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# The Effect of Employee Engagement on Continuance and Normative Commitment to the Organization

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# **THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON CONTINUANCE AND NORMATIVE COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A positive relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment is already documented in the literature. However, we do not adequately know how engagement is associated with continuance and normative commitment. Using survey methodology we find that while engagement has a non-significant positive association with continuance commitment, it has a positive association with normative commitment. No negative association was found between engagement and continuance commitment. This study's results support recent critiques to Allen and Meyer's three-dimensional model of organizational commitment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Employee engagement is important to cultivate because disengagement, or alienation, is central to the problem of workers' lack of motivation and commitment (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). Employee engagement (only engagement here in) has been positively associated with important job-related outcomes such as employee retention (e.g. Harter, Hayes & Schmidt, 2002) and affective, or attitudinal, organizational commitment (e.g. Saks, 2006). However, an area that has been inadequately explored is the direct effect between engagement and other types of commitment to the organization.

The study of commitment to the organization is important because organizational commitment can influence a series of positive behaviors (e.g. creativeness and innovation) toward the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Clugston, 2000; Riketta, 2002). Organizational commitment is an attitude that shows three dimensions. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) these dimensions are: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The association between engagement and affective commitment is already documented in the literature (e.g. Saks, 2006). The effect of engagement on continuance and normative commitment, nevertheless, has not been adequately explored yet. Exploring the association between engagement and

continuance and normative commitment is important because these dimensions of organizational commitment are highly related to employee turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Clugston, 2000).

In this manuscript we address the question of: *What is the association between engagement and continuance and normative commitment to the organization?* We believe that answers to this question will help researchers and practitioners to better understand the factors, such as engagement, that influence different types of commitment to the organization. Robins and Judge (2009) argue that given the relative newness of the concept of engagement, we still do not adequately know how it relates to different types of commitment. This study may also contribute to clarify the controversies around the validity of Allen and Meyer's three-dimensional organizational commitment model. This is important given the recent calls to abandon this model as the principal lens to study commitment to the organization (e.g. Solinger et al., 2008).

In the next paragraphs, we first briefly review the literature on engagement and organizational commitment that leads to think that there may be an association between engagement and continuance and normative commitment. Next, we summarize the literature review and draw a research model. Following, we elaborate on three hypotheses, present the research methods needed to test them, and show results. Finally, we discuss this study's findings, address limitations and future research, and draw conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a common topic in the Human Resources consultancy market, yet there is little academic research about it (Robinson & Perriman, 2004). Engagement is desirable for organizations, as it has been found that companies with an engaged work force have higher levels of customer satisfaction, are more productive, and have higher profits than companies with a less engaged personnel (Harter et al., 2002). The way engagement relates to other concepts such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, that have been found to relate to some of the same factors that engagement is supposed to influence, is, however, an area that needs further scrutiny (Little & Little, 2006).

Although engagement is a relatively new concept, research suggests that it may influence several work related attitudes. According to Khan (1990), employee engagement is the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles. Engagement is a type of positive and fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged employees are assumed to express these characteristics emotionally, cognitively, and physically (Khan, 1990). Because engaged employees drive personal energies into role behaviors and display the self within the role (May et al., 2004) they are highly proactive (Sonnetag, 2003) and productive (Cattew, Flynn & Vonderhorst, 2007). Notwithstanding, given that engagement entails physical and emotional behavior, then it can lead to the formation of work attitudes.

Existing research suggests that affective organizational commitment is one such attitude that engagement can affect. From the perspective of social exchange theory, Saks (2006) found that workers who feel that the organization gives them the opportunity to engage in their work roles tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes, such as affective commitment, toward the organization. Although previous research supports this finding (e.g. Demerouti, Bakker, de Jonge, Janssen & Shaufeli, 2001), little is known about how engagement affects other types of commitment. Organizational commitment research suggests that employees can be committed to the organization by other reasons different from affective feelings. The effect of engagement on continuance and normative commitment is an area that needs further scrutiny because just as affective commitment has, these two types of commitment have been found influencing employees' absenteeism and turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Clugston, 2000).

