficient and proficient” (Quran, 16:90). The prophet said: “God loves that when anyone does a job, he does it perfectly” (Al-Bayhaqi, no. 4915). Islam, for instance, regards the motives behind the acts and evaluates the deeds from the intention behind them. Thus, Islam

particularly stresses moral values such as sincerity “And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth...” (Quran, 98:5) and good intention "Actions are but by intentions and every man will have only what he intended” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Authentic Hadith). Islam emphasizes contentment “Wealth and children are (but) adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for (ones) hope” (Quran, 18:46), “When a person sees a person who has better wealth and beauty, let him look at the ones who have less than him” (Al-Bukhari, Authentic Hadith). Also, it emphasizes patience, “And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones...” (Quran 2:45). Thus, these values compel Muslims to be committed to their work.

Continuance commitment is more related to side-bets and calculated costs (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment is more instrumental. According to Allport (1967), people with low religiosity i.e. with high "extrinsic" religious motivation “use their religion”. Extrinsic religious people are more relativists when it comes to making moral decisions or behave morally. Hence, they may place significant value on financial and material rewards that a job offers. Also, they may be more attached and dependent on the “perceived costs” of leaving or remaining in their organization. As a result, their commitment to their organization is calculated and may engage more in continuance commitment. In Islam, obedience to God and pleasing God are very important. Every Muslim should ensure that his or her act is dedicated to God and that it conforms to Islamic principles. Therefore, working in an organization solely for the benefits one’s gains or for the purpose to avoid the costs associated with quitting, contradicts the consideration that any Muslim’s action or intention should be devoted to Allah.

Affective commitment as described by Meyer and Allen and many other authors, involves emotional attachment, feelings of membership, identification with and involvement in the organization. Affective commitment cannot be developed without connection and congruency with the goals and the values of the organization. Hence, it is strongly dependent on organizational factors such as ethical climate, ethical leadership, job satisfaction, or organizational spirituality. Sims & Kroeck (1994) confirms that affective commitment can be developed when employees feel their personal values fit those of their organizations to the degree that they can identify with their organizations. For these reasons, no hypothesis will be proposed for the relationship between religiosity and organizational affective commitment. This is because the relationship between religious motivation and affective commitment could be either positive or negative depending on

the organizational factors. On the basis of the statements above, the following hypotheses were developed with regard to an Islamic context:

*H1: High intrinsic religious motivation positively predicts normative commitment.*

*H2: High extrinsic religious motivation positively predicts continuance commitment.*

### **Religiosity as Antecedent of Ethical Ideology**

Religion is one of the factors that significantly influence people's values, ethical judgments (Huffman, 1988; Hunt and Vitell, 1993), and ethical and social responsibilities (Ibrahim et al., 2008). Religion is one of the more frequently mentioned determinants of the moral values that underpin ethical standards (Emerson and Mckinney, 2010). A number of studies confirms that religiosity in general has a positive impact on ethical attitudes (Smith and Oakley, 1996), (Conroy and Emerson, 2004; Bloodgood, Turnley and Mudrack, 2007; Longenecker, McKinney and Moore, 2004; Wong, 2007; Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen, 2007; Emerson and Mckinney, 2010; Singhapakdi, Marta, Rallapalli, & Rao, 2000; Siu et al., 2000; Stack and Kposowa, 2006; Phau and Kea, 2007; Perrin, 2000). According to Donahue (1985), intrinsically motivated people have more positive ethical attitudes than extrinsically motivated people. Emerson and McKinney (2010) reported: "Our empirical results provide strong evidence that it is the importance of religion in a person's life much more than mere religious affiliation that has a significant effect on ethical attitudes" (p.13). Singhapakdi, Vitell & Franke (1999) showed that high religious individuals are more idealistic than the less religious ones. Intrinsic religiosity is seen as a determinant of ethical beliefs. As argued before, religiosity relates to morality. Thus, highly religious people will be more idealists, whereas less religious people will tend to be more relativistic. Baumsteiger and chenneville (2013) found that religious people (Christians) tend to be idealistic but not relativistic.

