

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR:
a bibliometric study of the last twenty-one years of publications in English and
Portuguese language**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational Commitment (OC) research seeks to understand different topics. In fact, the domain of OC as a field of study is in constant evolution. Thus, as it becomes a growing theory, many researchers in different countries are studying this phenomenon. According to Bastos et. al (2014), the different approaches of this theory must be discussed, and the managerial process, specifically in the public sector, must be rethought.

In this scenario, with a more incisive vision about the public sector, in a parallel way, the development of the studies, like the OC, gains highlights. That is, the study of organizational links took center stage in the field of organizational behavior discipline, in a tradition dating back to the 60's (BASTOS et. al, 2014), at the public sector, begins to gain a breath, especially on the last twenty-one years.

An interest on the public sector, takes place, at the middle of the 2000's, when many countries adopt the New Public Management (NPM), and then, the Post-New Public Management (P-NPM) (VIGODA-GADOT; MEIRI, 2008). It means that both bring perspective of the private sector, to the public one, like the development of the performance, as one of the consequences of the OC, and the delivery of products and services to the citizens, among other characteristics (COHEN, 2016).

Lizote, Verdinelli and Nascimento (2017) affirm that organizational commitment has been considered as a key element for the public sector, in the search for excellence in the provision of services. Therefore, we may verify that this perspective goes in the same way of the precepts of the NPM e do P-NPM, that is, aspects of private organizations may and ought to be applied on the public organizations.

Starting from this point, when the public administration offers a range of services, it is important that its agents remain committed, so that the organization remains competitive. Thus, the process of hindering or facilitating organizational commitment should be viewed as an essential management tool currently.

We must indicate that before and after an economic crisis, which includes the public sector, it is necessary to comprehend the employee commitment. Therefore, during a period like that, Markovits et al. (2014) have found that in Greek economic crisis, the affective and normative commitment decreased the levels.

Some studies have brought the perspective that the manifest level of Organizational Commitment in the public sector is lower than in the private sector (ZEFFANE, 1994). In this way, it proves to be increasingly important to study such construct, specially when it is observed this discrepancy.

It is important to observe that the organizational commitment has a significant impact on the organization and when it comes to the public sector, it is no different. If we consider the correlation of this construct with job satisfaction, for example, we may verify that when the employees are satisfied with their job, there is a tendency for a greater commitment, leading to better performance (LIZOTE; VERDINELLI; NASCIMENTO, 2017).

The production of bibliometric studies using the OC as a field of discussion is not new (BASTOS et. al., 2014). The production released out of Portuguese-language region (MEYER; ALLEN, 1997; MEYER et. al, 2002; MOWDAY, 1998), must be highlighted as well. It is

remarkable that analyzing the bibliometric and the meta-analysis studies, it was verified that in none of them, the focus is to demonstrate the field in Portuguese and English language. That is, one of the contributions of the present paper is to investigate the OC in this scenario.

According to what was related until now, it can be observed that the organizational commitment is a construct still under construction (PINHO; ROWE; BASTOS, 2015), what demonstrates the necessity of studies focusing the understanding of the phenomenon. The same way, it is also important to reinforce the importance of the investigations in the public arena. This way, the present study establishes an analysis of the OC research in the period of twenty-one years (1997 – 2017), in Portuguese and English language, in all continents, in the public sector.

That is, our objective is to comprehend this phenomenon, investigating the tendencies, the most utilized models and the worldwide scenario of the research in OC, specifically in the public sector.

This paper is organized in three sections. First, we discuss what OC treats, and the distinct models adopted. Second, we present the methods, including procedures and sample. The other section treats about the results. Finally, we discuss the results, limitations and perspective for future researches.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to OC, it is important to inform that there are two main conceptions, but others are import in the construction of this theoretical field. That is, two different approaches domain the discussions, the attitudinal and the behavioral. Meyer and Allen (1991), bringing their point of view, proposing a three-component model of OC, affirming that their model is composed by the two approaches and their complementary relationship. So, the authors use the term OC to a psychological state, and the term “behavioral commitment” to persistence, referring to commitment.

