



The role of incentives in enhancing employee engagement and improving productivity in Cypriot businesses

Michael A. Michalakakis *

Department of Public and Business Administration, American University of Cyprus.

Open Access Research Journal of Science and Technology, 2026, 16(01), 053-064

Publication history: Received on 20 December 2025; revised on 01 February 2026; accepted on 03 February 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53022/oarjst.2026.16.1.0010>

Abstract

Job commitment is one of the most important factors for the success and sustainability of an organization in the modern, competitive market. As a concept, job commitment refers to the extent to which employees are emotionally and intellectually connected to their organization and demonstrate a willingness to actively participate, perform high performance, and contribute to innovation. In recent years, job commitment has gained particular attention from human resource management, as it is directly related to productivity, work quality, and the long-term development of organizations. Its lack, on the contrary, can lead to reduced performance, increased staff turnover, and lower levels of innovation. This article examines the importance of job commitment by focusing on four main axes: its relationship with organizational performance, its relationship with motivation, the strategies that can enhance it, the factors that hinder it, and its connection with innovation and the competitiveness of organizations. The objectives of the research are to analyze the experiences of employees, to identify practices that promote or weaken commitment, and to highlight its role in enhancing organizational performance and development.

Keywords: Incentives; Employees; Productivity; Business; Performance; KPIs

1. Introduction

1.1. Definitions and Basic Theories of Work Commitment

Work commitment is a multifaceted theoretical construct that has attracted significant attention in organizational psychology and human resource management. It refers to the psychological attachment and devotion that an individual has to his or her job and organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Understanding work commitment is crucial because it influences employee behavior, performance, and organizational outcomes. Job commitment is generally defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with their job role and the organization, demonstrating a willingness to exert effort on behalf of organizational goals (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). It encompasses an employee's loyalty and obligation to their employer, reflecting their intention to remain with the organization and make a positive contribution. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), job commitment is closely related to work engagement, which is characterized by vigor and absorption in work. This perspective emphasizes the active and enthusiastic participation of employees in their tasks. One of the main theories is Becker's (1960) Side-Bet Theory, which proposes that commitment arises from an accumulation of investments or "side bets" that would be lost if the individual were to leave the organization. These side bets include time, effort, relationships, and financial benefits. The theory argues that employees remain committed because leaving would entail significant personal costs. Becker's theory emphasizes the calculative aspect of commitment, where the decision to stay is based on weighing costs and benefits. This perspective aligns with the concept of continuance commitment, where employees stay because they feel they have to, due to the perceived losses associated with leaving (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Another perspective comes from Psychological Contract Theory. The psychological contract refers to the unwritten set of expectations between the employee and the employer (Rousseau, 1995). When employees perceive that the organization is fulfilling its obligations, they are more likely to

* Corresponding author: Michael A. Michalakakis

develop strong commitment. Conversely, violations of the psychological contract can lead to reduced commitment and increased intentions to leave (Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

In conclusion, job engagement is a complex theoretical construct influenced by a variety of factors and theoretical perspectives. Understanding the definitions and underlying theories of job engagement is essential for organizations that aim to improve employee retention, performance, and overall organizational effectiveness. Theories such as Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model, Social Exchange Theory, and others provide valuable insights into the motivations behind employee engagement. By applying these theories, organizations can develop strategies to enhance engagement, leading to positive outcomes for both employees and employers.

1.2. Motivation and work dedication

The relationship between motivation and organizational commitment is a well-researched topic in the organizational psychology literature. Organizational commitment is often associated with three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This three-component model posits that employees' levels of commitment to their organizations may vary depending on their emotional attachment, perceived costs, and obligation to remain with them. In early research, Porter et al. (1974) argued that motivation plays a critical role in enhancing organizational commitment.

They proposed that the higher employees' motivation, the greater their commitment to the organization. The relationship between motivation and organizational commitment has been further explored in various contexts. A study conducted by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found that when employees are highly motivated, they are more likely to exhibit increased levels of organizational commitment. They suggest that motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, influences the affective and normative aspects of commitment. Intrinsic motivation, in particular, has been found to enhance organizational commitment. Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which was referenced in the previous section, proposes that when employees perceive their tasks as self-determined and intrinsically rewarding, they feel more attached to their organization. This view is further supported by Kuvaas (2006), who found a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and affective commitment. He suggested that employees who find intrinsic satisfaction in their work exhibit stronger emotional attachment to their organizations.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, has been found to influence the continuance component of commitment. Employees who perceive tangible benefits, such as high pay or job security, are more likely to remain with the organization, demonstrating continued commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). However, some studies have found a paradoxical effect of extrinsic motivation on commitment. As discussed by Frey and Jegen (2001), if not managed properly, extrinsic rewards could undermine intrinsic motivation, resulting in reduced organizational commitment, echoing the "crowding out" phenomenon.

