

Cultivating loyalty: the role of inclusive leadership in fostering organizational commitment through mediating effect of psychological safety and perceived organizational support

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the effect of inclusive leadership (IL) on organizational commitment (OC) in Pakistan's telecom sector. Psychological safety (PS) and perceived organizational support (POS) are taken as mediators to explore the interplay of the constructs. The study aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing insights into the critical role of inclusive IL impacting OC through PS and POS as mediators.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses a quantitative methodology and a cross-sectional survey of 289 employees of the telecom sector working in the front office dealing with customer services. Using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling, the study tests hypotheses on the critical role of OC in Pakistan's telecom sector. With the aid of SPSS v27 and AMOS v23 for structural equation model construction and path analysis, a time-lagged data collection method was used to avoid common method bias.

Findings – According to the research paper's findings, evidence supports the hypotheses, suggesting that IL has a positive direct and indirect impact on OC via PS and POS.

Originality/value – This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on IL, PS, POS and OC. This study also tests the mediating role of PS and POS in Pakistan's telecom sector's service domain. This research also provides practical implications for leaders and employees concerning PS and POS in the specific context of Pakistan's society.

Keywords Inclusive leadership (IL), Organizational commitment (OC), Psychological safety (PS), Perceived organizational support (POS), Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The contemporary organizational landscape is complex, and numerous economic challenges are caused by an unstable political environment of society, affecting organizational productivity (Nurimansjah, 2023). In the present technological advancement era, an organization's success

hinges on the competencies of its employees, whose attributes are crucial for the organization's survival and growth in a competitive environment, which is nexus with organizational commitment (OC) (Yusuf *et al.*, 2024). Today's leaders must prioritize creating a work climate emphasizing diversity, inclusion and employee well-being (Nielsen, 2024). Inclusive leadership (IL), which involves leaders promoting diversity, fostering open communication and establishing psychological safety (PS), is receiving more attention for its potential influence on organizational results (Ly, 2024).

The way leaders approach innovation can significantly impact employee creativity, making it an essential external driving factor. Employees tend to follow the lead of their leaders, and when leaders endorse innovation, it can boost employee performance in this area (Gui *et al.*, 2024). With globalization, the internet age and a shift in employee demographics, it has become necessary to adapt organizational leadership to reflect these changes better (Hiebl and Pielsticker, 2023). This means embracing IL styles that consider employees' unique personalities and respect their diversity. This approach has gained attention in both academic research and enterprise practices (Vakira *et al.*, 2023).

The connection between inclusive leaders and their followers is probably affected by social exchanges, as indicated by Morinaga *et al.* (2023) and Korkmaz *et al.* (2022). Prior research on inclusion and IL has used the social exchange theory (SET). It is intended to analyze the influence of inclusion and its significance for individuals, groups and organizations, according to Xiaotao *et al.* (2018). Korkmaz *et al.* (2022) suggest that showing appreciation to followers through reciprocity is essential for effective IL. The SET is a well-established concept in IL studies due to the reciprocal interactions between leaders and followers, as well as the element of showing appreciation (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2022; Ahmad *et al.*, 2023; Korkmaz *et al.*, 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to address the research gap related to the impact of IL on OC. To achieve this objective, the study aims to answer the following research questions: How does IL affect OC? How do PS and POS affect the relationship between IL and OC? The study aims to recognize IL as a viable leadership style and enhance OC as its research objectives.

The significant research problem this endeavor aims to address is that brain drain has been occurring rapidly for the last one and a half years due to Pakistan's unstable economic and political environment (Abbas and Sultan, 2023). Employees are under severe stress that organization support is not there when they are required, nor are their voices heard, as PS is lacking. Literature acknowledges that under such circumstances, organizations must choose one leadership style to involve the employees and appreciate their contribution towards organizational goals. Such a leadership style is IL, which manages diversity in the organization, provides support, respects them and encourages them to speak their ideas fearlessly. Moreover, OC is pivotal, encouraging inclusive leaders to engage employees and ensure they will not be humiliated or punished. Their concerns are addressed appropriately as organizational support is present.

Furthermore, organizations today confront massive problems in retaining and engaging a diverse workforce. Inadequate inclusion in leadership practices can make employees feel excluded, impeding their sense of belonging and dedication to the organization. The virtual and dynamic work environment in modern settings increases complexity, requiring leaders to adjust their strategies to guarantee that employees feel appreciated and assisted. This study will investigate current issues and empirically examine the impact of IL on OC through mediation in Pakistan's telecom sector.

Literature review

Organizational commitment

OC is a widely recognized concept in organizational behavior research. It is commonly defined as employees' psychological attachment to their organization, which leads them to remain with

the firm despite external factors (Vuong *et al.*, 2023). OC determines how an individual identifies and engages with a specific organization. As Mowday *et al.* (2013) noted, OC has generated considerable interest in management research, primarily due to its potential to explain various workplace behaviors, which earlier techniques had failed to account for satisfactorily. OC is a multifaceted construct that reflects an individual's emotional attachment, identification and dedication toward their organization. It has been recognized as a crucial aspect of employee engagement and its impact on organizational success cannot be overstated (Pattnaik *et al.*, 2023). Scholars have identified various factors contributing to OC, including job satisfaction, perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived alternatives in the job market. A thorough understanding of these factors can help employers foster a positive work environment, enhance employee commitment and retain talented employees (Vuong *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, OC remains a keen interest among scholars and practitioners alike, as it has significant implications for employees and organizations.

OC comprises three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. As per organizational psychology, affective commitment pertains to the emotional attachment an employee develops toward their workplace (Mousa and Chaouali, 2023). This attachment stems from the employee's perceptions of congruence between their values and beliefs and the organizational mission, creating a sense of belongingness within the company (Mousa and Chaouali, 2023), whereas continuance commitment denotes employees' intention to remain due to the high cost of leaving the organization (Gharbi *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, normative commitment relates to employees' perceived obligation to stay with the organization based on their moral values and beliefs (Inam *et al.*, 2023). The importance of OC in the management sector cannot be overstated, as it significantly impacts job outcomes. Employees who exhibit high levels of commitment are likely to perform better than those who lack such dedication (Pattnaik *et al.*, 2023). They tend to display more significant effort, diligence and enthusiasm, which can ultimately lead to improved organizational performance. One of the most widely cited perspectives on OC is the model Mowday *et al.* (2013) proposed. They define it as a strong belief in and dedication to the organization's goals and values and a willingness to put in significant effort to achieve them. This perspective underscores the importance of employees' emotional connection with their organization and its role in fostering commitment (Mowday *et al.*, 2013).

