

# Feeling Good and Functioning Well: Role of Psychological well-being and Perceived Organizational Support in fortifying Commitment

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## ***Abstract***

*The importance of organizational commitment, i.e. the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in his organization, is well-established both in theory and in practice. This paper reviews the literature on organizational commitment; evaluates its established relationships with perceived organizational support, work engagement and psychological well-being; and proposes a conceptual framework in which the effect of work engagement on organizational commitment is moderated by the extent to which an employee perceives organizational support. We propose that perceived organizational support helps realize the benefits of work engagement by fostering psychological well-being. Thus, it is the feel-good factor of an employee that makes her/him function well and for long with her/his organization.*

**Keywords:** *Psychological well-being, Work Engagement, Perceived Organizational support, Organizational Commitment*

## **1. Introduction**

Today's dynamic business environment is characterized by flexibility, innovation, and speed-to-market thus, effectively developing and managing employees' knowledge, experiences, skills, and expertise—collectively defined as 'human capital'—has become a key success factor for sustainable organizational performance (Foss and Saebi, 2017; Meier, Favero & Compton, 2016). Building on human capital, aligning it with organizational strategy and retaining them for long term can help organizations have enhanced performance outcomes (Prajogo & Oke, 2016). Companies are increasingly aiming at enhancing their human resource by trying to engage not only the body, but also the mind and the soul of every employee, thus looking for employees who are willing to psychologically invest in their work i.e. employees who are engaged. Their larger aim is to have them retained and sustained in their organizations by fortifying their organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment (OC) is an important concept to be studied and understanding its processes has implications for employees, organizations and society as a whole (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) as it results in lower rates of job movement and perhaps higher national productivity or work quality or both (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Moreover, committed employees are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors, such as creativeness or innovativeness, which are often what keeps an organization competitive (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Positive associations between work engagement and indicators of organizational commitment have previously only been found in cross-sectional studies (Hakanen, Schaufeli & Ahola, 2006; Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli & Salanova, 2006; Schaufeli, 2004). There is evidence that work-related motivational process from job resources lead to work engagement which further leads to organizational commitment taking place over time (Hakanen, Schaufeli, Ahola, 2008). The linkage with work engagement is of major importance to the organizations as it enhances commitment of employees, thus making them more eligible to receive both extrinsic and psychological rewards associated with organizational membership. Given

the amount of speculation concerning the importance of employees' commitment in organizations; its linkage with work engagement; and the amount of research that has been devoted to both these concepts in recent years, it is useful to further elaborate how work engagement drives organizational commitment.

Despite numerous quality studies linking organizational commitment with work engagement (Hakannen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008; Hallberg, 2006; Cho, Laschinger, & Wong 2006), explanations on mechanisms that lead engagement to organizational commitment remain thin. Why do engaged employees feel more committed toward their organization? What is the underlying mechanism that leads to it? Is there a role played by the organization too? If yes, how much do organizational factors, mainly organizational support, explain the effect of engagement on commitment? To answer these questions, we thoroughly review literature on engagement, commitment and perceived organizational support, propose some hypotheses and move ahead to propose a model with the help of these three constructs. Before describing this model, we provide a brief explanation of these concepts and the relationships among them.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Organizational Commitment**

The concept of organizational commitment is based on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964, Emerson, 1976) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). According to social exchange theory, organizations are forums for transactions (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999) wherein employees have transactional relationships with their organization. Reciprocity is a social norm or value that '...people should help those who have helped them and people should not injure those who have helped them' (Gouldner, 1960, p. 171). Both the social exchange theory and reciprocity are applied to the employee–organizational relationship in the exchange of resources –symbolic or tangible, between employee and employer. It implies that each party, be it the employer or the employee, gets something out of the relationship otherwise the relationship will cease to exist (Foa & Foa, 1980). The employees' identification with an organization can be defined as the perception of shared characteristics with prototypical organization members and shared experiences with the organization (Mael & Tetrick, 1992). Meyer and Allen (1997) took several models and

definitions of commitment, combined them and determined the underlying themes to construct their Three Component Model of Commitment viz., affective, continuance, and normative component of commitment. Affective commitment pertains to the employees who are part of the organization because they want to be; hence, one would expect them to be present at work and motivated to perform their best (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Normative commitment refers to the group of employees who feel like they should stay with the organization out of a sense of obligation. Continuance commitment, on the other hand, describes the employees who are committed because they believe the costs associated with leaving the organization are too high and hence, they remain (Meyer & Allen, 1997). All in all, the concept of organizational commitment refers to a person's affective reactions to characteristics of his employing organization. It is concerned with feelings of attachment to the goals and values of the organization, one's role in relation to this, and attachment to the organization for its own sake rather than for its strictly instrumental value (Cook & Wall, 1980).

