

ANTECEDENTS, MODERATORS AND OUTCOMES OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract

This study examined: (1) the impact of the structural factors of tenure, job integration and organizational support on organizational commitment, (2) the mediating roles of the cultural values for performance and collectivity, and the intra-individual factors of organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity in the relationship between the structural factors and organization commitment; and, (3) the relationship between organizational commitment and the outcome variables of absenteeism, turnover and profitability.

The results show that job integration and organizational support are significant structural determinants of organizational commitment; the value for performance is a significant facilitator of the effects of the structural factors on commitment; and organization identification and the norm of reciprocity are important links in the structural factors-commitment relationship. There is no support for the hypothesized effects of the value for collectivism and tenure.

Furthermore, the results show commitment to be significantly (and negatively) related to absenteeism and turnover. However, commitment is not shown to be significantly related to profitability. Implications of the findings for managers and researchers are considered.

Introduction

Many studies have linked organizational commitment to a large number of organization-relevant variables. For instance, commitment has been found to be negatively correlated with turnover (Koch & Steers, 1978; Porter et al., 1976; Steers, 1977; Wiener & Vardi, 1980), absenteeism (Mowday et al., 1979; Steers, 1977), and tardiness (Angle & Perry, 1981). Furthermore, it has been found to be positively related with intention to stay with the organization (Angle & Perry, 1981, Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1976; Steers, 1977), quality of work (Steers, 1977) and organizational adaptability (Angle & Perry, 1981). Other studies have also linked it to employee-relevant outcomes such as job satisfaction (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Romzek, 1989) and career satisfaction and nonwork satisfaction (Romzek, 1989).

The present study is an attempt to develop and to test a model of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as the tendency, based on cognitive, affective and normative forces on the individual, to behave in ways which place primacy on the promotion and protection of the interests of the organization as opposed to a preoccupation with immediate and/or direct personal or sub-ground interests. A committed person is therefore one who resolves conflicts between his/her personal interests and the demands of the organization in favour of the organization and is prepared to sacrifice short-run personal needs or goals for the sake of those of the organization (Kundi & Saleh, in 1993).

Organizational commitment, as defined above, agrees with Oliver's assertion (1990) that commitment targets should be actions, as it is very difficult to operationalize commitment in any terms other than one's indication to act in a given way towards a particular commitment target.

Moreover, the definition does not imply that individuals would not be committed to themselves or their immediate groups in the organization. It simply indicates that whenever personal and/or sub-ground(s) interests are in

conflict with the demands and/or interests of the organization, the committed person will (in the short run) resolve the conflict in favour of the organization. In other words, commitment is reflected by the short-run sacrifice of one's own interests for the sake of the organization's interests. The resolution of such conflicts is based on cognitive, affective and/or normative factors. That is, the response in favour of the organization may occur because: the (committed) individual thinks it is a more reasonable choice (cognitive); s/he likes and respects the organization (affective); or, it is the moral/right thing to do (normative) (Withey, 1988).

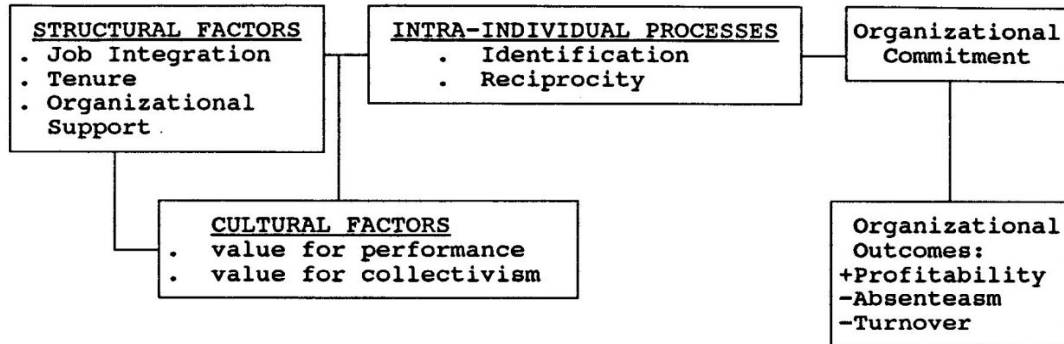
In view of the above definition, organizational commitment is expected to have an effect on behaviour independent of instrumental motivation. Commitment behaviours will not be the result of direct self-interests or immediate rewards. Moreover, the committed individual is expected (in the short-run) to promote or protect organizational interests irrespective of whether the activities he/she performs are intrinsically satisfying or not. According to intrinsic motivation theory, individual performs certain tasks primarily because he/she gets direct rewards from the tasks themselves (or, rather he or she enjoys them) and not necessarily because organizational interests and goals have priority in his/her mind. It is therefore expected that organizational commitment will complement instrumental and intrinsic motivational approaches by: (a) motivating employees to do those activities which these approaches do not address directly (e.g. no immediate rewards available!) and (b) focusing/channelling their effects on the wellbeing and integrity of the organization (e.g. ask for good working conditions only to the extent the organization can afford it).