In conclusion, while motivation is consistently linked to organizational commitment, the nature of this relationship is complex and influenced by the type of motivation. It is, however, clear from the literature that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play an important role in shaping an individual's commitment to their organization. However, achieving the right balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations appears to be a critical factor that organizations need to consider. Therefore, the third research hypothesis can be formulated as follows.

1.3. Work engagement and organizational commitment

The relationship between work involvement and organizational commitment has also been extensively studied in the organizational psychology literature. As already noted, work involvement is often defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with his or her job, is involved in his or her work, and views his or her job performance as vital to his or her self-esteem (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). On the other hand, organizational commitment refers to an individual's attachment to his or her organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Kanungo (1982), who was previously mentioned and whose questionnaire is used in this study, was among the first to propose that work involvement and organizational commitment are separate but related constructs. His study revealed a positive relationship between the two, with highly involved employees demonstrating strong commitment to their organizations. This relationship was further explored by Blau and Boal (1987), who found that job involvement significantly predicted organizational commitment. They argued that employees who are highly involved in their jobs will develop stronger emotional attachments to their organizations, leading to increased commitment.

Blau's (1988) work also supports the idea that job involvement contributes to the affective component of organizational commitment. Affective commitment, which refers to the emotional bond an employee has with their organization, is likely to be higher when individuals are deeply involved in their work. Furthermore, Mathieu and Zajac (1990)

conducted a meta-analysis of previous research and the results of organizational commitment, establishing job involvement as a significant predictor of the latter. Their findings showed that when employees see their work as an essential part of their lives, they are more likely to remain committed to their organization.

However, the relationship between work involvement and organizational commitment can be complex. As Curry, Wakefield, Price, and Mueller (1986) pointed out, the link can be influenced by a number of factors such as job satisfaction, role clarity, and leadership behavior. They suggested that these factors could either enhance or hinder the relationship between work involvement and commitment. In conclusion, while the literature consistently reveals a positive relationship between work involvement and organizational commitment, the dynamics of this relationship are influenced by a number of factors.

1.4. Work engagement and productivity improvement

Understanding the complex relationship between employee engagement and improved productivity is of paramount importance for organizations seeking to strengthen their position in their markets and achieve sustainable success. Over the years, researchers have delved into various dimensions of this relationship, revealing how different forms of engagement affect performance outcomes and how factors such as motivation, leadership, work environment, and employee competence play mediating roles. The role of leadership in enhancing employee engagement and performance is further highlighted by Hidayat and Graha (2021). In their study conducted at PT Kalbe Farma Tbk, they examined the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance, particularly through the mediating role of organizational commitment. Using data from 80 respondents, they found that transformational leadership and motivation significantly enhance employee performance both directly and by increasing organizational commitment.

Leaders who demonstrate strong competencies and knowledge inspire higher levels of trust and commitment from employees, leading to better performance outcomes. This aligns with the findings of Sutanto (1999) and highlights the critical role of leadership in cultivating an engaged and high-performing workforce. The role of leadership in influencing employee commitment and performance is further confirmed by Getnet and Fujie (2024). Using correlational research and regression analysis on data from 188 employees, they found that leadership style, employee engagement, and work motivation significantly influence employee performance, with employee engagement being a particularly strong predictor. The regression model showed that 64% of job satisfaction could be predicted by these variables, highlighting the importance of leadership and engagement in influencing employee outcomes. Effective leadership that supports employee development, combined with a motivating work climate, enhances employee engagement and leads to higher levels of performance.

Hidayati et al. (2021) provided a detailed analysis of how a supportive work environment can enhance employee engagement, which in turn leads to improved performance outcomes. Focusing on 43 employees from a government office in Malang, Indonesia, their study argued that a positive work environment promotes a sense of belonging and motivation, increasing employees' willingness to commit to their roles. This engagement translates into higher levels of work performance, as employees become more adaptable and resilient when faced with work-related challenges. The mediating role of work engagement highlighted in their research suggests that organizations should prioritize creating work conditions that promote employee engagement as a strategic means to enhance overall productivity.

Wulandari (2019) investigated the relationship between employee engagement and service performance in Lippo Cikarang Bekasi, a financial services company in Indonesia. Using data from 218 respondents, the study revealed that employee competence – including knowledge, motivation, personal characteristics, and skills – has a significant positive impact on employee engagement. As employees develop their competence, their engagement increases, leading to better performance in terms of service quality. This suggests that investing in employee development not only enhances skills, but also fosters a deeper commitment to the organization, resulting in improved performance outcomes. In the manufacturing and service sectors, the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance has been confirmed by Dafi and Solihat (2023). Their causal study involving 34 employees showed a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance. Specifically, they found that enhancing employee engagement leads to proportional increases in organizational performance. This highlights the broad applicability of the engagement-performance dynamic across industries and underscores the need for organizations to prioritize strategies that enhance employee engagement.

