

Affective Commitment as a Mediator Between Perceived Organizational Support as an Antecedent of Job Involvement & Intentions to Quit

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This study examines the role of employees' affective commitment as a mediator between their perceived organizational support and its associations with their levels of job involvement and their intentions to quit. Based on an appropriate literature review, the study hypotheses were formulated and linked to a conceptual latent variable model. The model is tested using data collected from 786 managerial executives working in India. The data were then subjected to various statistical techniques, including structural equation modeling. As per the results of the data analyses, all study hypotheses were found to be acceptable, as was the latent variable model.

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Introduction

For a long time, individual-organization value congruence, which describes the conformity of beliefs and assumptions between employees and their employing organizations, has been proposed as a key explanation for several work-related individual outcomes (Burns, 1978; Hoffman et al., 2011; Shamir, 1991). Person-organization value congruence has been found to enhance person-organization fit, which motivates employers to further support their subordinates (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). This is because such fitments not only add value to the firm's human resources but also through goal correspondence enhance individuals' willingness to put in greater effort to realize their performance objectives (Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991).

The literature indicates that person-organization value congruence contributes to cementing employer-employee relationship quality, leading to mutual

obligations (Wang & Xu, 2019). For individuals, their perceived organizational support (POS) manifests as organizational obligations, and in exchange, they display affective commitment (AC) towards their work and workplace (Li & Thatcher, 2015). While the literature has not precisely pointed out the furtherance of such a relationship between employees' POS and AC, it has been sufficiently hinted that such an association would ultimately culminate in advancing employees' job involvement and lessening their intentions to quit (ItQ) (Cohen et al., 2012; Ostroff et al., 2005). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether the connection between employees' POS and AC may be extended to their work attitude outcomes in terms of their increased JI and reduced ItQ.

Literature Review & Hypotheses Development

POS and AC: According to extant research, POS has been considered a crucial contextual resource for employees because it strengthens their existing resource pools while diminishing job stressors (Singh et al., 2018). In this connection, and as discussed earlier, employees' POS becomes more pronounced when they observe a distinct match between their values and those of other organizational members (Bhaskar & Mishra, 2019, Akhtar et al., 2019). Further, studies reveal that POS, by buttressing organizational identification and employment meaningfulness, encourages a sense of communal alignment between employees and their employing organization (Gupta et al., 2014). It is this sense

of community that individual employees gain through their POS, which makes them seek continuity and attachment to their current employment. This is reflected in their heightened AC towards their present workplace and the tasks that they are assigned there (Jin et al., 2018).

Although numerous factors may influence employees' AC, POS is of particular importance because it is closely associated with their sense of conservation of resources and the expansion of their existing resources to better meet their in-role expectations and objectives (Meglich et al., 2019). As POS is represented by the helping behaviors of others in the workplace, it creates a sense of belongingness and prompts employees' AC (Bothma, 2020).

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1. Employees' perceived organizational support is significantly and positively related to their affective commitment.

AC, JI, & ItQ: While AC is the socio-emotional attachment of an individual employee to his/her employing organization, JI has been conceptualized as their psychological identification with the tasks they perform therein (Akinbobolo & Bamigbola, 2017). As such, JI is marked by situational factors, such as participation, decision-making, and adequate execution of in-role requirements, resulting in an increased sense of self-worth and positive self-evaluation (Setar et al., 2015). This is more pronounced for em-

employees who experience AC towards their organization because, according to social exchange theory, JI is the currency of reciprocity for the effect they experience as members of that organization (Gupta & Singh, 2019; Huang et al., 2016).

Earlier research has pointed out that POS, through supportive collegial behaviors, transforms employees' alignment with organizational objectives in a manner that their intrinsic willingness to remain attached to their current employer instinctively increases or, in other words, there is an inevitable reduction in their ItQ (Shabane et al., 2017). POS, by underlining the employer-employee value congruence, creates a heightened sense of affiliation among individuals, which arrests any demonstration of negative attitudes, such as ItQ, which breaks socio-emotional ties, that is, their AC with the organization (Vijaykumar & Padma, 2014; Youn et al., 2017).

The discussion above leads to the postulation of the following hypotheses.

