

HEARTSTRINGS AT WORK: EXPLORING CATALYSTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Affective employee commitment, also known as organizational commitment, refers to the loyalty and emotional attachment that workers feel towards their employer. It reflects the extent to which employees align themselves with the organization's objectives and values and are willing to go above and beyond to contribute to its success. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of affective employee commitment by examining the factors or antecedents that significantly influence it. Additionally, the study explores the positive outcomes that stem from the establishment of affective employee commitment. Building upon previous research, this article carefully examines the relationship between various variables and affective employee commitment. The findings shed light on the causes and outcomes of affective employee commitment, highlighting its significance in achieving desirable outcomes for the organization. The top management of organizations is encouraged to foster an environment where employees feel a strong sense of belonging to their workplace, as this can result in numerous advantageous outcomes.

Keywords: Affective employee commitment; Antecedents; Consequences



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1. Introduction

Employees are considered the most crucial assets and play a vital role in determining an organization's performance (Ilyas et al., 2022; Nawaz et al., 2022; Zara et al., 2022) in today's fast-paced era (Abid et al., 2022). Their dedication and commitment are critical for paving the

way to organizational success (Sadaqat et al., 2022; Swalhi et al., 2017). Employee commitment to the organization is a well-established concept that dates back nearly half a century (Spiegeleare & Emre, 2019). It refers to the attachment and affiliation of workers towards their company. Employee commitment is defined as the strength of one's affiliation with the company (Mowdy et al., 1979) and has become an essential aspect of effective organizational functioning (Somers & Birnbaum, 2000). Committed employees feel attached and connected to their organization (Mowdy et al., 1982) and actively work towards resolving organizational issues (Gupta et al., 2016). When employees are committed, they make a positive impact on the organization by being more productive compared to those without a strong affiliation and connection to their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Employee commitment is influenced by individual characteristics, organizational structures, job characteristics, and work experiences, which collectively fulfill individuals' needs.

Three dimensions of employee commitment have been studied: affective, continuance, and normative employee commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). This article focuses on studying various elements discussed in previous studies that contribute to building affective commitment in employees and the effects of affective employee commitment on employees' behaviors and attitudes. Affective commitment refers to the relative strength of a person's identity and involvement with a particular company (Mowday & Steers, 1982). Some factors have a positive relationship with employee commitment, meaning that an increase in these factors leads to an increase in employee commitment, while others have a negative relationship, meaning that an increase in such factors results in a decrease in employee commitment.

Factors positively associated with affective commitment have a significant influence on strengthening employee commitment. Job resources such as social support, feedback, and growth opportunities contribute to the establishment of affective employee commitment (Marty & Albrecht, 2017). Employee engagement also plays a role in effectively connecting employees to their work and organization (Marty & Albrecht, 2017). Maintaining a healthy work-life balance (Sauer & Hofmann, 2017) and developing one's competencies, which refer to a person's ability to meet or exceed predetermined performance standards in a specific environment or context (Spencer and Spencer, 1993), also enhance affective employee commitment (Naim & Lenka, 2017). The perception of meaningful work and its value for employees contributes to the

development of affectively committed employees (Johnson & Jiang, 2017). Beliefs about corporate social responsibility within a company increase an individual's belief in the company's goodwill, leading to the establishment of affective employee commitment (Khaskheli et al., 2020). Additionally, empowering leadership (Kim & Beehr, 2018) and ethical leaders (Asif et al., 2019) foster affectively committed employees due to their effective and supportive leadership styles.

Perceived organizational support, which refers to the belief that the employer values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986), plays a significant role in creating affective affiliation and commitment towards work and the organization (Nazir et al., 2018). It promotes employees' well-being (Ilyas & Abid, 2022). Additionally, supervisors' social support contributes to the development of affectively committed employees (Orgambidez & Almeida, 2019). On the other hand, certain factors can diminish affective employee commitment. Narcissistic leadership, characterized by mistreatment and negative behavior towards employees, has a negative impact on affective employee commitment (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, workplaces dominated by toxic behaviors like bullying result in lower levels of affective commitment among employees (Teo et al., 2020).

This article also contributes to the literature by exploring the effects and consequences associated with affective employee commitment. When an organization has employees who feel a strong attachment and affiliation with their company and are dedicated to its success, numerous positive outcomes can be achieved. Affective commitment is positively related to employee job performance (Swalhi et al., 2017). Employees with strong affective commitment demonstrate greater effort and dedication in their work compared to those with weak affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Moreover, affective commitment fosters an individual's interest in their work and the organization as a whole (Asif et al., 2019). It enhances employee motivation and emotional connection to their work, leading to increased productivity (Mowdy et al., 1979). Affective commitment is also associated with proactive work behavior, where employees go beyond their regular job tasks to contribute positively to the organization (Tuan Luu, 2017).