Finally, we underline the importance of digital technologies in education domain and for employees and entrepreneurs training and education. ICTs support education for everyone, give new methods for efficient teachers training, improve the knowledge retention, encourage collaboration, improve transparency, create learner-centered approaches, invent new teaching methods, and accelerate the knowledge acquisition. Moreover, provide new tools for knowledge

representation and endorse the education activities and methods via virtualization, mobilization, artificial intelligence, and through new learning environments- worlds. More specifically in employee and entrepreneurship training ICTs are very productive and successful, facilitate and improve the assessment, the intervention and the educational procedures via Mobiles which brings educational activities everywhere [42-45] and through various ICTs applications which are the core supporters of education [46-51]. The exploitation of AI, STEM & ROBOTICS raise educational procedures into new levels of adaptability, innovation and performance [52], while games transform education in a multisensory, very friendly and enjoyable interaction [53-54]. Additionally, the adoption, enhancement and combination of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation and emotional intelligence cultivation [55-60] brings the mental abilities to the core of the education procedures and policies, and accelerate and improve even more the educational practices and results, especially in employees and entrepreneurs training.

2. Methodology

2.1. Qualitative approach

Research methodology is the system of principles and procedures followed to collect, analyze, and interpret data in order to answer research questions or solve problems (Creswell, 2014). The two main approaches to methodology are quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach relies on numerical data and statistical analyses to identify patterns and generalize conclusions (Bryman, 2015). In contrast, the qualitative approach focuses on understanding phenomena through the analysis of experiences, perceptions, and meanings that individuals attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Qualitative research is preferred in cases where the research process requires a deep understanding of complex and subjective issues. It is an interpretive process that examines the “how” and “why” of a phenomenon and often focuses on small samples for the purpose of in-depth analysis (Patton, 2015). Researchers use tools such as interviews, observation, and content analysis to examine participants’ experiences and identify emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research does not seek to generalize findings but rather to explore a social or organizational issue in depth, providing valuable information for understanding human behavior (Silverman, 2020).

2.2. The interview tool in qualitative research

The interview is one of the most popular data collection tools in qualitative research, as it allows for direct and in-depth exploration of participants’ opinions, experiences, and attitudes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Depending on the degree of structure, interviews are divided into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are particularly prevalent, as they offer the researcher flexibility to tailor questions and explore interesting points that arise during the conversation.

Semi-structured interviews use a question guide, but allow the participant to develop their views freely and in depth (Creswell, 2014). The researcher maintains a balance between controlling the interview and openness in the responses, allowing for the emergence of themes that were not initially anticipated. This makes the interview a particularly effective tool for exploring complex phenomena and personal experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010).

A key advantage of interviews is that they offer rich data and allow for the collection of detailed responses. However, they also have limitations, such as the risk of subjectivity, the influence of the researcher on the process and the difficulty of generalizing the results (Brinkmann, 2013). Despite the challenges, the correct application of interviews and the methodical analysis of the data ensure reliable and useful results for understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

2.3. Methodological approach of this research

This research adopted a qualitative research approach with the aim of investigating work commitment and its relationship with organizational performance, its strengthening strategies, the challenges that make it difficult, as well as its role in innovation and competitiveness of organizations. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and opinions of the participants, offering rich and detailed data on the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2014).

2.3.1. Data collection tool and research questions

The tool used to collect data was semi-structured interviews, which are one of the most efficient techniques in qualitative research for understanding personal experiences and opinions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The interviews followed a specific question guide, which was designed based on the research questions. The guide included 12 questions grouped into four research questions:

- How does work engagement affect organizational performance?
- Which motivational strategies can enhance work engagement?
- Which factors hinder work engagement?
- What is the relationship between work engagement and innovation and performance?

The questions were open-ended, allowing participants to freely express their opinions and experiences, while at the same time the interview structure allowed for the flexibility to explore new topics that arose during the conversation.

2.3.2. Sample and research framework

The research was conducted with the participation of five office workers from three different companies based in Cyprus. The sample was selected purposively, as participants had to have work experience and be able to analyze their relationship with the organization. The small number of participants is a common feature of qualitative research, as the emphasis is on in-depth analysis of data rather than statistical generalization (Patton, 2015). The participants had different levels of professional experience and occupied positions related to the daily functioning of organizations, which ensured diversity in the responses and enriched the discussion around work engagement.

The interviews were conducted in person in Cyprus and lasted 20-30 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to accurately capture and analyze their responses. After completion, the recorded data were fully transcribed for processing and analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involves coding the data and identifying themes emerging from the participants' responses. The main themes that emerged were organized based on the research questions, while special attention was paid to interpreting the data based on the participants' experiences and their perceptions of work engagement and innovation.