### **Organizational commitment**

Organizational commitment is a popular construct in organizational behavior literature because it is assumed to influence almost any behavior that is beneficial to the organization (e.g. turnover; Clugston, 2000). Organizational commitment, however, is not a unitary concept, as there are different types of commitment to the organization. Early research on organizational commitment indicates two basic types of commitment. Etzioni (1961) called these types normative and calculative involvement (commitment). While the former refers to the workers' sense of moral obligation toward the organization, the later refers to the workers' interest in the exchange of inducements for contributions with the organization. Porter, Mowday, and Steers (1982: 27) synthesize this research and define organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in a particular organization. Allen and Meyer (1990), however, make explicit that organizational commitment is a three dimensional construct; namely affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

According to Allen and Meyer (1990), affective, continuance, and normative commitment refer to different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Affective commitment refers to the employees' identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization. Continuance commitment refers to the employees' recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Normative commitment refers to the employees' sense of loyalty or moral obligation toward the organization. Solinger, et al., (2008), nevertheless, agree that such three dimensions may be different types of commitment rather than dimensions of the same construct. Because affective, continuance, and normative commitment are conceptually different, it is not that surprising that they predict different behaviors (Solinger et al., 2008). These different types of commitment are also believed to be differently affected by several factors.

Affective, continuance, and normative commitment are differently related to some variables that are supposed to antecede organizational commitment. Empirical evidence indicates that while factors such as transformational leadership, and role clarity have positive associations with affective commitment, they have a slightly negative, or no association at all, with continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer, et al., 2002). Part of the controversy that surrounds the association between continuance commitment with other variables centers on the unidimensionality of the continuance commitment scale. Beginning with McGee and Ford (1987), several studies have found that Allen and Meyer's original eight-item continuance

commitment scale loads in two different factors: lack of alternatives and high sacrifices of leaving the organization. Considering this, Meyer et al. (2002) suggest retaining only the high sacrifices of leaving the organization part of the scale. This suggestion, however, still does not entirely resolve the problems associated with continuance commitment, as it is still unclear whether the high sacrifices of leaving the organization refer to idiosyncratic sacrifices (e.g. energy, time invested) or to material sacrifices (e.g. benefits) associated with leaving one's organization. The continuance commitment item, for example, "*too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization right now*" (Allen & Meyer, 1990: 6) leaves unclear whether the disruption of leaving one's organization is due to personal or material sacrifices associated with leaving the organization.

Ambiguity concerning the type of sacrifices that continuance commitment reflects may influence the associations that continuance commitment has with other variables. For example, if continuance commitment refers to the workers' idiosyncratic sacrifices of leaving the job, then it can positively relate with variables (e.g. job satisfaction) that refer to the workers idiosyncratic investments in the organization. The more satisfaction employees experience, the more they invest their energy performing in and out of role behaviors (Judge, Bono, Thoresen & Patton, 2001). Extending this reasoning, the more employees invest in their job, the higher their perceived sacrifice of leaving the organization might be. More research on how continuance commitment develops is an area that needs more scrutiny (Meyer et al., 2002).

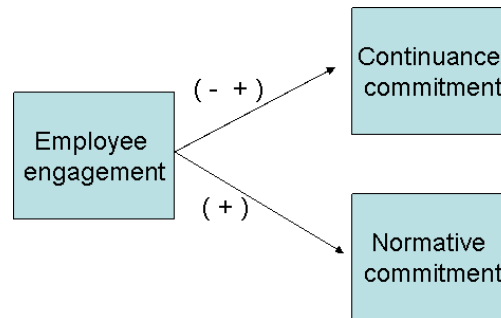
Concerning normative commitment, Meyer et al., (2002) observe that this dimension usually receives even less research attention than continuance commitment. Part of this problem, nevertheless, may also be due to controversies associated with the normative commitment scale. Research has found a consistent positive association between affective and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002), which makes some authors to question the validity of the normative commitment scale (Solinger et al., 2008). Allen and Meyer (1990; 1996) and Meyer et al., (2002) argue that although affective and normative commitment are positively associated, this does not mean that normative commitment is redundant. They have found that normative commitment has weak associations with several variables that usually correlate strongly with affective commitment (e.g. distributive justice), which in turns reflects some discriminant validity of the normative commitment scale.

