

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEVEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG MALAYSIA STATE SPORTS COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract.** This study examines organizational commitment among employees of the Malaysia State Sports Council, focusing on three key dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Grounded in Meyer and Allen Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment, the research adopts a cross-sectional, quantitative approach to assess the extent to which employees are emotionally attached to, feel obligated toward, or remain with the organization due to perceived costs. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample of council employees. Descriptive statistical analysis indicated that affective and continuance commitment were at moderate levels, while normative commitment demonstrated a high level among the employees. These findings show that the organization has a stable climate, but employees' loyalty can change based on different factors. The study contributes to human resource management discourse in the public sports sector by highlighting the importance of targeted strategies to strengthen each commitment dimension, thereby enhancing employee retention and organization performance. Future research should explore longitudinal data and incorporate qualitative insights to better understand the underlying causes influencing commitment levels.

**Keywords:** *organizational commitment, sports council employees, public sports organization, Malaysia*

### Introduction

Employee commitment is imperative to the development and sustained success of an organization, as it represents a fundamental requirement for individuals to effectively perform and remain within a particular organization. This commitment is reflected in employees' feelings, attitudes, and attachment toward their roles and the organization as a whole. Previous scholars have conceptualized organizational commitment as comprising three psychological components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Ahmad, 2018; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment is widely recognized as a vital indicator of an individual's contribution to, and connection with, organizational activities. Rameshkumar (2019) defined organizational commitment as the strength of an individual's identification with their work, characterized by trust, involvement, and loyalty toward the organization they represent. This definition highlights that organizational commitment becomes evident when individuals perceive their job as an integral part of their identity. Prior research suggests

that organizational success largely depends on the dedication of its personnel, who are expected to exert their best efforts in overcoming both internal and external challenges (Candelario et al., 2020). Organizational commitment examines the extent to which employees remain loyal to their organization and how they perceive its internal and external values, including leadership style and working conditions (Paramita et al., 2020). Ateş and Ünal (2021) further assert that employees demonstrate commitment when they sincerely and consistently work toward fulfilling the organization's mission. A high level of organizational commitment enables employees to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, fostering loyalty and a willingness to remain with the organization. This sense of belonging encourages employees to sustain their engagement and readiness to contribute effectively.

Moreover, employee commitment is a strong predictor of various work outcomes, including turnover intentions, actual turnover, and exceptional performance (Reza, 2019). Committed employees are also more inclined to seek opportunities for personal and professional development, recognizing continuous learning as essential for career success. With sustained dedication, employees are motivated to invest their time and energy in achieving organizational goals. As noted by Al Mamun and Hasan (2017), organizations highly value committed employees due to their significant contributions to organizational effectiveness and capability. This is attributed to the strong psychological attachment developed by committed employees, which enhances job satisfaction and productivity (Daniel, 2019). Additionally, the provision of safe and supportive working conditions plays a crucial role in strengthening organizational commitment. Employees who feel secure and protected in the workplace are more likely to remain loyal and committed to the organization. Arianto and Syihabudhin (2018) emphasize that organizational commitment reflects an employee's decision to either stay with or leave an organization. Failure to recognize and support employee commitment may hinder organizational sustainability, underscoring the importance of commitment in influencing organizational performance (Nikpour, 2017). Every organization seeks employees with strong commitment to ensure the delivery of high-quality services and to minimize employee turnover.

However, low levels of organizational commitment are often associated with inadequate managerial support, which may lead to increased stress and burnout among employees (Sokal et al., 2021). Data from the Employee Wellness Report revealed that 58% of Malaysian employees experienced burnout in the past three months due to poor work-life balance. Inegbedion et al. (2020) further identified high workload intensity as a significant contributor to burnout, while Mohammed et al. (2020) noted that excessive workloads and interpersonal conflicts exacerbate job stress. These factors can adversely affect employees' level of commitment, causing them to lose focus and, in some cases, feel disconnected from the organization. Consequently, burnout poses a serious threat to the working environment if organizations fail to implement effective preventive measures. In light of the challenges associated with employee stress, burnout, and declining commitment within organizations, this study focuses on examining the level of organizational commitment among employees of the Malaysia State Sports Councils. The primary objective of the research is to assess employees' affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Although organizational commitment has been widely examined in various organizational contexts, limited empirical research has specifically explored commitment levels within Malaysia's public-sector sports organizations. Understanding the level of organizational commitment among employees in state sports

councils is crucial, as these organizations play a significant role in developing national sports performance and delivering public services. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by providing empirical evidence based on the perspective of employees from the Malaysia State Sports Councils.