Employees who are highly committed and attached to their work and organization tend to engage in extra-role behaviors that go beyond their job requirements (Khaskheli et al., 2020). Affective employee commitment is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior

(Organ & Ryan, 1995). Furthermore, affective commitment stimulates employees' creative thinking and problem-solving abilities (Ribeiro et al., 2020). With confidence in themselves and the organization, affectively committed employees approach problem-solving with innovative ideas and solutions (Semedo et al., 2016). Affective commitment also reduces turnover intentions, as employees who feel a strong affiliation with the company are less likely to consider leaving and instead focus on making valuable contributions (Fazio et al., 2007). Thus, affective commitment increases employees' intention to stay and reduces turnover rates (Albrecht et al., 2015). Additionally, committed employees demonstrate resilience in the face of obstacles and are able to accomplish their objectives with limited resources. Affectively committed employees contribute favorably to the organization's success by exhibiting enthusiasm and increased productivity (Manzoor et al., 2019).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Antecedents of Affective Employee Commitment

Employees are indeed the most crucial asset for an organization, and their commitment plays a vital role in its success. Employee commitment can be defined as a link between the employee and the company that reduces the likelihood of turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Committed employees not only contribute to the efficient functioning of a company but also help it outperform its competitors. There are three widely accepted components of organizational commitment proposed by Meyer and Allen: continuous commitment, affective commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Continuous commitment refers to the employee's understanding of the consequences of leaving the company, affective commitment represents the employee's emotional attachment to and identification with the company, and normative commitment emphasizes the sense of responsibility employees feel towards their organization.

Affective commitment specifically pertains to the extent to which an individual identifies with a particular organization and actively engages in its activities (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Several factors contribute to the development of affective employee commitment. Job resources, including feedback, growth opportunities, social support, and the utilization of skills, have been found to be positively associated with commitment (Bakker et al., 2010). Job

resources assist individuals in achieving their goals and meeting their basic motivational needs for social interaction, accomplishment, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Work engagement has also been found to have a strong impact on affective employee commitment (Hakanen et al., 2006). According to Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958), engaged employees feel a sense of obligation to be socio-emotionally committed to the organization they work for (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013). Work-life balance, which refers to the harmony and lack of conflict between an individual's personal and professional life, has also been shown to have a strong association with affective employee commitment (Sauer & Hofmann, 2017). When an employee's workplace expectations align with job requirements, it fosters a strong sense of commitment (Huang et al., 2007). Recent studies have indicated that a healthy work-life balance benefits both employees and organizations, as it enhances affective employee commitment and feelings of loyalty (Hammer et al., 2005; Hye Kyoung Kim, 2014).

In summary, affective employee commitment is influenced by factors such as job resources, work engagement, and work-life balance. By fostering a positive work environment that provides necessary resources, promotes engagement, and supports work-life balance, organizations can enhance affective commitment among their employees.

The previous literature highlights the positive association between affective employee commitment and learning efforts. Learning initiatives contribute to the development of expertise and competencies among individuals, which are important for self-realization and personal development (Naim & Lenka, 2017). Employees who have opportunities to enhance their abilities and self-realization are more likely to exhibit higher levels of loyalty and affective commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Affective events theory suggests that when a company cares about its employees and provides growth and development opportunities, it satisfies their higher-order desires and fosters affective commitment (Naim & Lenka, 2017).

Meaningful work is also positively associated with affective employee commitment. The Job Characteristics Model explains this relationship by stating that meaningful work, which involves the significance and value an individual attributes to their work, leads to learning, growth, and autonomy, ultimately fostering affective commitment (Humphrey et al., 2007). When employees find their work meaningful, they are more likely to identify with the

organization's goals and exhibit affective commitment (Steger & Dik, 2010). Similarly, employees who perceive their organization as socially responsible also demonstrate higher levels of affective commitment (Khaskheli et al., 2020). The perception of corporate social responsibility and a positive organizational reputation can enhance employees' emotional attachment to the company, leading to affective commitment (Bouraou et al., 2019).