Inclusive leadership

The notion of inclusion has been extensively studied in different areas of organizational research. Inclusion covers various interconnected ideas such as atmosphere for inclusion, workgroup inclusion and IL, as discussed by Nishii (2013), Randel *et al.* (2018) and Shore *et al.* (2011). Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) were the first to introduce "inclusiveness" in leadership studies. They defined IL as *overcoming the inhibiting effects of status differences, allowing members to collaborate in process improvement* (p. 941). Other academics have aimed to explore the concept of IL from different viewpoints (Zeng *et al.*, 2020).

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) defined IL as a one-dimensional concept and created three items to assess it. Carmeli *et al.* (2010) defined IL as having three dimensions: *openness, availability, and accessibility*, and created a scale with nine items to measure it. Inclusive leaders create an atmosphere where workers from all backgrounds feel appreciated and express themselves freely. They encourage people to take the initiative and use nontraditional ways. Carmeli *et al.* (2010) emphasized that inclusive leaders convey the advantages of their actions and reassure people that there will not be any unfavorable outcomes. A leader's openness signals a willingness to consider novel ideas and creative solutions to achieve desired professional goals. It also demonstrates their alertness to fresh opportunities to improve work processes. Leaders need

to foster an atmosphere where people and groups may benefit from a varied and inclusive culture. They should also embrace flexibility in the norms governing acceptable behavior and show a strong interest in personal growth and learning (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008). The availability component pertains to the leader's consistent involvement with the team and their accessibility for guidance on various matters, organizational challenges and diverse questions. Finally, the accessibility element refers to how the leader encourages individuals to bring up emerging concerns and is readily available to deal with problems (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010).

Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) concluded that the practice of leadership and followership relies on respect, recognition, responsiveness and responsibility. These four components of IL are essential to a prosperous practice. IL involves assembling diverse teams, managing change, treating crises and addressing injustices and pressures.

Inclusive leadership and organizational commitment

IL is pivotal in building an environment that fosters OC in today's dynamic and diverse workplace (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). This mutually beneficial relationship between IL and OC is vital in promoting a culture of equity and diversity that enhances employee engagement and motivation. By creating an atmosphere that celebrates diversity and supports equity, inclusive leaders contribute to developing OC among employees (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). Through advocating for various perspectives, offering equal chances and guaranteeing equitable treatment, IL techniques are well-received by employees and enhance a healthy work environment (Yasin *et al.*, 2023).

When leaders show a dedication to diversity, employees are more likely to feel acknowledged and appreciated and have a sense of belonging (Ly, 2024). Trust and reciprocity are fostered by IL, leading to a social exchange that enhances employees' commitment and motivation to contribute to the organization's success (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). This emotional connection strengthens employees' loyalty and commitment to the organization, increasing OC (Ly, 2024).

The connection between IL and OC highlights the crucial influence of leaders in creating a work environment that promotes employee engagement, loyalty and a shared sense of purpose (Ly, 2024). Therefore, organizations must prioritize IL to create a culture that celebrates diversity and fosters a sense of belonging and equity. Research shows that employees working in an inclusive environment where leaders actively promote diversity and inclusion may perceive this as a favorable social interaction (Tran and Choi, 2019). Employees who feel valued and included tend to be more committed to the organization. IL, OC and SET are interrelated constructs (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). Adopting IL practices has been shown to foster positive social interaction between employees and their organization, leading to increased levels of commitment. Creating a work environment that promotes diversity and inclusivity aligns with the fundamental principles of SET, emphasizing the importance of mutual benefit and reciprocity in social interactions (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). This is likely to enhance the overall business culture and employee engagement. Therefore, leaders who adopt IL practices can improve OC and foster a more positive social exchange within their workplace (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). After analyzing the discussion, the first hypothesis of the study can be summarized as follows:

H1. IL has a positive impact on OC.

Psychological safety

Edmondson and Bransby (2023) posit that PS is a crucial driver of employee engagement and encourages employees to speak up and contribute to organizational learning initiatives.

[Xu et al. \(2023\)](#) provide empirical evidence to support this claim, demonstrating that employees are more likely to engage in learning behaviors such as asking for help, sharing knowledge and taking calculated risks when they feel psychologically safe.

[Sherf et al. \(2021\)](#) argue that silence and voice are two distinct constructs related to PS in different ways. Specifically, silence is more strongly correlated with PS than voice and is more favorably associated with burnout. [Gerpott et al. \(2021\)](#) find that PS acts as a buffer against the adverse effects of perceived age diversity on learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of this construct in facilitating team learning.

Furthermore, [Veltrop et al. \(2021\)](#) provide insights into the role of PS in participatory board meetings, demonstrating that board chairs who foster PS are more effective at resolving cognitive conflicts between board members and the CEO. The literature suggests that PS is crucial in promoting employee voice and learning behaviors, facilitating team learning and promoting positive workplace outcomes ([Xu et al., 2023](#)).

Mediating role of psychological safety between inclusive leadership and organizational commitment

The present study sheds light on the connection between IL, OC and the PS intermediary function by adopting a SET perspective ([Siyal, 2023](#)). Inclusive leaders advocate for diversity and equity in the workplace, which leads to pleasant social interactions with employees. PS enables employees to feel confident in taking social risks, sharing their viewpoints and participating without worrying about negative consequences, facilitating these pleasant interactions ([Edmondson and Bransby, 2023](#)). PS fosters trust and openness in the corporate setting by serving as a channel in social exchanges ([Vatankhah, 2021](#)). Employees who feel psychologically protected tend to demonstrate increased dedication to the firm. Within this context, IL techniques establish an environment where individuals perceive a fair exchange of resources and experience psychological security, resulting in a deeper emotional connection to the organization ([Vakira et al., 2023](#)). PS mediates the relationship between IL and OC, emphasizing interdependence within the SET paradigm ([Vatankhah, 2021](#)). The second postulated hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H2. PS mediates the relationship between IL and OC.