2.3.3. Ethical issues of the research

Adherence to ethical principles during the research was of utmost importance. Before the start of the process, the participants were informed about the purpose and procedure of the research and signed informed consent forms. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time without any repercussions. In addition, complete anonymity and confidentiality of their personal data were maintained. The responses were coded and there was no reference to names, organizations or other identifying information. The use of the data was limited exclusively to the present research work, as defined by the Code of Ethics for Research (Bryman, 2015). The application of qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews provided valuable information for understanding the factors that influence work engagement, as well as its connection with innovation and organizational performance. Adherence to ethical principles enhanced the reliability and validity of the research, creating a framework for safe and honest communication with the participants.

3. Research Results

3.1. How work engagement affects organizational performance

Work engagement is one of the determining factors that affect organizational performance, as it is related to the behavior, concentration and daily functioning of employees. The analysis of the interview participants' responses to the first research question reveals different perceptions of how work engagement shapes their experience, the quality of work and the wider benefits for the business.

Regarding the question about their daily experience in the organization in relation to their engagement, interviewee A stated: "My daily experience in the organization is satisfactory because of the collaborative climate". This statement suggests that a positive and collaborative environment can enhance employees' sense of engagement, offering them reasons to remain productive and connected to the organization. In contrast, interviewee D stated: "My daily experience is quite demanding, but at the same time interesting. Despite the challenges, the feeling that I am contributing to something meaningful helps me to remain dedicated and focused on my tasks". This particular position reveals that even in demanding working conditions, the existence of a meaningful purpose can motivate employees and strengthen their commitment. The answer of interviewee E is also interesting, who stated: "My daily experience in the organization

is quite stable, but at the same time predictable. My commitment stems mainly from the feeling of responsibility for completing my tasks and less from external motivations". This perspective demonstrates that, in some cases, work commitment functions as an internal driving force, despite the absence of particular external motivations. Regarding the impact of commitment on the quality of work, the opinions of the participants vary. Interviewee C emphasized the importance of connecting with the goals of the organization: "My commitment plays a decisive role in my work performance. When I feel connected to the organization and its goals, I operate with greater attention to detail and my efficiency increases." Here the positive effect of commitment on the accuracy and attention shown by employees is clearly visible. Interviewee D added: "My commitment greatly affects the quality of my work.

When I feel that my contribution is appreciated, I work with greater enthusiasm and give my best." This statement suggests that recognition of employees' work is a key factor in enhancing commitment and, by extension, the quality of work. However, interviewee E offered a different perspective: "My commitment affects the quality of my work, but not always for the better. When I feel that my efforts are not recognized, my performance is affected." Here it is clear that the absence of support and recognition can reduce an employee's effectiveness and concentration, demonstrating the impact of organizational culture on performance.

Regarding the benefits of employee commitment for the company, the participants highlighted significant advantages that arise from it. Interviewee A stated: "There are many benefits from employee commitment. Some of these are increasing productivity, improving the quality of colleagues and consequently strengthening the team". This statement reveals the value of commitment in strengthening team cooperation and increasing efficiency. At the same time, interviewee C added: "The main benefits are increasing productivity, strengthening team spirit and creating a positive work environment". This statement underlines the importance of commitment in shaping an environment that encourages cooperation and stability, factors that contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. On the other hand, interviewee D pointed out that: "Commitment leads to stable performance and creates a more coordinated and productive environment". This observation focuses on the connection of commitment with the efficiency and effectiveness of processes in the organization, while highlighting the importance of the coordinated operation of employees.

In summary, the participants' responses demonstrate that work engagement directly affects organizational performance by improving work quality, increasing productivity, and creating a positive climate of cooperation. At the same time, the existence of incentives, recognition of contributions, and support for employees by management are critical factors that enhance engagement and lead to increased performance. Employees who feel connected to the organization and its goals demonstrate higher concentration, greater enthusiasm, and a heightened sense of responsibility, which positively affects the overall functioning and stability of the organization.

3.2. Motivational strategies can enhance work engagement

Work engagement is a multidimensional concept that is closely linked to the strategies that management implements to encourage employee engagement. The second research question examines strategies that can enhance work engagement, based on employee encouragement, organizational initiatives, and the quality of communication between management and staff. The participants' responses provide a clear picture of the factors that influence work engagement and the challenges that may exist.

Initially, the question regarding what encourages employees to feel more committed to the organization revealed the importance of recognition, financial incentives, and managerial behavior. Interviewee A stated: "Recognition, financial rewards, and the work environment are criteria that push me to be more committed to the organization." This response reveals that recognition and rewards are essential factors that enhance commitment, as employees feel that their efforts are appreciated and rewarded. Similarly, interviewee B added: "The incentives are either financial or for job advancement, and of course the employer's behavior." This response highlights the importance of development opportunities and the respect that management should show to employees. On the other hand, interviewee D pointed out a different factor: "The existence of development opportunities, the appreciation of my work by superiors, and the trust that management shows in my abilities are factors that encourage me to feel more committed to the organization." This statement shows that personal and professional development, combined with management's trust, create the conditions for a strong work commitment.