Conversely, employees may have negative feelings towards a company that lacks social responsibility. Misalignment between employees' personal ethical views and the principles of the organization can reduce loyalty and affective commitment (Corciolani et al., 2020). Empowering leadership, characterized by sharing control and offering support for employee development, has been found to promote affective employee commitment (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Empowering leaders emphasize autonomy, engagement, and self-direction, which positively influence followers and lead to greater affiliation and commitment towards the organization (Beehr & Kim, 2018). Employees perceive empowering leadership as a promise from the company, resulting in increased affective commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In summary, affective employee commitment is positively associated with learning efforts, meaningful work, perception of corporate social responsibility, and empowering leadership. Organizations that prioritize employee development, provide meaningful work experiences, demonstrate social responsibility, and foster empowering leadership can cultivate higher levels of affective commitment among their employees.

On the other hand, narcissistic leaders can have a negative impact on their followers and their affective commitment. Narcissistic leaders often prioritize their own interests and lack empathy for others, which can lead to disrespectful behavior and a disregard for their subordinates' feelings (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Dimaggio et al., 2002). They may also take credit for successes while blaming others for failures (Campbell et al., 2004). Such behaviors undermine the trust and emotional connection between the leader and their followers, leading to reduced affective commitment (Wang et al., 2020).

In contrast, ethical leadership, which involves demonstrating behavior that is normatively appropriate and encouraging similar behavior in followers through communication, support, and decision-making, can foster affective employee commitment (Brown et al., 2005).

Ethical leaders address the socio-emotional needs of their employees, creating an environment where employees feel engaged and interested in contributing to the company's goals (Rhoades et al., 2005). When employees perceive that their ethical leaders value their thoughts and input, they feel secure in their positions and develop a strong affective organizational commitment (Asif et al., 2019).

By promoting ethical behavior, ethical leaders create a positive work environment and establish trust with their employees. This, in turn, enhances employees' emotional attachment to the organization and their commitment to its goals.

Table 1: Antecedents of Affective Employee Commitment

Antecedents	Source
Job Resources	Marty & Albrecht., 2017
Work Engagement	Marty & Albrecht., 2017
Prosocial Motivation	Ullah et al., 2020
Work life balance	Sauer & Hofmann, 2017
Competency Development	Naim & Lenka, 2017
Supervisor narcissism	Wang et al., 2020
Grit	Nisar et al., 2020
High Involvement practices	Renkema et al., 2020
Self-Efficacy	Ashfaq et al., 2021; Erum et al., 2020
Employee's CSR perception	Khaskheli et al., 2020
Perceived Organizational support	Nazir et al., 2018
Collaborative Culture in the Informal Subgroup	Meredith et al., 2023
Ethical Leadership	Asif et al., 2019; Ashfaq et al., 2021
Thriving at Work	Abid et al. 2019
Social Support	Orgambidez & Almeida, 2019
Work Place Bullying	Teo et al., 2020
Empowering Leadership	Kim & Beehr, 2018
Managerial Support	Arshad et al., 2021
Diversity Management	Tajeddini et al., 2023
Warm glow, Moral Credit, Emotional Exhaustion	Ren et al., 2023
Job Satisfaction, Innovation Climate	Demircioglu, 2023

However, a toxic work environment, particularly one that involves workplace bullying, can have a detrimental effect on affective employee commitment. Workplace bullying, which involves ongoing negative activities directed at individuals, creates feelings of injustice and

psychological threat (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Parzefall & Salin, 2010). In such circumstances, when an organization is perceived as unjust and uncaring about the well-being of its employees, it not only damages its reputation but also reduces employees' affiliation with the organization, leading to a decline in affective commitment (Teo et al., 2020).

To foster affective employee commitment, it is crucial for organizations to create a supportive work environment that values employees' contributions, provides social support, and actively addresses issues such as workplace bullying. By cultivating a positive and inclusive workplace culture, organizations can enhance affective employee commitment and promote the well-being and satisfaction of their employees.

2.2 Consequences of Affective Employee Commitment

Affective employee commitment itself leads to generating many positive outcomes that benefit the employees and are advantageous for the organization's success. The nature of an employee's involvement and attachment has an impact on his or her willingness to contribute to the organization's effectiveness (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, employees who want to be a part of a company and have strong affective commitment are more likely to work hard for it (Swalhi et al., 2017). It shows that affective employee commitment is positively associated with job performance (Somers & Birnbaum, 2000). According to several research findings, workers with a strong affective connection to their jobs are more likely to put in extra effort than those with weak affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Previously conducted empirical studies have shown a significantly positive relationship between affective employee commitment and job performance (Chang & Chen, 2011).

Employees who are emotionally invested in their company reflect this bond in one way or another. Committed workers are more likely to contribute to the organization's best interests by displaying a personal connection and devotion to the organization's aims and by working hard to achieve success in those goals (Mowdy et al., 1982). Affective commitment can also serve as a foundation for employees' goals to get engrossed in proactive work behaviors (Tuan lu, 2017). In the absence of rewards, commitment helps to maintain behavioral direction.