In one of the major works, organizational commitment has been divided into three distinguished components (Buchanan, 1974) –Identification i.e. pride in the organization: the internalization of the organization's goals and values; Involvement—psychological absorption in the activities of one's role; and Loyalty—affection (brand attachment to the organization; a sense of belongingness manifesting as 'a wish to stay'. Despite having difference of opinions on these three components (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979), we maintain this definition for our further conceptualization of the research model

In order to make the employees participate more, get more involved and be more committed, organizations also resort to financial participation. Financial participation is a generic term for the participation of employees in profit and enterprise results including equity of their employing firm. In general, there are two forms of employee financial participation: profit-sharing and employee share ownership (including options). While profit sharing is considered an incentive for employees with positive individual and organizational level outcomes, employee share ownership adds to that a share holding element where employees may consider themselves as co- owners of the firm, including the possibility of voice and control (Poutsma & Kaarsemaker, 2015).

In principle, by tying worker's pay more closely to firm's performance and involving workers in decision-making, employee ownership arrangements can help reduce the principal-agent problem in the workplace and increase performance and commitment (Kruse, 1997). Although studies that compare employee attitudes and self-assessed work behavior under employee ownership give a mixed picture (Kruse, 1997; Kruse, 1999, 2002) there are evidences that show higher satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation among employee owners due to stock ownership plans (Klein, 1988). This shows organizational commitment plays an important role in the sharing of the added value between workers and shareholders.

## **2.2 Work Engagement as an important driver of Organizational Commitment**

Employee contribution is a critical business issue. If organizations want to produce more output with less employee input, they must try to engage not only the body, but also the mind and the soul of every employee (Ulrich, 1997, p. 125). In present times, organizations are in need of employees who are willing to psychologically invest in their work, i.e. who are engaged. Engaged employee works in a 'flow' wherein an individual is in absolute consonance with one's surroundings (Csikszantmihalyi, 1975). When the employees are in a state of flow, they experience oneness between self and the environment. Work engagement not only facilitates cognitive interpretation of in-role activities, but also paves way for affective and psychological attachment to one's job and organization (May, Richard, & Lynn, 2004; Kahn, 2004; Saks, 2006). Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008;

Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonz lez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). The vigor aspect of work engagement is categorized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of obstacles (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). The dedication aspect of work engagement is characterized as having a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge at work (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). Absorption refers to full concentration, happiness, and engrossment in one's work whereby time passes quickly

and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). Recent research has found that work engagement is related to increased job performance and organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006).

A growing number of studies of human resource practices show that innovative human resource practices that can encourage work engagement among employees, make them more involved and absorbed in their work can help enhance business productivity, primarily through the use of systems of related work practices designed to enhance worker participation and flexibility in the design of work and decentralization of managerial tasks and responsibilities (Ichniowski, Kochan, Levine, Olson, & Strauss, 1996). Engaged employees, who are intrinsically motivated to fulfill their work objectives, create job resources to use as means to achieve these objectives and are more likely to fulfill their work goals (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Drawing from the broaden and build theory, Fredrickson (2003) proposes that positive affective states have the capability to broaden employees' momentary thought-action repertoires and build enduring personal, social and psychological resources. Work engagement, as a positive motivational-affective state, broadens by creating the urge to expand the self through learning and goal fulfilment, and as such builds resources. Building on such psychological resources generate positive self-beliefs about their self-efficacy, make them feel more valuable and eventually more optimistic about their stay with the organization (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Thus, engaged employees feel an intrinsic obligation to be socio-emotionally attached to the source of such engagement i.e., their work and their employing organization.