According to Simosi (2012), Meyer and Allen’s (1991) framework is one of the most used concepts in OC studies. In this framework, employees are considered to be subject to three different forces, in the form of three mindsets: Affective Commitment (AC), which refers to the emotional attachment of the employee to the organization, accepting and internalizing their goals and values; Continuance Commitment (CC), which refers to the perceived cost associated with leaving the organization; and finally, Normative Commitment (NC), which refers to the feeling of obligation to continue with the organization (MOLDOGAZIEV; SILVIA, 2015).

This way, Meyer and Allen (1991) conclude that the most appropriated way to consider the AC, CC and NC is as components, instead of types, of commitment. To emphasize this point of view, it is reasonable to expect that an employee may feel the three components, in different degrees of intensity.

But as Simosi (2012) alerts, the three-component model of OC has been criticized, specially the scale used to its studies. One of the criticisms is the fact that the AC and CC are unstable as structures.

Solinger, van Olffen and Roe (2008), in turn, reinforce the point that the three-component conceptualization is the dominant, in OC research, but as Simosi (2012) affirm that this model is inconsistent and the normative, affective and continuance commitment, cannot be considered components of the same attitudinal phenomenon.

As it is normal to appear different point of views, it is important to observe that, as already said, there is another main different concept of the Organizational Commitment, and it was designed by the studies of Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979). Johnson (2012), describing this concept, affirms that it refers to the bond of the employee to the organization.

The other main concept in OC, stems from the work of Mowday et al. (1979). Johnson (2012) affirms that the attitudinal approach refers to the bond of the employee to the organization. Thus, here OC is the individual strength of the identification of the employee with the organization. Three different factors characterize this concept, namely, the acceptance of the values and goals of the organization, the desire to put forward a considerable effort for the organization, and finally, the desire to remain an employee of the organization (MOWDAY et al., 1979).

Therefore, as we can see, unlike what occurs in the three-component model, this concept has only one dimension. Another difference between the models is the fact that this one, designed by Mowday et al. (1979) has an attitudinal approach.

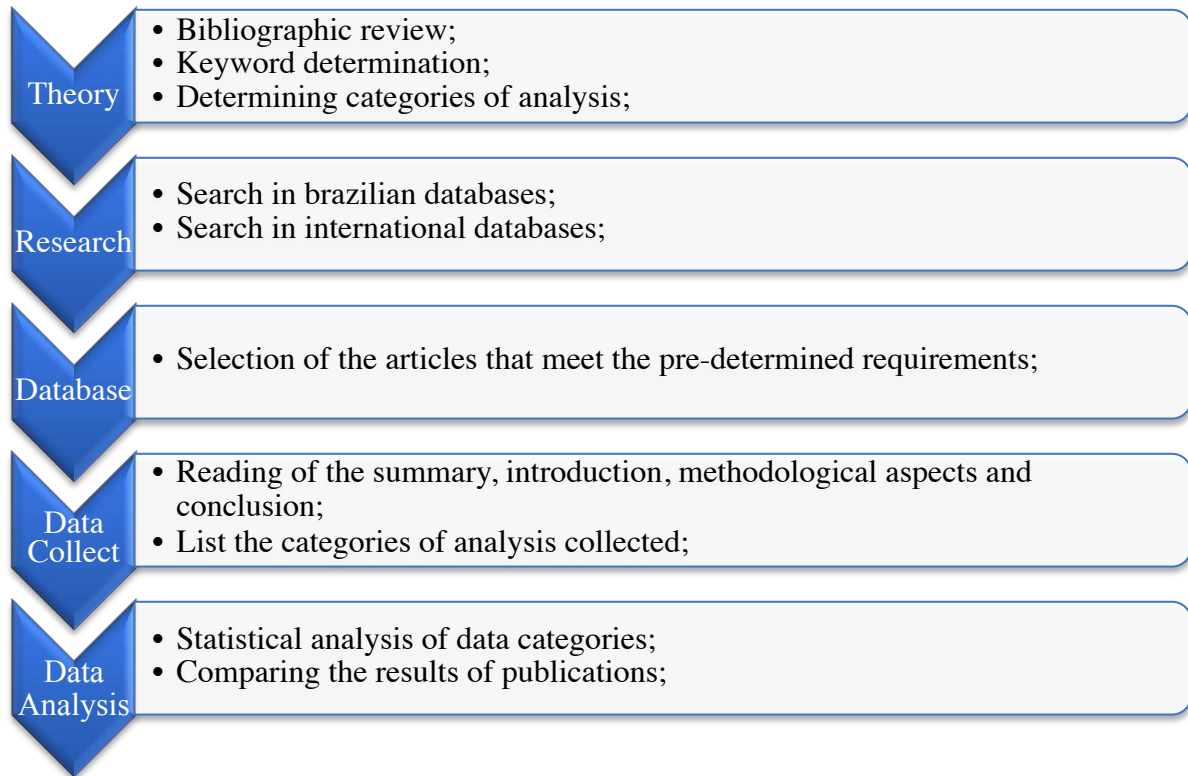
3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Bibliometric studies are used to explain and to interpret behavior in certain areas of knowledge, with the intention of observing objects, agents, products and contexts (CRUMPTON et. al, 2016). Such studies use a set of mathematical and statistical tools to analyze the object of research. They are also used to account for numbers of publications, authors, trends in a given subject or discipline, and main theories, in a specific period of time (CRUMPTON et al., 2016).