Some authors have equated organizational commitment with organizational identification (e.g. Kidron, 1978). However, defining organizational commitment in term of organizational identification contributes unnecessarily to concept redundancy (Morrow, 1983). If the two concepts have to be used, they should be differentiated. In terms of our definition, organizational identification is one's positive psychological orientation to the social organization which is accompanied by a strong affection for it. It is an affective factor which leads to organizational commitment. In our view, there are cognitive and normative factors, in addition to the affective factor, which contribute to organizational commitment. For instance, it has been noted that certain job and structural factors will increase one's thinking of responsibility towards the organization and hence his/her (cognitive) commitment to it (Salancik, 1977). Also, the norm of reciprocity, which is considered one of the most universal norms (Gouldner, 1960) is expected to lead to (normative) commitment.

The proposed model (Figure 1) presents three categories of factors of organizational commitment. These are:

- (1) The structural category which includes the variables of job integration, employee-tenure and organizational support. The model indicates that these variables affect commitment through appropriate variables of the intra-individual category.
- (2) The cultural category which includes the variables of the value for performance and value for collectivity. It is believed that organizational commitment is facilitated by an organizational culture that is strong in its value for performance (Bettinger, 1989) and value for collectivity (Saleh, 1982; 1987).
- (3) The intra-individual category which includes the variables of the norm of reciprocity and organizational identification. Although there has been a suggestion of the influence of the norm of reciprocity on organizational commitment (e.g. Brief and Motowidlo, 1986) there is no empirical test of this influence. It is also to be noted that while there has been a number of studies of organizational identification, there is a lack of investigation of its effect on commitment. The main reason seems to be that many consider identification as one of the components of commitment and not as a cause of it (e.g. Mowday et al., 1979).

Figure 1: A Research Model of Organizational Commitment



Explanation of the Model's Variables and Relationships

1. The Structural Variables:

Job Integration: An integrated job is one which emphasizes communications and contacts between employees within and outside their immediate work group. It leads to organizational commitment through its expected influence on organizational identification. Job integration reinforces de-individualization, a state in which the person is motivated to identify with the organization. In addition, since integrated jobs are likely to result in more meaningful work experience (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), they enhance organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity and, hence organizational commitment.

Tenure: The amount of time invested by employees in the organization will have positive influence on the level of organizational commitment through organizational identification. Through time, employees gain specific expertise and knowledge about the organization and accumulate psychological as well as economic investments which make them tend to identify more with the organization.

Organizational Support: Organizational support refers to the explicit actions by the organization to show its concern and care for its employees, and reflects its willingness to invest in them. Walton (1985, p.77) has argued that workers will respond positively and creatively to the organization, "not when they are...treated like an unwelcome necessity, but instead, when they are helped to take satisfaction in their work". The support (or value) by the organization for its employees is expected to have a positive impact on organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1990) through its impact on reciprocation and organizational identification.

2. Organization's Cultural Variables:

The Value for performance: This is the belief by organizational members that the attainment of high standards in their work performance is an important end in itself. It is an important facilitator of the organizational commitment process. For, it (a) clarifies the goals of the organization; (b) raises the tendency to interpret organizational and individual actions in terms of their relevance to the quality of work performance; and (c) provides the justification for the organization's use of the mentioned structural factors.