Perceived organizational support

The POS concept has been widely discussed in organizational literature. It is a characteristic encompassing supportive leader behavior and an overall supportive organizational climate ([Utomo et al., 2023](#)). The level of an employee's POS may be based on various factors, such as the organization's members' readiness to lend them special equipment or assistance to finish the project or the opportunities for training and development ([Aldabbas et al., 2023](#)). It is pertinent to note that employees are often aware of the organizational and environmental limits that may hinder the fulfillment of their expectations. Theoretically, high levels of POS are believed to foster a sense of obligation among workers to return favors by adopting attitudes and actions that advance the organization ([Aldabbas et al., 2023](#)). Individuals who felt a high degree of POS were likely to perceive a responsibility to care about the organization's development and assist it in realizing its objectives ([Utomo et al., 2023](#)). It has been stated that *high levels of POS create a sense of obligation to make a difference to the organization*. Comparably, individuals who felt stronger POS saw an improved needs-supply match and enhanced creativity ([Aldabbas et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, organizations must ensure employees perceive favorable treatment, such as supervisor support, to improve their POS.

This can lead to higher employee commitment and engagement levels, positively impacting organizational outcomes (Aldabbas *et al.*, 2023).

Mediating role of perceived organizational support between inclusive leadership and organizational commitment

POS mediates between IL and OC, creating an essential link in organizational dynamics (Qi *et al.*, 2019). IL, which supports diversity, justice and equitable treatment, establishes a foundation for constructive social interaction between leaders and employees (Hudie *et al.*, 2017; Qi *et al.*, 2019). Employees' impression of organizational support plays a vital role in this interaction. IL techniques enhance a feeling of support by acknowledging varied contributions, offering equal chances and promoting a collaborative and respectful work atmosphere (Hudie *et al.*, 2017). Employees' perception of support impacts their overall commitment to the organization. When employees feel appreciated and supported, the positive correlation between IL and OC is enhanced, resulting in higher job satisfaction and loyalty (Qi *et al.*, 2019). POS is how the IL style positively impacts OC. This mediation emphasizes the importance of establishing a workplace culture that provides employees with IL and genuine support, leading to a more substantial and lasting dedication to the firm (Qi *et al.*, 2019).

IL promotes justice, diversity and equal chances, fostering a strong social relationship with employees. Employees in this interaction view organizational support as a vital component, demonstrating the reciprocity found in SET (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). This mutual relationship is based on the ideas of SET, in which favorable contacts foster a dedication to the organization. The interconnected framework emphasizes how SET, IL, POS and OC work together to create a mutually beneficial and positive workplace environment (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). Henceforth, the third hypothesis of the study is:

H3. POS mediates the relationship between IL and OC.

The proposed theoretical framework, in addition to its core hypotheses, presents several subhypotheses as follows:

H4. IL has a positive impact on PS.

H5. IL has a positive impact on POS.

H6. PS has a positive impact on OC.

H7. POS has a positive impact on OC.

Facilities management organizations

Facilities management primarily focuses on optimizing organizational efficiency. The decisions about facilities are strategic business considerations (Alexander, 2013). The justification for investing in the development of facilities relies on comprehending the capacity of these facilities to establish favorable working conditions that facilitate essential operations (Alexander, 2013). Strategically designed facilities and high-quality support services can generate substantial financial gains for a corporation. In the face of increasing competition and rapid change, numerous prominent organizations are reassessing facilities' role in achieving business success (Alexander, 2013). They acknowledge poorly managed facilities' negative impact on their operations and actively seek ways to enhance value through efficient planning and management (Alexander, 2013).

Facilities management is an organization's systematic approach to guarantee that its buildings, systems and services effectively support its core operations and procedures while helping achieve its strategic objectives in dynamic environments (Alexander, 2013). The primary objective is to allocate resources toward fulfilling user requirements, thereby supporting the pivotal role of individuals within businesses. In addition, the aim is to enhance quality and, most importantly, to mitigate risks, ensuring the security and stability of the organization's operations (Alexander, 2013).

Facilities management applies to companies across all sectors and developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the disparities in culture and management approach while providing the necessary operational environment and services to ensure business efficiency in a certain setting (Alexander, 2013).

Functions of facilities management organizations

According to Alexander (2013), the functions of FMO encompass:

- *Space*: Optimized to meet evolving requirements and efficiently used.
- *Environment*: The workplace environment is designed to promote well-being and sustainability.
- *Information technology*: IT is used to facilitate efficient communication.
- *Support services*: To provide not just services but high-quality services to ensure user satisfaction and make stakeholders feel valued and well-cared.
- *Infrastructure*: Established to deliver the necessary capacity and reliability.
- *Project management*: Renovations and upgrades will be conducted to enrich the prevailing quality and functionality of the project, ensuring that it meets and exceeds the desired standards and requirements.
- *Safety and security*: This implies health and safety compliance and the protection and well-being of individuals and their belongings through precautionary measures and risk management.

Research methods

The model's foundation is rooted in SET (Blau, 1968). SET is a widely recognized and applicable paradigm that can be used to evaluate employee behavior in a professional setting. In this context, it is pertinent to note that the prevalence of mental and physical illnesses in contemporary society has impacted all facets of daily living (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). Cropanzano *et al.* (2017) define SET as a mutually beneficial interaction between participants to achieve a common goal. A person's response regarding their mental or physical actions in a shared connection leads to a reciprocal exchange of responses, a central tenet of SET. Professional networking is becoming increasingly complex in modern society (Zhao and Detlor, 2023).