Work engagement has been mostly studied as a mediator in various studies. It provides an explanation for organizations that want to convert organizational level factors into commitment. In the best situations, people start their jobs feeling engaged with their work which often leads to organizational commitment (Maslach, 1997) but over time a mismatch between employee and job results in the erosion of work engagement. Structural conditions of the work environment play a significant role in influencing employee attitudes and behaviours (Kanter, 1987). Following the same line, a predictive, non-experimental survey design was used to test a theoretical model linking empowerment, engagement and commitment on a sample of new

graduate nurses (Cho, Lachinger, & Wong, 2006). It was found that as predicted, structural empowerment had a direct positive effect on the areas of work life, which in turn had a positive effect on work engagement. Subsequently, enhanced work engagement had a direct positive effect on organizational commitment. It also suggested that a good employee-job fit resulted in greater work engagement which ultimately led to greater organizational commitment (Cho, Lachinger, & Wong 2006). The same study asserted that structural empowerment had a strong direct effect on organizational commitment. The results of the study provide support for an expanded model of work empowerment that links Kanter's theory to Maslach and Leiter's theory of work engagement, thereby illuminating the mechanisms through which empowering work conditions affect organizational attitudes and behaviours such as organizational commitment. Thereafter other empirical studies also endorsed a positive effect of work engagement on organizational commitment. A study on call centre employees in a South African organization showed work engagement as a significant predictor of organisational commitment (Simons, 2013). Another study on Swedish police stated the impact of work climate on engagement and organizational commitment. Different facets of work climate explained how employees perceived their job, workplace relations, supervisory styles, development horizons, and satisfaction. Work climate, in turn, was followed with several organizational outcomes and job attitudes such as organizational commitment and work engagement (Nima, Moradi, Archer, & Garcia, 2014).

### **2.3 Role of Psychological well-being in capitalizing on Work Engagement**

Psychological well-being is about lives going well; the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. The notion of psychological well-being includes concepts of physical and psychological health and has been found to be related to both work and personal life outcomes such as performance at work (Cropanzano, 1999; Wright, Bonett, & Sweeney, 1993; Wright, 2000; Wright, 1999) and successful relationships (Diener, 2002). PWB is a subjective experience. In other words, people are psychologically well to the extent that they believe themselves to be (Wright & Bonett, 2007). Psychological well-being (PWB) includes six core well-being dimensions: self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, autonomy and personal growth. In all, these six dimensions “encompass a

breadth of wellness that includes positive evaluations of one's self and one's life, a sense of continued growth and development as a person, the belief that life is purposeful and meaningful, the possession of good relationships with other people, the capacity to manage one's life and the surrounding world effectively, and a sense of self-determination'' (Ryff 1989, p.99). Given this understanding of psychological wellness as a primary resource with reciprocal effects on work-related outcomes, it is important to consider how work-related attitude such as work engagement affects one's well-being. Studies on psychological well-being have been guided by positive and negative affect and many researchers have operationalized well-being as employees' general affect (Positive Affect PA and Negative Affect NA) (Shoenfelt and Battista, 2004).

Organizations are in need of employees who are willing to psychologically invest in their work, i.e. who are engaged. As mentioned above, work engagement is an active type of wellbeing (Warr, 1990). Broaden-and-Build (B&B) theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) states that the experience of positive emotions can build resources and may predict wellbeing in the long run. B&B theory posits that positive emotions not only make people feel good at a particular point in time, but these emotions may also predict future wellbeing (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002). In line with B&B theory, it has been found that there is a causal effect of personal resources on work engagement and that work engagement consequently leads to wellbeing (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008; Weigl, Hornung, Parker, Petru, Glaser, & Angerer, 2010; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). By experiencing positive emotions, people enhance their resources leading to work engagement that consequently will lead to a more enduring positive state of wellbeing. Work engagement is an important indicator of occupational wellbeing for both employees and organizations (Bakker and Demerouti 2008).

