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The Relationship Between Company, Manager, Group, and Individual-Level Variables and Affective Commitment

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPANY, MANAGER, GROUP, AND
INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science

by

Varavit Chinnapong

August 2020

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPANY, MANAGER, GROUP, AND
INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPANY, MANAGER, GROUP, AND INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

by Varavit Chinnapong

Predicting employees' affective commitment to their organization continues to be of strong interest to researchers. Previous studies have examined the relationship between specific organizational levels (company, manager, group, individual) and affective commitment. However, there is a lack of research that has analyzed all four levels in one study. Therefore, the current study sought to evaluate the relationships between the four organizational levels and affective commitment. More specifically, the current study analyzed human resources practices as the company-level variables, transformational and transactional leadership as the manager-level variables, group cohesion as the group-level variable, and psychological safety at the individual level. The sample comprised of 16,188 employees from a large multinational finance company. The data were collected by a global management-consulting firm as part of an annual employee engagement survey. All four levels made significant unique contributions to affective commitment, but when examined deeper, company level made the strongest contribution. Further analysis within the company level revealed that career advancement, and diversity and inclusion made the strongest contributions. The results suggest that organizational leaders and human resource professionals should focus on helping employees reach career objectives and develop a culture that is committed to diversity and inclusion to help foster affectively committed employees.

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Introduction

Affective commitment is a widely studied topic within the field of behavioral sciences (Mercurio, 2015). However, existing studies have examined affective commitment at specific levels of the organization, such as the company level, manager level, group level, or individual level. In other words, studies have yet to examine affective commitment when considering all four organizational levels (company, manager, group, and individual) in one study. Given that research is scarce in this area, the purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the four organizational levels and affective commitment. Examining all four levels in one study allows for the opportunity to compare each level and determine which has the greatest contribution to affective commitment.

Organizational Commitment

Much attention has been given to the psychological concept of organizational commitment because of its value in the workplace. Organizational commitment has been found in past studies to be strongly linked to turnover; in particular, employees who are strongly committed are less likely to leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Other researchers have defined organizational commitment as the degree to which an individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization as his or her own (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

There is consensus in the literature that organizational commitment encompasses three components that fully conceptualize the construct: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment is defined as the

emotional attachment to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Individuals who are affectively committed genuinely enjoy their membership, stay involved, and identify strongly with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment stems from an intrinsic and emotional drive that keeps employees committed. In addition, affective commitment can also be described as an individual's active willingness to be involved with the organization, as opposed to feeling obligated to do so (Ulusoy, 2016).

Continuance commitment is defined as commitment based on an individual's perception of potential costs associated with leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). For instance, employees may exhibit continuance commitment when benefits are associated with staying. If there is a negative cost associated with leaving, employees will likely weigh their options and choose to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1990). In essence, continuance commitment is different from affective commitment because employees are not intrinsically committed. Instead, extrinsic factors such as obtaining rewards play a key role in continuance commitment.

Lastly, normative commitment is portrayed as a perceived moral obligation to stay with an organization. In other words, normative commitment is one's sense of responsibility to an organization and is based upon what the individual believes is the right thing to do (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1990) also argue that normative commitment is internalized normative pressures to act in ways that meet the organization's goals and interests. This type of commitment could be possessed by employees who may not feel emotionally attached, but are concerned with the repercussions of leaving the organization.

Overall, the three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment identifies thoughts and feelings relevant in employees' choice to remain and work for an organization. All three components influence employees' relationships with their organizations, but for different reasons. Employees who are affectively committed are personally embedded with the organization and thoroughly *want* to stay. On the other hand, employees who show continuance commitment have a different motive: they feel like they *have* to stay with the organization. Finally, those who display normative commitment feel like they *ought* to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

Affective Commitment as a Focal Point

As stated earlier, affective commitment can be distinguished from continuance commitment and normative commitment because it is based on an employee's personal identification with an organization. Affectively committed employees want to be in the organization because they genuinely enjoy being part of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Past research has debated the contribution of each component as it relates to organizational commitment.

Mercurio (2015) argued that affective commitment was the core component of organizational commitment. To support this belief, he reported that past research has found affective commitment was more strongly correlated with key workplace behaviors than the other two components. For example, based on a meta-analysis, affective commitment had stronger correlations with absenteeism, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors than either continuance or normative commitment. Furthermore, affective commitment has been found to be more strongly related to other

work behaviors, such as assisting other employees, working longer hours, sharing information, and receiving better reviews by supervisors. This makes affective commitment an increasingly important variable to examine because of its implications to enhance the employee work experience.

Affective commitment is the only component of organizational commitment that pertains to one's emotions. Therefore, one could argue that affective commitment is the greatest way to drive highly committed employees who express genuinely positive attitudes towards the organization. Ideally, organizational leaders and human resource professionals should focus on creating and effectively managing a work environment where employees feel a strong sense of affective commitment. Considering these factors, affective commitment will be the focal point of the current study.

Relationship between Affective Commitment and Variables at Different Organizational Levels

For the context of this study, organizational levels are defined as four levels that start broad and eventually become more narrowly focused. The various levels include *company level*, which are seen as resources controlled by the organization as a whole; *manager level*, which portrays employees' relationships with their managers; *group level*, which emphasizes employees' experiences with their co-workers; and the *individual level*, which is experienced by the employees themselves. The theoretical framework for this structure comes from Kozlowski and Klein (2000), who define organizations as multilevel systems. As a result, various entities are formed that include individuals, dyads, teams, groups, and the larger organization.

Each level has an abundance of relevant variables that have been found to impact affective commitment. Affective commitment should be related to the various organization level variables that have been examined because of the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Social Exchange Theory indicates that social relationships are based on the exchange of benefits between two parties. People enter and remain in exchange relationships as long as the costs do not outweigh benefits. Social exchanges evoke the sense of obligations and norm of reciprocity, which includes the need or feeling to repay others for what they have offered. Take employee benefits as an example: when employees are provided benefits that meet their needs, they may reciprocate it with being affectively committed to their organization. Employees could feel that the organization is being generous by providing benefits to help them stay healthy, and in return, employees want to commit and contribute to the organization. Examples of variables at each level and how they influence affective commitment will be introduced in the following sections.

Company-Level Variables and Affective Commitment

In the growing world of globalization and product markets, the significance of human resource practices and involvement has surged in order to get the most out of employee productivity. Human resource management is considered a company-level variable because it is initiated at the corporate level and is provided to all employees. Many organizations realize that investing in employees will help maintain a competitive advantage (Wright & Kehoe, 2007). Resources provided at the company level are geared towards developing employee skills, improving work design, enhancing motivation, and

encouraging behavioral outcomes that will lead to greater financial gain (Wright & Kehoe, 2007).