Then, regarding initiatives that could enhance employee engagement, participants highlighted the need for training, professional development and clear communication. Interviewee A stated: "Initiatives that enhance engagement include ongoing training, development opportunities and clear communication". This statement highlights the need for

continuous skill development and advancement opportunities, which enhance employee interest and give them a reason to stay with the organization.

On the other hand, interviewee C noted: "Initiatives such as training and skill development programs, transparent promotion processes and the establishment of regular communication between management and employees could enhance my engagement". This response highlights the importance of transparency and communication as key factors that create a sense of trust and perspective for employees. Interviewee D added an interesting aspect by stating: "Establishing mentoring programs, providing incentives for achievements and creating an open dialogue with management could significantly enhance my commitment. Also, flexibility in working hours is an important motivator". The reference to flexibility in hours highlights the need for employees to balance work and personal life, something that is often overlooked in more traditional work environments. Finally, regarding management's communication with employees and how it affects work commitment, the participants' responses highlight both positive and negative points. Interviewee A stated characteristically: "I consider it incomplete. Management's communication must be continuous and clear to encourage commitment". This statement shows that lack of communication can create gaps in information and undermine employee trust in management.

Interviewee C offered a different perspective, saying: "Management communication could be clearer and more transparent. Often the organization's goals are not conveyed accurately, which creates confusion." This observation highlights the importance of transparency and accuracy in communication in encouraging engagement. At the same time, interviewee E stated: "Communication is often formal and superficial. There is a lack of real willingness to understand the needs of employees." This position suggests that communication should go beyond formal procedures and focus on the needs of employees in order to create a more meaningful relationship between management and staff.

Overall, strategies that encourage employee engagement are related to recognition, rewards, development opportunities, and transparency in communication. The participants' responses show that employees feel more engaged when management shows them trust, provides them with opportunities for development and creates a work environment based on cooperation and respect. At the same time, the quality of communication plays a crucial role, as employees need clarity, transparency and meaningful response from management to feel that they are an active part of the organization. Strengthening work engagement, therefore, requires a holistic approach that responds to the needs and expectations of employees, ensuring the simultaneous development of the organization.

3.3. Factors that make work engagement difficult

The third research question focuses on the factors that make it difficult for employees to work engagement, highlighting the challenges they face and the reasons that may discourage them from becoming more connected to the organization. The participants' responses to the interview reveal specific problems that concern both the lack of recognition and the internal operational weaknesses of the organization, which reduces their commitment and overall performance.

Regarding the main challenges that employees face in their commitment to the organization, interviewee A emphasized: "The main challenges are the lack of recognition, excessive pressure from the employer who believes that we must have knowledge of everything, the derogatory attitude of the board of directors towards new employees, the ambiguity of the organization's goals as well as the lack of opportunities for professional and financial development." This response highlights the multidimensional nature of the difficulties experienced by employees, as the lack of clear goals and the absence of development create a sense of stagnation and questioning of their abilities. Interviewee D added: "Some of the challenges I face include unsatisfactory feedback from management, unclear procedures in some projects and difficulty in managing excessive demands." The lack of meaningful feedback and the ambiguity in the execution of work tasks seem to prevent employees from staying focused on their goals, leading to declining commitment and reduced efficiency. Accordingly, interviewee C pointed out: "Some of the main challenges are the lack of recognition, unclear assignment of tasks and excessive pressure to achieve goals. Also, the lack of opportunities for professional development and the insufficient climate of cooperation from management act as deterrents". This response reveals that the pressure for results without simultaneous support and recognition creates a dysfunctional environment that discourages work commitment. Equally important is the question regarding the factors that discourage employees from becoming more connected to the organization. Interviewee A stated: "Injustice in the workplace, unkind comments between colleagues and the employer, and all of the above." This response suggests that a sense of injustice and a negative work environment act as a deterrent to commitment, as they undermine employee trust. Interviewee C also addressed the issue of fairness, saying: "Yes, factors such as lack of fairness in evaluations, negative attitudes from colleagues, and a sense of undervaluation of my abilities discourage me from being more committed." This response suggests that employees desire a fair evaluation system that recognizes their contribution, while negative attitudes and lack of appreciation reduce their desire for greater commitment to the organization. At the same time, interviewee E

added: "The lack of equality in the distribution of responsibilities, the absence of opportunities for development and the tendency of some superiors not to value the opinion of employees are deterrent factors". This observation highlights the need for equal treatment and recognition of employees' opinions as prerequisites for strengthening their commitment. The participants' responses confirm that work commitment is significantly influenced by the quality of relationships within the organization, the existence of development opportunities and communication with management. The lack of recognition and fairness seems to be one of the main factors leading to frustration and reduced loyalty. As interviewee B stated: "The competition of colleagues, the derogatory behavior of the employer and the bad work environment". This response emphasizes that negative interpersonal relationships and the behavior of management play a decisive role in shaping an environment that prevents work commitment.