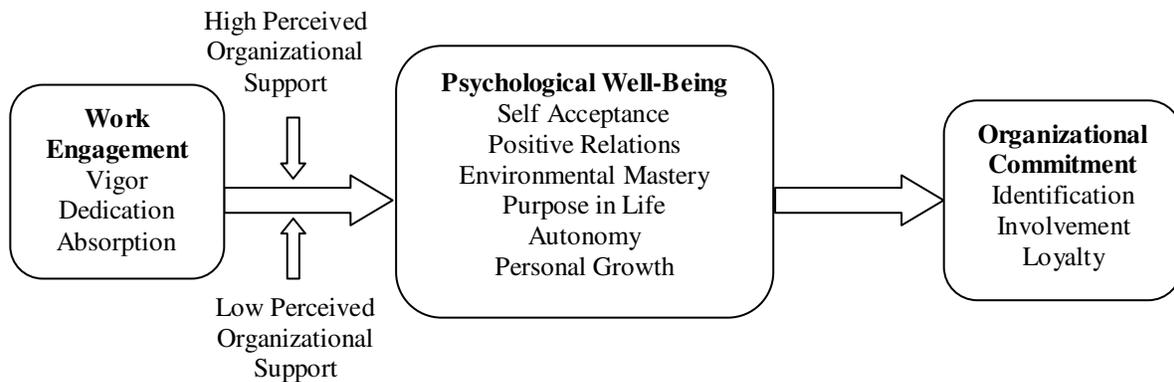


Figure 1: Conceptual representation of the proposed relationships

### 3. Propositions

#### 3.1 The moderating role of Perceived Organizational Support

Because organizational commitment is a complex concept, other constructs such as perceived organizational support (POS), work values, perceived person-organization fit, developmental experiences, and global job satisfaction are said to have positive correlation with organizational commitment (Polit and Beck 2004). Perceived organizational support (POS) is the overall extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organizational support, also linked to social exchange theory, has been discussed as important to affective organizational commitment. The premise of POS is that an employee who feels more attached to an organization will become more committed to it. So the greater the extent to which perceived material and social needs are met, the more supportive the organization is deemed to be (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, & Relyea, 2006). Drawing from the organizational support theory (OST) which maintains that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organization cares about them and values their contributions to the organization (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), we suggest that perceived organizational support has moderating effects on the relationship of work engagement with psychological well-being and with organizational commitment. Referring to employees' perception of how much his organization supports him, it would be right to state that better the perception, more will be the feeling of well-being of the employee. For

example, an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), a mechanism by which management gives employees stock in order to fulfill management's commitment to employee participation, to increase employee commitment and productivity among many other reasons (Klein and Hall, 1988), is viewed as organizational support by the employee that is consequently translated into their increased levels of well-being. If management is not committed to employee ownership and does little to communicate its benefits to employees, employee ESOP satisfaction tends to be low, which further lowers the level of satisfaction and eventually their well-being (Klein and Hall, 1988). Referring to the organizational support theory, we propose that the strength of the relationship between work engagement and psychological well-being is affected by perceived organizational support. Thus, we suggest that when engaged employees perceive greater organizational support, it promotes them to experience a feel-good factor and instills a feeling of psychological well-being in them.

***Proposition 1: Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between work engagement and psychological well-being such that work engagement will lead to psychological well-being more when employees perceive higher organizational support than when they perceive lower organizational support.***

Referring to the organizational support theory (OST), it is stated that perceived organizational support promotes affective organizational commitment by coping up socio-emotional needs of employees, for instance, esteem needs, approval, and emotional support (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger, Huntingdon, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). According to OST, employees work harder in return for a high level of support and they exert extra efforts to achieve the organizational goals (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003) because job satisfaction and organizational commitment are significantly affected by organizational support (Aubé, Rousseau, Morin, 2007; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). There is positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment because when employees perceive organizational support, the relationship between organization and employee changes (Chiang, Han, & Chuang, 2011). Perceived organizational support increases the employees' feelings of