Past studies examining outcomes from company-level human resource practices have paid close attention to organizational outcomes such as financial gains, productivity, market return, and performance measures through quality and customer feedback. Yet a smaller proportion of studies have assessed outcomes based on the employee's perspective, which includes affective commitment (Wright & Kehoe, 2007).

Scholars and practitioners have long discussed ways that human resource management practices and policies can foster highly committed employees. Researchers have discovered that developing and maintaining affective commitment starts with initial work experiences at the company level (Mercurio, 2015). Organizations (usually human resources departments) begin the recruitment and socialization processes for new employees and continue to influence and impact their affective commitment throughout the employee lifecycle. For example, common human resource practices include determining pay and benefits packages, providing training and development opportunities, providing opportunities for career advancement and growth, and promoting a culture that emphasizes diversity and inclusion, and a reasonable work-life balance. The rest of this section will examine the relationship between each of these human resource practices and affective commitment.

Compensation. Compensation consists of the monetary (cash) gains an employee receives from the employer (Abasili, Bambale, & Aliyu, 2017). Compensation is seen as the cornerstone of why people decide to work, such that the monetary gains associated

with working have a great impact on an employee's work effort, self-esteem, and satisfaction with management (Taylor & Pierce, 1999). Wadhawan, Mishra, and Garg (2017) emphasized that compensation could be used as a tactic to help retain employees and boost employee morale.

Researchers have assessed compensation through how employees feel about fair pay. Fair pay is deemed as the right for employees to have a good salary. The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines fair pay as an ideal compensation policy that encourages employees to work harder with more determination (Wadhawan, Mishra, & Garg, 2017). Compensation has been found to be significantly related to organizational commitment in various studies in multiple countries including the United States, Canada, and Pakistan (Wadhawan et al., 2017). In particular, fair pay showed the strongest relationship to affective commitment when compared to the other types of organizational commitment (Wadhawan et al., 2017). The strong association between fair pay and affective commitment should inform human resource management teams to pay close attention to fair pay when attempting to foster highly committed employees.

Benefits. Employee benefits are seen as tangible rewards for employees beyond just a paycheck; examples of employee benefits include medical coverage and retirement plans (Newman & Sheikh, 2012). Newman and Sheikh (2012) found that benefits that met employees' needs had a strong positive relationship with affective commitment in a sample of Chinese employees. However, other studies have reported contrary findings such that benefits had no relationship with affective commitment (Newman & Sheikh, 2012). It is important to further continue research on employee benefits as it relates to

affective commitment because of its potential in driving highly committed employees. In addition, benefits packages are expensive for organizations to implement. If benefits are not a key driver of affective commitment, organizations can best allocate funds elsewhere or minimize benefits options.

Learning and development. Learning and development opportunities are strategic methods organizations implement to further develop employee skills, increase productivity, align employee development to organization's needs, and retain valuable employees (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). An organization that emphasizes learning and development provides opportunities for employees to learn skills and knowledge needed to be effective in their roles.

Lau, McLean, Hsu, and Lien (2017) found a relationship between learning organizations and affective commitment, such that organizations that emphasized learning and development saw an increase in affective commitment among their employees. Other studies have concluded that learning and development opportunities are instrumental in fostering affective commitment among employees (Mercurio, 2015; Vance, 2006). This is especially true at the early stages of employee tenure because of the importance of obtaining skills and knowledge necessary to be successful at their jobs. When employees feel successful in their jobs, affective commitment increases. Furthermore, Bartlett (2001) conducted a study on a sample of nurses and found that perceived access to learning and development was significantly related to affective commitment.

Career advancement. Career advancement is the vertical movement or upward progression employees make within an organization (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). An example of career advancement is moving from an internship to a full-time position. Promotions and meeting career goals are another example of career development and is the focus of this current study.

Johnston, Griffeth, Burton, and Carson (1993) conducted a study to determine the impact of promotions or lack of promotions on affective commitment in a sample of sales employees. The affective commitment for promoted stayers, promoted leavers, non-promoted stayers, and non-promoted leavers were compared, with the finding that promoted stayers were significantly more committed than the other groups. The results of the study provide insight regarding the impact promotions have in positively influencing affective commitment.

Diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion initiatives have increased in attention and importance in the contemporary workplace (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). Diversity and inclusion is defined as creating a work environment where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can equally contribute to the organization's success (Parsi, 2017). Organizations are making a conscious effort to use diversity and inclusion to develop a welcoming environment for all employees, regardless of demographic differences in such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, birth region, education, and position (Cho & Barak, 2008).

In regards to the relationship between diversity and inclusion and affective commitment, very little research has been conducted. One study examined the direct

relationship between a diverse and inclusive culture and affective commitment in a sample of Egyptian physicians. The results revealed a positive and significant relationship between organizational inclusion and affective commitment (Mousa & Puhakka, 2019). The findings from this study should be further confirmed and uncovering more insights on the relationship between diversity and inclusion and affective commitment.

Work-life balance initiatives. Many organizations are beginning to emphasize the importance of having employees balance their work and home lives (Gulbahar, Kundi, Qureshi, & Akhtar, 2014). An example of a work-life balance initiative is providing employees with flexible work arrangements. Because the excessive prioritization of work can accumulate in stress, work-life balance initiatives can buffer negative outcomes associated from being overworked (Gulbahar et al., 2014).

A recent study revealed a significant and positive relationship between work-life balance and affective commitment (Gulbahar et al., 2014). Similarly, another study showed that work-life balance had a strong positive relationship with normative commitment (Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017). On the contrary, another study indicated that the promotion of work-life balance did not influence organizational commitment (Mano & Dev, 2017). These differences in results in previous research open the doors for further analysis.

When analyzing company-level variables, it is important to consider human resources practices as a key driver in influencing affective commitment. Consequently, compensation, benefits, learning and development opportunities, career advancement,

diversity and inclusion, and work-life balance initiatives are included in the current study. The study hopes to expand on the existing literature revolving around these variables.

Manager-level Variables and Affective Commitment: Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership

Managers have a critical impact on employee success in organizations. Managers in the workplace provide direction and mobilize efforts toward a common goal (Truxillo, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2016). Beyond the realm of directing and delegating subordinates' efforts, managers may also inspire and motivate employees. Manager-level variables have also been examined in relation to affective commitment. For example, leadership styles have been related to affective commitment. One particular leadership style that has been studied in regards to affective commitment is leader-member exchange, or LMX (Kim & Park, 2015). Leader-member exchange is the quality of the relationship developed between a manager and his or her subordinate. According to this theory, managers will establish a unique relationship with a small group of followers. Studies have revealed that high quality leader-member exchange is positively related to affective commitment (Kim & Park, 2015).