Blau's concept of "exchange and power", introduced in 1964, highlights one party's ability to influence another party to do a particular action. Homans (1958) studied the psychological aspects of this phrase, whereas Blau (1968) focused more on the economic perspective. SET's fundamental principles are dedication, allegiance and dependability, originating from fostering interpersonal interactions (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017). This component requires players to follow specific standards, including the laws that govern transactions. Norms, such as those governing ethical conduct, represent the ethical portrayal of those involved in a transactional interaction (Zhao and Detlor, 2023). The exchange of

resources can be classified into various categories, such as social standing, expertise, material possessions, emotional support, financial resources and professional aid (Stafford and Kuiper, 2021). These assets are desirable benefits sought in social interactions, categorized into economic (physical) and socioemotional (symbolic) components. Usmani and Khan (2022) conducted an extensive investigation into the interpersonal relationships between managers in the workplace.

As proposed by Wan and Antonucci (2016), SET suggests that social behavior results from an exchange process. This means that individuals consider the benefits and drawbacks of their social connections and may end the relationship if the risks outweigh the benefits (Wan and Antonucci, 2016). The ultimate goal of this exchange is to maximize benefits. Many studies focus on trade relations, specifically the relationships between employers and employees, as Blau (1968) highlighted. The formality in interactions lowers, but the success of transactions relies on the shared dedication of all parties involved. Blau (1968) also viewed relationships as transactions.

Data and methods

The present study has used a rigorous quantitative methodology to investigate the hypothesized relationship between the expected model and the prevalent method for cross-sectional analysis (Savitz and Wellenius, 2023; Setia, 2016). The study used a deductive approach to attain a plausible explanation of the relationship between the variables under investigation (Pandey, 2019).

The present study was conducted in Pakistan's telecom sector, specifically focusing on the service side of telecom operators. The study focused on *Telenor Pakistan*, *Pakistan Mobile Communication Limited (PMCL/Jazz)*, *Pakistan Telecommunication Mobile Limited (PTML/Ufone)*, and *China Mobile Pakistan (CMPak/Zong)*, which were the intended populations under investigation. The research sample comprised front-office personnel engaged in various customer-oriented roles, including sales, support and call center operations. The rationale behind analyzing the telecom sector was its substantial contribution to the gross domestic product, which makes it an important sector to study. The study used purposive sampling based on prior research conducted in analogous settings (Campbell et al., 2020). The survey was conducted using a self-administered paper-based questionnaire in the proximal regions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Sample and procedure

The size of a sample can significantly impact the analysis of a study. This study used a cross-sectional design, and a power analysis was conducted to determine the minimum sample size needed to obtain statistically significant results. A total of 1,149 individuals were included in the poll, and various statistical metrics, including a p -value of 0.05, a statistical power of 0.95 and an effect size of 0.30, were used. According to statistical power, the study aimed to have a minimum of 289 participants (Cohen, 2013).

To mitigate common method variance (CMV), the study used a time-delayed data collection technique with a one-month interval between two independent stages. The first phase (T1) collected data on IL and participant demographics, whereas the second phase (T2) gathered information on OC, PS and POS. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the study demographics.

Measures

The methodological approach applied in the present study draws on the findings of prior research endeavors conducted within the same domain. The participants were provided with

Table 1. Demographics

Measures	Items	Frequency	%age
Gender	Male	173	59.86
	Female	116	40.14
Age (years)	25–35	139	48.10
	36–45	117	40.48
	46 and above	33	11.42
Education	MS/M. Phil degree	37	12.80
	Master's degree	213	73.70
	Bachelor's degree	39	13.49
Work experience	Less than 5 years	87	30.10
	5–7 years	92	31.83
	7–9 years	67	23.18
	9 years and above	43	14.88

Source: Authors' own work

explicit instructions to address the questions. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to elicit their opinions and perspectives. Scale is present in the [Appendix](#).

- *Inclusive leadership (IL)*: IL is measured by the adopting nine-item scale of [Carmeli et al. \(2010\)](#). The scale comprises three dimensions: openness, availability and accessibility, having three items each. The Cronbach alpha is 0.857, which signifies that the scale is highly reliable.
- *Organizational commitment (OC)*: The study at hand adopted three dimensions of [Allen and Meyer \(1990\)](#) scale, namely, affective commitment (consisting of eight items, four of which were reverse coded), continuance commitment (consisting of eight items, two of which were reverse coded) and normative commitment (consisting of eight items, three of which were reverse coded). It is worth noting that the scale exhibits high reliability, as indicated by a Cronbach alpha value of 0.823.
- *Psychological safety (PS)*: In the present study, [Edmondson \(1999\)](#), a five-item scale has been adopted to measure PS. The scale's Cronbach alpha value, which stands at 0.827, is notable for its high reliability.
- *Perceived organizational support (POS)*: The measurement of POS was carried out by adopting the short version of the scale as proposed by [Eisenberger et al. \(1997\)](#). It is noteworthy that two of the items were reverse-coded to ensure data accuracy. With a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.883, the scale exhibited high reliability.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The statistical findings are presented in [Table 2](#), which showcases the mean, standard deviation (SD), skewness, kurtosis and multicollinearity values of the examined constructs. The participants' responses on a five-point Likert scale ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree and the mean and SD values offered insights into the average rating and the variability of the responses, respectively. The standard deviation data specifically

Table 2. Mean, SD, skewness, kurtosis, multicollinearity

	Mean	SD	Data normality		Collinearity statistics	
			Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	VIF
Inclusive leadership	2.847	0.653	0.320	2.539	–	–
Organizational commitment	2.870	0.456	0.612	1.097	0.552	1.810
Psychological safety	3.568	0.692	0.666	–0.993	0.903	1.108
Perceived organizational support	2.985	0.699	–0.089	0.632	0.544	1.838

Note: Dependent variable: organizational commitment
Source: Authors’ own work

demonstrate how responses are dispersed around the mean. Skewness and kurtosis were examined to assess the normality of the data, as suggested by [Kline \(2023\)](#). According to [Hair et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Kline \(2023\)](#), data is considered to be normally distributed if the skewness value is within ± 2 and the kurtosis value is within ± 7 . The skewness and kurtosis values presented in [Table 2](#) demonstrate that the data adheres to a normal distribution.