With an organizational culture which is strong in terms of the value for performance, job integration is more likely to create social support that facilitates management attempts to boost performance. Furthermore, organizational support and tenure are more likely to be interpreted by the respective employees in terms of organizational performance requirements.

Value for collectivity. This refers to the extent to which organizational members believe that working together cooperatively for the common good is preferable to working competitively for individual gain. It is an important facilitator of organizational commitment because once one has internalized the

practice of working in cooperation with other (co-workers, leaders, etc) in the organization, it (should) become easier for him/her to place a higher priority on organization interests. This is easy to understand when the organization is viewed as a collection of the associative efforts of individuals and groups within it.

3. The Intra-Individual Variables:

Norm of Reciprocity: Although there is a lack of empirical evidence for the effects of reciprocity, there is a growing consensus that a strong norm of reciprocity between the individual and his/her organization is an important determinant of organizational commitment (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986; Scholl, 1981). The norm is an important mechanism linking the needs and concerns of employees with the work performance demands of the organization. Gouldner (1960) sees the norm of reciprocity as one of the most universal norms according to which: (1) "people should help those who have helped them" and (2) "should not injure those who have helped them" (p.171). Once a strong norm of reciprocity has been established between the individual and the organization, it is expected to motivate the short-run sacrifice (help) by the individual on behalf of the organization.

Organizational Identification: Organizational identification is defined as one's positive psychological orientation to the social organization which is accompanied by a strong affection for it. It entails a "perception of oneness" with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Some reviews of the organizational commitment literature (Scholl, 1981; Wiener, 1982) have found that organizational identification increases the tendency for employees to interpret the success and failures of the organization as their own, and results in biases in the evaluation employees make of the actions and characteristics of the organizations. It was also found that it facilitates the internalization of the organization's values and norms (Eisenberger et al., 1990). It is expected therefore that organizational identification would make the individual a staunch supporter of the organization; someone who is very sympathetic and sensitive to the needs of the organization and therefore willing to put off his/her short-run self-interests in defense of those of the organization.

4. The Outcome Variables: Profitability, Absentecism & Turnover

It is expected that organizational commitment will be positively related with profitability and negatively related with turnover and absenteeism principally because commitment induces employees to sacrifice (in the short-run) their efforts for the benefit of the organization. Available empirical evidence supports these expectations. For example organizational commitment has been found to be negatively related to absenteeism (Mowday et. al., 1979; Steers, 1977) and turnover (Koch & Steers, 1978; Porter et al., 1976; Wiener & Vardi, 1980). It has also been positively related to quality of work (Steers, 1977) which is expected to contribute to profitability.

Based on the foregoing discussions, the following hypotheses are introduced for testing:

Hypothesis 1: Each of the structural factors (i.e. job integration, tenure and organizational support) is a significant predictor of organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2: The value for performance and for collectivity mediate the relationship between the structural factors and organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 3: The influence of the structural factors on commitment is mainly through the intra-individual factors of reciprocity and identification.

Hypothesis 4: Organizational commitment is negatively related to absenteeism and turnover, and is positively related to profitability.

Method

Data were collected from government-owned and privately owned organizations in Tanzania. A total of 41 government-owned and 32 private organizations participated in the studies. Depending on the size of company, two or three of the major functional departments were identified. Then, two individuals were randomly selected from each of these departments. This resulted in selecting a total of 368 employees who were asked to complete the study's questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were 299, representing 81% of the original sample. The respondents were given the choice to complete an English or a Swahili version of the questionnaire. The Swahili version was developed by translating the English version into Swahili and then retranslating the Swahili version into English to check its equivalency. The translations were done by people from the field.

The variables of the model were measured as follows: The job integration scale had ten Likert type items. Two sample items were: "In your organization, jobs that you are familiar with require close communications between employees" and "As far as you know the majority of employees in your organization have the opportunity to work closely with each other." The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.92.

The organizational support scale had ten Likert type items selected and adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). A sample item was "Employees in your organization are proud to be part of it". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.92.