Leader-member exchange is just one example of a leadership style. Other leadership styles that have been shown to be related to affective commitment are transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Truxillo et al., 2016). Transactional leadership is portrayed as a leadership style that utilizes contingent reinforcement (Bass, Jung, Avolio, & Berson, 2003). In other words, the leader and subordinate have a relationship where exchanges are agreed upon, complied, or accepted. For example, a transactional leader

might praise or reward subordinates who successfully complete a task. Rewards are provided when a subordinate achieves formal goals or objectives.

On the other hand, transformational leadership is described as leaders who “transform” employees to become loyal to the organization and see their well-being and the organization’s well-being as being intertwined (Truxillo et al., 2016). Furthermore, transformational leadership builds upon transactional leadership by acknowledging the reward-reinforcement concept but also putting a strong emphasis on the ability to continually inspire and motivate employees (Bass, 1985). While transactional leadership is effective for helping employees recognize their goals, transformational leadership also provides support and emotional intelligence to guide subordinates to success (Amin, Akram, Shahzad, & Amir, 2018).

Transformational leadership puts emphasis on four core aspects: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Truxillo et al., 2016). The idealized influence component portrays the leader as someone followers want to identify with and emulate. The inspirational motivation aspect refers to a leader's ability to motivate subordinates by providing them meaningful and challenging work experiences. Intellectual stimulation is the ability of a leader to create an environment where employees can thrive and innovate, and remove obstacles that prevent employees from being creative. Lastly, individualized consideration is the ability to act as a coach tailored to the needs of specific employees.

Transactional leadership has been shown to be quite effective when it comes to accomplishing goals, especially when the task at hand is clearly defined (Hargis, Watt,

Piotrowski, 2011). In addition, transactional leadership accounted for some of the variance for ratings of leadership effectiveness and leadership satisfaction even after transformational leadership was controlled for (Hargis et al., 2011). However, research attempting to relate transactional leadership to affective commitment is limited in that more studies pay closer attention to transformational leadership. Therefore, another goal of the current study was to further evaluate transactional leadership and its influence on affective commitment.

In regards to the direct relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment, Amin et al. (2018) found significant relationships between all four sub-dimensions of transformational leadership and affective commitment. In particular, the individualized consideration aspect, where leaders act as a coach and provide consistent development and growth for subordinates, was most strongly related to affective commitment.

Another study showed similar findings, where managers with transformational leadership styles also saw high levels of affective commitment among their subordinates (Kodama, Fukahori, Sato, & Nishida, 2016). Based on the potential influences that these two leadership styles have on affective commitment, it is important to further examine both leadership styles.

Group-level Variables and Affective Commitment: Group Cohesion

Continuing down the organizational structure, employees typically work in teams to achieve common goals. Consequently, the relationships and experiences employees have with their co-workers are vital for employees to thrive. Workers collaborate to meet

formal goals, but they can also form meaningful relationships based on co-worker support (Rosseau & Aubé, 2010). Coworkers can also help other employees by providing both intangible and tangible aid. Tangible aid includes providing information or resources and helping to further develop skills; intangible aid includes support through care, approval, affiliation, and enhancing self-esteem (Rosseau & Aubé, 2010).

Group cohesion has frequently been examined because of its influence on affective commitment, but primarily within the sports world (Charbonneau & Wood, 2018). Group or team cohesion is defined as the extent to which team members work well together. Cohesive groups also feel connected and safe around each other, which helps foster team effectiveness (Chen, Zhou, & Klyver, 2019). Ha and Ha (2015) described group cohesion as an important factor in influencing affective commitment because being around supportive and friendly teammates make team experiences more meaningful. Some studies examining a relationship between group cohesion and affective commitment have focused on the military. For example, Charbonneau and Wood (2018) found that group cohesion was strongly correlated to affective commitment when surveying Canadian army personnel. Based on the lack of relevant research on group cohesion and affective commitment in the workplace, the current study aims to analyze group cohesion and its influence on affective commitment based on a sample of employees.

Individual-level Variables and Affective Commitment: Psychological Safety

Outside of company, manager, and co-worker levels of the workplace, individual employees also have their own set of psychological variables. For instance, one commonly analyzed variable in regards to affective commitment is perceived

organizational support, which is defined as the degree to which employees believe their work organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Numerous studies have concluded that employees' perceptions of, access to, and involvement with various organizational practices positively influences affective commitment (Morrow, 2011). Other notable individual-level variables that have shown to be positively related to affective commitment are job satisfaction and perceived organizational justice (Morrow, 2011). Job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which employees express positive affective orientation towards a job (Curry, Wakefield, Price, & Mueller, 1986). Perceived organizational justice refers to an employees' perception of fairness in organizations (Greenberg, 1987).

The individual-level variable of interest for this study is psychological safety, which is defined as the state in which employees feel a sense of interpersonal trust and mutual respect from others (Kirk-Brown & Van Dijk, 2016). When a work environment is deemed as psychologically safe, employees experience less fear, which allows employees to feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks. Ulusoy (2016) explains how it is easier to complete goals when one feels accepted. It is extremely important for organizations to foster psychological safety in employees to bring out the best in employees.

Past studies have revealed a positive relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. In a study featuring German and Turkish employees working in small to mid-sized enterprises, those who experienced greater psychological safety also reported higher affective commitment (Ulusoy, 2016).

Current Research on Multiple Organizational Level Variables and Affective Commitment

Through an extensive literature search to find studies that accounted for multiple organizational levels and affective commitment, a majority focused on a specific organizational level, but not all four levels. Typically, these studies analyzed variables within one or two organizational levels. For example, the manager-level variable, LMX and its direct relationship with affective commitment have been widely analyzed in the current body of literature. The same can be seen in regards to other variables from each organizational level. However, only a few studies have analyzed variables from different organizational levels in the same study (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Vandenberghe et al., 2004). The ability to analyze variables from multiple levels allows for a comprehensive analysis that provides insight on levels that contribute to affective commitment and allows for a comparison of the contributions of the levels. Based on a thorough literature review, only a few studies have included three levels in regards to affective commitment. The studies that examined three organization levels are further described.

Vandenberghe et al. (2004) related variables from three of the four organizational levels to affective commitment: manager, group, and individual. For manager level, LMX was the variable included in the study. For the group level, team cohesion was the representative variable. For the individual level, the authors utilized perceived organizational support. Results showed that LMX had a moderately strong relationship with affective commitment, team cohesion had a weak relationship with affective commitment, and perceived organizational support had a moderately strong relationship with affective commitment. Overall, the findings from this study suggested that leader-

member exchange (manager level) and perceived organization support (individual level) had moderately strong associations with affective commitment, while team cohesion (group level) had a weak relationship.

Another study that examined three organizational levels also looked at variables from the manager level, group level, and individual level (Allen & Meyer, 1990). For the manager level, manager receptiveness, defined as effort managers take to listen to employee's ideas (Allen & Meyer, 1990), was examined. For the group level variable, peer cohesion was the variable under analysis. In regards to the individual level, two variables were examined: feelings of equity and self-investment.