Furthermore, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance were employed to evaluate the presence of multicollinearity. [Daoud \(2017\)](#) explains that multicollinearity arises when there is a correlation between variables. A VIF value of 1 indicates no correlation, whereas a VIF value between 1 and 5 indicates moderate correlation, and a VIF value greater than 5 indicates a strong correlation. In addition, a tolerance value below 0.1 indicates the presence of collinearity. The findings presented in [Table 2](#) indicate that there is no multicollinearity in the data based on the parameters of tolerance and VIF.

Data analysis

We used Harman’s single-factor test ([Harman, 1976](#)) to evaluate the existence of CMV in our research. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) and reliability studies assessed the component structure. We used structural equation modeling based on the [Jöreskog \(1993\)](#) technique to evaluate our direct and indirect impact assumptions. The analysis was performed using the software applications SPSS v27 and AMOS v23. Mediation analysis was conducted using Process Macro Model 4 by [Preacher and Hayes \(2008\)](#) to investigate the indirect effect.

Confirmatory factor analysis

CMV can significantly undermine data quality in research investigations. CMV presence can be detected when an unrotated factor analysis results in a single factor or when a single component explains much of the total variance. After performing an exploratory factor analysis, we found that 11 factors, based on the eigenvalue of 1 ([Cliff, 1988](#)), accounted for 83.786% of the total variance. The most significant factor explained 32.931% of the variance, which is significantly less than the threshold value of 50%. Therefore, CMV is not an issue in our investigation. The empirical findings confirm the effectiveness of the time-lagged approach, which was shown to function smoothly and was statistically validated using Harman’s single-factor test ([Harman, 1976](#)).

The present study conducted a CFA to assess the extent of convergence between the postulated theoretical framework and the empirical evidence obtained from the data. The findings of the CFA demonstrated an excellent fit of the model, as substantiated by the statistical indices, including $\chi^2 = 618.039$, $df = 402$, $\chi^2/df = 1.537$, $p < 0.001$, Comparative Fit Index = 0.980, Tucker Lewis Index = 0.975, Standardized Root Mean

Square Residual = 0.059 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = 0.043. Moreover, the graphical representation of the model's fitness with unstandardized weights is provided in [Figure 1](#). These results underscore the validity and reliability of the proposed model in explaining the observed phenomena.

In the subsequent phase of the inquiry, the latent variables were methodically evaluated for composite reliability (CR), convergent validity and discriminant validity. As per the established criteria laid down by [Bagozzi \(1983\)](#) and [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#), all the latent variables demonstrated CR values exceeding 0.90, which indicated the absence of any internal consistency issues. Convergent validity was evaluated based on the average variance extracted (AVE) values, which are considered crucial indicators, with a recommended threshold value above 0.5, as proposed by [Sarstedt et al. \(2016\)](#). Notably, all the constructs analyzed in the present study exhibited AVE values above 0.5, signifying the absence of any problems with convergent validity. The criteria laid down by [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) were meticulously adhered to confirm discriminant validity. The conditions stipulate that the square root of AVE must exceed the correlation between all variables. The values for factor loading, CR, AVE and the square root of AVE (SQRT of AVE) were presented in [Table 3](#). Furthermore, [Table 4](#) delved into assessing the discriminant validity of the components.

The data presented in [Table 4](#) provides critical information for assessing the discriminant validity of the variables under study.

After analyzing the data presented in [Table 4](#), it is evident that the values highlighted in bold and italics are arranged diagonally to represent the square root of the AVE. According to our findings, it can be inferred that every value present within the aforementioned columns is lower than the square root of AVE, thus providing substantial evidence in favor of the concept of discriminant validity.