In the end, normative commitment seems to capture something different than affective commitment, and thus, may be affected by other factors that can influence the two other types of commitment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). One factor, though, that appears to be more relevant to normative commitment than to the other commitment dimensions is socialization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002). However, if socialization can affect normative commitment, then it is possible to speculate that variables, such as engagement, that may affect socialization can also affect normative commitment. Although this is a speculation, below we elaborate on a series of hypotheses to test possible associations between employee engagement and continuance and normative commitment to the organization.

## Research model

Before we elaborate on the possible associations between engagement and continuance and normative commitment to the organization, we draw a research model that emerges from the above literature review. Figure 1 shows that employee engagement can be either positively or negatively related to continuance commitment. Figure 1 also shows that engagement may be positively related to normative commitment. Below we elaborate on this research model.

**Figure 1, The associations between employee engagement and continuance and normative commitment to the organization**



## HYPOTHESES

Conceptually, as indicated above, continuance committed individuals remain in organizations because they feel that they need to do so. An individual's feelings about need to remain in the organization may be influenced by the sacrifices the s/he will likely incur if s/he leaves the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The sacrifices that individuals have to do if they leave the organization may be more idiosyncratic (Meyer et al., 2002), or more material in nature.

Engagement and continuance commitment may be positively related. When people engage in their work roles they self-employ in them (Khan, 1990). Engaged employees become physically involved in their tasks and connect emphatically with others in a way that they display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others (Khan, 1990). Engaged employees harness their behaviors, cognitions, and emotions so high in their work performances that they fulfill their human spirit at work (Khan, 1990; May et al., 2004). Remarkably, if individuals harness their self so high in their jobs, then leaving the organization for which they work may be a high sacrifice for them. Given their fulfillment, engaged employees are likely to drive their energies into the job and dedicate long periods of time to it (Schaufely & Barker, 2004). Time and energy put into a job may be a form of idiosyncratic investment that individuals make in an organization and that can increase the perceived sacrifices that they may have to do if they leave the organization (Meyer et al., 2002). Given that perceived sacrifices of leaving an organization can affect continuance commitment, then it is reasonable to expect the following hypothesis.

*H1. There is a positive association between employee engagement and continuance commitment*

Continuance commitment, however, can also refer to the material sacrifices of leaving the job. People may have, for example benefits, which make them to believe that they are in the organization because they need to do so. These beliefs, however, can be attenuated by factors that can change individuals' attitudes (Allen & Meyer, 1996). An attitudinal change in this respect does not mean that, all of a sudden, people may not need to make material sacrifices if they leave the organization (e.g. loss their benefits), it refers only to the beliefs about it. After all, attitudes can influence perceptions and beliefs (Brief, 1998). As suggested by several authors, engagement can affect attitudes creation and change (Robins & Judge, 2009).

Engagement and continuance commitment can be negatively associated. May et al., (2004) found that factors such as meaningfulness, psychological safety, and physical availability can increase the workers' levels of engagement. If engagement can change from a low to a high level according to these factors, then so can continuance commitment. When meaningfulness, psychological safety, and physical availability change from a low to a high level some individuals may find themselves in engaged performances (Khan, 1990; May et al., 2004). Performing the physical and emotional behaviors associated with engagement can lead to a change in attitudes. By a cognitive dissonance effect, attitudes can be created or changed when individuals find themselves performing a counter-attitudinal behavior, or a behavior for which they do not already have an attitude (Brief, 1998). If individuals that are in organizations mostly because they feel that they need to, find themselves engaged in their job performances, then they have an incentive to adjust their attitudes in order to reduce the dissonance between their behaviors and attitudes (Festinger, 1957). In other words, they may have an inclination to justify, or rationalize, their engaged behaviors by changing their attitude toward the organization. They may start believing that material sacrifices are not the leading reason to remain in the organization.

However, the above does not necessarily presumes a strong negative association between affective and continuance commitment. Meyer et al., (2002) found meta-analytic evidence that several studies report a slightly negative association between affective and continuance commitment. Although, it may be possible that engaged employees will change their "I need to be here" beliefs associated with continuance commitment, to the "I want to be here" characteristic of affective commitment, it may also be possible that just the belief of being tethered to the organization due to material sacrifices weakens. Formally, we expect the following hypothesis that focuses only on the effect of engagement on continuance commitment.

