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Analysis of organizational commitment in cooperatives in Ecuador

organizational
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Received 23 May 2019
Revised 13 September 2019
12 November 2019
Accepted 27 December 2019

Abstract

Purpose – The objective of this research is to analyse the affective organizational commitment in cooperatives in Ecuador. This was done by adapting and testing a measurement scale based on the one-dimensional model proposed by Porter.

Design/methodology/approach – Field work was carried out, with a structured questionnaire being given to a significant sample of workers in Ecuadorian cooperatives (2,499 employees and heads of department). The scale was adapted through a structural equation model.

Findings – The results show that the adaptation of the measuring scale for affective organizational commitment using a one-dimensional vision is consistent for the cooperative sector. In addition, the analysis of the socio-demographic variables and the work position show that some of them have a statistically significant relationship with organizational commitment.

Practical implications – The proposed scale can contribute to the management of human capital in cooperatives in Ecuador. It can also be used as a tool to support the national agency in charge of the cooperative sector in this country (Superintendencia de Economía Popular y Solidaria, “*Superintendency of Popular and Solidarity Economy*”). By applying this tool, social economy organizations in Ecuador can measure the level of their employees’ affective commitment with the institution they work in. Using the results, the people in charge and the leaders of the organization shall be able to introduce strategies to develop this organizational variable that is crucial for the proper management of human resources and, therefore, to help to obtain the institutional purposes.

Originality/value – This research project presents a measuring tool that can discover the unique features of the cooperative sector in a developing country such as Ecuador as it provides a special framework for managing human resources in this sector. Additionally, in a cooperative organization many employees have different roles in the same company. This tool can be adapted for other kinds of cooperatives with different activities (financial and non-financial activities) in different sectors.

Keywords Organizational commitment, Measuring scale, Cooperative movement, Ecuador

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In the current changeable economic environment, businesses have become interested in the management of human capital, considering this to be a key factor for their success (Lau and Ngo, 2004). If this capital is considered to be a general intangible asset, the value of each individual must be considered to be determined by his or her abilities, skills, experience, loyalty, interests, motivations and so on and by how these qualities are used to improve the efficiency of the organization (Grant, 1991; King *et al.*, 2013). In this regard, organizational commitment is born from the relationship and exchanges between two fundamental actors:



Journal of Management
Development
© Emerald Publishing Limited
0262-1711
DOI 10.1108/JMD-05-2019-0180

the employees and the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1996). This relationship allows the officers of the organization to understand people better and to manage them in a way that increases their productivity and produces a sustainable competitive advantage (Yao *et al.*, 2018). For this reason, Olivier (2018) believes that business leaders need to motivate and understand their employees, so that the employees will give their best to their organizations and get the expected results.

Organizational commitment is a construct that was conceived in the West and has been expanding over the years, reaching the whole of North America and Europe (Darwish, 2003; Obedgiu, 2017; Al-Yami *et al.*, 2019). The analyses from these countries have mainly been for commercial businesses. These precedents suggest there is a need for a tool for the assessment and better understanding of employees' perceptions in social economy organizations and in developing countries (Wang *et al.*, 2019), like cooperatives in Ecuador, with the aim of improving the commitment of their employees and increasing organizational success.

In this context, cooperatives are organizations whose activity revolves around people and their needs. Therefore, they consider themselves to be more people-orientated entities because of their principles, values and culture (Ratner, 2009). For this reason, these entities should aim for their employees to show satisfaction, loyalty and commitment, so that this is reflected in the employees' subsequent dealings with their clients (Ahluwalia and Preet, 2017). In this regard, leaders should provide employees with positive and favourable experiences, encouraging emotional attachment to the organization by means of a process of social exchange (Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018). In this line, organizational commitment is the most appropriate way of studying the attitude of employees towards the institution as it influences their behaviour and it has been analysed using diverse academic approaches (Qureshi *et al.*, 2018). In the various precursors of this construct (Becker, 1960; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Porter *et al.*, 1974, among others), theoretical models of organizational commitment that have been subject to later debate were proposed, with the idea of clarifying the dimensionality of this construct (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Bishop and Scott, 2000, among others). The results of this research have produced controversy in terms of whether organizational commitment should be considered from a one-dimensional point of view, focusing on emotional factors (Mowday *et al.*, 1982), or from a multi-dimensional point of view (Meyer *et al.*, 1993).