obligations to help organization in the achievement of its objectives, their expectation and their commitment to organization so that the improved performance can be achieved (Eisenberger, Huntingdon, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995; Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012; Celep & Yilmazturk, 2012). The higher the quality of POS, higher will be the organizational commitment of employees (Aselage and Eisenberger 2003; Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Employees with high degree of perceived organizational supports relatively are more willing to remain with that particular organization (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003) and on the job these employees perform well (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). For example, employees are most satisfied when their company makes large annual contributions to the ESOP, their company communicates to its people benefits of shared value, and when they see management is strongly committed to employee ownership (Klein and Hall, 1988). Employees' satisfaction depends on the extent to which the organizations meet their needs and expectations in the form of shared value and ownership for financial gain, influence in company decision making, and a sense of greater involvement in the company (Klein and Hall, 1988). This satisfaction is closely related to organizational commitment as employees see the ESOP as proof of the company's generosity and commitment to its employees and thus feel greater satisfaction with the company as a whole (Pendleton, Wilson and Wright 1998, Filbeck, Gorman, & Fink, 2015).

In addition to this, we suggest that the perceived organizational support affects the strength of the relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment. Perceived organizational support may not have a direct effect on commitment rather it has an indirect effect on commitment and it happens when POS interacts with engagement and affects employee's commitment towards his organization. Though engaged employees feel an intrinsic obligation to be socio-emotionally attached to their work and their employing organization, it is more presumably more when the perceived organizational support is higher. We suggest that when engaged workers perceive higher organizational support they generate more commitment towards their organization.

***Proposition 2: Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment such that work engagement will lead to organizational commitment more when employees perceive higher organizational support than when they perceive lower organizational support.***

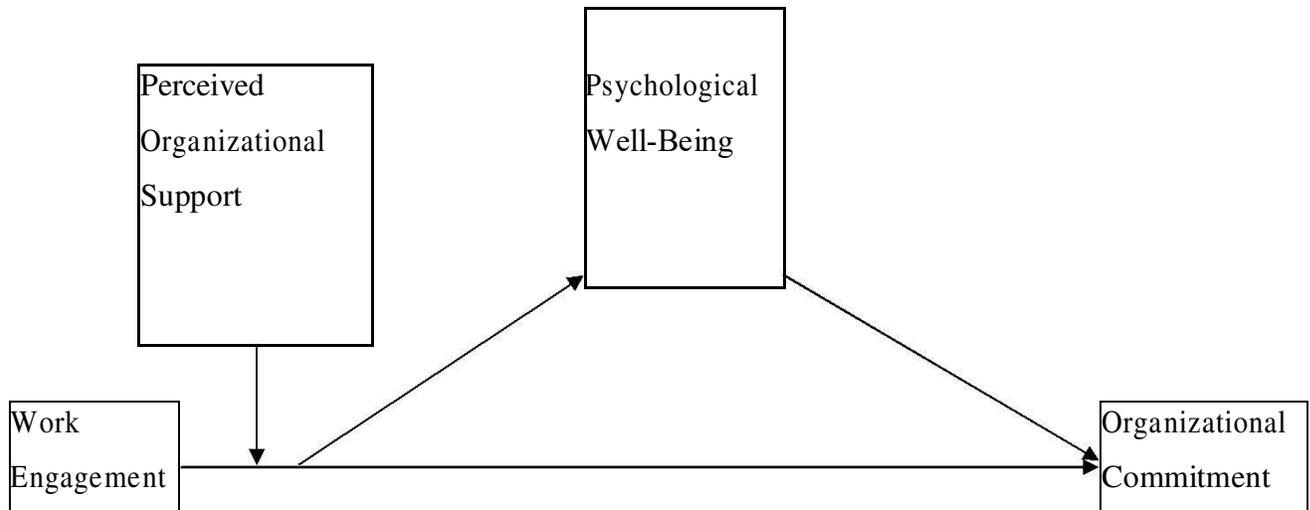
Psychological well-being has been linked with positive organizational behavior, which aims to foster positive phenomena such as hope and resilience among employees (Luthans, 2002; Luthans and Youssef, 2004, 2007), and positive organizational scholarship, which is the study of what is positive, flourishing and life-giving, at the organizational level (Cameron and Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton, Quinn, & Wrzesniewski, 2003). PWB also promotes and preserves employee mental health which leads to improvements in employee performance and turnover. Well-being is primarily driven by one's dispositional affect and is operationalised as employees' general affect (positive and negative affect). A growing body of evidence suggests that employees' intention to turnover is related to the absence of work-related Positive Affect (i.e., languishing) rather than the presence of work-related Negative Affect (i.e., ill-being). Employee's positive affect is negatively and moderately correlated with withdrawal intentions, however, employee's negative affect is not significantly related to withdrawal intentions (Hart and Cooper, 2001). Positive job satisfaction and mood states reduced turnover intentions (Shoenfelt and Battista, 2004). Judge (1993) found that employees' general affect (PA and NA) moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover (Wright and Bonett, 2007, Judge, 1993).