- H2. Employees' affective commitment shall have a significantly positive association with their level of job involvement.
- H3. Higher levels of employees' affective commitment will significantly reduce their intentions to quit their current employment.

AC as a Mediator: As evident from previous studies, POS has been indicated to create a favorable socio-emotional

bond between employees and their employing organization (Pierce & Aguinis, 2003). Based on the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), it may be argued that employees wish to reciprocate this tie with a substantive increment in their AC (Alshabaani et al., 2021; Rameshkumar, 2020). While this indicates POS as a possible antecedent of AC, others hint at a possible extension of the SET in the form of enhanced JI and reduced ItQ as an outcome of AC arising out of employees' POS.

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is posited.

- H4. Employees' affective commitment is a significant mediator between their perceived organizational support as an antecedent of their job involvement and intentions to quit.

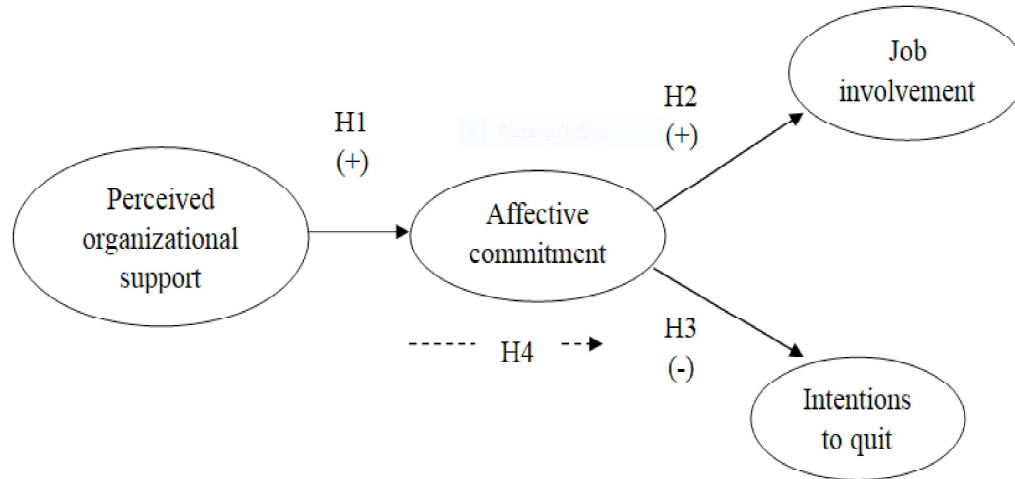
The above study hypotheses are combined into a conceptual latent variable model (LVM) in Fig. I.

Sample & Procedures

A random survey was conducted in different organizations in India. With exact data not available for the workforce population, the sample size was approximated using the method when the population was infinite, and the recommended sample size was 775 (Liu, 2014).

To collect data for this study, 48 organizations listed in the Yellow Pages Business Directory of India were randomly selected. Ten of the 48 organiza-

Fig. 1 The Proposed Conceptual Latent Variable Model



tions allowed their employees to participate in the survey. Six of these 10 organizations were from the manufacturing sector, and the remaining four were from the services sector. Next, the participants who agreed to fill out the study questionnaire were listed. A cover letter was also attached to each questionnaire outlining the study objectives, the researcher's profile, respondent anonymity, and also a note that the data being collected was only for academic purposes and served no commercial interest was attached along with each questionnaire. Approximately 1400 study questionnaires were distributed, of which 786 were filled and usable forms were returned. The response rate of this survey was approximately 56.1 percent.

All respondents in this survey were full-time executives of their respective organizations. Their average age was 38.29 years and their average work experience was 11.07 years. While 410

respondents belonged to organizations in the manufacturing sector, the remaining 376 were from organizations in the services sector. Further, 562 of the respondents were males and 224 were females. Moreover, 56 of the respondents were from the senior level, 296 from the middle level, and 434 from the junior level of managerial cadres in their respective organizations.

Measures

It should be noted that all study variables were measured on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

POS was measured using the nine-item shortened scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). A sample item of this scale is: 'The organization strongly considers my goals and values.' The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .81.