The target of this research is to analyse the affective organizational commitment of workers in the Ecuadorian cooperative sector. This is achieved by the adaptation of a scale based on the one-dimensional theoretical model of Porter *et al.* (1974). This model appears to be the most suitable one for adaptation to the reality of the cooperative movement, which consists of organizations in the social economy, because it can be identified with the intrinsic affective nature of cooperative values; therefore, it can help to improve the results of the organization (Ratner, 2009). In this regard, the cooperative movement becomes a reference point in the business world, because among its goals are the promotion and maintenance of jobs in a way that is dignified, equitable and without discrimination (Fernández *et al.*, 2018; López *et al.*, 2018). With this in mind, it is necessary to know the strategies applied in Ecuadorian cooperatives, as these may be useful for other organizations with similar characteristics.

To summarize, the originality of this research lies mainly in its proposal of a scale that can be used as a tool in the strategic management of human resources in the cooperative sector in Ecuador and by the national agency in charge of these enterprises. All this is possible because the scale will be adapted to the needs of cooperatives in Ecuador and to their cultural, social and language aspects. This will also give an understanding of the perspectives of different employees in different roles (internal and external stakeholders), as well as their intentions to stay and how they feel about doing so.

The paper includes five sections, in addition to this introduction. The first of these is the literature review which contributes to the scientific basis of this study. The following part is the methodology section which describes the field work and the measuring scale. The results are then presented using a structural equations model before being discussed. Finally, the conclusions are offered, while also identifying the limitations and future lines of research.

Literature review

With the passing of time, human capital has become a strategic factor of the utmost importance for businesses, given that it provides value and constitutes a determining element in the success or failure of a business (Navarro and Carmona, 2010). In this context, the management in the area of human resources should promote strategies that motivate and integrate staff in order to fulfil the organization's purposes (González Santa Cruz *et al.*, 2016). Following these strategies, individuals will cooperate in a significant way to obtain sustainable competitive advantages, given that, as part of the intangible capital, they combine special criteria, such as being valuable, unique and irreplaceable and having particular qualities (Olson *et al.*, 2018). From this perspective, organizational commitment suggests that there should be a balance and synergy in the employee–organization relationship, bearing in mind that human resources are extremely valuable in this context (Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018; De Regge *et al.*, 2019).

The scientific literature related to organizational commitment recognizes two study aspects regarding this construct. The first has its roots in the 1970s, when the main idea was to identify the variables that could influence the behaviour of the employees in an organization, following an emotional approach (Becker, 1960). Other approaches that have emerged to define organizational commitment do so in terms of attitude (among others, see Sheldon, 1971; Porter *et al.*, 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977). These authors define the construct far more widely than simple passive loyalty to an organization, implying that an employee has an active role in the relationship. This means that individuals inside the organization are willing to give up everything to contribute to the organization's success. In this regard, models were designed that helped to provide a basis for this conceptualization; the construct was initially presented using a one-dimensional or global approach, considering the emotional attitude of the individual towards the organization; this attitude creates a feeling of belonging and greatly influences the individual's desire to continue working for the organization (Becker, 1960; Porter *et al.*, 1974; Mowday *et al.*, 1979). This point of view is considered to be the starting point for many different contemporary studies (among others, Darwish, 2003; Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018; Al-Yami *et al.*, 2019), with all of these being related to the emotional attitude of the worker. Furthermore, this research is based on this affective vision of organizational commitment.

For its part, the one-dimensional model, according to Mowday (1998), is directly related to emotional attitude and would include the affective commitment dimension of the multi-dimensional model described earlier. Some important aspects and characteristics considered in this model should be noted: (1) a strong belief and acceptance of the aims and values of the organization; (2) a will to exercise considerable effort in the name of the organization; and (3) a defined wish to continue being a member of the organization so that affective adherence is emphasized (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). As we have said before, other empirical studies use the one-dimensional model of organizational commitment as their reference (among others, Darwish, 2003; Ke and Deng, 2018; Takamatsu and Yamaguchi, 2018; Shahid and Zain, 2018) because it has suitable characteristics that are applicable in the business reality of economic globalization. From this point of view, the commitment

would only really have an aspect related to the emotional and affective attachment to the organization someone works in.