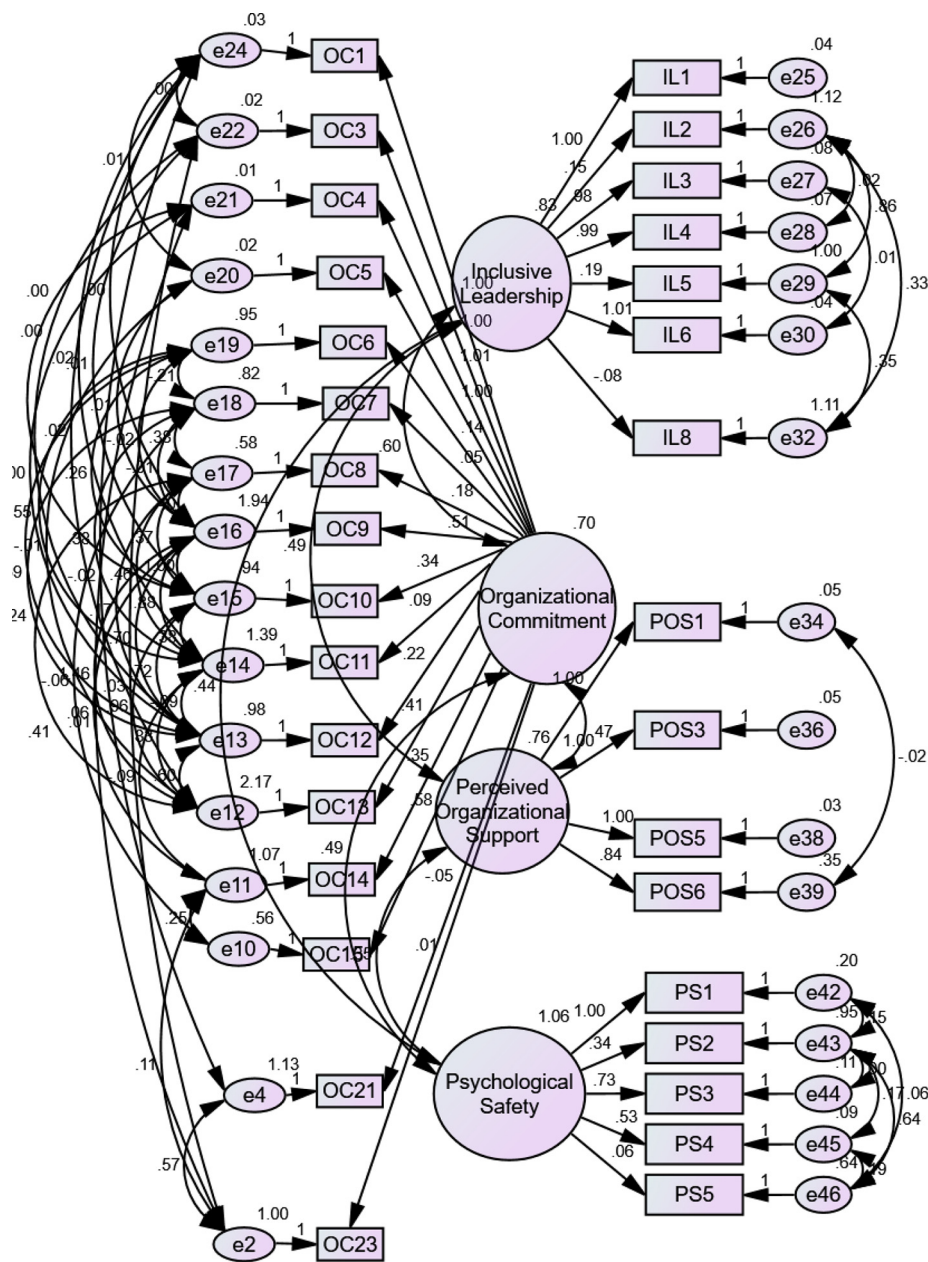
Structural model testing

In the first phase of our research, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted to assess the dependability and validity of the measurement model's constructs. In the subsequent stage, we scrutinized the structural model [Hair et al. \(2021\)](#) recommended to ascertain its predictive accuracy and the interrelationships among the variables under consideration. For a graphical illustration of the path diagram, please refer to [Figure 2](#).

The present study used a structural equation model to investigate the relationship between IL, PS, POS and OC. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between IL and OC, as evidenced by the standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.369, p < 0.001$), thus confirming the study's main hypothesis (*H1*). Furthermore, the study's subhypotheses also yielded significant positive effects. Specifically, the findings supported *H4*, which posited a relationship between IL and PS, with ($\beta = 0.527, p < 0.001$). Similarly, *H5*, which postulated a relationship between IL and POS, demonstrated a significant and positive impact with ($\beta = 0.605, p < 0.001$), thereby supporting the hypothesis. *H6*, which explained the relationship between PS and OC, showed a significant and positive impact indicated by ($\beta = 0.123, p < 0.001$), and *H7*, which described the relationship between POS and OC, was also supported by the results ($\beta = 0.141, p < 0.001$).

H2 and *H3* were created in the study to represent the indirect influence, specifically mediation.

Bootstrap analysis [Table 5](#) confirms a statistically significant positive mediation effect of PS between IL and OC ($\beta = 0.055, SE = 0.021, 95\% \text{ Confidence-Interval (CI) } [0.022, 0.102]$), supporting *H2*. *H3* is validated by the bootstrap analysis, showing a statistically significant positive indirect effect of POS between IL and OC ($\beta = 0.191, SE = 0.035, 95\%$



Source: Authors' own work
Figure 1. Model fitness with unstandardized weights

Table 3. Factor loading, CR, AVE and SQRT of AVE

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	SQRT of AVE
Inclusive leadership			0.96	0.73	0.857
	IL1	0.870			
	IL2	0.856			
	IL3	0.863			
	IL4	0.883			
	IL5	0.846			
	IL6	0.878			
	IL7	0.815			
	IL8	0.887			
Organizational commitment	IL9	0.808			
			0.97	0.61	0.782
	OC1	0.807			
	OC2	0.876			
	OC3	0.808			
	OC4	0.816			
	OC5	0.804			
	OC6	−0.804			
	OC7	0.741			
	OC8	0.600			
	OC9	0.831			
	OC10	0.918			
	OC11	0.779			
	OC12	0.755			
	OC13	0.808			
	OC14	0.684			
	OC15	0.711			
	OC16	0.614			
	OC17	0.813			
	OC18	0.644			
	OC19	0.710			
	OC20	0.852			
	OC21	0.760			
	OC22	0.904			
	OC23	0.798			
Psychological safety	OC24	0.826			
			0.92	0.70	0.835
	PS1	0.807			
	PS2	0.842			
	PS3	0.880			
Perceived organizational support	PS4	0.770			
	PS5	0.871			
			0.93	0.62	0.785
	POS1	0.839			
	POS2	0.864			
	POS3	0.848			
	POS4	0.825			
	POS5	0.865			
	POS6	0.699			
	POS7	0.680			
	POS8	0.616			

Source: Authors' own work

Table 4. Correlation matrix with SQRT of AVE values

Constructs	IL	OC	PS	POS
IL	0.857			
OC	0.659**	0.782		
PS	0.271**	0.448**	0.835	
POS	0.664**	0.668**	0.296**	0.785

Notes: IL = inclusive leadership; OC = organizational commitment; PS = psychological safety; POS = perceived organizational support; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors' own work

CI [0.127, 0.263]). Partial mediation is present when both the direct and indirect effects are statistically significant (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Zhao *et al.*, 2010).

Discussion

Existing literature emphasizes the significance of the relationship between leadership and OC (Yasin *et al.*, 2023). Research on the various leadership styles and their outcomes is limited (Fischer and Sitkin, 2023; Piwowar-Sulej and Iqbal, 2023). To overcome this constraint, the following study used the SET framework to examine the seldom-studied IL and its impact on OC in Pakistan's culture.

This study investigated how PS and POS mediate the relationship between IL and OC in the service domain of Pakistan's telecom sector. In conjunction with the results of the mediating route analysis, PS and POS mediate between IL and OC.