Public administration research suffers from a lack of theoretical and methodological rigor, when compared to organizational studies. Bibliometric studies reinforces the scientific character of the field, as they use statistical analysis, based on the aggregation and reorganization of citation data gathered from scholarly journals (VOGEL, 2014).

So, we have adopted a quantitative research using bibliometric techniques for data collection and analysis. Thus, in order to achieve the objectives proposed here, five stages had to be developed, as we can see in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Methodological Steps



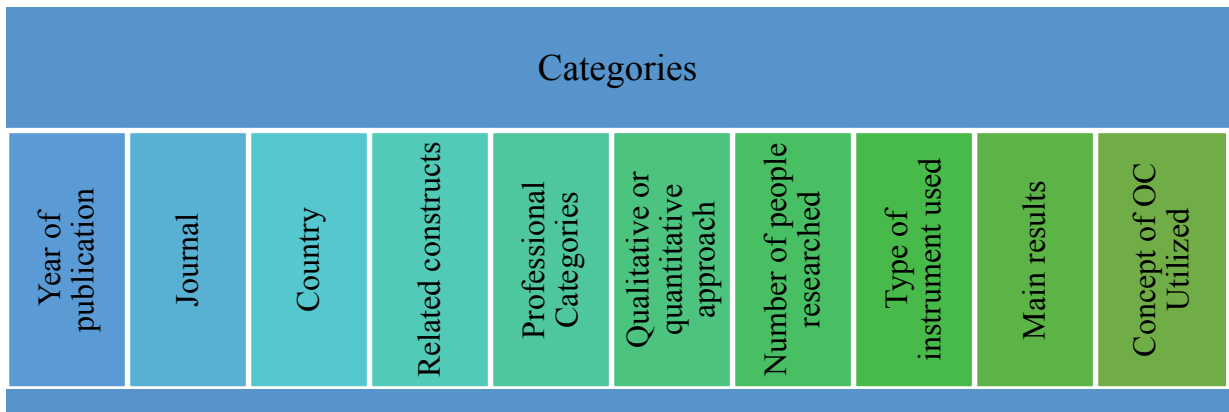
Source: elaborated by the authors

In this study, we have adopted certain criteria for our bibliometric study: articles should be about OC in the public sector; should be published in Portuguese or in English language, in the last twenty-one years, that is, in the period 1997-2017. The sample of articles was drawn utilizing data-bases: for Portuguese we had access to the ANPAD archives, SCIELO, SPELL, rPOT, and GOOGLE SCHOLAR; for English language we used the Wiley Online Library and Sage Publications; for both languages we had accessed the *Portal de Periódicos da CAPES*. These sources have been used by multiple scholars, used by other studies (BASTOS et al., 2014; CRUMPTON et al., 2016;).

We drew the data from the journals selected using the following procedure. The choice of the sample is based in quality criteria, that is, observing the impact factor, from 2.5 to 4.2, of the journals published out of Brazil. In turn, in Brazilian production, it was used Qualis CAPES, from B2 to A2.