Table 2: Consequences of Affective Employee Commitment

Consequences	Source
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Job Performance	Swalhi et al., 2017
Proactive Work Behavior	Tuan Lu , 2017
Innovative Work Behavior	Tajeddini et al., 2023
Work Engagement	Ashfaq et al., 2021; Asif et al., 2019
Employee Creativity	Ribeiro et al., 2020
Turnover Intention	Marty & Albrecht, 2017
Organizational citizenship behavior	Khaskheli et al., 2020
Job Satisfaction	Meredith et al., 2023
Thriving at Work	Zhai et al., 2023

Employees who are devoted to the organization are more inclined to go beyond what is required for their essential job tasks, such as by participating in proactive work behavior that boosts the company's performance, than employees who are not committed to the organization (Scholl R.W., 1981). Affectively committed employees can make tremendous contributions to the company through their proactive work behaviors. Consequently, the relationship between affective commitment and proactive work behavior is significantly positive (Tuan lu, 2020). Affectively committed employees get involved in performing extra-role tasks that do not get them rewarded and do not belong to their required job activities (Meynhardt et al., 2020) but are important contributions to the organization. Organizational citizenship behavior is one such task. An employee is engaging in organizational citizenship behavior when they willingly participate in extra-role tasks that do not fall under the purview of their job descriptions but do make contributions to the organization's aims (Khaskheli et al., 2020), like cooperating with others, proposing assistance to fulfill tasks, and orienting new employees (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). It is described as contributions by employees that exceed their rewarded job tasks and accomplishments (Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Affective commitment in employees plays a vital role in generating employee creativity (Ribeiro et al., 2020). Creativity can be understood as the generation of new and unique ideas and solutions (Semedo et al., 2016). Happier people are considered to be more creative, and if they are happy at work, affective attachment toward the company is generated (Rego et al., 2011). Happiness has a positive impact on originality, creativity, and flexibility (Lyubomirsk et al., 2005). Workers' autonomy, perseverance, and organizational commitment are linked to creative behavior. According to Semedo et al. (2016), these traits encourage the establishment of strong bonds between employees and the company and influence how

employees' organizations impact their creative output. According to the social exchange theory, workers with a high level of affective commitment are more likely to contribute to creating and implementing new solutions that improve the company's efficacy and efficiency (Montani et al., 2017).

Affective employee commitment leads to a desire to stay on the job and reduces turnover intention. An affectively committed employee has a strong psychological attachment to his or her organization (Albrecht et al., 2015). As turnover is strongly associated with significant recruitment and training costs, turnover intention is considered a crucial attitudinal outcome (Tziner & Birati, 1996).