The study *H1* has exhibited the significant positive effect of IL on OC, signifying that if IL performance increases by 1%, the OC increases by 37%, which is a substantial improvement of commitment by the organizations. The results acknowledge the prior investigations of Yasin *et al.* (2023), Choi *et al.* (2015) and Srimulyani *et al.* (2023). In addition, the findings of *H4*, which confirmed the correlation between IL and PS, exhibited a substantial 53% surge in PS. These outcomes are consistent with earlier research conducted by Carmeli *et al.* (2010), Zeng *et al.* (2020), Javed *et al.* (2019) and Zhao *et al.* (2020), further strengthening the existing body of knowledge in this field. The findings of *H5* present a noteworthy improvement of 61% in POS via IL, which supports the previous claims made by Qi *et al.* (2019), Hudie *et al.* (2017) and Aslan (2019). Furthermore, the findings of *H6* align with prior research endeavors that have investigated the association between PS and OC (Chang *et al.*, 2023; Choi and Lee, 2020; Kim, 2020; Kirk-Brown and Van Dijk, 2016). Moreover, the results pertaining to *H7* concerning POS and OC provide further validation for the previous findings (Aggarwal-Gupta *et al.*, 2010; Aube *et al.*, 2007; Fuller *et al.*, 2003; Kalidass and Bahron, 2015). The findings of the mediation analysis presented in this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Hayes (2012, 2017) and Igartua and Hayes (2021). These results hold significant implications for theoretical and practical domains, which warrant careful examination.

Conclusions, implications and future directions

Theoretical implications

This study proposes several theoretical consequences, whereas the primary theoretical contribution is to illustrate new ways in which IL influences OC through PS and POS. This work represents a significant advancement in SET by applying it to the context of OC

Table 5. Bootstrap results for indirect effect Process Macro Model 4

	Total effect	T	Sig.	Direct effect	T	Sig.	Path	Indirect effect	SE	LL .95% CI	UL .95% CI
H2: IL → OC	0.460	14.831	0.000	0.405	13.513	0.000	IL → PS → OC	0.055	0.021	0.022	0.102
H3: IL → OC	0.460	14.831	0.000	0.269	7.090	0.000	IL → POS → OC	0.191	0.035	0.127	0.263

Notes: IL = inclusive leadership; OC = organizational commitment; PS = psychological safety; POS = perceived organizational support; SE = standard error; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; CI = confidence interval; bootstrap samples = 5,000

Source: Authors' own work

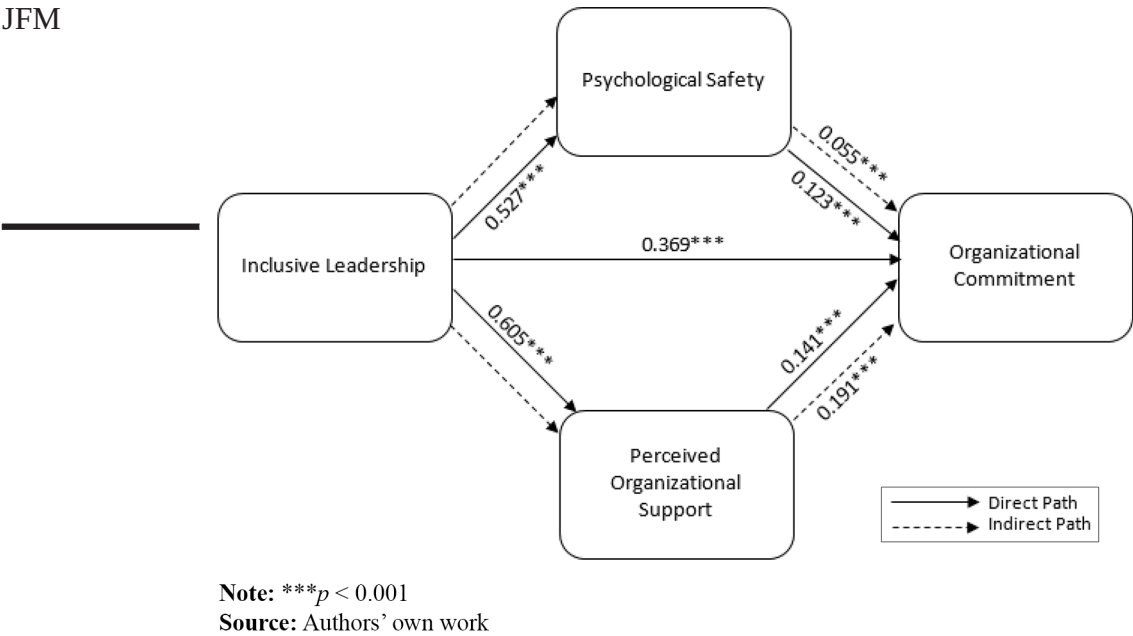


Figure 2. Path diagram

(Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). The study contributes to the current literature on leadership by integrating IL and OC within the framework of SET, thereby strengthening the theoretical foundation of leadership research (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005; Vroom and Jago, 2007). By incorporating mediators, leaders are presented with fresh perspectives on promoting positive social interactions to enhance OC effectiveness (Burns, 2012; Kouzes and Posner, 2006). The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of leadership and OC, which can inform future research and practice in this area (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016).

First, this study improves the IL literature by integrating PS and POS into a unified paradigm. The organization has been extensively studied by Aldrich (2008), Handy (2007) and Blau and Scott (2003), with little focus on IL. The research findings provide empirical evidence for the beneficial influence of IL on OC. The study highlighted that IL is a promising leadership style that assists organizational leaders in cultivating OC (Randel *et al.*, 2018; Shore *et al.*, 2018).

Second, the significance of IL lies in its ability to provide a holistic perspective on a distinct leadership approach that positively impacts OC (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010). Inclusive leaders offer support, effectively contribute, promote the exchange of innovative ideas among followers and cultivate an environment of inclusivity within the organization (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010). This research delves deeper into the subject of IL by highlighting its potential to improve social interaction between leaders and employees within the organization (Aslan, 2019; Hudie *et al.*, 2017). The study explores the intervening effects of PS and POS on IL, OC and the SET paradigm, thereby broadening our understanding of the subject (Aslan, 2019).