The second aspect, primarily suggested by the studies of [Allen and Meyer \(1990\)](#), suggests that organizational commitment describes the relationship between the employee and the organization and that it intervened in the decision to continue or not continue working. From this perspective, a three-dimensional model of organizational commitment is recognized and identified by its characteristics and dimensions as multi-dimensional. In certain terms, other researchers have completed different studies regarding the dimensions of this construct ([Morrow, 1983](#); [Cohen, 2007](#)), which has contributed to the emergence of multi-dimensional models of the conceptualization of the employee–organization relationship ([O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986](#); [Allen and Meyer, 1990](#); [Meyer et al., 2002](#)). In this way, the research on organizational commitment made substantial progress in the understanding of its dimensions, developing diverse theories in this multi-disciplinary field, and the conclusion was reached that this construct may be analysed from two perspectives, one being one-dimensional and the other multi-dimensional ([González Santa Cruz et al., 2016](#)).

Regarding this last perspective, the most common model conceptualizes organizational commitment into three dimensions: various other studies ([Mathieu and Zajac, 1990](#); [Meyer et al., 1990](#); [Meyer et al., 2002](#), among others) propose that the first dimension, affective commitment (desire), describes the internal force that identifies the employee with the organization ([Betanzos Díaz et al., 2006](#)); the second dimension, continuance commitment (necessity), is understood as the effect of losing one's job or the personal impact of leaving an organization ([Peña et al., 2016](#)); and, finally, the third dimension, normative commitment (duty), refers to the feeling of moral obligation that an employee has towards the organization because of the benefits received and is a kind of loyalty. This third dimension does not take into account whether or not the employee feels satisfied with his or her job ([Meyer et al., 2018](#)). However, despite being a model that is widely used, it raises important questions and restrictions as acknowledged by its own authors. These are mainly because of a possible overlap between the affective and regulatory dimension and conceptual inaccuracy in the continuance dimension ([Allen and Meyer, 1996](#)).

During the last few years, other empirical studies have been carried out in different environments and cultural surroundings regarding organizational commitment and its dimensionality being analysed for commercial businesses ([Zeinabadi, 2010](#); [Battistelli et al., 2014](#); [Cai et al., 2018](#); [Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018](#)). However, empirical studies in the social economy sector are needed, especially in developing countries. There is a need to analyse the implications of this construct in cooperatives in Ecuador, bearing in mind that institutions that have strong organizational commitment increase the aggregate value of the product or service that they provide, thus improving their results ([Gopalakrishnan and Zhang, 2017](#)).

As said previously, this research follows the one-dimensional model of [Porter et al. \(1974\)](#). This model revolves around the idea that the well-being of an employee inside an organization is based on their state of mind; it is born primarily from within themselves and does not lead to any kind of obligation on their behalf ([Kurüüzüm et al., 2009](#)). Because of this, the adoption of this affective commitment model that identifies itself with the cooperative principles is emphasized (voluntary adhesion, democratic, equitable, self-help training, cooperation and interest from the community), configured as an essential part of the culture of these organizations. This makes them different from purely mercantilist businesses that are focused on maximizing their profitability. Therefore, the multi-dimensional analysis of organizational commitment is considered to be restrictive in the social economy field in which the cooperative movement is found, because of the continuance dimension and the rules

arising from need or duty, which are separate from sentimental attachment to the organization (Barzoki and Ghujali, 2013).

Many instruments have been created to measure organizational commitment, using the two previously mentioned approaches as references. In order to show its dimensionality and relationship with other constructs, some of these have been analysed using meta-analysis. The study by Meyer *et al.* (2002) determined that the three dimensions of organizational commitment identified in their study are related with other aspects such as participation and work satisfaction. Additionally, this research highlighted that the commitment is negatively associated with the intention of rotation, at the same time confirming that the affective commitment is the most solid predictor of this construct.

