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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	<b>WORKERS' FELT-BELONGINGNESS AND COMMITMENT: A RELATIONSHIP-BASED DISCOURSE</b> <i>EGWAKHE, A. JOHNSON</i>	1
2.	<b>NON MONETARY REWARDS: A SOURCE OF SATISFYING THE SELF-ACTUALIZATION NEED</b> <i>DR. P. K. JAIN &amp; RASHMI BADJATYA</i>	8
3.	<b>IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH DIRECTION</b> <i>DR. S. SARAVANAN &amp; A. MADHUMITHA RANI</i>	12
4.	<b>MEASUREMENT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN BANKING SECTOR: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BANKS IN SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT</b> <i>B. KAVITHA &amp; DR. A. ABBAS MANTHIRI</i>	19
5.	<b>E-BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF AUTOMOBILES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON DETERMINANTS</b> <i>JOSEPH VARGHESE &amp; DR. J. CLEMENT SUDHAHAR</i>	22
6.	<b>STUDY OF REWARDS AND MOTIVATION ON JOB SATISFACTION IN BANKING SECTOR WITH REFERENCE TO PUNE REGION</b> <i>DR. MANISHA PUROHIT</i>	26
7.	<b>A STUDY OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROVIDED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE JAIPUR DISTRICT OF RAJASTHAN</b> <i>DR. NANDINI SHARMA</i>	29
8.	<b>A STUDY ON THE WORKPLACE CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SAKTHI FINANCE LTD, COIMBATORE</b> <i>DR. D. BARANIKUMAR &amp; STEFFI RACHEL S</i>	32
9.	<b>A PREFERENTIAL STUDY ON INVESTMENT IN PHYSICAL GOLD AND INVESTMENT IN E GOLD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MANGALORE</b> <i>DR. UMA.V.R. &amp; GOMINI.K.S.</i>	35
10.	<b>VENTURE CAPITAL IN INDIA: TRENDS &amp; CHALLENGES</b> <i>SAUMYA JAIN &amp; NARANDER KUMAR NIGAM</i>	38
11.	<b>ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN BOOSTING EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE</b> <i>ROJI PHUTELA &amp; ASHUTOSH PANDE</i>	43
12.	<b>EVENT MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY &amp; JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STUDENTS RESIDING IN BANGALORE URBAN)</b> <i>JYOTHI.J</i>	48
13.	<b>PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA</b> <i>DR. MOHD. IQBAL DARZI</i>	54
14.	<b>AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE EXISTENCE OF GENDER GAP IN THE PERSONAL FINANCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF INFORMED INVESTORS</b> <i>PADMA NANDANAN</i>	56
15.	<b>A STUDY ON COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR BANK</b> <i>M. NAGAJOTHI &amp; DR. S. P. DHANDAYUTHAPANI</i>	59
16.	<b>ELECTRONIC BANKING IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES</b> <i>DR. KANDULA SALAIAH</i>	62
17.	<b>DAY OF THE WEEK ANALYSIS ON SECTORAL INDEX OF INDIAN STOCK MARKET</b> <i>J. THIAGARAJAN &amp; DR. B. KANNAN</i>	66
18.	<b>THE MOVEMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN THE NIGERIAN PETROLEUM INDUSTRY: CAN IT BE STABILISED?</b> <i>MONEY, UDIH</i>	70
19.	<b>WATERSHED APPROACH THROUGH TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD OF KORAPUT DISTRICT IN ODISHA</b> <i>ASHOK KUMAR NANDA</i>	74
20.	<b>COMPARING MEAN RETURNS AND DETERMINING EXCHANGE RATE EFFECT IN INTERNATIONAL EQUITY INVESTMENT</b> <i>DIKKO BELLO.</i>	79
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	87

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**WORKERS' FELT-BELONGINGNESS AND COMMITMENT: A RELATIONSHIP-BASED DISCOURSE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The thrust of this perceptual-based study was to investigate the perception and relationship between workers' felt-belongingness and commitment among profit and non-profit oriented organizations in Kigali. A purposive sample of 40 organizations<sup>1</sup> was used to examine the theoretical assumption of possible relationship. All responses obtained were analyzed through SPSS version 21. The statistical results from both descriptive and correlations indicate strong evidences of high rating for elements of felt-belongingness and commitment and positive statistical significant relationship between felt-belongingness and commitment was discovered. Findings thus indicate that felt-belongingness is a strong springboard for workers' commitment among the surveyed organizations.

