

Organisational attachment in hospitality organisations: a review

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ABSTRACT: The hospitality industry relies on dedicated and emotionally connected employees to deliver exceptional guest experiences and maintain competitiveness. However, high turnover rates pose challenges for organisations in retaining devoted employees. Organisational attachment, encompassing affective commitment, organisational identification and turnover intentions, plays a crucial role in reducing turnover and enhancing productivity. While existing research provides valuable insights into organisational attachment, gaps remain in understanding its practical implications and applications in diverse organisational contexts. This article reviews the literature on organisational attachment and its influencing factors, highlighting the need for future research to explore industry-specific dynamics, cultural influences and intervention strategies for enhancing organisational attachment and achieving organisational goals.

KEYWORDS: commitment, decent work, human resource management, leadership, work environment

Introduction

The hospitality industry thrives on its human capital. Employees who are dedicated, passionate and emotionally connected to their workplace are more likely to deliver exceptional guest experiences, a core driver of success in this competitive sector. But many organisations are encountering issues recruiting employees who are committed to the organisation (Bodjrenou et al., 2019). The conditions of employee work can motivate them to look for a better career option outside the organisation, and consequently, they may have the intention to leave the organisation voluntarily (Ahmad, 2018). Despite being one of the most progressive sectors, this is also happening in the hospitality sector (Doggrell, 2020). The issue of high staff turnover has been identified as one of the problems in the hotel industry (Yao et al., 2019). Employees who identify strongly with the organisation are less likely to leave and also show a high level of support for the organisation (Luu, 2017). Turnover intentions among employees can be minimised when employees feel attached to their organisation. When an employee is highly attached to their present organisation, they are more likely to remain in the organisation (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). High organisational attachment is a reflection of employees' satisfaction with their job, and they became more productive and more likely to display better work engagement (Mura et al., 2022), such as actively involving themselves in any of the organisation's activities, and contributing to the attainment of organisations' objectives (Casey & Sieber, 2016). Moreover, these engagement behaviours are driven by the feeling of employees that they are part of the organisation; therefore, they develop a feeling of attachment towards their work and the organisation as a whole (Costa et al., 2022).

Organisational attachment as a theoretical construct has not been adequately explained in the literature and its measurement, thus making its theoretical progression challenging (De Andrade & Pedruzzi, 2020; Verma & Khatri, 2021). While there are studies that explore organisational attachment (Casper & Harris, 2008; Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015), they focused on co-workers and other members of the organisation instead of viewing the organisation as an entity of social interactions (Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; Feeney et al. 2020). Understanding what fosters organisational attachment in the hospitality context is crucial for building a strong workforce, reducing employee turnover, and ultimately, achieving organisational goals. This literature review delves into the concept of organizational attachment, explores the factors influencing it, and identifies key areas for future research.

This review endeavours to follow the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) as presented in Liberati et al. (2009). During the review period, I had limited access to Scopus and Web of Science journals, which were considered major and preferred data sources; therefore, this review relied only on the Google Scholar database and other open-access materials. It is suggested that future studies may expand this exploration using these major data sources. Further, this review included both qualitative and quantitative research about organisational attachment conducted among various types of business organisations. Screening of the articles was done using the following keywords: organisational attachment; organisational attachment + hospitality; employee attachment + organisations; attachment + hotel + organisation; organisation + identity + attachment. It resulted in 106 articles being identified to be included in the review. I used the PRISMA Flow Diagram

tool from Haddaway et al. (2022) as shown in Figure 1. However, only 68 articles were accessed by me during the compilation of the articles. Another 13 articles were excluded due to the non-relevance of the topic in a business organisation context. Hence, a total of 55 articles were considered in this review. It is recognised in this research that there are still articles that may be relevant to the topic, but my ability to access them is restricted, primarily due to financial resources. I advise that future researchers may take caution when generalising and using the results of the study. More articles than those included in the present article will be reviewed based on the context and application of the research.

Literature review

Several themes emerged during the literature review. The first theme outlines the development of organisational attachment as a construct derived from attachment theory. Leadership, empowerment, organisational practices, rewards, learning and development and a positive work environment were identified as influences on organisational attachment.