The searched words include “organizational commitment”, “public sector”, “organizational linkage” and their variations in English and Portuguese language. It was made using titles, abstracts, and keywords. 60 different journals were found, so that we can highlight the American Public Review of Public Administration, with 9 publications, in English language, and the RAP, with 5 articles, in Portuguese language and the ANPAD production, with 29 papers. Every paper was, then, read, to observe if it fits the purpose of this research. Hence, some of them were eliminated of the sample. The final result is composed by a sample of 122 papers: 45 in English language and 77 in Portuguese. It is interesting to inform that all of these samples have cited 3,761 different references. And as can be seen later on, ten of them stand out.

Figure 2 - Categories used for the analysis of the data



Source: Data survey

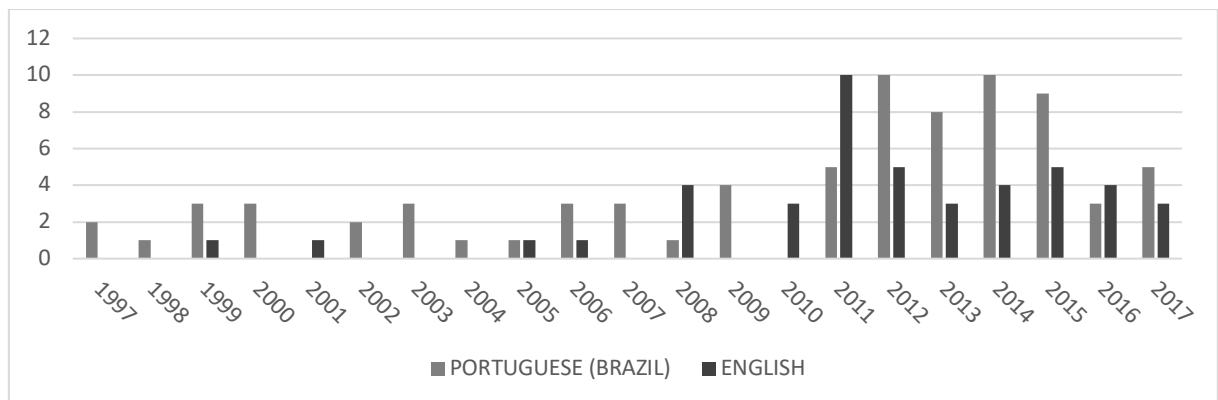
To analyze the 122 selected articles, it was created standard procedures for extraction and classification of relevant information, as we can see in figure 2. The MS Excel was utilized for a quantitative analysis.

To strengthen the adoption of these procedures, Bastos et al. (2014) affirm that the bibliometric study is supported by quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative characterizes the analyzed articles using statistical and mathematical procedures, like frequency. In turn, the qualitative describes the contributions, limits, trends and problems that were faced, aiming to elucidate the theoretical strengths and weakness and methodological of the sample.

4. RESULTS

The results obtained are structured in the following way: first, scientific production on OC in the public sector is presented with the intention of showing the behavior of this field during the period examined. Second, the word cloud generated by language. Third, the network of citations of the papers are reviewed, noting countries with the ten most cited works and presenting an analysis of the collected data. Fourth, an analysis of the themes of the papers is presented with its contributions.

Figure 3. Publications Frequency



Source: Data survey

Table 1 - Most cited papers and network of countries

| Paper | % | Country where was cited |
|--|------|---|
| Meyer; Allen (1991) | 61.4 | Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Holland, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Nigeria, Portugal, Santa Lucia, South Korea, Uganda and USA |
| Mowday; Porter; Steers (1982) | 45 | Brazil, China, England, Ghana, Greece, Holland, India, Italy, Romania, South Korea and USA |
| Meyer; Allen (1997) | 39 | Australia, Brazil, England, Ghana, Greece, Holland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Santa Lucia and USA |
| Meyer; Herscovitch; Topolnytsky (2002) | 36 | Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, Greece, Holland, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Korea, Uganda and USA |
| Mathieu; Zajac (1990) | 32.7 | Brazil, China, England, Holland, India, Israel, Jordan, Santa Lucia, South Korea, Uganda and USA |
| Becker (1960) | 31.1 | Brazil, England, Uganda and USA |
| Wiener (1982) | 23.7 | Australia, Brazil and Nigeria |
| Mowday; Steers; Porter (1979) | 23.7 | Australia, Brazil, England, Ghana, Holland, India, Portugal and USA |
| Meyer; Herscovitch (2001) | 23.7 | Brazil, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Nigeria, Santa Lucia, South Korea and USA |
| Bastos (1994) | 22.1 | Brazil |

Source: Data survey

These 10 papers were then used to analyze production among the countries that were represented in this study. From the data collected, examining papers from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Ghana, Greece, Holland, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Nigeria, Portugal, Romania, Santa Lucia, South Korea, Uganda, United States. This procedure provides some important information about the arrangements that configure this field and may help to identify the characteristics of the scientifically identified production. For example, papers from Brazil cite all the most 10 most cited works. This is an important information, which shows that researchers in this country are open to and interested in all forms of data. However, the Brazilian productions cited, basically, by articles published inside the country.