For his part Darwish (2003) confirmed, by means of another meta-analysis, that his scale of 15 items was significantly correlated with a single factor. For their part, Choi *et al.* (2015), based on 55 independent samples, revealed in their study that in the proposed model of five factors (affective, regulatory, continuance commitment, individualistic and collectivist culture), all the components had positive relationships with the affective and regulatory commitment, while emotional stability, extraversion and openness to experience had negative relationships with the continuance commitment. Kains *et al.* (2016), working with a sample of 40 primary details, completed a meta-analysis whose results revealed that high levels of commitment were associated with profiles based on values, while low levels were associated with weak obligation profiles.

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Additionally, there are other primary studies which analyzed the viability of the measurement scale focused on the one-dimensional model of an affective nature. In others, Ferris and Aranya (1983) analyzed data from 1,105 accounts in Canada and the United States, finding that their scale of 15 items correlated with only one factor. In the same way, Morrow and McElroy (1986) worked on a sample of 563 employees in a public agency in the US mid-west. With the use of an exploratory factor analysis, they determined that organizational commitment can also be measured using a scale of 15 items focused on the emotional attitude of the workers.

Tools have also been developed in Latin America to measure the construct, but they have followed the multi-dimensional perspective (Fruto *et al.*, 1998; Arias, 2001; Barraza Macías and Acosta Chávez, 2008). Nevertheless, their results show important differences in the internal consistency of the factors, since Cronbach's alpha indexes for the affective dimension are between 0.71 and 0.81 while for the other dimensions they are lower than 0.5. For these reasons, the decision was made in this study to use the one-dimensional model proposed by Porter *et al.* (1974); this is the most accurate model for this research because the cooperative movement relies mainly on human beings and on the universal principle of a popular and caring economy. These principles relate to the employees' emotional perspective and at the same time must relate to the goals and values of the organization. The study by Porter *et al.* (1974) has been validated by recent studies (Mackay, 2018; Al-Yami *et al.*, 2019).

On the basis of the literature review, the following work **proposition** is formulated: Affective commitment in cooperatives in Ecuador can be measured using a scale of 15 items based on the classic one-dimensional model of Porter *et al.* (1974).

Methodology

Survey design

The target of this research was to analyse organizational commitment in cooperatives in Ecuador through the validation of a scale based on the classic model of Porter *et al.* (1974). With this in mind, quantitative research was undertaken to discover the perceptions of the

employees of these institutions (in these cooperatives, workers might have different roles in the same place). The literature review allowed for the identification of a preliminary list of suitable items for the measuring instrument. The participants were presented with open and closed questions related to aspects of their work and questions to obtain socio-demographic data.

Data collection

The way of completing the survey was mainly face to face, being aimed at the staff who worked in the cooperatives (workers and leaders/executives), relying on the assistance of a team of researchers who were able to resolve any doubts about the survey. They also administered online surveys to cooperatives in the rural sector of Ecuador, where the response level was quite low. The field work was done with the support of a team of researchers from Eloy Alfaro de Manabí Lay University (Ecuador). The purpose of the study was explained to the managers of each cooperative, and their permission was requested to survey their employees and officers. The questionnaires were designed in Spanish. The field work was carried out between the months of January and April 2018. The sample consisted of 2,499 employees and heads of department from Ecuadorian cooperatives. The rejection rate was very low, at just 3.88 per cent; in total, 101 surveys were rejected because they lacked important data. It did not take longer than 15 minutes for any respondent to complete the survey.

Sample and sampling error

The target population of this study was the employees and officers of cooperatives in Ecuador. Layered sampling was done, and 2,499 valid surveys were ultimately obtained. Cooperatives in this developing Latin American country are classified as (1) financial, with this class being subdivided into segments numbered from 1 to 5 (in terms of the value of their assets), or (2) non-financial, for cooperatives whose activities are in areas such as services, housing, production and consumption ([Superintendencia de Economía Popular y Solidaria, "Superintendency of Popular and Solidarity Economy"; 2017](#)). The sample consisted of 1,414 women and 1,085 men, whose ages ranged from 18 to 60. From these, 1,072 are single, 835 are married and 592 have another type of civil status (civil union, widowed and divorced). On the other hand, in terms of the level of studies, there are a large number of employees with higher studies (1,349), while the number of employees with an average/basic level is 1,150. In relation to the respondents' functions, there were 1,950 employees and 549 officers, and the prevalence of permanent labour relationships among them should be highlighted (2,256 had permanent contracts and 243 fixed-term contracts). Finally, in terms of compensation, the monthly salaries vary between less than US\$ 500.00 (830 employees) and more than US\$ 501.00 (1,661 employees).