The responses also show that unclear goals and poor resource management are key challenges. Interviewee E stated: "The main challenges are the lack of transparency in goals and poor resource management. Also, frequent changes in organizational priorities and overload of tasks without support make it difficult for me to maintain my commitment." This observation reveals that employees find it difficult to remain committed when goals are unclear and processes are inconsistent. The lack of support combined with the constant reshaping of priorities creates a sense of insecurity and leads to a decrease in commitment.

Overall, factors that hinder job engagement include lack of recognition, fairness in appraisals, demeaning behavior, and lack of career development opportunities. Lack of clear communication from management and poor management of working conditions increase employee frustration, undermining their trust in the organization. Interview participants emphasized the importance of creating a work environment that is based on transparency, recognition, and collaboration. When these factors are absent, employees experience feelings of frustration and injustice that discourage them from investing meaningfully in their professional relationship with the organization.

3.4. The relationship between job engagement and innovation and performance

The relationship between job engagement, innovation, and performance is a critical issue for an organization's competitiveness. The fourth research question explores how work engagement affects employees' willingness to propose innovative ideas and how this engagement can enhance the competitiveness of the organization. The interviewees' responses provide clear indications that engagement not only functions as a lever for increased performance but also as a motivation to promote innovation, provided that the environment supports and encourages such initiatives.

Initially, the research participants were asked to answer how their engagement affects their willingness to introduce innovative ideas. Interviewee A stated: "My engagement significantly affects my willingness to introduce innovative ideas. Since there is positive work engagement in the department where I work, I am always in a pleasant mood to actively participate in innovation." This response reveals that engagement can work positively when the work environment is supportive and encourages the active participation of employees. Correspondingly, interviewee C emphasized the importance of support from management, saying: "My commitment creates a positive incentive to propose new ideas and solutions. When there is support from the team and recognition from management, I feel safe to express innovative suggestions that could improve processes." This response highlights the close relationship between the trust an employee enjoys and his willingness to propose innovative ideas, while at the same time underlining the importance of recognition of suggestions by management. On the other hand, interviewee E presented a different perspective, highlighting the effect of indifference from management: "My commitment positively affects my willingness to introduce innovative ideas, but only when I feel that there is a real interest from management to listen to these suggestions. If new ideas are treated with indifference or delays, then my willingness to actively participate in innovation decreases." This position suggests that a lack of recognition or interest from management can suppress employees' desire to contribute new ideas, even when there is a strong commitment to the organization.

Next, it was examined how work engagement can enhance the competitiveness of the organization. Interviewee A stated: "Work engagement can enhance the competitiveness of the organization through increased creativity, innovation and better performance.

Management's desire is essential to enhance competitiveness." This response suggests that creativity and innovation are the direct benefits of employee engagement, while management's support and desire to encourage such practices are necessary conditions for their exploitation. Accordingly, interviewee C added: "Employment engagement enhances competitiveness by increasing creativity and team performance. Employees who feel engaged contribute to the implementation of innovative strategies, thus improving the organization's position in the market." This position focuses on the collective effort resulting from engagement and the impact that creativity has on an organization's

strategic competitiveness. At the same time, interviewee D emphasized the importance of proactive action and initiatives taken by employees: "Employment leads to employees who act proactively and take initiatives to improve processes. With increased commitment, innovation and teamwork are enhanced, which gives the organization a competitive advantage." This response reveals that engaged employees are not limited to their standard tasks but look for ways to improve and innovate, which makes the organization more competitive in the market.

At the same time, the response of interviewee E focuses on the need for a supportive environment: "Employee engagement can boost competitiveness through continuous improvement of processes and promotion of new solutions. When employees feel connected to the organization, they operate more responsibly and offer creative proposals that can differentiate the organization from the competition." This statement highlights that engagement leads to a responsible and creative attitude from employees, which enhances the organization's differentiation and competitiveness in the market. However, as several participants observed, the existence of a supportive and open environment from management is a prerequisite for work engagement to deliver the expected benefits. Overall, the analysis of the responses shows that work engagement can positively affect both the willingness to innovate and the competitiveness of an organization. Employees who feel engaged are more motivated to propose new ideas and take initiatives that improve processes and enhance efficiency. Innovation, however, requires management support, as the lack of recognition or indifference towards employees' suggestions can limit their willingness to participate in creative processes. At the same time, work engagement gives the organization a significant competitive advantage, as it leads to increased team effort, responsibility and a continuous search for new solutions. However, in order to realize these benefits, the organization must create an environment that encourages innovation, rewards effort and ensures employee participation in decision-making.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the results for the first research question shows that work engagement positively affects organizational performance, confirming findings reported in the literature. The data reveal that engagement is associated with the quality of work, increased productivity, and the formation of a positive and collaborative work climate. Specifically, employees who experience recognition and support from management, as well as clarity about their goals, demonstrate higher concentration and efficiency. Conversely, lack of recognition and a sense of stagnation can lead to a decrease in performance, confirming that organizational culture plays a crucial role in maintaining employee engagement.