Results showed that, manager receptiveness had a strong relationship with affective commitment. The group-level variable of peer cohesion revealed a strong relationship with affective commitment, differing from the results of the Vandenberghe et al. (2004), which concluded that team cohesion was only weakly related to affective commitment. Out of the two individual-level variables, equity had a strong relationship with affective commitment, while self-investment revealed a weak relationship. Overall, the study indicated that affective commitment improved when managers were open to employee ideas and feedback, when there was strong peer cohesion, and when employees experienced equity in the workplace (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

As seen in Table 1, across these two studies, both manager-level variables were moderately or strongly related to affective commitment. Group level variables presented contrasting findings, as peer cohesion revealed a strong relationship with affective commitment but group cohesiveness uncovered a weak relationship. Lastly, at the

individual level, only perceived organizational support and feelings of equity revealed a moderate or strong relationship with affective commitment.

Table 1

Studies that Included Three Organizational Level Variables and Correlations with Affective Commitment

Study	Company Level	Manager Level	Group Level	Individual level
Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, (2004) N = 316	No variables represented	Leader-member exchange r = .35	Group cohesiveness r = .16	Perceived organizational support r = .40
Allen & Meyer, (1990) N = 337	No variables represented	Manager receptiveness r = .48	Peer cohesion r = .51	Self-investment r = .13 Equity r = .55

Purpose of the Current Study

There is a lack of studies in the literature that have related variables from all four organizational levels to affective commitment. The two studies discussed above included the manager, team, and individual levels, but did not include any variables from the company level. Through an extensive literature search, there has yet to be a study that has included the company level along with the other three levels. However, plenty of studies have analyzed the company level and one other level, revealing the importance company-level variables have on affective commitment.

In one study that included the company level and one other level, Neves, Almeida, and Velez (2017) looked at commitment-based HR for the company level and ethical leadership for the manager level. Commitment-based HR practices were compensation practices, trainings, and long-term goal alignment designed to motivate employees. Ethical leadership was defined as managers acting in ways that support employee growth with appropriate conduct. Results showed that commitment-based HR practices had a moderately strong relationship with affective commitment and ethical leadership had a moderate relationship with affective commitment. The results of this study indicate that both commitment-based HR practices (company level) and ethical leadership (manager level) play a role in employees' affective commitment, with commitment-based HR practices having a stronger relationship.

A study by Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, and De Lange (2009) related company-level and group-level variables to affective commitment. For the company level, high-commitment HR practices were the variables used, which included perceptions of job security, staffing and selection, rewards and benefits, performance management, and flexible work policies. For the group-level variable, teamwork was assessed and was defined as cooperation with team. In this study, both high-commitment HR practices (company level) and teamwork (group level) revealed a moderately strong relationship with affective commitment, indicating that both made an influence on affective commitment.

One study that examined the company and individual levels looked at high-performance work practices as the company level and perceptions of person-organization fit as the individual-level variable (Kooij & Boon, 2017). In this study, high-performance

work practices were defined as organizations that attempted to foster an environment where colleagues built long-term relationships to enhance performance. Employees who experience person-organization fit feel involved with the broader mission of the organization and define themselves with the organization (Kooij & Boon, 2017). In regards to the results, high-performance work practices (company level) had a moderate relationship with affective commitment, while person-organization fit (individual level) had a strong relationship with affective commitment. The overall findings indicate that both levels make a contribution to affective commitment, with person-organization fit (individual-level) being stronger.

Given this gap in the literature, the purpose of the current study was to evaluate the relationship between the four organizational levels and affective commitment. To be more specific, the current study analyzed human resources practices as the company-level variables, transformational and transactional leadership as the manager-level variables, group cohesion as the group-level variables, and psychological safety at the individual level. Being able to include all four levels in one study provides the opportunity to compare the four levels and determine each level's contributions to the relationship. Understanding and comparing the four levels may provide insights on levels that contribute more to affective commitment, and therefore, should be given more attention when attempting to foster employees who are affectively committed. The research question for the current study is:

Research Question: Which organizational level has the highest contribution to affective commitment?

Method

Participants

The present study utilized archival employee data collected from a large American owned multinational financial services company headquartered in the western United States. Geographic locations of facilities located abroad include Asia Pacific, Central Europe, Middle East, or Africa, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, and North America. The data were collected by a global management-consulting firm. Collected data encompass two datasets: (a) annual employee engagement survey consisting of 21 items assessing attitudes – about the company, leadership, and jobs – from 16,188 leaders and employees representing a wide array of jobs (e.g., legal, corporate, human resources, information technology, etc.); (b) data from human resource information systems (HRIS) for the purpose of segmenting the results by demographic (e.g., location, length of service, job type, etc.). The purpose of the survey was to gather employee feedback in order to identify strengths and areas of opportunity in the organization.

As seen in Table 2, the sample consisted of 9,636 males (59.5%) and 6,551 females (40.5%). Employees were located across five geographic regions with the majority in North America (53.4%). In terms of tenure, many employees had been with the organization fewer than three years (43.9%). In regards to job level, many were at the professional level (44.7%).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 16,188)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	9,636	59.5%
Female	6,551	40.5%
Geographic Region		
Asian-Pacific	4,553	28.1%
Central Europe, the Middle East, or Africa	911	5.6%
Europe	1,728	10.7%
Latin America and Caribbean	357	2.2%
North America	8,639	53.4%
Tenure		
less than a year	2,741	16.9%
1 - 3 years	4,364	27.0%
3 - 5 years	3,126	19.3%
5 - 10 years	3,251	20.1%
10 - 15 years	1,353	8.4%
15 or more years	1,353	8.4%
Job Level		
Executive Leadership	667	4.1%
Senior Director	1,779	11.0%
Director	3,265	20.2%
Professional	7,238	44.7%
Support	1,198	7.4%
Other	2,041	12.6%

Measures

The variables listed below were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5), with a *Don't Know / Not Applicable* option.

Company level. The variables that represent the company level (Compensation, Benefits, Learning and Development, Career Advancement, Diversity and Inclusion, and Work-life Balance) were measured by six items. The variables were consolidated into one score by averaging these items. The range of possible scores was 1.00 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5.00 (*Strongly Agree*), with higher scores representing greater favorability. The overall level demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$).

Compensation. Compensation consists of the monetary gains an employee receives from the employer (Abasili, et al., 2017). Compensation in this study assessed thoughts towards fair pay and was measured by the item, "I believe I am paid fairly for contributions I make at my company."

Benefits. Employee benefits are defined as tangible rewards for employees beyond just a paycheck; examples of employee benefits include medical coverage and retirement plans (Newman & Sheikh, 2012). Benefits were measured through perceptions of needs being met and measured by the item, "My company provides employee benefits that meet my needs."