It is important to emphasize that Brazilian production have demonstrated great quality. Many papers are published in journals with excellent impact factors, with methodological rigor,

however the disclosure is restricted inside the country. The data indicate that there is a necessity of greater publication of articles in journals outside. This situation may change in the next few years, due to Brazilian journals are stimulating the production in English language.

The results of this analysis suggest that some works are still a reference for the area, even after a long period of time, and their ranges is quite large, reaching many cultures and countries. In turn, some productions are cited only within their own countries. This may demonstrate a language barrier, and also, that Brazil utilizes information and expertise from abroad, expanding its international scientific research network.

Another tendency found in the research is the investigation of antecedents, with 53.3% of works showing interest in this subject and 17.2% showing interest in the consequents. There was also found six that examined both, representing 6.5%. The most prominent issues are organizational justice and organizational restructuring.

The three-component theory is the most utilized and that the quantitative methodological is the dominant. The most cited scale is the instrument developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), with 33% of the sample. It is important to affirm that this scale was adapted and validated to different cultures, as we have observed. Other questionnaires were utilized, as well, like the OCQ, by Mowday et al. (1982).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study was guided by question: how is the scenario of the Organizational Commitment in the scientific production in Portuguese and English production? The results that were presented, helped to answer this question, thus meeting the general objective of the research, that was to analyze the scientific publication about the Organizational Commitment in journals that publish in Portuguese and English language around the world. First of all, one of the specific objectives was to verify the evolution of the publications along the period of twenty-one years. As we observed, specially from 2010 to 2015, there is an increasing of the number of articles discussing the researched subject. But, in the last two years, this index has been decreasing. Therefore, we suggest that it is necessary for this field, to be consolidated, to maintain the constant increase in publication.

Another specific objective, was to verify the number of publications in each language. Thus, when we observe, both studied realities have been increasing, but when it comes to the insertion of studies from one language in the other, there is a huge imbalance. All the most 10 cited studies in English language were present in Portuguese publications. The reverse, in turn, was not found.

Analyzing the adopted methodological procedure, we observed that there is a huge prevalence of the quantitative approach. Therefore, it is necessary to carry studies with different approaches, such as qualitative or even mixed, especially in English language publications. We also suggest further qualitative research, using different techniques of data collection and data analysis. For example, no study using the focus group was found, which indicates an innovation in the research.

The studies that explore the normative and the continuance commitments ought to be developed, especially in the English language. In Portuguese language production, there are some samples, but are still shown as a small quantity, especially the normative commitment. In its turn, we observed that the organizational commitment studies focus, basically, on their attention in the researches of its antecedents. Thus, it is necessary to reinforce the studies of the consequents in OC.

Finally, it was possible to identify that in English and Portuguese language production, the fields of studies vary widely. Future studies may explore the intention of the choice of the

sample, considering the reality of the cultures of the countries where the studies were developed. It is necessary to cover a larger field of action of professions in the public sector, so that, it will be possible to better understand the scenario, in both languages.

It is also necessary to indicate researches in OC that consider the change in the world of work. Although the focus of this study is the public servants, all sectors are impacted by the modifications in our society. That is, with these changes in work relations, with greater time of contribution of the workers, besides the precariousness of the working conditions, with the possibility of outsourcing the activity, it becomes relevant to understand the phenomenon of OC in this context.

It was developed a research encompassing a diversity of thematic axes related to the OC, offering a panorama of the scientific production in this field in the last twenty-one years. Thus, this study contributes to the research of the OC demonstrating the limits of the construct, especially in the public sector, and showing possible paths that may help to develop the studies of the Organizational Commitment, contributing to the advancement of the theme.

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