Data analysis

After the completion of the questionnaires, the next stage was the refinement of the details, during which those presenting absent values for any item were rejected. The SSPS v23 software program was used, which calculated the descriptive statistics for each element, studying their asymmetry, along with their normality, at a one-variant level as well as a multi-variant level. Secondly, an exploratory factor analysis (using SSPS v23) and a confirmatory factor analysis were carried out, with a structural equations model to study the validity of the scale, using Amos Graphic v23 software. The sample was divided into two parts for the factor analysis. For the exploratory analysis, 40 per cent of the total sample ($n = 1,000$) was used,

and 60 per cent of the sample ($n = 1,499$) was used for confirmatory analysis. For the development of this research, a quantitative approach was applied, based on a deductive diagram that looks for mechanisms to confirm the viability of the instruments used.

Design of the measurement scale

The literature review regarding organizational commitment has allowed for the definition of the theoretical model and the more idyllic measuring scale for the cooperative sector, also determining their respective items. The structure of the questionnaire includes aspects related to socio-demographic data, such as age and gender, as well as, in relation to the respondent's work position, the role or type of contract, among other things. Additionally, this information allows the organizational structure that exists in Ecuadorian cooperatives to be identified.

With these precedents, the scale and the selection of the items are developed. For this, [Hinkin's \(1998\)](#) methodology for the design of research instruments was applied. The first step (to specify the domain of construct), as suggested by [Churchill \(1979\)](#), was added. All this, as will be shown in the following sections, allowed for the classic model of [Porter et al. \(1974\)](#) to be identified as the most suitable one for adaptation for the cooperative sector. As the starting point for the questionnaire, the proposals of [Mowday et al. \(1979\)](#), [Mathieu \(1991\)](#), [Darwish \(2003\)](#) and [Kim et al. \(2016\)](#) were used as the basis in order to generate the sample of items, with the 24 items being taken from these other studies. Afterwards, the questionnaire was administered and the scale was adjusted. Once this stage was completed, the questionnaire with 24 items was refined, by means of a pre-test to 40 employees of cooperatives to detect, among other concerns, deviations in terminology and to incorporate suggestions from the trial respondents. Assistance was also received from two Ecuadorian specialists in social economy as well as two international specialists in the construct being studied. As a result of this process, nine items were removed due to them not being appropriate for the cooperative sector, reducing the scale to 15 items. This was vital for the initial item reduction, as well as to show that the adaptation contained no errors or inconsistencies. To continue the process, exploratory analysis was carried out, to determine the number of common factors and to group the variables that were being measured. As a result, 15 items were obtained with high positive factor loadings, responding to the one-dimensional vision of affective organizational commitment. These items were applied in the field research, using a five-point Likert scale where the options went from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Finally, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine the discriminant validity, which allows the study to be replicated.

Results

Correlation matrix

T1 The descriptive analysis of the sample reached an average in the organizational commitment of the participants of 3.89 ($DT = 0.47$), which indicates a normal distribution. In [Table I](#), the results of the tests are shown and confirmed the possible relationship of age with this construct, which does not influence significantly. A statistically significant difference was observed among the participants according to the level of studies: the organizational commitment of those who have higher studies was significantly greater than those who have a basic/medium education level. It is possible that by having a higher level of studies, employees find it easier to adapt to changes, freedom and initiative at work and more possibilities for promotion. This would lead to a greater commitment to the organization. In terms of the civil status variable, married employees present a statistically significant and positive relationship regarding organizational commitment. This result could derive from the fact that married employees have greater economic and family responsibilities, which

leads to more dependency and attachment to the business in order to preserve their position. On the other hand, women have a high score in organizational commitment. This could be because they may consider emotionally important that the organization has given them the opportunity to access a work position, schedule flexibility and conciliate the work and the family.