As stated before, Muslims derive their ethical system from the teachings of the Quran (which Muslims believe was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad), and from the Sunnah (the recorded sayings and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad) (Abbasi, Hollman, & Murrey, 1989; Rice, 1999). Islam has an ethical code of behavior, a set of ethical rules and principles that exhort Muslims to act morally. Islam stresses the respect of moral principles in all aspects of human life. The Qur'an says: "The noblest of you in the sight of God is the best of you in conduct" (Quran, 49: 13). Furthermore, in Islamic religion, adherence to moral code and ethical behavior is a part of faith itself. Islam asks its believers to observe certain norms and moral codes in all spheres of their private and public life. Ahmad

(2006) claimed that Muslims, who wish to be granted the pleasure of Allah, may achieve this by applying the core values of ethics. Additionally, Abeng (1997) confirms that Islam insists on rigorous compliance with the moral precepts of the Quran. Muslims are also urged not to offend or harm others. The prophet said: “Do not cause harm or return harm” (Sunan ibn Majah, 2340, Grade: Good). He also said: “The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 10, Grade: Authentic). Hence, strict adherence to the tradition of Islamic religion would strengthen moral norms and codes of ethics in individuals’ ethical system. This leads us to postulate that truly, Muslim believers tend to be more idealistic and less relativistic. Therefore, it is then hypothesized with regard to an Islamic context that:

*H3: High intrinsic religious motivation positively predicts idealism.*

*H4: High intrinsic religious motivation negatively predicts relativism.*

*H5: High extrinsic religious motivation positively predicts relativism.*

*H6: High extrinsic religious motivation negatively predicts idealism.*

### **Ethical Position and Organizational Commitment**

According to Cullen, Parboteeah, and Victor (2003), only a small number of studies have examined the relationship between ethics and organizational commitment. Studies have empirically established ethics as the antecedents of organizational commitment (Schwepker, 2001; Kidron, 1978; Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003; Peterson, 2003; Vitell & Davis, 1990; Koh et al., 2004). Kidron (1978) found that work values are highly correlated with moral commitment to the organization than calculative commitment (Elizur and Koslowsky, 2001).

Some studies have investigated the relationships between ethics in Islam and organizational commitment. Youssef (2001) investigated the moderating impacts of the Islamic work ethics on the relationships between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. He found that Islamic work ethics directly affects both organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and it moderates the relationship between these two constructs. Also, Salem and Agil (2012) found that normative commitment correlates highly with Islamic individuals’ ethics than either affective and continuance commitment. Other studies in a Muslim context (Nor, 2010; Wahibur, 2010; Norshida et al., 2010) showed that Islamic work ethics have positive effects on organizational commitment.

However, relatively little is known about how ethical ideology is related to organizational commitment. Forsyth (1980) identified idealism and relativism as significant predictors of moral judgment. Forsyth and Berger (1982) posit that ethical ideology might predict individual differences in

moral judgment. Shaub et al. (1993) revealed that the relativistic auditors show less commitment to their organizations compared to idealistic auditors. Idealism is found to have positive influence on moral intensity, whereas relativism negatively influences moral intensity (Dorantes, Hewitt & Goles, 2006). Vitell and Singhapadki (1993) and Sparks and Hunt (1998) found that relativism has a negative effect on honesty, integrity, ethical judgments, and deontological norms.

Relativists deny the existence of universal rules. For them, the importance of moral commitment as a guiding principle is less relevant. They are less sensitive to universal moral principles. Therefore, they may evaluate the costs of their commitment more than evaluating the moral consequences of their weak commitment. So, relativists are expected to be involved in continuance commitment. The idealists are more attracted to ethical aims compared to less idealistic individuals. According to Forsyth (1980), the idealistic individuals believe that they must not offend or harm others and generate negative consequences from their acts. Since idealists give importance to the consequences of their acts, they think more of the ethical consequences of their lack of commitment to their organization or of leaving their organizations. However, they are more likely to engage in normative commitment.