Organisational attachment

Organisational attachment is determined by an individual's willingness to be attached to the organisation (Chen et al., 2019). People typically form attachments to the systems of which they are a part; this attachment can be behavioural or psychological in nature (Tsui et al., 1992). It is a construct that has been derived from organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), which considers the organisational commitment

and recurrence intentions of employees (Menon, 2015). Organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) explains how employees identify with and feel attached to their organisation. This occurs when people have an emotional attachment to the organisation, feel obligated to stay, and are aware of the costs involved in leaving. This feeling leads to discretionary behaviours that go beyond formal job requirements and contribute to the overall functioning and effectiveness of the organisation, such as helping co-workers, volunteering for additional tasks, and showing concern for organisational issues (Organ, 1998; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Bolino et al., 2015). These dynamics show how organisational attachment is linked to the citizenship and commitment behaviours of employees in an organisation.

Organisational attachment can be traced back to the original attachment theory, which has psychological roots (Bowlby, 1973). This theory explains that all people have an inbuilt attachment system. The strong and long-lasting emotional bonds formed in a person's formative years usually develop in patterns, and an individual's attachment pattern, or style, is typically stable and resistant to change from outside sources. This pattern will subsequently impact numerous facets of individuals' subsequent lives, such as their cognitive, affective and behavioural response patterns (Collins et al., 2004). Additionally, it will shape their viewpoints on interpersonal distance, encompassing whether they are comfortable being in close proximity to others, or would rather be left alone (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

Organisational attachment has been viewed in multiple ways and not as a single dimension (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005). Organisational attachment is characterised by affective commitment, organisational identification and turnover