Regarding the variables related to the job (Table II), the salary shows a statistically significant and positive relationship with organizational commitment. Thus, high salary levels are related to high scores in organizational commitment, which implies greater salary, greater commitment. In this sense, cooperatives that offer their employees higher salaries as an incentive for good performance cause a greater institutional commitment. On the other hand, the executives showed a significantly greater organizational commitment in comparison with the administration staff and the operators, with no significant difference being observed between the administration staff and the operators. This result could reflect that the executives, by being more involved in the strategic management of the cooperative, are considered fundamental, increasing the feeling of belonging to it. Regarding the relationship with the contract type, high score levels for staff are found with temporary contracts, presenting a statistically significant relationship with organizational commitment. This could be a result of employees with a temporary working relationship providing a greater performance and commitment in order to achieve stability in their position in the organization.

T2

Table I.
Descriptive and comparative analysis of the organizational commitment scores, according to socio-demographic variables

Variables	OC Median (DT)	Test	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Age</i>	–	$r = 0.018$	0.377
<i>Sex</i>	–	$t(2489) = 0.744$	0.457
Woman	3.90 (0.46)	–	–
Man	3.88 (0.48)	–	–
<i>Civil status</i>	–	$F(2, 2496) = 2.043$	0.130
Married	3.95 (0.45)	–	–
Single	3.87 (0.46)	–	–
Other	3.82 (0.51)	–	–
<i>Education</i>	–	$t(2497) = -7.987$	<0.001
Basic/Medium	3.61 (0.53)	–	–
Higher	3.96 (0.40)	–	–

Notes: *r*: Pearson correlation coefficient; *t*: *t*-student test

Source: Own elaboration

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Table II.
Descriptive and comparative analysis of the organizational commitment score, according to work position variables

Variables	OC Median (DT)	Test	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Length of service</i>	–	$r = 0.027$	0.175
<i>Salary</i>	–	$r = 0.13$	<0.001
<i>Department</i>	–	$F(2, 2493) = 40.728$	<0.001
Management	4.24 (0.44)	–	–
Administration	3.62 (0.44)	–	–
Operation	3.68 (0.50)	–	–
<i>Type of contract</i>	–	$t(2497) = -0.801$	0.423
Permanent	3.89 (0.47)	–	–
Temporary	3.91 (0.51)	–	–

Notes: *r*: Pearson correlation coefficient; *t*: *t*-student test

Source: Own elaboration

Validity of the measurement scale

The exploratory factor analysis was carried out using the main components method with Varimax rotation, and a unique factor or dimension with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was obtained. This was used as the criterion for assigning an item to the factor if it presented a factor load greater than 0.30, which explains 66.15 per cent of the total variance.

The viability of the factor analysis was assessed using the following criteria: the original calculation of the correlations presented a large number of correlations (85.4 per cent) with a value greater than 0.30 and a determinant lower than 0.008, and the result of Bartlett's sphericity test showed that the variables were not independent (Bartlett Test = 4,184.6, $p < 0.001$). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test for the sample gave a value of 0.864, indicating that correlations among variable pairs may almost be explained by the remaining variable, and the commonality was over 0.67. All of the values for the measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) were found to be over 0.81. This indicates that it is not possible to complete a factor analysis of the model. Table I shows the factor loadings for the 15 items proposed for the scale (some of which are negatively worded).

T3 The analysis of the components from Table III shows a very uniform factor for organizational commitment. Even though items 2 and 10 have a large factor load and items 1 and 3 have a minor load, the global view reflects a load pattern for the items that look very alike. This can anticipate the one-dimensional character of this construct.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

After the model was generated in the exploratory study, confirmatory analysis with structural equations was carried out by means of the extraction method of maximum likelihood. Afterwards, the convergent validity of the components of organizational commitment was tested, which confirmed the appropriateness of the instrument created in the exploratory factor analysis, where a model composed of one factor and 15 items in total was obtained. The estimated parameters were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and the factor loadings had values greater than 0.50, which shows that all of the items satisfactorily represent each of the latent variables, thus determining that the suggested model has a consistent scale with proven discriminant validity.