## *H2. There is a negative association between employee engagement and continuance commitment*

As suggested above, some individuals feel committed to the organization by a sense of loyalty or moral obligation. Organizational commitment research indicates that factors that affect people socialization in the job can influence normative commitment. Allen & Meyer (1990) indicate that through socialization, employees may develop loyalty, or a sense of moral obligation toward the organization. Through socialization individuals may learn what they ought to do to help their organization from what they believe most others in the group will actually do (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). The social group can infuse into their members the "sink or swim" with the rest of the group type of loyalty (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004) that has been found affecting employees'

attitudes (Gibson, Inancevich, & Donnelly, 1997). Engagement, however, may influence the workers' socialization that can eventually increase their normative commitment to the organization.

Engagement and normative commitment can be positively associated. Khan (1990) argues that engaged employees are highly empathic toward others in the group. If engaged employees are empathic, then they may be easy to socialize. Khan (1990) found that engaged employees spend a considerable amount of time in and out of their formal work schedule with other organizational members. As suggested by social information theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 19878), the amount of time that workers spend together increases the chances that employees have meaningful interactions through which they communicate the group's accepted behaviors and expectations. The interactions that engaged employees have can also increase loyalty toward the organization as they develop social identification with others. May et al., (2004) suggest that engaged employees are likely to identify with their jobs. Social identification has been suggested as a factor that can influence normative commitment (Meyer et al., 1993).

Finally, because normative commitment has been found to be positively associated with socialization related factors such as support from co-workers (Taormina, 1999), then I formally expect the following hypothesis.

*H3. There is a positive association between employee engagement and normative commitment*

## **METHODS**

### **Research design and sample**

The research design is a non-experimental cross-sectional field study using survey methodology. Using a convenient sample of 116 undergraduate students, the survey was conducted at a major university in the southwestern USA during April 2009. Undergraduate students were considered representative of the population of workers in general because they have employment experience, which is primary requisite to develop general attitudes and behaviors at work. All students in the sample had employment experience although not all of them were currently working (14 out of 116 students were not working). Students not currently working were asked to answer in accordance to their previous work experience. The sample consisted of 53 female and 63 male. While 36 out of 116 individuals had full time jobs, the rest had part time jobs. The response rate was 96.55%. The final sample, however, equals 112 observations because 4 out of 116 surveys were dropped due to highly incomplete information. Students were on average 23.99 years old (st. dev = 5.827) with an average of 2.519 years of work experience (st. dev = 2.6188).

The paper and pencil, self responded, questionnaire was applied to the students with the permission of the instructor in three different sessions during their class hour. All respondents were informed that the study had no foreseeable risks and that participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. Students choosing not to participate were given the choice of leaving the room or remaining quietly seated. Instructions were read by the surveyor in order to clarify the process and to ensure that there were no doubts about how to fill the survey out. The original



survey contained 35 items, 24 about organizational commitment, 5 about employee engagement, and 5 to gather demographic data. All items in the questionnaire (except those for demographic information) employed a seven point agreement-disagreement Likert format, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

## Measures

*Organizational commitment.* In this study, continuance and normative organizational commitment are measured using Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale. This scale consists of 8 items for each one of the organizational commitment dimensions (normative and continuance). We used these scales because previous studies report high reliability estimates (usually all dimensions' Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.7$ ) and there is reasonable evidence of their construct validity (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment was measured along with continuance and normative commitment to do a post-hoc analysis on it, although as specified above there is no specific hypothesis involving it. Affective commitment was measured by Allen and Meyer (1990) eight item scale of affective commitment. In sum, the survey contained 24 questions to gauge organizational commitment.

*Employee engagement.* In this study, we measure employee engagement using Saks' (2006) five-item job engagement scale. We use Saks' job engagement scale rather than his organization engagement scale because it better reflects Khan's (1990) notion of engagement with the job. A sample item of job engagement is "I really throw myself into my job", which we consider reflects the type of absorption than Khan conveys in his notion of engagement. Saks successfully tested the unidimensionality of the job engagement scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ). We did not use May et al., (2004) engagement measurement instrument because the authors acknowledge dimensionality issues in their fifteen-item scale.