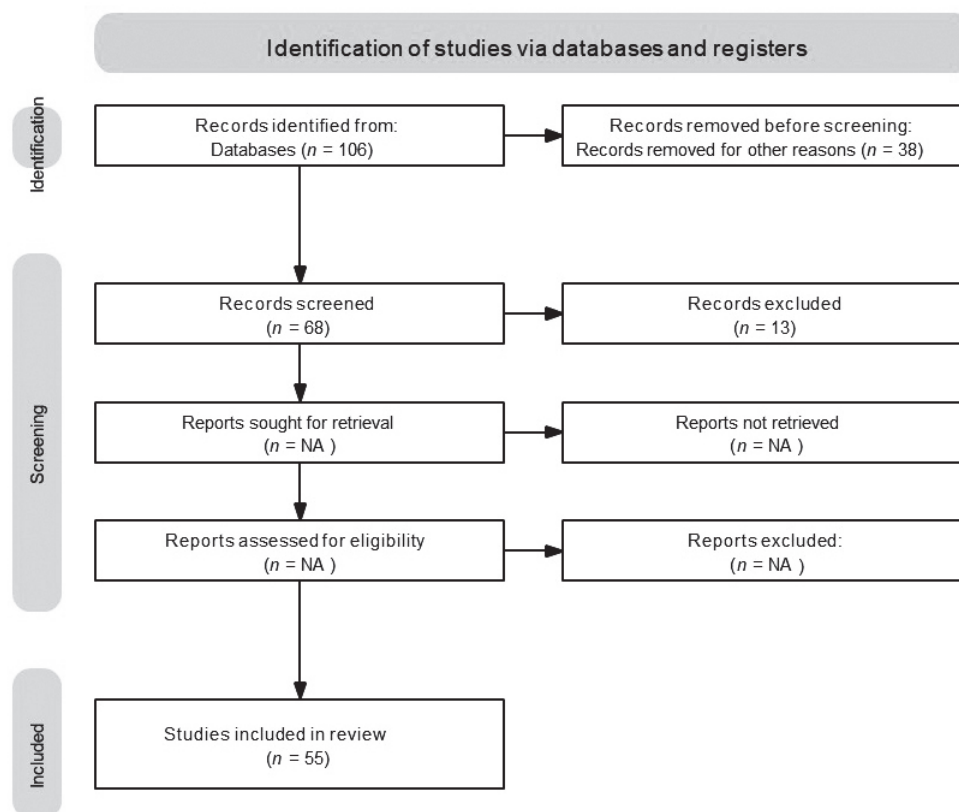


FIGURE 1: PRISMA flow diagram

intentions, according to Gonzalez and DeNisi (2009). Similar to securely attached employees who perceive more positive attitudes toward the organisation and believe working hard will benefit both the organisation and themselves (Schmidt, 2016), affective commitment is defined as the degree of employees' acceptance of the organisation's goals and values and their willingness to contribute to the well-being of the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees who identify as members of the organisation and who share its values and goals are said to exhibit organisational identification (Pratt, 1998). Like the emotional tie of the original attachment theory, it is the psychological bond formed when employees take on the traits of the organisation to define themselves (Brown, 1969). Turnover intention is an employee's assessment of whether to stay or leave the organisation (Venkataramani et al., 2013). This entails an employee with avoidant attachment styles who tends to disengage from work and avoid forming long-term relationships with colleagues (Richards & Schat, 2011).

These three organisational attachment indicators interact with one another and have emotional similarities. Employees that are affectively committed to the company, for example, are more likely to stay in their roles and to firmly embrace the company's values; as a result, they have lower turnover and higher organisational identification (Venkataramani et al., 2013).

Influences on organisational attachment

Employee attachment is largely fostered by the abilities of leaders to execute human-oriented styles – a leader who invests in good working relationships and shows concerns with their subordinates – which therefore empowers the employees to clearly perform their day-to-day activities and responsibilities. Hence, this situation creates a positive work environment and drives better organisational performance (Chi et al., 2017). The core basis for human-oriented leadership is the attitude of a leader whose approach is led by pioneering human beings rather than by projects and/or power in the process of realising organisational objectives and strategies (Leonard, 2018; Oh et al., 2018). Leadership can assist a person in becoming a leader through a variety of actions that inspire followers to meet the objectives of the company (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Organisations with better leadership increase employee productivity and efficiency (Di Fabio & Peiro, 2018) and make employees feel more attached to the organisation if they feel that they are being well supported by their leaders (Yip et al., 2015). Supportive, transparent, ethical and trustworthy leaders create a more positive and engaging work environment (Dimitriou, 2022), and improve employee organisational attachment and organisational performance (Duarte et al., 2021; Baquero, 2023).

Employees who find their work fulfilling feel that they are valued by the organisation, and when they are given autonomy towards their job and authority to make decisions related to how the job is performed, it will make them feel empowered and will encourage them to exhibit higher attachment behaviours towards the organisation (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Additionally, opportunities for growth and skills development through challenging tasks and training programmes foster a sense of value and strengthen attachment.

Organisational practices can influence organisational attachment as well. A positive, supportive and inclusive organisational culture that prioritises employee well-being fosters strong attachment (Lee et al., 2014). This includes open

communication channels, opportunities for social interaction and work-life balance initiatives. Organisations that foster work-life balance with favourable career development opportunities improve the attachment behaviours of employees towards their organisation. Demanding work environments characterised by long hours, shift work and emotional labour can contribute to burnout and hinder attachment, and organisations that prioritise flexible scheduling and well-being programmes can mitigate these challenges. Clear pathways for career advancement through training and development programmes demonstrate the organisation's investment in its employees, strengthening attachment (Baruch, 2015). If employees also feel secure in their jobs, it provides them with a sense of stability and reduces their turnover intentions, fostering organisational attachment (Judge et al., 2002).

Rewards play a significant role in fostering organisational attachment. However, the effectiveness of rewards depends on the type of reward offered, its alignment with individual employee needs and the broader organisational context. By designing a comprehensive reward system that considers both financial and non-financial rewards, organisations can strengthen employee attachment, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce (Ambrose et al., 2016; Bhattarai & Budhathoki, 2023). Putting in place a programme for rewards and recognition at work can increase employee engagement and strengthen retention efforts. Support can be given through incentives, rewards, or recognition for a job well done (Pillay & Singh, 2018). Although pay and workload are now the most important factors in determining an employee's decision to remain in or leave the hospitality sector (Abdou & Shehata, 2021). According to Hussain et al. (2019), a study conducted among an organisation's employees revealed that employee recognition and rewards have a significant impact on worker performance. Rewards and recognition are valuable tools that can spur workers to meet company objectives and are crucial for both employee performance and retention. A company needs to provide its workers with a wide variety of incentives (Madhani, 2020). According to Tehseen and Hadi's (2015) research, when employees receive praise from management, they perform better on their tasks, and organisations reach their highest potential and eventually contribute to favourable attachment behaviours.