The norm of reciprocity scale had five, seven-point Likert type, items. Some of them were adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). One sample item was: "History has shown that employees in your organization work hard when the organization treats them well". The Cronbach Alpha was 0.85.

The organizational commitment scale consisted of ten items. It was a seven-point Likert type scale. Some of the items were adapted from Mowday et al. (1979) and Takezawa & Whitehill (1981). A sample item was: "Employees in your organization are likely to place their personal interests ahead of those of the organization". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.83.

The value for performance scale had six Likert type items. One item was "Most members of your organization believe strongly in achieving excellent work performance in their job". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.89.

The value for collectivism scale had seven Likert type items. Some of them were adapted from the works of Hui (1988) and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961). A sample item was: "Employees in your organization like to work together as opposed to having each individual working on his/her own." The Cronbach alpha was 0.84.

Tenure was measured by the average amount of time (in years) that the individual spent working for the organization.

Data on the three organizational outcomes were collected from company records. Organizational profitability was indicated by the previous year after-tax profit. Organizational level absenteeism was indicated by the number of man-days missed without official permission in the previous year. Employee turnover at the organizational level was indicated by the number of those who voluntarily left the organization during the previous year. For each organization the three sets of data were averaged per employee (i.e. adjusted for the size of the organization).

Other variables that were measured include: the type of ownership (i.e., public vs private) of the organization, size (i.e., number of employees) and personal demographic data. Ownership was scored as "1" for the case of the government-owned organizations and "2" for the case of the private organizations.

The responses from each organization were averaged and the averages were used on the analysis.

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test hypotheses 1 through 3. Table 1 helps to show how this was done.

Table 1: Illustrating Hierarchical Regression

Independent variables	Dependent Variable		
	1 Commitment	2 Commitment	3 Commitment
<u>Controls</u> Public vs private ownership Organizational size	b b	b b	b b
<u>Structural variables</u> Tenure Org'nal support Job intergration	b* b* b*	b b b	b b b
<u>1st Mediators</u> Value for collectivism Valve for performance		b** b**	b b
<u>2nd Mediators</u> Org'nal Identification Norm of Reciprocity			b*** b***

For hypothesis 1 to be supported, the betas corresponding to the three structural variables (of job integration, organizational support and tenure) from regression analysis 1 (see the b*s in column marked 1, table 1) must be significant. The support for hypothesis 2 requires that when the value for collectivism and value for performance are added (see the result of analysis 2 in the column marked 2) the previously substantial direct effects of the structural variables should drop to (or close to) insignificance. At the same time the betas corresponding to the effects of the two value orientations (see notes with b**s in column 2, table 1) should be significant.

Support for hypothesis 3 requires that the b's for the effects of values for collectivism and performance should be high and significant while the b's for the structural variables should remain close to insignificance in equation 2. At the same time, the b's for the effects of organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity (i.e. the b***) should be high and significant while the b's for the effects of the values for collectivism and performance should drop to insignificance in equation 3 and the b's for the structural variables should remain insignificant.

A similar kind of analysis is needed for the predictive models of organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity.

Results

Table 2 presents the product-moment correlations between the commitment variables. As can be seen all the structural and cultural factors are positively related with organizational commitment with the exception of tenure. Table 2 also shows that organizational size is not significantly correlated with commitment.

Table 2. Correlation Among the Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Org. commitment									
2. Norm of reciprocity	0.61								
3. Value of performance	0.64	0.59							
4. Org. identification	0.69	0.59	0.69						
5. Tenure	0.19	0.29	0.24	0.26					
6. Orgn. Support	0.51	0.42	0.52	0.58	0.34				
7. V. for collectivism	0.52	0.46	0.53	0.51	0.10	0.38			
8. Job integration	0.52	0.46	0.53	0.45	0.20	0.27	0.63		
9. Public/private own.	0.20	0.23	0.38	0.23	-0.26	0.07	0.09	0.16	
10. Org. size	-0.16	-0.15	-0.12	-0.24	-0.08	0.12	0.02	0.01	0.32

Significance of the correlation coefficients:
 (r>0.20, p<0.05) (r>0.28, p<0.01) (r>0.38, p<0.001)