Learning and development. Learning and development is described as strategic methods organizations implement to further develop employee skills, increase productivity, align employee development to organization's needs, and retain valuable

employees (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). For this study, learning and development focused on perceptions of currently learning development resources and if they helped develop skills. Learning and development was measured by the item, “The learning and development resources at my company help me grow my skills and knowledge.”

Career advancement. Career advancement is the vertical movement or upward progression employees make within an organization (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). For this study, career advancement was measured through employee thoughts about their career growth opportunities. Career advancement was measured by the item, “My company provides opportunities to achieve personal career objectives.”

Diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion is defined as creating a work environment where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can equally contribute to the organization’s success (Parsi, 2017). As it pertains to this study, diversity and inclusion was measured by employee’s perspective that the company was committed towards building a diverse and inclusive culture. Diversity and inclusion was measured by the item, “My company is committed to promoting a culture that values diversity, including diversity of thought, opinions and ideas.”

Work-life balance. Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium in which the demands of a person’s job and personal life are equal (Kanter, 1977). Many organizations are beginning to emphasize the importance of having employees balance their home and work lives because it promotes productivity and health (Gulbahar et al., 2014). In this study, work-life balance was measured by employee’s thoughts on how the company

supported work-life balance. Work-life balance was measured by the item, “My company supports me in achieving a reasonable balance between my work life and my personal life.”

Manager level. The two variables that represent the manager level (Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership) were measured by six items. The variables were consolidated into one score by averaging the items. The range of possible scores was 1.00 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5.00 (*Strongly Agree*), with higher scores representing more positive beliefs regarding their manager's leadership. The overall level demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$).

Transformational leadership. The intent of the study was to capture employees’ opinions on various characteristics that made a leader transformational and/or transactional. Transformational leadership is described as leaders who “transform” employees to become loyal to the organization and see their well-being and the organization’s well-being as being intertwined (Truxillo et al., 2016). There were three items used to measure transformational leadership ($\alpha = .88$). The items were “My immediate manager drives and supports a client-focused mindset,” “My immediate manager builds and maintains an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are encouraged,” and “My immediate manager empowers me to carry out my work effectively and provides support when needed.”

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is defined as a leadership style that utilizes contingent reinforcement (Bass et al., 2003). Transactional leadership was measured utilizing three items ($\alpha = .86$). The items were, “My immediate manager’s

actions are consistent with his/her words,” “My immediate manager recognizes or praises me for good work,” and “Throughout the year, I receive ongoing feedback on my performance from my immediate manager.”

Group level. The variable that represented the group level was group cohesion. Group cohesion is defined as the extent to which team members work well together. Group cohesion was measured through employee perspectives on their current teams and direct colleagues with five items. The items included “People I work with at my company are held accountable for results”, “In my team, we have a working environment in which different views and perspectives are valued”, “Different teams collaborate with each other to achieve business objectives,” “There is cooperation and teamwork within my team,” and “In my team, decisions get made without unnecessary delay.” The range of possible scores was 1.00 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5.00 (*Strongly Agree*), with higher scores representing higher levels of group cohesion. The overall level demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$).

Individual level. The variable that represented the individual level was psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined as the state in which employees feel a sense of interpersonal trust and mutual respect from others (Kirk-Brown & Van Dijk, 2016). In this study, the intent was to capture employees’ feelings towards psychological safety at work. Psychological safety was measured by four items: “I am encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways of doing things”, “I can freely express my views without fear of negative consequences”, “I am treated with respect as an individual”, and “I feel free to take appropriated risks in getting my work done.” The range of possible scores

was 1.00 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5.00 (*Strongly Agree*), with higher scores representing greater psychological safety. The overall level demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$).

Affective commitment. Affective commitment is defined as the emotional attachment to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment was measured by five items including “I feel proud to work for my company,” “I would recommend my company as a great place to work,” “I would choose to stay with my company even if offered a similar job elsewhere,” “I feel motivated to go beyond my formal job responsibilities,” and “Overall, I am satisfied with my company as a place to work”. The affective commitment scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$).

Procedure

The survey was administered online through a survey reporting tool. The link and request to participate in the survey was emailed to individual employees by the third party management-consulting firm. When participants clicked the link, a communication message appeared that indicated the anonymity of the collected responses and that participation was voluntary. After participation, the responses were collected in the survey reporting tool that could transfer data to Microsoft Excel or Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The survey closed after the two-week administration period, and a total of 95% of employees participated. Data were transferred to SPSS (Version 25) for statistical analysis, using Pearson correlations and hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for the measured variables are portrayed in Table 3. The means of the measured variables fell on the higher end of the scale, which indicated more favorable beliefs and attitudes. In other words, employees indicated positive opinions towards fair pay, benefits, learning and development, work-life balance, the opportunity to reach career objectives, and diversity and inclusion. In addition, employees also indicated positive opinions towards the transformational and transactional leadership from managers, as well as positive opinions towards group cohesion and feeling psychologically safe. The highest mean was the manager level ($M = 4.29$) and the lowest was the company level ($M = 3.98$). The manager level also had the greatest amount of variability ($SD = .80$), while the company level had the least ($SD = .66$). This indicates that the manager level had the highest score, suggesting that the respondents had more favorable opinions about transformational and transactional leadership styles than aspects at the other three levels, but also the greatest amount of variability in responses. The group ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .71$) and individual ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .75$) levels revealed similar means and standard deviations. Employees were affectively committed to their organizations ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .76$).

Pearson Correlations

Pearson correlations were conducted to compare the levels in terms of their relationship with affective commitment. The company level had a very strong positive relationship with affective commitment ($r = .73$, $p < .001$), which suggested that those

who had favorable opinions towards human resource management practices were more affectively committed. The manager level had a strong positive relationship with affective commitment ($r = .56, p < .001$), indicating that transformational and transactional leaders had a strong influence on affective commitment. The group level also had a very strong positive relationship with affective commitment ($r = .63, p < .001$), which indicated that employees who felt a sense of team cohesion also reported more affective commitment. Lastly, the individual level had a very strong positive relationship with affective commitment ($r = .65, p < .001$), which meant that those who experience psychological safety were more affectively committed. Overall, the company level revealed that it had the strongest relationship to affective commitment when compared to the other three levels.