**KEYWORDS**

workers' felt-belongingness and commitment.

**INTRODUCTION**

In a world of geo-political, social, and economic complexity and uncertainty, the public narratives on how to foster workplace commitment through workers' felt-belongingness is less investigated in literature and the underpinning nexus is academically limited in Kigali. The research gap exists despite the old roundly theoretical notion of belongingness credited to Maslow (1954) as construct of social identity and acceptance among humans. The simple unanswered question is how workers' workplace-based social identity or constructive sense of identity influence workers' commitment? A recent study in Rwanda mirrored on turnover<sup>2</sup> and commitment engendering factors but the degree of workers' felt-belongingness contributions to commitment or turnover-intention was comprehensively isolated. However, workers' intra-organizational belongingness is fundamental to understanding how workers ascribe meaning to social exchange (Jones, 2009), identity, and work-life that characterized workplace lives<sup>3</sup> and the overlapping commitment to the workplace.

A cursory observation of workers' practices sees felt-belongingness from economic, social identity<sup>4</sup>, and inclusion<sup>5</sup> as driving-construct into organization's membership being prioritized as automatic upon employment process completion. In a similar perspective, workers' commitment is associated with workers' adjustment/adaptation to appropriate given conditions (Bryson and White, 2008) and loyalty, while neglecting the myriad person-specifics and endogenous processes leading to felt-belongingness. This shortsightedness could have resulted from the inherent rigidities in deciphering workers' felt-belongingness/commitment, which conveys the realities of managing knowledge workers vis-à-vis mechanical controlled jobs. This indicates that humans are not mechanistic and workplace is diverse, complex, and dynamic.

In most business organizations, workers' psychodynamics<sup>6</sup> is least espoused and encouraged as productivity seems to preoccupy and override the sense of felt-belongingness. In addition, the over-emphasis on result-based approach to human engineering has orchestrated insufficient attention to workers' emotional element with assumed mood switching thinking. This devalued and triggered workplace felt-exclusion (Ryan and Deci, 2000), poor quality of work-life, and apathy among workers. In light of this, felt-belongingness or workplace intimacy is derogated at the expense of workers' utilization and productivity oriented thinking.

The incongruence between low felt-belongingness and high productivity illuminates and stimulates negativity in attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of employees. It further defies attachment theory<sup>7</sup>, self-esteem reflective capacities<sup>8</sup>, and workers' development of idiosyncratic coping or defense mechanisms of being within a specific family context (Fonagy and Target, 2007). This tendency has its danger. The danger is conventionally evident in workers' turnover and absenteeism (Powell and Meyer, 2004), discomfort and disconnect in workers, and workers' less loyalty and insecurity. Within this discourse, Gardner, Pickett, Jefferis, and Knowles (2005) identify the various effects a lack of sense of belonging creates, such as greater risk to physical wellbeing, distrust (Chughtai and Buckley, 2008), inability to synchronize with others, weak performance (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2006), and poor quality of work-life.

The terms commitment and felt-belongingness are closely related concepts but differs in usage along morally dedicated and emotional acceptance by others. While felt-belongingness<sup>9</sup> and commitment have received divergent theoretical, conceptual, and contextual discourse, their meaning and influence seemed inherently individualized (Blum, 2004) and psychologically bottled-up and/or determined by external factors or behaviours. Some scholastic approaches are prominent in Holland's (1959) concept of fit, side-bets of Becker (1960), Bowen's (1966) concept of togetherness, Bowlby's (1969 & 1973) attachment theory, Kegan's (1982) concept of inclusion, Guisinger and Blatt's (1994) concept of relatedness, as well as terms such as adjustment, association, bonding, engagement, connectedness, security, and even commitment.