Employees' AC was measured using the eight items of the organizational commitment scale reported by Meyer and Allen (1997). A sample item of the measure is 'I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.' Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .83.

Employees' JI was operationalized using nine items of the employee performance inventory reported by Lawler III and Hall (1970). An example item of this inventory is 'I am very much involved personally in my work.' The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .86.

The four-item scale developed by O'Reilly et al. (1991) was adapted and utilized to measure employees' ItQ. A sample item was, 'If I had my own way, I would not be working for this organization three years from now.' The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .83.

Control variables. In all subsequent analyses, respondents' age, work experience, sex, managerial position, and the sector to which their organization belonged were treated as control variables. While respondents' sex (1 = male, 2 = female) and sector to which their organization belonged (1 = manufacturing, 2 = services) were categorized as dichotomous variables, their managerial position had three categories (1 = senior, 2 = middle, and 3 = junior). The age and work experience of the respondents were treated as ratio variables and calculated by rounding them off to the nearest year (Kim et al., 2020).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A single-latent factor approach was also considered to inspect the presence of latent variable common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For this study, a common latent variable model (CLVM) associated with the manifest variables of the four study constructs, namely, POS, AC, JP, and ItQ, was tested against the measurement model of the conceptual LVM (Fig. 1) for differences in model fit. The comparative fit index (CFI) and the incremental fit index (IFI) of the proposed model were .95 and .95, whereas the same indices were .80 and .80, respectively, for the CLVM. As such, the CLVM could not be accepted, which eliminated the risk of CMB in the proposed LVM.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were tested as the main assessment criteria (Ramayah et al., 2011). As per Table I, the composite reliability values ranged from .71 to .75, thus establishing construct reliability, while the AVE values varied between .52 and .54, demonstrating convergent validity. As shown in Table I, the squares of the inter-correlations between the study variables were less than the AVE values, which provided evidence of discriminant validity (Koufteros, 1999). Additionally, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method (Henseler et al., 2016) was applied, and as shown in Table I, these values spread from .31 to .46, thus providing further substantiation of discriminant validity.

Tab I. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Variables	CR	1	2	3	4
1. POS	.71	.54			
2. AC	.74	0.18 (.39)	.52		
3. JI	.73	0.06 (.32)	0.12 (.38)	.54	
4. ItQ	.75	0.18 (.39)	0.20 (.31)	0.16 (.46)	.53

Note. $n = 786$; CR is 'Composite reliability'; The diagonal values of the matrix represent the average variance extracted while the off-diagonal values are the squares of the inter-correlations between the study variables; Off-diagonal values in parentheses are results of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis; 'POS' is 'Perceived organizational support', 'AC' is 'Affective Commitment', 'JI' is 'Job involvement', and 'ItQ' is 'Intentions to quit'.

Configural Invariance Tests

Before carrying out further analyses, the proposed model was tested for configural invariance using the grouping variables of sector, gender, and LoM. Configural invariance examines the equivalence of the indicator variables and the validity of the study constructs across groups. As per the results, the measures used were found to be invariant between sectors ($\Delta\chi^2=590.4$, $\Delta df=578$, $p=.35$), gender ($\Delta\chi^2=327.8$, $\Delta df=318$, $p=.34$), and LoM ($\Delta\chi^2=602.1$, $\Delta df=636$, $p=.83$), and therefore, the results obtained are equally applicable to all groups considered in the present study.

Descriptive Statistics, Inter-correlations, and Internal Reliabilities

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and internal reliability indices of the key study variables. According to the analyses, POS and AC were positively and significantly correlated ($r = .42$, $p \leq .01$). In addition, AC correlated significantly and

positively with JI ($r = .35$, $p \leq .01$) and negatively with ItQ ($r = -.45$, $p \leq .05$).