When further analyzing the relationships between the variables, it is important to note that the levels are highly correlated with each other. The strong or moderate and positive relationships among the various levels could indicate overlap. However, the company level demonstrated the weakest correlation with the other three levels. Therefore, the company level seemed to be measuring a different concept, which could account for why the company level demonstrated the strongest relationship with affective commitment when compared to the other levels.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables (N = 16,188)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Company Level	3.98	.66	-				
2. Manager Level	4.29	.80	.54***	-			
3. Group Level	4.10	.71	.64***	.70***	-		
4. Individual Level	4.18	.75	.65***	.77***	.76***	-	
5. Affective Commitment	4.16	.76	.73***	.56***	.63***	.65***	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Test of Research Question

The research question of the current study is: *Which organizational level has the highest contribution to affective commitment?* To answer that question, a standard multiple regression (MRC) analysis and two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to answer the research question of which level had the highest contribution to affective commitment. The standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the amount of variance the four levels (company, manager, group, individual) accounted for in affective commitment and results are presented in Table 4.

As seen in Table 4, the analysis revealed that the four levels accounted for 60% of the variance in affective commitment, $R^2 = .60$, $R^2_{adj} = .60$ $F(4, 15812) = 5937.66$, $p < .001$. Looking at this table, the company level made the largest significant unique contribution

to affective commitment ($\beta = .50, t = 71.57, p < .001$). The betas for the other three levels, albeit significant, were much smaller than that for the company level (manager level: $\beta = .04, t = 5.46, p < .001$; group level: $\beta = .13, t = 15.96, p < .001$; individual level: $\beta = .20, t = 21.00, p < .001$). Overall, the standard MRC shows that the set of four levels were significantly related to affective commitment and all levels made significant unique contributions to affective commitment but that the company level had the strongest unique contribution. It is crucial to note that the large sample size was driving the significance.

Next, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine any additional variance after starting from the broadest level (company). Therefore, the levels were entered in the following order: company, manager, group, individual. The purpose of this order was to start at the broadest level (company) and move down to the most specific level (individual). The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 4

Standard MRC for Affective Commitment

Predictor	<i>r</i>	β
Company Level	.73***	.50***
Manager Level	.56***	.04***
Group Level	.63***	.13***
Individual Level	.65***	.20***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As seen in Table 5, the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression showed that company level accounted for 54% of the variance in affective commitment, $R^2 = .54$, $R^2_{adj} = .54$ $F(1, 15815) = 18267.89, p < .001$. In the second step, manager level was entered. Based on the second step, manager level accounted for a significant amount of variance above and beyond company level, $\Delta R^2 = .03$ $F(1, 15814) = 1342.64, p < .001$. In the third step, group level was added and accounted for a significant amount of variance above and beyond company and manager levels, $\Delta R^2 = .02, F(1, 15813) = 850.02, p < .001$. Lastly, individual level was added and accounted for a small yet significant amount of variance above and beyond company, manager, and group levels $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 15812) = 440.95, p < .001$. When evaluating based on the change in accounted-for variance, the manager, group, and individual levels did not contribute much to affective commitment once the company level was included.

Table 5

*Hierarchical MRC for Affective Commitment
(Company level first)*

Predictor	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1: Company Level	.54***	-
Step 2: Manager Level	.57***	.03***
Step 3: Group Level	.59***	.02***
Step 4: Individual Level	.60***	.01***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Another hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to enter the variables in the opposite direction of the previous hierarchical regression analysis by going from most specific (individual) to broadest (company). The variables were entered in the following order: individual, group, manager, company. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Hierarchical MRC for Affective Commitment
(Individual level first)*

Predictor	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1: Individual Level	.43***	-
Step 2: Group Level	.47***	.04***
Step 3: Manager Level	.47***	.00***
Step 4: Company Level	.60***	.13***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As presented in Table 6, the results from the first step revealed that individual level accounted for 43% of the variance in affective commitment $R^2 = .43$, $R^2_{adj} = .43$ $F(1, 15815) = 11844.40$, $p < .001$. In the second step, the group level was entered and accounted for a significant amount of variance above and beyond the individual level, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(1, 15814) = 1240.95$, $p < .001$. In the third step, the manager level was added and accounted for a very small yet still significant amount of variance above and beyond the individual and group levels, $\Delta R^2 = .001$, $F(1, 15813) = 30.45$, $p < .001$. In the fourth and final step, the company level was included and accounted for significant

amount of variance above and beyond the individual, group, and manager levels, $\Delta R^2 = .13$, $F(1, 15812) = 5122.74$, $p < .001$. Most notably, the change in R^2 at the fourth and final level (company) is much larger than the change in R^2 for the second (group) and third (manager) levels, indicating that company level made a large contribution even after the other three levels have been taken into account.

Based on the two hierarchical multiple regression analyses, the company level appears to make the greatest and most notable contribution to affective commitment. Company level accounted for more variance when entered first than did the individual level. Furthermore, when the company level was entered last, it accounted for a large amount of variance even after the individual, group, and manager levels were taken into account.

Further Analysis on Company Level

Based on the standard and hierarchical MRC analyses, the company level emerged as the highest contributor to affective commitment. Consequently, a standard multiple regression was conducted with only the variables that represented the company level to determine which aspects of the company level made the highest contribution to affective commitment. The six variables that were included in the company-level variable were compensation, benefits, learning and development, career advancement, diversity and inclusion, and work-life balance.

The results of this standard multiple regression analysis (see Table 7) revealed that the set of six company-level variables accounted for 55% of the variance in affective commitment, $R^2 = .55$, $R^2_{adj} = .55$, $F(6, 15971) = 3301.54$, $p < .001$. This analysis

suggests that the set of six company-level variables are significantly related to affective commitment.

Table 7

Standard MRC for Affective Commitment (Company-level variables)

Predictor	<i>r</i>	β
Benefits	.47***	.09***
Work-Life Balance	.61***	.17***
Career Advancement	.61***	.27***
Learning & Development	.50***	.07***
Diversity & Inclusion	.55***	.25***
Compensation	.50***	.18***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

All of the company-level variables made significant unique contributions to affective commitment; however, this could have occurred because of the large sample size. When evaluating based on the size of the beta, career advancement ($\beta = .27, t = 36.92, p < .001$) had the highest unique contribution. Diversity and inclusion had the next highest unique contribution ($\beta = .25, t = 39.90, p < .001$). After these two variables, there is a notable drop-off as follows: compensation: $\beta = .18, t = 27.99, p < .001$; work-life balance: $\beta = .17, t = 27.52, p < .001$; benefits: $\beta = .09, t = 13.91, p < .001$; and learning and development: $\beta = .07, t = 9.85, p < .001$. Overall, providing the opportunity to reach career objectives and promoting a diverse and inclusive culture appeared to matter more than fair pay,

supporting work-life balance, providing benefits that meet needs, and learning and development resources in predicting affective commitment.