Third, within the framework of SET, IL is a valuable asset that leaders can bring to their organizations. By exhibiting inclusive behaviors, leaders create a dynamic of social exchange in which employees perceive the leader's actions as valuable resources. Such resources may include opportunities for offering employees feedback, recognition and support (Yasin *et al.*, 2023).

Fourth, SET proposes that the quality of social interactions impacts results. In the study's scenario, PS can mediate between IL and OC and POS can be seen as a result of social exchange (Hudie *et al.*, 2017). Practicing IL can enhance pleasant interactions and promote psychological well-being. Consequently, this could result in heightened OC as employees perceive a sense of security and appreciation (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010).

Practical implications

As mentioned earlier, the study offers valuable recommendations to telecom companies that may consider investing in leadership development initiatives to foster IL capabilities (AlMulhim and Mohammed, 2023). By training leaders to comprehend, value and advocate for diversity and inclusion, organizations can enhance their employees' perceptions of leadership and cultivate a supportive environment that promotes loyalty and dedication (McCauley, 2001). The study underscores the significance of incorporating IL principles to foster positive OC and encourage constructive social engagement among employees within the organization (Hudie *et al.*, 2017).

To foster a workplace environment conducive to open and honest communication, organizations may use various techniques that recognize the crucial role of PS within the theoretical framework (Hopp and Fisher, 2021). Leaders can demonstrate their commitment to diversity by actively seeking feedback and establishing channels for individuals to express their perspectives without fear of negative consequences. By doing so, they can enhance PS and encourage healthy social interactions among all organization members (Edmondson, 2018).

Telecom companies should implement concrete steps to strengthen POS, showing a sincere dedication to employee well-being. Options may involve flexible work schedules or mentorship initiatives tailored to various needs. These measures create a healthy organizational culture that encourages loyalty and dedication.

Limitations and future research directions

The current investigation has produced significant results that enhance our comprehension of the research subject. It is essential to recognize the constraints of this research project, which offer several opportunities for further study and inquiry. The distinct attributes of the telecom industry, such as rapid technological advancements and market dynamics, could impact the correlations between variables in a manner that differs from other industries. Hence, the study's results may have limited generalizability as it is conducted in the telecom service sector. Researchers must recognize the unique attributes of the sample and be careful when generalizing the findings to various environments. Moreover, the study relies on cross-sectional data, which could limit the ability to demonstrate causality. Longitudinal research approaches offer more reliable evidence of the documented connections between IL, OC, PS and POS.

The results of this study carry broad implications for various types of organizations, including those operating in the facilities management sector. The primary finding indicates that organizations investing in leadership development programs, particularly those cultivating IL capabilities, are likelier to maintain a highly dedicated workforce. Leaders who embrace an IL style are better poised to foster an environment that encourages loyalty and commitment. In addition, this study offers managers a framework for enhancing employee engagement. Organizations can realize this objective by prioritizing PS among

their employees and adopting IL practices. Employee engagement enhancement can significantly elevate their performance, contributing to overall organizational success.

Furthermore, research within the FMO framework discusses the impact of IL practices on creating a psychologically safe environment. It involves evaluating employees' willingness to voice concerns and ideas without fear of reprisal. In addition, the research explores the influence of POS on employees' commitment within facilities management, encompassing support measures such as resources, training and recognition provided by the organization.

Future studies may include more independent variables, mediators and moderators to enhance the understanding of the relationships presented in the theoretical framework. By doing so, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions within the framework and ultimately develop more robust theories and models. Some of the potential variables could be diversity climate, leadership trustworthiness and employee empowerment. At the same time, mediators could be job satisfaction, workplace engagement and team cohesion. Moderators could be organizational size, technological sophistication and employee tenure.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complex dynamics of IL in the telecom sector, using the SET as a guide. The results suggest that promoting IL techniques substantially impacts building loyalty among employees in the telecom sector. Moreover, the necessity of establishing a workplace environment where employees feel secure, respected and supported has been emphasized, focusing on the mediating roles of PS and POS.

This study adds to the increasing knowledge of IL in the telecom industry. Organizations can strategically navigate the changing landscape by recognizing the relationship between IL, PS, POS and OC. This fosters a workplace culture that adapts to industry changes, boosts employee loyalty and enhances organizational success.

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Appendix*Inclusive leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010)*

- (1) The manager is open to hearing new ideas (openness).
- (2) The manager is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes (openness).
- (3) The manager is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them (openness).
- (4) The manager is available for consultation on problems (availability).
- (5) The manager is an ongoing 'presence in this team someone who is readily available (availability).
- (6) The manager is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him/her (availability).
- (7) The manager Is ready to listen to my requests (availability).
- (8) The manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues (accessibility). The manager is accessible for discussing emerging problems (accessibility)

Psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999)

- (1) I am able to bring up problems and tough ours.
- (2) People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different.
- (3) It is safe to take a risk in this organization.
- (4) It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help.
- (5) No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

Perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1997)

- (1) My organization really cares about my well-being.
- (2) My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
- (3) My organization shows little concern for me.(R)
- (4) My organization cares about my opinions.
- (5) My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor.
- (6) Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
- (7) My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part.
- (8) If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me. (R)

*Organization commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990)**Affective commitment*

- (1) I am very happy being a member of this organization.
- (2) I enjoy discussing about my organization with people outside it.
- (3) I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
- (4) I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one. (R)
- (5) I do not feel like 'part of the family at my organization. (R)
- (6) I do not feel 'emotionally attached to this organization. (R)
- (7) This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
- (8) I do not feel a 'strong' sense of belonging to my organization. (R)

Continuance commitment

- (1) I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up. (R)
- (2) It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
- (3) Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave my organization now.
- (4) It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organization now. (R)
- (5) Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
- (6) I feel that I have very few options to consider leaving this organization.
- (7) One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.
- (8) One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice-another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.

Normative commitment

- (1) I think that people these days move from company to company too often.
- (2) I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization. (R)
- (3) Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me. (R)
- (4) One of the major reasons I continue to work in this organization is that I believe loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain
- (5) If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.
- (6) I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization.
- (7) Things were better in the days when people stayed in one organization for most of the organization.
- (8) I do not think that to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore. (R)

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