## Adequacy of the measurement scales

To ensure the unidimensionality of the commitment and engagement scales, factor analysis using varimax rotation were conducted on the scales. Concerning organizational commitment, all the items that had cross-loadings above .40 were dropped. The final measure of organizational commitment consisted of five items per commitment type. All the resulting scales' Chronbach's alphas were above .70. This suggests a reasonable level of reliability for the commitment scales. It is important to note that concerning continuance commitment, the five items kept in this study are precisely those that encompass the high sacrifices of leaving the job part of the scale. Items such as: "*I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization*" (Allen & Meyer, 1990: 7), are the ones that loaded in a separate factor, and hence dropped from the study. Concerning engagement, all items loaded in a single factor which reliability estimate was above .80. All the measuring scales had levels of skewness and kurtosis within the accepted ranges (-1, 1 for skewness, -1, 2 for kurtosis).

Discriminant validity for the organizational commitment and engagement scales was assessed at the item-level using a single-method, multiple-trait approach. The lowest correlation for a particular item and any other item within the factor was compared to correlations of that item and all items outside the factor. If the former correlation was lower than the latter, then a violation

occurred (a violation occurs when the within factor correlation is lower than the between factor correlation). This analysis suggests that, in general, all correlations within factors are greater than correlations between factors. This indicates a reasonable level of discriminant validity for the measurement scales.

## RESULTS

Table 1 (shown below), contains bivariate correlations among the research constructs. As shown in table 1, continuance commitment has weak and non-statistically significant correlations with the other organizational commitment measure and with employee engagement. Normative commitment has a positive and statistically significant correlation with employee engagement, but it has no significant association with continuance commitment.

**Table 1. Bivariate correlations**

	$\alpha$	Mean	S.d	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment	Employee engagement
Continuance commitment	0.716	4.091	3.975	1		
Normative commitment	0.700	4.083	2.067	0.183	1	
Employee engagement	0.825	4.407	2.831	0.153	0.286 **	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Two different simple regression models were run to test this study’s hypotheses as detailed below. Regression results are shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Regression results**

Model	Variables		Coefficients		SE coefficient		T value				Model summary			Anova	
	Dependent	Independent	Constant	Predictor	Constant	Predictor	Constant	P	Predictor	P	Std. error	R-Sq	R-Sq (adj)	F	P
1	Continuance commitment	Employee engagement	3.411	0.155	0.433	0.096	7.815	0.000	1.618	0.108	1.240	0.023	0.014	2.690	0.108
2	Normative commitment	Employee engagement	2.982	0.253	0.369	0.081	8.084	0.000	3.134	0.002	1.050	0.082	0.074	9.825	0.002

Hypothesis 1 predicts a positive association between engagement and continuance commitment. This hypothesis is not supported, as indicated by regression model 1 (above). Employee engagement explained only 2.3% (R- Sq) of the continuance commitment variance. Furthermore,

both, the overall model's and the predictor variable's coefficient are non significant ( $F = 2.690$ ;  $p > .05$ ; so  $\beta_1 = 0$  ;  $t = 1.168$ ;  $p > .05$ ; so  $\beta_1 = 0$ ). The sign of the relationship, however, is in the expected positive direction.

Hypothesis 2 predicts a negative association between engagement and continuance commitment. As suggested by regression model 1 (above), this hypothesis is not supported. The relationship is non significant as indicated in the previous paragraph. The sign of the beta coefficient is in the opposite direction to what hypothesis 2 predicts.

Hypothesis 3 predicts a positive association between engagement and normative commitment. This hypothesis is supported because regression model 2 (above) indicates a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and normative commitment. Engagement explained 8.20% ( $R^2$ ) of the normative commitment variance. The overall regression model ( $F = 9.825$ ;  $p < .05$ ; so  $\beta_1 \neq 0$ ) and the predictor variable's coefficient and constant are significant ( $t = 3.134$ ;  $p < .05$ ; so  $\beta_1 \neq 0$  ;  $t = 8.084$ ;  $p < .05$ , so  $\beta_0 \neq 0$ ).

Finally, diagnostics test for lack of fit were conducted with each model's residuals. Successfully, the Runs test's (randomness)  $p$  values are higher than the critical threshold ( $p > .05$ ). Also the Saphiro-Wilk tests of normality had  $p$  values higher than the critical threshold ( $p > .05$ ). The regression models, in sum, had no problem with the assumptions of the residuals' normality, randomness and equality of variance. This last assumption was tested in the correspondent plots of homogeneity.