### *Literature review*

#### *Organizational commitment*

Organizational commitment is seen as an indicator for employees to deliver a good or bad quality of services which can impact the overall success of an organization. The organizational commitment were measured through three distinct forms stated by Allen and Meyer (1990): affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuous commitment.

#### *Previous studies on the level of affective commitment*

Affective commitment has been determined as one of the dimensions that could influence organizational performance. According to Kiprawi et al. (2020), affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, including their beliefs and wishes for attaining organizational goals. This is supported by Al Zefeiti and Mohamad (2017), who stated that affective commitment appears when an employee identifies with the organization's goals and is willing to reach them. This situation can create an emotional bond between the employee and the organization. Meanwhile, Werang et al. (2017) viewed affective commitment as employees' willingness to remain within an organization since their position and job objectives are clearly defined. Previous researchers pointed out effective commitment can be achieved through the care and responsibility employers demonstrate toward employees (Al Balushi et al., 2022). This indicates that affective commitment is a relationship between employees and employers based on emotions.

Akar (2018) signifies that affective commitment is characterized as employees identifying and caring about the organization and being emotionally devoted to the goals. The researcher also recognized affective commitment as the most significant component of organizational commitment. Support by Ribeiro et al. (2018) indicates that affective commitment offers more favorable results for organizations. This is due to employees' effort being boosted when they are emotionally committed, resulting in the high affective commitment of employees' work beyond what is expected. A review from previous researchers revealed that low affective commitment might influence employees who had a terrible performance at work, which will cause them to intentionally or unintentionally leave the organization. The low emotional attachment to the organization makes employees less motivated to work on their job. However, the result of this study are not aligned with the previous research conducted among small and medium employees in French, as it shows the result of affective commitment was at a moderate level. Forming an emotional tie between employees and the organization inspires them to be more creative in producing output. On top of the above explanation, it can be concluded that the affective commitment delivered by employees can be observed when they are emotionally satisfied with their job or achievement in the organization. Employees with a high level of affective commitment can enhance their skills and performance towards customers. This kind of way will surely provide opportunities for employees to capitalize on their experience in their job, which in

return makes them stay in the organization for a long time. Therefore, organizations need to play their role in developing the affective commitment of employees to achieve desired results.

### ***Previous studies on the level of normative commitment***

According to Elisabeth et al. (2021), normative commitment derives from the self-value of employees who endure because their responsibility is essential to the organization. Qureshi et al. (2019) mentioned that the normative commitment is employees' loyalty to remain with their current employment due to the obligation that must be fulfilled. Bothma (2020) expresses that the strength of the relationship between organizations and employees may develop good normative commitment. The high normative commitment perceived by employees may execute their motivation and enthusiasm to work. From this, it helps the organization produce employees concerned about others to avoid disappointment when they leave. Therefore, the level of normative commitment delivered by employees is important as it can contribute to the achievement of any organization.

Based on a previous study by Grego-Planer (2019) among employees in the public and private sectors in Poland, the results revealed a low level of normative commitment. Low normative commitment may reduce the engagement of employees to communicate and socialize with others. This is supported by Wang et al. (2020), employees who perceived low devotion to norms felt devoid of belonging and membership, ultimately diminishing organizational connection. On the other hand, the level of normative commitment illustrated by Inam et al. (2021) in the telecom sector in Pakistan was at a high level. Researchers stated individuals with high degrees of normative commitment would feel obligated to remain in their organizations since they know it is things that they need to obey. Employees with good normative commitment always think their role is irreplaceable due to the organization depending on their level of commitment to be successful. From the explanation above, it can sum up that normative commitment can be seen when employees devote themselves to the organization. In other words, employees might feel accountable to their organization due to the opportunities and benefits provided. This can be seen when an organization makes a high investment, especially in providing training and development to employees. An organization takes this way to help capable employees achieve their goals. Hence, employees who know their duty will stay with the organization and not leave.