The analysis of the results regarding the motivational strategies that enhance work engagement shows that recognition, professional development opportunities, and quality of communication play a key role in enhancing employee loyalty. Participants highlighted the importance of recognition and financial rewards as key motivators, confirming the literature of Shahid and Azhar (2013), according to which organizations that recognize and reward performance enhance commitment and job satisfaction. At the same time, research by Xanthopoulou and Karampelas (2020) highlights that transformational leadership, which encourages positive communication and recognition, is a key strategy for cultivating work commitment. The analysis of factors that hinder work commitment highlighted specific issues, such as lack of recognition, unclear goals, a negative work environment and the absence of professional development. The results confirm findings from previous studies that highlight that work commitment decreases when employees feel that their efforts are not recognized and when they face a dysfunctional environment. For example, Rahimi (2020) and Abd-El-Salam (2023) emphasize the importance of empowering employees through meaningful feedback and their participation in the decision-making process, elements that enhance trust and reduce frustration. Finally, management plays a crucial role in encouraging innovation through employee engagement. Adopting transformational leadership practices, such as recognition, clear communication, and motivation, contributes to empowering employees and creating a supportive environment. As Ahmed et al. (2018) point out, having a work environment that encourages knowledge sharing and collaboration enhances engagement and creates the conditions for innovative behaviors. Therefore, employee engagement acts as a cornerstone for innovation and competitiveness, while management must ensure the right conditions that encourage employee creativity and participation.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The Authors would like to thank the SPECIALIZATION IN ICTs AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: PSYCHOPEDAGOGY OF INCLUSION Postgraduate studies Team, for their support.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Abd-El-Salam, E. M. (2023). Exploring factors affecting employee loyalty through the relationship between service quality and management commitment: A case study analysis in the iron and steel industry. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(2), 2212492.
- [2] Ahmed, F., Hassan, A., Ayub, U., & Klimoski, R. J. (2018). High commitment work system and innovative work behavior: The mediating role of knowledge sharing. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 29-51.
- [3] Becker, H. S. (1960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66(1), 32-40.
- [4] Blau, G. J. (1988). Further exploring the meaning and measurement of career commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 32(3), 284-297.
- [5] Blau, G. J., & Boal, K. B. (1987). Conceptualizing how job involvement and organizational commitment affect turnover and absenteeism. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(2), 288-300.
- [6] Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Book. New York: Wiley.
- [7] Brinkmann, S. (2013). *Qualitative interviewing*. Book. Oxford University Press.
- [8] Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods (5th ed.)*. Book. Oxford University Press.
- [9] Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- [10] Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- [11] Curry, J. P., Wakefield, D. S., Price, J. L., & Mueller, C. W. (1986). On the causal ordering of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 29(4), 847-858.
- [12] Dafi, M., & Solihat, A. (2023). Correlation between commitment and organizational performance. *International Journal of Business Economics and Social Development*, 4(4), 341-347.
- [13] Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- [14] DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314-321.
- [15] Frey, B. S., & Jegen, R. (2001). Motivation crowding theory. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 15(5), 589-611.
- [16] Getnet, D., & Fujie, A. T. (2024). Effect of leadership, employee commitment, and work motivation on employees' performance. *Journal Research of Social Science Economics and Management*, 3(6), 1310-1322.
- [17] Hidayat, R., & Graha, A. N. (2021). The role of organizational commitment in employee performance. *2nd Annual Conference on Social Science and Humanities (ANCOSH 2020)*, 542265.
- [18] Hidayati, E. W., Supriyanto, A. S., & Maharani, V. (2021). Work commitment as a mediator of work environment effect on employee performance. *MEC-J (Management and Economics Journal)*, 5(1), 59-66.
- [19] Hidayati, T., Lestari, D., Maria, S., & Za, S. Z. (2019). Effect of employee loyalty and commitment on organizational performance with considering role of work stress. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 20(2), 256-266.
- [20] Kanungo, R. N. (1982). Measurement of job and work involvement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 67(3), 341-349.
- [21] King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.
- [22] Kuvaas, B. (2006). Work performance, affective commitment, and work motivation: The roles of pay administration and pay level. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(3), 365-385.
- [23] Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing (3rd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.