Learning and development can improve organisational attachment among employees. By investing in high-quality programmes that address individual needs and career aspirations, organisations can cultivate a learning culture that strengthens employee engagement, skill development and, ultimately, attachment to the workplace (Edmonson, 1999; Mdhlalose, 2022; Lee et al., 2014). Moreover, numerous scholarly investigations have documented the advantageous outcomes of education and training initiatives. Keomorakath and Suhariadi (2021) found a phenomenon wherein employee performance experience increased significantly following seminars and training sessions, with the takeaway being that employees felt good about their career development. According to a study by Sangeeta (2021), the evolution of engagement activities in organisations – such as webinars with industry experts, social interactions in a virtual office and live sessions for new-skill training – is the main reason why employees stayed, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Garavan et al. (2020), as long as companies keep funding their learning and

development initiatives, employees' knowledge, abilities and attitudes will continue to improve.

Finally, a positive and thriving work environment fosters employee involvement and productivity, which makes it critical (Kundu & Lata, 2017). On the contrary, a negative work environment can significantly affect efficiency and reduce morale (Sarwani, 2017). It is clear that an innovative, supportive work environment also increases staff motivation and cooperation (Supriyanto et al., 2020). Therefore, in areas where there is respect between employees, support from each other and a proper working atmosphere, good results are obtained (Putri et al., 2019; Putra et al., 2020). These organisational environments significantly influence an employee's feeling of attachment towards their organisation.

Conclusion

Organisational attachment is a complex construct influenced by various factors in the organisational context. It is deeply rooted in attachment theory, which suggests that individuals form emotional bonds with organisations akin to those formed in early interpersonal relationships. Organisational attachment manifests through affective commitment, organisational identification and turnover intentions, which interact to shape employees' attitudes and behaviours towards the organisation.

Leadership styles, organisational practices, rewards and recognition, learning and development opportunities and the work environment significantly impact organisational attachment. Human-oriented leadership fosters a sense of security and support among employees, leading to stronger attachment. Similarly, a positive work environment characterised by open communication, work-life balance initiatives and career development opportunities enhances attachment and reduces turnover intentions. Rewards and recognition programmes, coupled with learning and development initiatives, further strengthen employee attachment.

Future research

This study primarily focuses on the conceptualisation and theoretical understanding of organisational attachment in the context of various organisational factors. However, the practical implementation and real-world application of these concepts may vary across different industries and organisational settings. Future research may explore organisational attachment in specific industries to understand how industry-specific factors influence attachment dynamics. With the complex operational structure of hospitality and tourism organisations and the challenges of acquiring and retaining a workforce (Guilding et al., 2014; Ibrahim, 2020), understanding how employees could increase their attachment and commitment behaviours will help in the improvement of employee retention among these organisations. Future empirical studies focusing on identifying factors that influence attachment behaviours will be helpful in providing practical recommendations for effective human resource management and development in the hospitality sector.

Organisational attachment is influenced by cultural norms, societal values and contextual factors that vary across regions and countries. Future researchers may explore how cultural and contextual factors influence organisational attachment in

diverse organisational settings. Workforce demographics may be considered in analysing levels of organisational attachment to understand how it varies among various groups of employee profiles in the organisation. Moreover, implementing intervention studies aimed at enhancing organisational attachment can provide practical insights into effective strategies for improving attachment in real-world organisational contexts. By testing different interventions, such as leadership development programmes, organisational culture initiatives, or reward system enhancements, researchers can identify best practices for promoting attachment and organisational effectiveness.

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