Regarding the model setting, the diverse indexes used mean that the scale is statistically sustainable. In this regard, in the analysis carried out in two random sub-samples, statistics to compare the settings were considered, such as the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the normed fit index (NFI). In relation to the said sub-samples, no differences in the factor weight, intercepts and factor measures were observed between these models and the model with the whole sample. Additionally, the goodness of fit indexes was determined: the goodness of fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), where a confidence interval of 90 per cent was considered. The CFI, TLI and NFI comparative fit indexes had values greater than 0.96. The GFI and AGFI indexes had values greater than 0.97 and the value obtained for the RMSEA was 0.051 (Table II). These results indicate that the fits in the adaptation of the proposed measuring scale for the cooperative sector are high. With respect to the internal consistency of the items and the dimensionality of the construct, it is necessary to determine the reliability of the scale. For this, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Various studies have established that an average value of 0.7 is a moderate or acceptable level for research in social sciences (Green and Salkind, 2016; Hair *et al.*, 2011), bearing in mind that the bigger the coefficient, the more reliable the scale. In this regard, the value of 0.855 that was reached indicates that the proposed measuring instrument has a very high reliability.

Items (Spanish vs English)	EFA	CFA
OC1: Estoy dispuesto a realizar un gran esfuerzo para contribuir al éxito de esta cooperativa I am willing to make a big effort to contribute to the success of this cooperative	0.675	0.594
OC2: Cuando hablo con mis amigos les digo que mi cooperativa es un gran lugar para trabajar When I talk with my friends, I tell them my cooperative is a great place to work in	0.814	0.653
OC3: Siento lealtad hacia esta cooperativa I feel loyalty towards my cooperativa	0.684	0.685
OC4: Aceptaría casi cualquier tipo de tarea con tal de seguir trabajando aquí I would accept nearly any task to keep my job here	0.751	0.502
OC5: Considero que mis valores y los de la dirección de la cooperativa son muy similares I consider that my values and those of the cooperative's management are very similar	0.700	0.484
OC6: Me siento orgulloso de decir que formo parte de esta cooperativa I feel proud to say I am part of this cooperative	0.713	0.652
OC7: No me importaría trabajar en otra cooperativa si el tipo de trabajo fuera similar I would not mind working in another cooperative if the kind of job was similar	0.705	0.394
OC8: La dirección de la cooperativa contribuye a que me sienta motivado en el desempeño de mi trabajo Management contributes to my motivation to work in the cooperative	0.699	0.711
OC9: En mis circunstancias actuales, apenas me afectaría tener que abandonar esta cooperativa In my current situation, I would not be affected by leaving the cooperative	0.741	0.557
OC10: Estoy encantado de haber escogido esta cooperativa para trabajar y no otras a los que considere unirme en su momento I am delighted to have chosen this cooperative to work in instead of another	0.802	0.673
OC11: No merece la pena permanecer trabajando en esta cooperativa indefinidamente It is not worth working indefinitely in this cooperative	0.799	0.642
OC12: A menudo discrepo con la política de la cooperativa en asuntos relacionados con los empleados I usually disagree with the corporate policies towards employees	0.790	0.708
OC13: Me importa mucho el futuro de esta cooperativa I care a lot about this cooperative's future	0.684	0.639
OC14: Para mí esta es la mejor cooperativa posible para trabajar For me, this is the best cooperative to work in	0.696	0.595
OC15: Definitivamente, la decisión de trabajar en esta cooperativa ha sido un error de mi parte The decision to work here has been a mistake on my behalf	0.721	0.678

Table III.
Factor loading for the items of the organizational commitment, exploratory and confirmatory analysis

Source: Own elaboration

The results shown confirm the work **proposition**: affective commitment in cooperatives in Ecuador can be measured by a scale of 15 items based on the classic one-dimensional model of Porter *et al.* (1974). Hence, the questionnaire we propose is extremely relevant for cooperatives wishing to engage in strategies to motivate and retain their human resources, leading to satisfaction for their clients (see Table IV).