Table 3 shows the direct effects (regression betas) between the variables of the model in Figure 1. Public vs private ownership and organizational size were included as controls in the hierarchical equations.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Betas with Organizational Commitment as the Dependent Variable

Predictors	Dependent variable		
	1 Commitment	2 Commitment	3 Commitment
<u>Controls</u>			
Pub. vs private ownership	0.08	-0.04	-0.05
Size	-0.11	-0.12	-0.05
<u>Structrual variables</u>			
Tenure	-0.01	-0.04	-0.08
Organizational Support	0.39*	0.23*	0.13
Job integration	0.41*	0.21	0.17
<u>1st Mediators</u>			
Value for collectivism		0.13	0.04
Value for performance		0.34*	0.15
<u>2nd Mediators</u>			
Org. identification			0.31*
Norm of reciprocity			0.21+
R ²	0.44	0.52	0.59

* P < 0.05

+p = 0.06

Tables 4 contains the results of hierarchical regression analysis with organization identification and the norm of reciprocity as dependent variables.

The results (column 1 of Table 3) support the prediction of hypothesis 1 that job integration and organizational support are significant predictors of organizational commitment (i.e. beta = 0.39, $p < 0.05$ for organizational support; beta = 0.41, $p < 0.05$ for job integration). However, the expectation that tenure would be a significant predictor of organization commitment is not supported (i.e. beta = -0.01, $p < 0.05$).

The results (column 2 of Table 3) support the prediction of hypothesis 2 that the values for performance and collectivism would mediate the relationship between the structural factors and organization commitment. The b's for the structural variables in equation 1 (see column 1, table 3) are high and significant (except for the case for tenure) but drop to/close to/insignificance in the second analysis (see column 2, table 3) when the values for collectivism and performance are added. At the same time, the value for performance becomes a significant mediator (i.e., beta = 0.34, $p < 0.05$) although the value for collectivity does not (beta = 0.13, n.s.). The value for performance appears to be, also, a significant moderator of the relationship between the structural factors and the norm of reciprocity and organizational identification (see table 4).

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Betas with Organizational Identification and the Norm of Reciprocity as Dependent variables.

Predictors	Dependent variables			
	1 Identif- ication	2 Identif- ication	3 Recipr- ocity	4 Recip- ocity
<u>Controls</u>				
Pub. vs private ownership	0.11	-0.03	0.19	0.19
Size	-0.16	-0.17*	-0.06	-0.07
<u>Structural variables</u>				
Tenure	0.06	0.01	0.19	0.16
Organizational support	0.46*	0.26*	0.26*	0.10
Job integration	0.29*	0.05	0.33*	0.12
<u>Mediators</u>				
Value for collectivism		0.16		0.16
Value for performance		0.44*		0.31*
R ²	0.48	0.60	0.37	0.44

The results (column 3, Table 3) support the prediction of hypothesis 3 that the influence of the structural factors on commitment would be mainly through the intra-individual factors of reciprocity and identification. The b for the effect of the value for performance (which was significant in analysis 2) has dropped to insignificance in analysis 3 while the b's for the structural variables, which were insignificant in analysis 2) remain insignificant. At the same time the b's for the mediating effects of organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity appear to be strong (i.e. beta = 0.31, $p < 0.0$ for organizational identification; beta = 0.21, $p = 0.06$ for the norm of reciprocity).

Table 5 presents the correlations between organizational commitment and absenteeism, turnover and profitability. The results provide support for the predictions of hypothesis 4 that organizational commitment would be negatively related to absenteeism ($r = -0.50$, $p < 0.001$) and turnover ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5 Correlations between Commitment and Outcome Variables

VARIABLE*	combined sample			public sample			private sample		
	r	n	prob.	r	n	prob.	r	n	prob.
Absenteeism	-0.50	56	0.00	-0.04	29	0.01	-0.56	27	0.00
Turnover	-0.34	63	0.00	-0.33	34	0.03	-0.33	29	0.04
Net profit	0.13	53	0.18	0.24	28	0.11	-0.05	25	0.41

* averaged per employee

However, no significant support is obtained for the hypothesized positive relationship between organizational commitment and profitability ($r=0.13$, n.s)

Discussion

The results indicate that the norm of reciprocity and organizational identification are important direct factors of organizational commitment. Although there is no previous empirical research which has examined the effects of these variables on organizational commitment, the finding for the norm of the reciprocity agrees with the speculations of Brief & Motowidlo (1986) and School (1981). Also, the finding for organizational identification reinforces the idea of O'Reilly & Chatman (1986) that identification would be positively related to extra role behaviors done for the good of the organization as opposed for the direct benefit of the individual.