In addition to the above regression models, we made two post-hoc analyses. In the first analysis we regressed affective commitment on engagement and we got a positive and significant association between them ( $t = 6.570$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In a bivariate correlation analysis affective commitment was positively and significantly associated with normative commitment ( $r = 0.426$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and non-significantly associated with continuance commitment ( $0.092$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

As a second post-hoc analysis, some univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test the effects of the categorical demographic variables (sex, currently working, and type of work) on the organizational commitment types and engagement. The only significant test ( $F = 8.185$ ,  $p < .05$ ) suggests that men in the sample (mean = 4.689) show higher levels of engagement than women (mean = 4.039). For this test, the assumptions of homocedasticity (Levine  $p$  value  $> .05$ ) and normality were met (Saphiro-Wilk  $p$  value  $> .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study's findings suggest that engagement and continuance commitment have a non-significant positive association. In general, this finding is in line with some previous research that has found no significant associations between some attitude influencing variables and continuance commitment (Meyer et al., 2001). Although non-significant, the sign of the association between engagement and continuance commitment suggests that there may be a small effect of engagement on continuance commitment. As previously discussed, engaged

individuals may consider leaving the organization as a sacrifice; however, this effect may not be strong enough to increase significantly their continuance commitment to the organization.

Although, as hypothesized here, a cognitive dissonance effect may weaken continuance commitment when engagement is high, results suggest that this may not be the case. It can be that individuals' beliefs about the material costs of leaving the organization are just not affected by a change in their attitudes. Even if engagement can increase the workers' feeling that they are in the organization because they want to do so, it may not change the workers' feeling that they are also in the organization because they need to do so. This result, however, strengthens recent critiques to Allen and Meyer's three dimensional organizational commitment model because it seems that continuance commitment is indeed a conceptually different phenomenon that may not well represent an organizational commitment type. As it has been argued before, it is questionable whether continuance commitment represents a psychological state, or whether it just represents the extent to which the employee is "tethered" to the organization.

This study's findings suggest that there is a positive association between engagement and normative commitment. Previous research has documented a positive association between engagement and affective commitment. One interpretation for this association indicates that individuals tend to reciprocate the organization if the organization allows them the opportunity to engage in their jobs. Similarly, it is possible that individuals that feel engaged in their jobs reciprocate toward the organization with loyalty and a sense of moral obligation that makes them to remain in the organization because they feel that they ought to do so. Another interpretation, is, as suggested in this study, that engaged individuals tend to socialize more with others in the organization, which can in turn, increase communication among them concerning the loyalty expectations that the organization has from them. Finally, and as it has been suggested before by Allen and Meyer (1990, 1996) individuals who develop positive feelings toward the organization may develop loyalty feelings as well, and hence the consistent positive association between affective and continuance commitment may not be that surprising. This research supports such possibility given the post-hoc analysis that reveals a strong positive association between affective and normative commitment.

In general, results of this investigation indicate that it is worth for companies to invest in practices that can increase their personnel levels of engagement. If engagement can positively affect loyalty to the organization (normative commitment), and loyalty can reduce employee turnover (as past research suggests that it does), then investing in engagement can save turnover costs for companies. This, in addition to the other benefits that an engaged workforce can bring to organizations. These recommendations are, for the most part, in accordance with most consultancy recommendations about the benefits of engagement for organizations. Finally, whether engagement can also change the employees' beliefs about the sacrifices associated with leaving the organization, this is an area that further research may help to clarify.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study has some limitations. Among such limitations, this study uses a cross-sectional design that is not suitable to test causality among engagement and organizational commitment. As

suggested by exchange theories, engagement and organizational commitment may have a dynamic relationship over time where engagement can influence commitment and commitment can influence engagement in a recursive fashion. It can also be that it is organizational commitment which affects engagement rather than the other way around. A cross sectional design cannot help to explore these relationships, so future works that can employ longitudinal designs may help to shed more light on the relationship between engagement and different types of organizational commitment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to test the association between engagement and continuance and normative commitment. It is hypothesized that while engagement can positively or negatively affect continuance commitment, it can positively affect normative commitment. Results, however, indicate that even though there is no association between engagement and continuance commitment, there is a positive association between engagement and normative commitment. Overall, results of this research support existing arguments that an engaged work force can help to increase the workers' levels of commitment, which can eventually decrease turnover and other withdrawal behaviors.

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