Because career advancement and diversity and inclusion emerged as the greatest contributors within the company level, a hierarchical multiple regression with the company-level variables was conducted. The purpose was to see if any additional variance is accounted for after the two strongest contributors (career advancement and diversity & inclusion) were accounted for. The first step of the analysis included career advancement and diversity and inclusion. The second step included the remaining variables: compensation, work-life balance, benefits, and learning and development. The results can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8

Hierarchical MRC for Affective Commitment (Company-level variables)

	Predictor	<i>r</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1:	Career Advancement	.61***	.27***	.46***	-
	Diversity & Inclusion	.55***	.25***		
Step 2:	Compensation	.50***	.18***	.55***	.09***
	Work-Life Balance	.50***	.17***		
	Benefits	.47***	.09***		
	Learning & Development	.50***	.07***		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The first step of this hierarchical analysis of the company-level variables revealed that the set of Career advancement and diversity and inclusion accounted for 46% of the

variance in affective commitment, $R^2 = .46$, $R^2_{adj} = .46$ $F(2, 15975) = 6860.12$, $p < .001$. In regards to the two variables entered in the first step, career advancement ($\beta = .27$, $t = 36.92$, $p < .001$) and diversity and inclusion ($\beta = .25$, $t = 39.90$, $p < .001$.) made a similar contribution.

In the second step, the remaining four company variables (compensation, work-life balance, benefits, and learning and development) were entered. The addition of the other four variables accounted for a significant additional amount of variance, $\Delta R^2 = .09$, $F(4, 15971) = 819.38$, $p < .001$, in affective commitment. The strongest additional contributor was compensation ($\beta = .18$, $t = 27.99$, $p < .001$), followed by work-life balance ($\beta = .17$, $t = 27.52$, $p < .001$). Lastly, benefits ($\beta = .09$, $t = 13.91$, $p < .001$), and learning and development ($\beta = .07$, $t = 9.85$, $p < .001$) had the smallest betas. Once again, the significance is influenced by the large sample size. Therefore, when further evaluating, it is clear that the addition of the four variables did not make a notable contribution after Career advancement and diversity and inclusion had been taken into account.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between four organizational levels (company, manager, group, individual) and affective commitment. Although other studies have looked at one, two, or three organizational levels, no studies have included all four levels in one study as it pertains to affective commitment.

Summary of Findings

The research question sought to understand which organizational levels contributed to affective commitment. A standard multiple regression showed that all levels made significant unique contributions. However, the greatest contributor was company level, suggesting that company level had a greater influence on affective commitment than the manager, group, or individual levels.

In addition, two hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted. The first hierarchical multiple regression entered variables starting from the broadest (company) to the most specific (individual). The results indicated that the levels entered in subsequent steps after company level made significant unique contributions. However, when evaluated for change in accounted-for variance, the manager, group, and individual levels did not contribute much to affective commitment after company level was entered first.

The second hierarchical multiple regression was conducted in the opposite direction of the first hierarchical multiple regression. The variables were entered from the most specific (individual) to the broadest (company). The results indicated that the subsequent variables entered after the individual level made unique significant contributions. However, when the company level was entered last, it showed the greatest change in R^2 .

The two hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed that company level made the greatest contribution to the prediction of affective commitment. When the company level was entered first, the other three levels did not account for much more variance; when company was entered last, it had the largest change in accounted-for variance.

After discovering that the company level was the greatest contributor to affective commitment, additional analyses were conducted to dive deeper into which specific variables that made up the company level made unique contributions to affective commitment. Another standard multiple regression was conducted by entering the variables within the company level. This included the variables career advancement, diversity and inclusion, compensation, benefits, work-life balance, and learning and development. The results of this analysis indicated that career advancement and diversity and inclusion were the strongest contributors to affective commitment when compared to the other four variables and had similar betas to each other. The next set of variables with similarly lower unique contributions were compensation and work-life balance. The two with the lowest contributions were learning and development and benefits.

To confirm that career advancement and diversity and inclusion were the greatest company-level contributors, a final hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. The results of this analysis indicated that when career advancement and diversity and inclusion were entered in the first step, they accounted for most of the variance and both variables made significant unique contribution. In the following step, the remaining four variables were included and did not contribute much more to affective commitment. In other words, when career advancement and diversity & inclusion were controlled for, the

remaining four variables did not contribute much more. This further suggests that within the company level, affective commitment is influenced most by career advancement opportunities and feeling a sense of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Theoretical Implications

When comparing the existing literature to this study's findings, there are similarities. Mercurio (2015) indicated that organizations provide resources to employees through human resources management, which occurs at the company level. Some examples of these resources include determining pay, benefits, career development, and training opportunities, which have a positive impact on affective commitment. Based on the current study, human resource management resources provided at the company level showed a strong positive relationship to affective commitment. The company-level variables included in this study were compensation, benefits, diversity and inclusion, career advancement, learning and development, and work-life balance. In other words, when employees felt positive about those company-level variables, they were also more affectively committed.

In regards to the manager level, previous literature has suggested that leadership makes a difference in affective commitment. Amin et al. (2018) indicated that all four elements of transformational leadership had a positive relationship with affective commitment. Studies have also examined other forms of leadership, such as transactional and leader-member exchange (Kim & Park, 2015). In comparison to the current study, which looked at both transformational and transactional leadership as the manager level,

similar results are noted. The manager level in the current study also revealed a strong positive relationship to affective commitment.

For the group level, it has been shown that group cohesion has a positive association with affective commitment (Charbonneau, 2018). However, the majority of studies that examined the relationship between group cohesion and affective commitment have paid close attention to sports teams or military personnel. Therefore, research on affective commitment and group cohesion within the framework of the workplace is limited. The current study revealed that the group level had a strong positive relationship with affective commitment. This finding indicates that group cohesion also has a strong positive relationship with affective commitment within the workplace.

Within the individual level, previous studies have indicated that psychological safety has a positive relationship with affective commitment (Ulusoy, 2016). The current study indicated similar findings, as psychological safety had a strong positive relationship to affective commitment. In other words, the findings of the current study support the previous studies.

Given that only a few past studies have looked at three different organizational levels within one study, this study becomes one of the first to incorporate and compare all four levels. Based on previous studies that have looked at multiple organizational levels, the current study adds to the body of knowledge since the company level was not included in the two studies that looked at three organizational levels. Vandenberghe et al. (2004) analyzed the manager, group, and individual levels and found that the manager level had a strong relationship to affective commitment, while group had a weak relationship, and

the individual level had a moderate relationship. When evaluating more than three levels in one study, there are discrepancies with the current study. For instance, the current study indicated that manager, group, and individual levels had a strong positive relationship to affective commitment, while Vandenberghe et al. (2004) only saw a strong positive relationship with affective commitment at the manager level. However, the difference from the current study could have been based on the different variables examined.

In another study, Allen and Meyer (1990) also included three organizational levels, analyzing affective commitment at the manager, group, and individual level. The research findings suggest that manager and group levels had a strong relationship with affective commitment. The individual level included two variables, where one had a weak relationship (self-investment) and the other had a strong relationship (equity). The findings of the current study echo similar results in regards to manager, group, and one individual-level variable (equity) having strong positive relationships with affective commitment.