The study has shown that the structural factors of organizational support and job integration influences organizational commitment through the intra-individual factors of reciprocity and identification. Hence, the relationship between the structural factors and organizational commitment can be explained by the intervening roles of organizational identification and the norm of reciprocity. Although previous research has not tested the intervening roles of identification and reciprocity in the organizational support/commitment relationship, the simple Person correlation between organizational support and organizational commitment replicates the findings of DeCotiis & Summers (1987) of the relationships between commitment and "trust", "support", "recognition", and "fairness". It also replicates the findings of Angle & Perry (1983) relating commitment to "treatment of the organization", of Lee (1971) relating commitment to "relations with management", of Morris & Sherman (1980), relating commitment to "supervisors' consideration".

Furthermore, the observed positive relationship (Person r) between job integration and organizational commitment is consistent with Morris & Steers' (1980) finding of a positive relationship between organizational commitment and functional dependence and decentralization and with Brooke Russel & Price's (1988) finding that "centralization" and "routinization" are negatively related to organizational commitment. It is assumed that jobs which are high in centralization, routinization, and functional independence are low in terms of the level of job integration.

The study provides support for the mediating role of the cultural value for performance in the relationship between the structural factors and organizational commitment. This finding agrees with those of close studies. For example, Weber et al. (1989) found that the relationship between job/policy characteristics and organizational commitment is mediated by "work experience" factors. Similarly, DeCotiis & Summers (1987) found that the relationship between structural factors and organizational commitment is mediated by organizational climate variables. Work experience and organizational climate factors are closely related to organizational culture.

It is noted in our results that tenure does not have effects on organizational commitment. It appears that staying with the same organizational may be mainly due to different reasons other than commitment (Mottaz, 1988). Although a

number of studies, (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1983; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Shoemaker et al., 1977) including the present one, have found a positive relationship between tenure and organizational commitment, this relationship seems to be largely spurious. In all of these studies, the analysis used direct correlations without controlling or partialing out the effects of the other relevant variables.

The study's finding of significant negative relationship between organizational commitment and absenteeism and turnover suggests that those organizations wishing to reduce absenteeism and turnover may do so by enhancing organizational commitment with a special emphasis on identification and norm of reciprocity. The results do not, however, show a significant positive relationship between organizational commitment and the net-profitability of the organization. It may be that this result is due to the simplistic assumption that organizational commitment leads directly to organizational profitability. There might be salient factors moderating the relationship. For example, the practice of government-owned organizations to provide a wide array of social services which are not tightly linked to performance lowers (their reported) profitability. Moreover, profitability is usually influenced by factors beyond the human input in the organization, specifically by the general economic and market environments.

It was rather surprising that the results did not show important differences between the parastatal and private organizations. One possible reason for this may be the similarity of the economic conditions for both types of organizations. Ever since 1984, when the Tanzanian government started lifting subsidies and reduced offering preferential treatment to parastatals, pressure increased on the parastatals to rely more on efficiency-oriented practices in order to survive. Moreover, as the general economic environment became even tougher and more competitive following the stringent conditions imposed on the government by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the pressure was increased on the parastatals to justify their existence. These conditions are not unsimilar to those usually faced by private organizations.

Since the results of the study are based on data collected in a developing country, we may ask whether the same results can be obtained from developed countries. In other words, can the study's model be considered a general one. While we consider this to be an issue for future research, we may speculate that since the rationales in developing the model were based on studies from Western countries, the model may generally be applicable to these countries.

The practical implications of the study are clear. Organizations concerned with reducing absenteeism and turnover will find it useful to focus their attention on the building of organizational commitment. This in turn means increasing job integration and organizational support for employees and also putting emphasis on high work performance standards.

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