Turnover, which has been an important issue for organizations from quite some time, is majorly due to its significant business costs. The cost of losing an employee is almost 1.5 times the departing employee's annual salary (Cascio, 2003). Retention may also be assessed subjectively by asking employees about their commitment towards an organization. However, irrespective of whether intention to leave predicts actual turnover, employee's who harbour low organizational commitment are not likely to exhibit high levels of motivation or performance at work. As such, a healthy organization is one in which employees are committed to their organization rather than

earing intention to leave. It has been proved in earlier research that both employee well-being and job satisfaction have significant main effects on employee turnover, such that employees' commitment to stay with an organization is primarily driven by his dispositional affect (Judge, 1993). Employees who have a positive disposition and are high at psychological well-being will show more signs of commitment with the organization.

Broaden and build theory also suggests that the experience of positive emotions builds resources and predicts wellbeing in the long run. These resources boost the level of engagement of an employee, who gets filled with positive emotions when he finds himself vigorous, absorbed, and dedicated in his work. These positive emotions lead to the feeling of well-being which eventually affects the commitment to the organization. Joining the two together and looking at the past literature, we propose two things: one that psychological well-being is positively associated with organizational commitment and second that it is psychological well-being that mediates the relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment. There is evidence that employees' psychological well-being affects their intention to leave. In fact, studies have shown that employees' intention to turnover is related to the absence of work-related PA (i.e., languishing) rather than the presence of work-related NA (i.e., ill-being) (Shoenfelt and Battista, 2004).

***Proposition 3: Psychological well-being mediates the interactive effect of work engagement and perceived organizational support on organizational commitment***



**Figure 2: Research Model**

#### **4. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE**

Our goal has been to synthesize the literature and present a set of variables that affect organizational commitment directly and indirectly. Review of literature shows work engagement mostly as a mediator that converts factors such as employee—job fit, work climate, structural empowerment into organizational commitment. Our conceptual framework considers the interactive effect of work engagement and perceived organizational support on well-being and how it is used to foster organizational commitment among the employees. Thus, work engagement will lead to higher commitment when the employee perceives high organizational support than when he perceives low organization support. We have augmented the theoretical framework with a testable model and research hypotheses. Clearly empirical work is required to test these links. Given the proposed role of psychological well-being and perceived organizational support in Figure 2, a sample of employees across various industries with a long tenure would be optimal. It would also be beneficial to consider employees who have low levels of commitment and how they perceive organization support so that the predicted moderating effects of POS on organizational commitment could be examined. As for all models proposing causal links, a longitudinal design assessing work

engagement and organizational commitment would be ideal to fully confirm the direction of the proposed relationships.

We also explore the implications to practitioners, explicitly, how organizations and individuals may apply and benefit from this theoretical framework. The model provides practitioners with insights for framing strategies to provide a work environment and frame organizational policies such that engagement levels of employees are enhanced. One thing to note here is that we are referring to ‘perceived’ organizational support that means even if the organizations feel their policies are employee-friendly and that they are providing support to their employees, the same may not be true on employee front. For example, if the policies are not well-communicated to the employees or if the policies are not properly implemented at various levels, employees will perceive organizational support to be low. The proposed relationships between work engagement, psychological well-being, perceived organizational support and organizational commitment also need to be considered in terms of human resource applications for better management of human capital. We close with specific thoughts on a multi-faceted research agenda: a qualitative study to refine the constructs; empirical examinations that would assess engagement linked to commitment via well-being; and the study of these relationships in the context of shared employee ownership. Theoretical refinement and empirical examination may validate this proposed framework and move it toward acceptance as a limited-domain theory. Alternatively, future examination may disconfirm our perspective. In either case, we are keen to know future research opportunities in this domain.

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