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POS, JI, ItQ, Mediation by AC

In this section, three competing LVMs (LVM1, LVM2, and LVM3) represent path models in the absence of mediation, with quasi-mediation, and with full mediation, respectively, by AC between POS as the primary exogenous variable and JI and ItQ as the final endogenous latent variables. The three competing LVMs were subjected to structural equation modeling (SEM) procedures with maximum likelihood estimates using AMOS 24.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). To meet the objectives of this study, three absolute and four comparative fit indices were investigated. The absolute fit indices included the normed χ^2 , goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The comparative fit consisted

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Inter-correlations, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices

Values (→) Variables (↓)	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	38.29	7.11	1.00								
2. Work experience	11.07	6.93	.82*	1.00							
3. Sector	1.72	.45	.06**	.10	1.00						
4. Sex	1.48	.50	.03	.06	.16*	1.00					
5. LoM	2.48	.63	-.15	-.05*	-.06	-.08*	1.00				
6. POS	3.37	.82	-.05*	-.10	-.13**	-.12	.20	.81			
7. AC	3.57	.44	.08	.03**	-.06	-.09	.04**	.42**	.83		
8. JI	3.71	.42	.07	.12	.18	.15**	-.03	.24**	.35**	.86	
9. ItQ	3.36	.57	.02*	.04*	.39**	.27	-.11*	-.42*	-.45**	-.40*	.83

Note. $n = 786$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; SD, Standard Deviation. Cronbach's alpha reliability indices are reported in parentheses on the diagonal; short forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and text.

of the comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), normed-fit index (NFI), and relative fit index (RFI).

For the two LVMs namely, LVM2 and LVM3, which incorporated AC as a mediator, AC regressed significantly and positively on POS (standardized $\beta = .37$, $p \leq .01$; standardized $\beta = .34$, $p < .01$). Thus, H1 was accepted in the present study. Furthermore, for LVM1, JI regressed significantly and positively on POS (standardized $\beta = .54$, $p \leq .01$), and ItQ did not regress significantly on POS (standardized $\beta = -.43$, $p = NS$). For LVM2, JI regressed significantly and positively on POS (standardized $\beta = .42$, $p \leq .01$), as did ItQ, which regressed significantly negatively on POS (standardized $\beta = -.46$, $p \leq .01$). Finally, for LVM2 and LVM3, JI regressed significantly and positively on AC (standardized $\beta = .34$, $p \leq .01$; standardized $\beta = .33$, $p \leq .01$, LVM3), but ItQ regressed significantly and negatively on AC for LVM2 only (standardized $\beta = -.48$, $p \leq .01$; standardized $\beta = -.38$, $p = NS$). Thus, H2 and H3 are accepted.

When inspecting the absolute and comparative fit indices of the three LVMs, those related to LVM2 were found to not only be above the recommended threshold levels but also had the best fit. For LVM2, the absolute fit indices, specifically, the normed χ^2 was 1.09, GFI was .97, RMSEA was .04, and the comparative fit indices CFI and IFI were both .97, NFI was .94, and RFI was .92.

The standardized regression estimates of the accepted model (LVM2) are pre-

Table 3. Regression Analyses Result for the Conceptual LVM

Values (→) Paths(↓)	Unstandardized coefficients			C.R.†	Remarks
	b	Standard Error	Standardized β estimates		
POS → AC	1.12	.07	.37	13.46	H1 accepted
AC → JI	1.03	.09	.34	16.04	H2 accepted
AC → ItQ	-1.33	.09	-.48	-16.56	H3 accepted

Note. *n* = 786; short-forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and the text; ‘LVM’ is ‘Latent Variable Model’; †C.R. is ‘Critical Ratios,’ a recommended basis for testing the statistical significance of SEM components. C.R.e”±1.96 indicates significance at the 95% level, and C.R.e”±2.58 indicates significance at the 99% level.

Table 4 Analysis of Competing LV

Values (→) Models(↓)	Fit Indices						
	Absolute Fit Indices			Comparative Fit Indices			
	Normed χ^2	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NFI	RFI
LVM1 (<i>no</i> mediation)	3.52	.84	.09	.85	.85	.84	.80
LVM2 (<i>quasi</i> -mediation model)	1.09	.97	.04	.97	.97	.94	.92
LVM3 (<i>full</i> -mediation model)	2.61	.86	.07	.90	.90	.89	.88

Note. *n* = 786; short forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and the text; Minimum acceptable values of the fit indices are as mentioned in the text.

sented in Table 3 and the fit measures comparing the three LVMs (LVM1, LVM2, and LVM3) are presented in Table 4.