Since previous studies have only addressed three organizational levels in regards to affective commitment, the current study further builds upon this by incorporating all four levels. In particular, the two previous studies that included three organizational levels were both missing the company level. The current study was able to include the company level, as the findings suggest that the company level had a strong positive relationship to affective commitment. Ultimately, company level was also the greatest contributor to affective commitment, indicating the importance of including the company level in

similar studies moving forward. In other words, future studies should consider including variables that examine the broader resources that organizations provide, such as pay and benefits.

Practical Implications

Results of the current study revealed that company-level variables made the greatest contribution to affective commitment when compared to the other three levels. The findings could suggest that companies invest more attention and time to the resources provided by human resources management. Within the company level in particular, the opportunity for career advancement and feeling that there is a culture of diversity and inclusion emerged as the strongest contributors when compared to compensation, benefits, work-life balance, and learning and development. When organizational leaders attempt to foster more affectively committed employees, it could be important to emphasize strong career advancement opportunities for employees.

One method in which companies can help foster career advancement opportunities in employees is through a mentorship model. Based on a case study of a professional services firm, employees who were paired with a mentor were more likely to experience increased career advancement, dedication, and resiliency (Curtis & Taylor, 2018). In turn, employees experienced more affective commitment, which led to greater retention rates (Curtis & Taylor, 2018). Organizations should consider assigning a mentor to employees, as it can help employees advance their skills and careers, which leads to greater retention rates for employers.

Another method that helps foster career advancement is by providing clear and concise performance reviews. Performance reviews are considered a formal documentation system that gives employees feedback on their performance (Gul, Xiaolin, Lanrong, Ullah, & Ali, 2017). Providing clear performance reviews helps employees understand their roles and what is expected of them (Gul et al., 2017). When employees understand what is expected of them, they can invest energy in improving their performance and meeting goals, which leads to career advancements. However, when employees are not receiving clear performance reviews, they may perceive the review as unfair, which negatively impacts affective commitment (Gul et al., 2017).

In addition, organizational leaders should focus their time and energy on building a culture that values diversity and inclusion. Organizations can increase support and awareness for diverse groups by implementing employee resource groups. Employee resource groups are typically employee-led groups that are aligned with a common interest and offer a welcoming environment for minority or underrepresented groups of employees (Nair & Vohra, 2015). The purpose of an employee resource group is to have employees feel a sense of belonging and connection with other colleagues. Employees who participate in employee resource groups feel valued in an organization (Nair & Vohra, 2015). Organizations should encourage and allow employees to start employee resource groups by giving them a platform to connect with other colleagues and share ideas. However, leveraging the voice of an executive leader is necessary for employee resource groups because employees must feel like leadership is committed. Based on these findings of this study, organizations should provide mentors, establish clear

performance reviews for employees, and dedicate more effort towards creating a diverse and inclusive work culture. Emphasizing the two areas that contributed most to affective commitment could result in affectively committed employees and possibly reduced turnover.

Strengths of the Study

A strength of this study is that it included variables from all four levels of the organization, when other studies only included three at most. Comparing all four organizational levels paints a comprehensive and clear picture of what areas are contributing most to affective commitment. Therefore, scholars and organizational leaders can pinpoint and direct actions towards levels that have the most impact on affective commitment.

In addition, another strength of the study featured a large sample size of 16,188 employees, which increases the generalizability of the results. However, it is important to note that with the large sample size drove significant results through each analysis.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations that should be discussed. One limitation involved in this study is that the variables were highly correlated to one another causing the potential of overlap to occur. The overlap could have led to highly correlated variables, which leaves little distinction between each level of the organization.

Another possible limitation is the demographic composition of the sample with over half (53.4%) of respondents being from North America. The vast number of respondents from North America could indicate that the results reflect a particular location, since the

headquarters is located in the United States. In the future, a select amount of responses could be accounted for to represent each region equally.

In addition, the organization is a global company, meaning that cultural nuances could influence the way employees internalize their environments and respond to surveys. For example, individualistic cultures tend to respond to surveys on extreme ends of the scale, while collectivist respondents tend to answer towards the neutral part of the scale (Reimer & Shavitt, 2010). This impression management and response bias could have occurred given that over half of the respondents are from North America and a little over a quarter are from Asian-Pacific. This response bias could potentially interfere with the results, as employees respond in ways that align with their culture. For instance, individualistic vs. collectivist teams and managers operate differently and this could have affected how employees responded to the items.

Furthermore, another limitation is that the study is based on the responses from one company. Despite the large sample size, all employees belong to same organization, which also abides by the same values and mission. Therefore, the results may not apply to other organizations. In regards to the industry, the sample is based on a multinational finance company, making it difficult to generalize to other industries outside of the finance field.

In the future, it would be interesting to see more studies utilize all four different organizational levels as a framework when evaluating variables other than affective commitment. Another variable that could be analyzed is employee engagement, as it overlaps with affective commitment and has become a popular aspect of the employee

experience to measure in recent years (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). In addition, There were no studies found that looked at the four levels, leaving plenty of room for future research to uncover more findings.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to determine which organizational level (company, manager, group, individual) would make contributions to affective commitment. Given that the company level had the greatest contribution to affective commitment, it is important for organizational leaders and human resources professionals to pay close attention to human resource management resources provided to employees. In particular, the study indicated that having opportunities to meet career objectives and having a culture of diversity and inclusion were the strongest contributors within the company level. These findings on improving career opportunities and improving diversity and inclusion could influence employees to feel more affectively committed.

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Appendix

Scale Items

Company Level Items

My company provides employee benefits that meet my needs.

My company supports me in achieving a reasonable balance between my work life and my personal life.

My company provides opportunities to achieve personal career objectives.

The learning and development resources at Company X help me grow my skills and knowledge.

Company X is committed to promoting a culture that values diversity, including diversity of thought, opinions and ideas.

I believe I am paid fairly for the contributions I make at Company X.

Manager Level Items

My immediate manager drives and supports a client-focused mindset.

My immediate manager's actions are consistent with his/her words.

My immediate manager recognizes or praises me for good work.

My immediate manager builds and maintains an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are encouraged.

My immediate manager empowers me to carry out my work effectively and provides support when needed.

Throughout the year, I receive ongoing feedback on my performance from my immediate manager.

Group Level Items

People I work with at Company X are held accountable for results.

In my team, we have a working environment in which different views and perspectives are valued.

Different teams collaborate with each other to achieve business objectives.

There is cooperation and teamwork within my team.

In my team, decisions get made without unnecessary delay.

Individual Level Items

I am encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways of doing things.

I can freely express my views without fear of negative consequences.

I am treated with respect as an individual.

I feel free to take appropriate risks in getting my work done.