Idealist ethical position is associated with moral evaluation of attitudes and acts. We postulate that moral individuals will expect ethical climate and behaviors within their organizations to be committed affectively to it. Additionally, either for idealists or relativists, fit between personal values and corporate values is necessary to affective identification and engagement. Hence, affective commitment of idealists or relativists depends on organizational factors. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed with regard to an Islamic context:

*H7: Idealism positively predicts normative commitment.*

*H8: Idealism negatively predicts continuance commitment.*

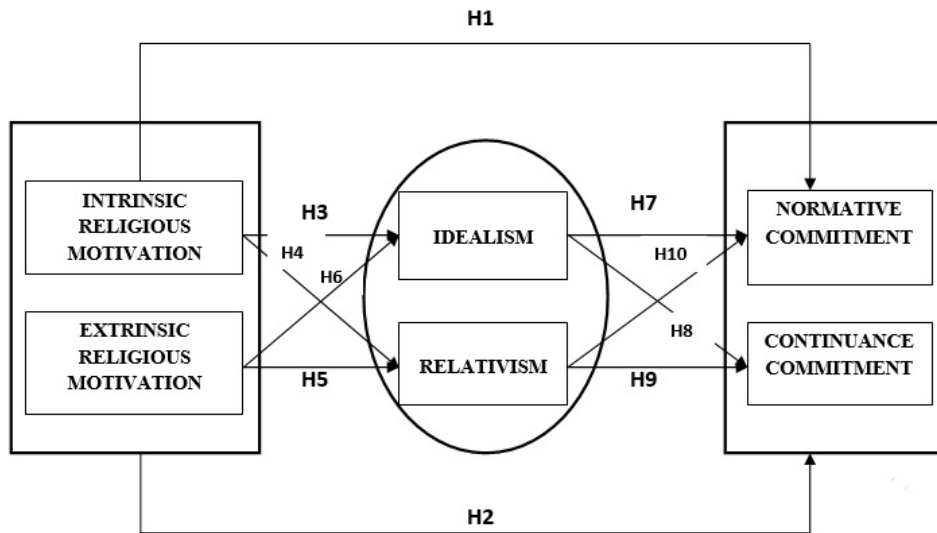
*H9: Relativism positively predicts continuance commitment.*

*H10: Relativism negatively predicts normative commitment.*

Taking into account the above mentioned literature and the proposed hypotheses, the following model summarizes the discussion above. The model involves the postulated relationships among religiosity, organizational commitment, and ethical ideology.



**Figure 1: The conceptual model**



Literature on commitment has revealed several variables as antecedents and predictors of the three forms of commitment (i.e. affective, continuance, and normative). These variables fall into the following categories: personal characteristics, organizational characteristics, and work experiences. This paper focuses on the category of personal characteristics. It postulates that religiosity and ethical ideology could predict organizational commitment. It proposes a set of hypotheses about the association between religiosity, ethical ideology, and organizational commitment. Thus, it is postulated that religion and ideological position might shape organizational commitment through high concerns with moral values. Believing in a sacred transcendent reality (GOD) is connected to the adherence to moral values which influence attitudes and specifically organizational commitment. Differences in levels of religious commitment may determine the differences in ethical ideology and may result in different types of organizational commitment.

In addition, despite the fact that religion plays an important role in people's lives, it is still considered as a topic to be avoided in organizational management. Thus, this article attempts to underline that religion, which is part of the personal characteristics of individuals, should take an important place in managerial studies.

This paper does not use an empirical study to test the hypotheses. It proposes a theoretical model based on literature review that attempts to explain how Islamic religious motivation influences organizational commitment via ethical ideology. This paper may hopefully contribute to the literature of organizational commitment and religion at work. It gives a

unique contribution which is the examination from an Islamic perspective of the links between intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation, ethical ideology, and organizational commitment. The theoretical model provides a conceptual ground to develop a greater knowledge and investigate Muslims' religiosity, ethical ideology, and organizational commitment. Thus, our future work will be to test this conceptual model in a Muslim context which is the particular field of the Moroccan public sector.

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