Additional Mediation Analysis

Additional mediation analyses, as per the procedures suggested by MacKinnon et al. (1995), were also conducted. With RC as a mediator, two conditions were checked: (i) whether the direct path from the primary antecedents to the final consequent variables was greater than the indirect path through the designated mediator variable, and (ii) whether the direct path remained significant under conditions of mediation. As both conditions were fulfilled with respect to LVM2, RC was considered a quasi-mediator in the proposed LVM.

Finally, although the application of SEM procedures established RC as a full mediator and precluded problems of correlated measurement errors, Sobel’s (1982), Aorian’s (1944), and Goodman’s (1960) tests were conducted as per the z-prime method (MacKinnon et al., 2002) to discount the possibility of Type-I error while exploring the strength of mediation. Additionally, the ratios of the indirect effects to the total effects of all the mediated paths were computed and expressed as percentages and labeled as ‘percentage of mediation.’ The results are listed in Table 5. All the study hypotheses and the conceptual LVM presented in Fig. I and the empirical model labeled LVM2 are supported by the results presented above.-

Table 5. Additional Analysis of Mediation

Values (→) Paths (↓)	Additional Mediation Tests	Percentage of mediation	Path Analyses	Results of the additional mediation analyses
	Sobel's test	Aorian's test	Goodman's test	
POS → AC → JI	9.30**	9.29**	9.32**	19.48
POS → AC → ItQ	-10.85**	-10.84**	-10.86**	27.85
	Whether regression estimate of (direct paths) > (paths under mediated condition)?			Whether regression estimate of (paths under mediated condition) is significant?
	YES			YES
	Affective commitment is a <i>quasi</i> -mediator			

Note. $n = 786$; * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$; short forms are mentioned in the previous table(s) and text.

Theoretical Implications

As per the results of this study, organizational support perceptions create an affiliative linkage among employees, as demonstrated by their AC, which induces them to be more focused and involved in their job while suppressing their intention to quit. In keeping with cognitive appraisal theory (Jiang & Johnson, 2018), it may be argued that AC arising out of organizational support experiences may be reasoned as a ration for employees exchanging it with higher levels of task identification; consequently, job involvement and as a corollary, a higher amount of willingness to continue with their organizational affiliation by checking their intention to quit.

Organizational support perceptions create an affiliative linkage among employees.

The results of this study have further implications from the perspective of the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Since the contemporary work environment makes every job demanding and stressful for those in charge of executing it, POS provides an additional psychosocial resource that helps them cope with the job demands smoothly to the extent of being deeply involved in their assigned tasks. Such supportive resources are utilized in developing employees' AC and in fulfilling performance objectives through higher levels of JI and reduced ItQ.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study indicate that organizations should emphasize value-congruence between employees and themselves to nurture person-organization fit such that supportive activities are understood and appreciated by those to whom they are provided. Appropriate rewards and recognition that go beyond mere pay and promotions translate the meaningfulness of POS to employees' AC.

Further, organizations should, to the extent possible, encourage job crafting that will make the path from AC to JI, as conceptualized and validated in this study, easier and more fruitful from the employees' and the organization's point of view.

Finally, organizations, through their managerial agencies, should encourage the continuity of POS insofar as their employees are concerned so that the latter's intentions to stay are cemented, thus dampening their ItQ.

Limitations & Future Research

The results and findings of this study are constrained by certain limitations that give rise to future research scope. First, this study did not consider cross-national comparisons, and because the data were collected cross-sectionally, causal inferences had to be precluded. Based on these limitations, the accepted LVM2 should be tested using cross-national and/or cross-temporal data. The model may further be contextualized based on different socioeconomic demo-

graphics as well as different types of jobs that may include telecommuters and/or non-managerial cadres.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between employees' POS and their AC, and the extension of this linkage to their JI and ItQ. For this purpose, a conceptual LVM was formulated and the data collected were subjected to empirical testing. The results of this investigation suggest that a particular LVM namely, LVM2 was accepted as the model that fulfilled the study objectives. The theoretical and practical implications of this study are then noted. Despite some limitations, this study concludes by describing possible areas for future research.

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