### ***Previous studies on the level of continuance commitment***

Continuance commitment can be defined as a commitment based on an employee's understanding of the consequences of quitting the organization (Yousef, 2017). It is seen as a sense that employees are committed to their organization when they evaluate the potential cost of quitting the job. Al Balushi et al. (2022) stated that continuance commitment is predicated on losing incentives and seniority if employees quit because they are considered indispensable. Researchers have further indicated that employees exhibit this commitment due to rewards and benefits rather than organizational goals. Therefore, strong continuance commitment of employees realizes that their decision to leave will make them lose their benefits and investments in the organization. A previous study conducted among employees in Poland proved that continuance commitment had a lower mean score (Grego-Planer, 2019). The result of this study was not aligned with

a study done by Bhatti et al. (2019) among employees who work in the hotel industry in Pakistan, as they found a moderate level of continuance commitment. This result is consistent with Feng et al. (2020) on employees in South China, as researchers also demonstrated the same level of continuance commitment. According to Kuhal et al. (2020), employees who are influenced by continuous commitment will be loyal to their work but may leave when they get another chance at better employment. The results stated above by previous researchers are inconsistent with a study investigated by Tian et al. (2018) in South China that found a high mean of continuance commitment. Employee with a high commitment to continued employment is implicitly unable to find employment elsewhere. It shows that employees need to comply with their responsibilities to ensure they can maintain their life. Therefore, the fair determination of resources between employees and employers can enhance the employees' continuance commitment to the organization.

## Materials and Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional research design to determine the level of organizational commitment among employees of the Malaysia State Sports Council. A total of 280 participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness of the target population (*Table 1*). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from Meyer et al. (1993), measured on a five-point Likert scale. The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to summarize and interpret the levels of organizational commitment. A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the research instrument. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that the instrument demonstrated good and acceptable internal consistency, supporting its suitability for the main study (Konting et al., 2009).

**Table 1.** Cronbach Alpha value of organizational commitment.

Variables	N of items	Cronbach Alpha
Affective Commitment	4	0.793
Continuance commitment	4	0.816
Normative commitment	5	0.837

## Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistical methods were applied to examine the level of organizational commitment based on the perspective of Malaysia State Sports Council employees, and the interpretation of the mean scores followed the classification proposed by Best (1977), as summarized in *Table 2*. The findings revealed varying levels of organizational commitment among employees of the Malaysia State Sports Council. Descriptive analysis showed that affective commitment recorded a mean score of 3.46 (SD = 0.464), indicating a moderate level of emotional attachment to the organization. Normative commitment demonstrated the highest mean score (M = 3.67, SD = 0.526), reflecting a high level of perceived obligation among employees to remain with the organization. In contrast, continuance commitment recorded a mean score of 3.45 (SD = 0.562), which also indicated a moderate level. Overall, the results suggest that

employees exhibited moderate to high levels of organizational commitment, with normative commitment being the most prominent dimension (*Table 3*).

**Table 2.** Interpretation of mean score.

Level	Mean score
Low	1.00-2.33
Moderate	2.34-3.66
High	3.67-5.00

**Table 3.** Mean score of organizational commitment.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Interpretation
Affective Commitment	3.46	.464	Moderate
Normative Commitment	3.67	.526	High
Continuance Commitment	3.45	.562	Moderate

### **Level of affective commitment**

The result of this study shows a moderate level of affective commitment among MSSC employees. The findings suggest that limited collegial enjoyment in the working environment may influence employees' emotional experiences, resulting in a moderate level of affective commitment among MSSC employees. Tsaur et al. (2019) provide support for the notion that workplace enjoyment is essential for employees, as it involves various social and interpersonal aspects. When organizations prioritize a fun work environment, it strengthens social connections among employees. Consequently, this leads to higher levels of commitment and dedication among employees. This indicates employees may feel gratitude and a sense of obligation when their emotional needs are taken care of by the organization. The result of this study was in line with a study done by Md Jais and Hamid (2019), indicating a moderate mean score of affective commitment among primary school teachers in Malaysia. Khaola and Rambe (2021) conducted a study among the public and private sectors in Lesotho and also found a moderate mean score for affective commitment. However, this finding of this study was not aligned with Albrecht and Marty (2020), who conducted a study in Australia. Researchers stated the high mean of affective commitment achieved due to the fulfilment of respective preferences made by employers. This enabled them to feel respected and remain loyal for a longer period. Meanwhile, Kamali et al. (2017) found a low mean of affective commitment among Yazd employees. Researchers stated the poor work-life balance due to the limited flexibility and opportunities makes employees feel less attachment to the organization. Hence, employers need to provide support to ensure that employees in the organization feel a sense of belonging. The good affective enables employees to engage in behavior that can benefit the organization. From this, it can make employees happier and more motivated in their work performance.