Table IV.
Goodness of fit statistics CFA

	χ^2 (gl)	<i>p</i>	χ^2 /gl	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA (I.C. 90%)
Total	1.135.74 (90)	<0.001	12.60	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.051 (0.041–0.068)
Sub-sample 1	988.83 (90)	<0.001	11.00	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.054 (0.044–0.074)
Sub-sample 2	947.17 (90)	<0.001	10.50	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.95	0.053 (0.044–0.073)

Source: Own elaboration

Discussion and conclusions

Ecuadorian cooperativism looks to strengthen its principles and values which, with the passing of time, have been weakened, especially due to the macro-economic crises that have taken place. In order to help, this study intends to offer a tool that allows for the measurement of affective organizational commitment using a one-dimensional approach, characterized by the employee's pride and feeling of belonging to the organization. By doing so, they hope to enable tools for the people in charge and the leaders of the cooperatives who allow for the proposal of policies that bring benefits and incentives to the employees and, thus, create a greater degree of commitment to the organization and improve productivity (Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018; Qureshi *et al.*, 2018).

In this context, this model is considered to be the most appropriate one for the social economy sector. Its bases are clearly identified with cooperativism because of feelings of loyalty, congruence of values and the will to make an additional effort in the name of the organization. Using the meta-analysis completed by other researchers (among others, Allen and Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Darwish, 2003; Choi *et al.*, 2015; Kabins *et al.*, 2016), their results revealed a positive relationship with the affective dimension, while the other dimensions studied presented low levels of relationship. On the other hand, recent studies (among others, Takamatsu and Yamaguchi, 2018; Ke and Deng, 2018; Shahid and Zain, 2018; Mackay, 2018) confirm the one-dimensionality of this construct.

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The results of the field work and its statistical treatment allowed for the confirmation that the adaptation of the scale to measure the perception of the employees and executives in the cooperativism of Ecuador is appropriate. In addition, the study proved the existence of significant relationships among specific socio-demographic variables (age, sex and level of studies) and job position (length of service, salary, department and type of contract) with organizational commitment, providing particularly solid evidence and reflecting relationship patterns among these variables and the construct subject being studied. Therefore, it must be considered that human capital linked emotionally and affectively to the business makes an important contribution to competitive advantage in the Ecuadorian cooperative sector.

As a result, the findings allow us to confirm the appropriateness of Porter *et al.*'s (1974) classic model, applied in the research under the affective organizational commitment approach. Considering the structure of cooperatives in Ecuador (which are classified into two groups: financial, which, in turn, are grouped according to their assets; and non-financial, which are grouped according to their activity – services, housing, consumption and production), it can be concluded that the proposed instrument is easy to apply for institutions of diverse sizes and in diverse areas, as well as social and commercial organizations. It should also be remembered that this research deals with a developing country, where there is a lack of research on this construct and on social economy businesses, such as cooperatives (Fernández *et al.*, 2018).

The empirical study shows the suggested scale to be reliable and consistent, since its items were found to be correlated with each other and with the one-dimensional vision of the construct. For this reason, the main contribution of this research is a measurement scale (using 15 items) that can be used not only for academic reference but also for the business management of institutions forming part of the popular and social economy of Ecuador, with its potential application, as has already been indicated, to other Latin American countries and different sectors of activity.

As already mentioned, the main practical applications of this study can be used to improve the strategic management of human resources in cooperatives, which will be of benefit to them because satisfied and motivated employees lead to greater client satisfaction. It is important to note that the application of this instrument may lead managers to make good decisions regarding the management of their human capital. Additionally, this tool can help

with the control and promotion carried out by the national agency of social economy in its capacity as regulator of these organizations and may also be helpful to other similar entities.

The main limitation of this study resulted from the difficulty in accessing rural areas, where only questionnaires were sent online achieving, therefore, a low percentage of replies, unlike those which were personally applied, where there was an important success in applying the questionnaire. Finally, in future research it would be interesting to apply the measurement scale created in this study to other areas of purely commercial activity, with the idea of confirming, where appropriate, the adaptability that has been found here and, additionally, to study whether there is a relationship between organizational commitment and other variables such as corporate sustainability.

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Further readings

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