- [24] Lodahl, T. M., &Kejner, M. (1965). The definition and measurement of job involvement. *Journal ofApplied Psychology*, 49(1).
- [25] Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 171-194.
- [26] Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61–89.
- [27] Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11(3), 299–326.
- [28] Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., &Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates, and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(1), 20-52.
- [29] Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1982). *Employee—organization linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*. New York: Academic Press.
- [30] Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [31] Porter, L. W., Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., & Boulian, P. V(1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal ofApplied Psychology*, 59(5), 603 609.
- [32] Rahimi, R. (2020). Understanding the key factors that influence employee loyalty in public organizations. In *The International Conference on Decision Aid Sciences and Applications*.
- [33] Robinson, S. L., & Morrison, E. W. (2000). The development of psychological contract breach and violation: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(5), 525–546.
- [34] Rousseau, D. M. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- [35] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67.
- [36] Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two-sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71–92
- [37] Shahid, A., & Azhar, S. M. (2013). Gaining employee commitment: Linking to organizational effectiveness. *Journal of Management Research*, 5(1), 250.
- [38] Silverman, D. (2020). *Qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [39] Sutanto, E. M. (1999). The relationship between employee commitment and job performance. *Jurnal Manajemen dan Kewirausahaan*, 1(1), 49-55.
- [40] Wulandari, S. S. (2019). Employee commitment and service performance. *Human Systems Management*, 37(4), 381-386.
- [41] Xanthopoulou, P., & Karampelas, I. D. (2020). The impact of leadership on employees' loyalty and organizational success: Do transformational and transactional leadership ensure organizational and work commitment? *International Journal of Sciences*, 9(10), 45-63.
- [42] M Karyotaki, A Drigas, C Skianis 2022 The Role of Mobiles and Women in the Sustainable Local Economic Development. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies* 16 (22)
- [43] P. Leliopoulos, AS Drigas, 2022 The evolution of wireless mobile networks and the future 5G mobile technology for sustainability *Technium Sustainability* 2(2):28-43
- [44] A Stathopoulou, Z Karabatzaki, G Kokkalia, E Dimitriou, PI Loukeri, ...2018, Mobile Assessment Procedures for Mental Health and Literacy Skills in Education. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies* 12 (3), 21-37
- [45] Politi-Georgousi S, Drigas A 2020 Mobile Applications, an Emerging Powerful Tool for Dyslexia Screening and Intervention: A Systematic Literature Review , *International Association of Online Engineering*
- [46] Chaidi I, Papoutsis C, Drigas A, C Skianis 2022 Women: E-Entrepreneurship and Emotional Intelligence *Technium Soc. Sci. J.* 30, 214

- [47] Pappas M, Papagerasimou Y, Drigas A, D Raftopoulos, P Nikolaidis 2017 ICT-based Innovation and Employability for Women International Association of Online Engineering 7 (2), 36-47
- [48] Galitskaya V, Drigas A Special education: Teaching geometry with ICTs 2020 International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET) 15 (6)
- [49] Pappas M, et all 2017 Online Research for the Impact of ICTs on Greek Women's Employability and Entrepreneurship. International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning 10 (1)
- [50] Karyotaki M, Drigas A, 2022 The impact of digital technologies and social networks in young women and young mother's entrepreneurship and employability Technium Sustainability 2(5):79-91
- [51] Alexopoulou, A., Batsou, A., & Drigas, A. S. (2019). Effectiveness of Assessment, Diagnostic and Intervention ICT Tools for Children and Adolescents with ADHD. International Journal of Recent Contributions from Engineering, Science & IT (IJES), 7(3), pp. 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijes.v7i3.11178>
- [52] Drigas A, Mitsea E, Skianis C. 2022 Virtual Reality and Metacognition Training Techniques for Learning Disabilities , SUSTAINABILITY 14(16), 10170, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141610170>
- [53] Drigas A, Sideraki A 2024 Brain neuroplasticity leveraging virtual reality and brain-computer interface technologies. Sensors 24 (17), 5725
- [54] Drigas A, Papoutsi C, Skianis C, 2023 Being an emotionally intelligent leader through the nine-layer model of emotional intelligence—The supporting role of new technologies Sustainability 15 (10), 8103
- [55] Drigas A., Sideraki A. 2021 Emotional Intelligence in Autism , Technium Social Sciences Journal 26, 80, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v26i1.5178>
- [56] E Mitsea, A Drigas, C Skianis 2023 Digitally assisted mindfulness in training self-regulation skills for sustainable mental health: a systematic review Behavioral Sciences 13 (12), 1008
- [57] Bamicha V, Drigas A 2022 The Evolutionary Course of Theory of Mind-Factors that facilitate or inhibit its operation & the role of ICTs. Technium Soc. Sci. J. 30, 138
- [58] Chaidi I, Drigas A 2022 Social and Emotional Skills of children with ASD: Assessment with Emotional Comprehension Test (TEC) in a Greek context and the role of ICTs. Technium Soc. Sci. J. 33, 146
- [59] Kontostavrou, E. Z., & Drigas, A. (2021). How Metacognition Supports Giftedness in Leadership: A Review of Contemporary Literature. International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning (IJAC), 14(2), pp. 4–16. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijac.v14i2.23237>
- [60] Karyotaki M, Drigas A, Skianis C, 2024 Contributions of the 9-Layered Model of Giftedness to the Development of a Conversational Agent for Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Living. Sustainability 16(7):1-18