### **Level of normative commitment**

The result shows MSSC employees have a high level of normative commitment. MSSC employees agree that the positive culture in the working environment makes them feel high normative commitment. They might be due to the frequent meeting conducted by MSSC enables employees to develop a strong psychological attachment towards their tasks. According to Circular Service Number 7 of 2020, which governs employer-employee relations in the civil service, department heads are mandated to

hold meetings at least three times a year or more frequently as needed by the organization. Lim et al. (2022) also supports that regular meetings and discussions can enrich employees' psychological connection to work in the organization. From this, it can help the organization to achieve its mission and vision especially related to athletes' development. This is supported by Hashim (2019), high initiative and effort by the organization make employees have a high desire to serve at the organization. The researcher also stated the employees' commitment initiated to produce good competency and capabilities of the school. This aligns with past results that also revealed a high mean score of normative commitment among teachers in Kedah and Negeri Sembilan (Selvadurai and Mansor, 2021; Munian and Hasan, 2020). Meanwhile, Tiing and Amir (2020) stated that the high mean score of normative commitment implies that most employees have a moral obligation to continue working in the organization. However, this was not aligned with the findings of Sang et al. (2020), which signified a moderate mean score of normative commitment. Employees feel less social connection among peers, which causes them to have a moderate sense of belonging and obligation to the organization. This may lead them to get new opportunities in other organizations. Fauzi et al. (2020) support that poor commitment can lead employees to pull out of the organization and find new job opportunities. This indicates that employees think their obligations are not significant to the organizational contributions. Thus, this signifies that normative commitment can foster positive attitudes and behaviors, contributing to organizational performance. Employees with normative commitment feel a sense of obligation to exceed expectations, enhancing their motivation and willingness to contribute significantly.

### ***Level of continuance commitment***

Based on the finding, the continuance commitment among MSSC employees was at a moderate level. This study indicates that the moderate mean score of continuance commitment among MSSC employees may be influenced by external economic conditions, highlighting opportunities for the organization to further enhance benefits and support systems to strengthen employees' intention to remain. Alshaabani et al. (2021) support the idea that the lack of options to achieve employees' desired level may influence their commitment to the organization. This suggests that employees need to work to fulfill the cost of leaving requirement. The result is similar to the finding by Kern and Selamat (2021), which show a moderate mean score of continuance commitment among Malaysian students' representative councils. A study by Kun and Hamzah (2023) also reported a moderate mean of continuance commitment because most teachers are not worried about leaving their school as they believe they will not be unemployed. Nonetheless, Keman et al. (2021) contradict the finding as it was in a high mean score of continuance commitment. Researchers stated that fair treatment of the number of resources, time, and effort invested by the organization enables employees to feel a higher level of continuance commitment. Zainuddin et al. (2019) support that employees who are treated fairly in terms of rewards will have higher dedication and commitment toward the achieving the organizational goals. After all, it can be asserted that fostering good career growth opportunities can make employees feel secure and less inclined to leave the organization. The organization's ability to recognize the employees' concerns can contribute to a high level of continuance commitment.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that employees of the Malaysia State Sports Council exhibit moderate to high levels of organizational commitment, with normative commitment emerging as the most prominent dimension. These findings contribute to the existing literature on organizational commitment in the public sports sector and highlight the importance of organizational values and perceived obligations in fostering employee commitment. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that management initiatives aimed at strengthening affective and continuance commitment may further enhance overall organizational commitment. Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations, as it employed a cross-sectional design and relied on self-reported data from a single organizational context, which may limit causal inference and generalizability. Future research is therefore recommended to adopt longitudinal designs, include multiple organizations, and incorporate additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of organizational commitment.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involving any party in this research study.

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