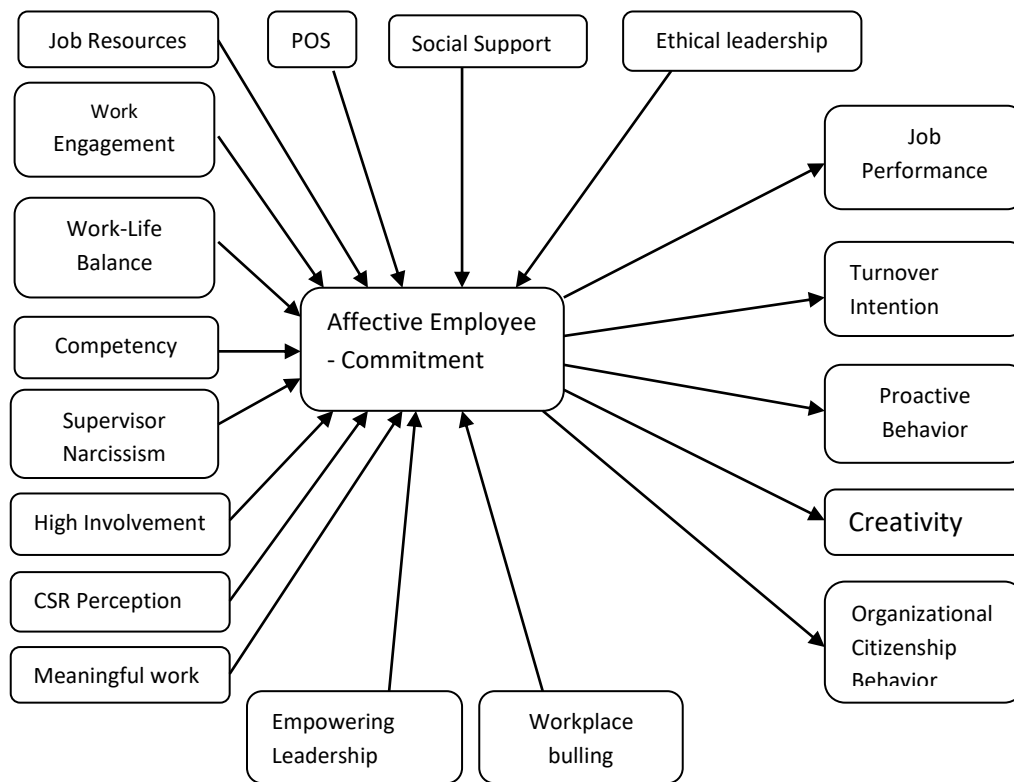


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

When an employee feels a strong affiliation with the organization and believes that their needs and well-being are cared for, their intention to leave the company and seek another job is reduced (Fazio et al., 2007). Affective commitment provides new approaches and mechanisms for understanding the phenomenon of change that leads to organizational efficiency and survival (Woodman et al., 1993). It serves as a vital means through which employees can

express themselves. Affective commitment also leads to employee engagement (Asif et al., 2019). With a strong commitment, employees feel a greater sense of responsibility and involvement in the company's tasks, motivating them to work harder to achieve organizational goals (Rhoades et al., 2001). Consequently, they exhibit a higher level of engagement in both their prescribed job tasks and additional discretionary behaviors. Moreover, committed employees are able to overcome obstacles and accomplish their objectives even with limited resources. These capabilities shape their mindset, resulting in increased engagement, self-determination, productivity, and success in achieving long-term goals for the organization (Asif et al., 2019). Affectively committed employees demonstrate favorable behaviors in relation to their jobs, contributing to their enthusiasm and productivity (Manzoor et al., 2019).

3. Method

In this review article, previously conducted research was utilized to explore the relationship between various variables and affective employee commitment. Empirical published articles were thoroughly examined and analyzed to identify the causes and outcomes associated with affective employee commitment. Care was taken to include high-impact papers to ensure the quality, reliability, and authenticity of the articles used in this review. By drawing on existing research, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of affective employee commitment and its implications.

4. Discussion

Affective employee commitment plays a crucial role in differentiating an organization from its competitors. Committed employees are dedicated to their personal growth and work diligently to achieve organizational goals, ultimately contributing to the organization's success. This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature by enhancing our understanding of affective commitment, its determinants (such as work engagement, job resources, supervisor support, work-life balance, CSR perception, perceived organizational support, and meaningful work), and its inhibitors (such as workplace bullying and narcissistic leadership). By shedding light on these factors, the article contributes to the field of positive organizational scholarship.

Furthermore, the study highlights the positive outcomes associated with fostering affective commitment, including improved job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, creative and proactive employees, and reduced turnover intention. Creating an environment where employees feel emotionally connected to the organization is crucial. The article emphasizes the importance of top management in creating a positive and supportive workplace where employees feel valued and their well-being is prioritized. By doing so, organizations can attract and retain affectively committed employees who are dedicated to the organization's growth and success. Overall, this study underscores the significance of affective employee commitment and its positive impact on organizational outcomes. It emphasizes the need for organizations to cultivate a positive work environment and demonstrate genuine concern for employee well-being and development.

5. Limitations and Future Directions

This article explores a limited number of factors that contribute to the development of affective employee commitment. In future research, additional antecedents such as teamwork, work ethics, trust, work culture, and constructive feedback can be examined to understand their impact on commitment more comprehensively. Furthermore, while this study focuses on a subset of positive outcomes associated with affective commitment, it would be valuable to explore additional positive outcomes, such as psychological empowerment, employee well-being, and reduced stress levels. By including these factors and outcomes, a more comprehensive understanding of affective commitment can be achieved.

6. Conclusion

Employees who experience a strong sense of attachment, affiliation, and affective commitment to their organization are considered a valuable asset. These affectively committed employees tend to establish a stronger bond with their organization, leading to increased dedication, sincerity, and effort in contributing to the company's success and growth. Several factors play a crucial role in fostering affective commitment among employees, including the availability of efficient job resources, the promotion of work-life balance, opportunities for competency development, the implementation of high involvement practices, perceived organizational support, ethical and empowering leadership, and supportive supervisor relationships. As a result of their affective commitment, employees are more likely to demonstrate long-term commitment

to the organization, exhibit high levels of dedication, perform well, and display creativity and proactivity in their work.

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