Nevertheless, scholars have seen commitment through conceptualizations such as behavioral and attitudinal approaches embedded in technical exchange processes or psychological identity at strategic, HR policy, and workplace levels. Similarly, Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2001), theorized that psychological ownership is linked with felt-belongingness which can be differentiated from other construct based on possessiveness<sup>10</sup>, motivation, and organizational-bases self-esteem<sup>11</sup>. The fundamental argument of these scholars (Blum, 2006; Coates, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2001 and Pierce, *et al.*, 2001) was anchored on three basic human needs: sense of home (Pierce, 2001), efficacy and affective, and self-identity (Gardner, 2005).

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledged and appreciate the background work of Ms. Niyigena, Monique and Ms. Ishimwe, Chantal who are current MBA students at AUCA, Kigali Rwanda

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Rwanda Public Service Commission Technical Call for Consultancy on Turnover, June 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Leblelici, D. (2012). Impact of workplace quality on employee's productivity: Case study of a bank in Turkey. *Journal of Business, Economics and Finance*, 1(1), 739-762.

<sup>4</sup> Akerlof, G. A. and Kranton, R. E. (2000). Economics and Identity, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 105 (2), 255-83

<sup>5</sup> Akerlof, G. A. and Kranton, R. E. (2005). Identity and Economics of Organization, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19 (1), 9-32

<sup>6</sup> Shook, N. J and Clay, R. (2012). Inter-racial roommate relationships: A mechanism for promoting sense of belonging at university and academic performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48: 1168-1172.

<sup>7</sup> Blum, H. (2004). Separation-individuation Theory and Attachment Theory. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association*, 52, 535-553

<sup>8</sup> Coates, S. W. (2004). John Bowlby and Margaret S. Mahler: Their lives and theories. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 52, 571-601.

<sup>9</sup> McGregor, D. and Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. (2006). *The Human Side of Enterprise*, annotated edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

<sup>10</sup> Linn, V. D. and Pierce, J. I. (2004). Psychological Ownership and feeling of possession: three field studies predicting employee attitudes and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25, 439-459

<sup>11</sup> Ragins, B. R., Cotton, J. L., and Miller, J. S. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 1177-1194



However, workers' felt-belongingness (inclusion, engagement, and involvement) and commitment has not been addressed in most literature in Rwanda. In light of the above mentioned research gap, this article examines (a) the perceptions of employees on felt belongingness, (b) respondents' perceptions on commitment, and (c) the relationships between employees' felt belongingness and employees' commitment. The work is divided into the foregoing introduction, literature review, methodology, data presentation, conclusion and recommendation.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Human civilization provides eclectic robust evidences of an inherent desire to belong and to feel secured or important<sup>12</sup> in and among any culture, race, society and organization as part of something greater than oneself. The aforementioned are positive reinforcing psychological identity (Pierce, 2001) synchronizing with optimal functioning and human strength in work engagement according to Chughtai and Buckley (2008). This implies a meaningful inter-persons relationship that is greater than simple acquaintance or familiarity to inseparable intimacy (Blum, 2004) which is fundamental to mental and physical resilience (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Further, workers' belongingness resonates social capital (Jaitli and Hua, 2012), symbiotic network, attachment, and the need to give and receive affection from others (social interdependence) (Powell and Meyer, 2004). The interdependence prevents detachment<sup>13</sup>, distrust, and transactional cost (Dyer and Chu, 2003) that are pivotal to human resilience, performance (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2006), motivation, and commitment in any organization.

In addition, previous evidences indicate that workers are likely to increase performance<sup>14</sup> (outcomes), normative commitment, and satisfaction (Chughtai and Buckley, 2008) when they develop a high organizational trust (Tan and Lim, 2009). This human desire (felt-belongingness and trust) are universal and evident across all cultures and different people<sup>15</sup>. However, it is often overlooked in workplace, although Vischer (2008) had demonstrated that workforce with strong emotional bound and trust are more participatory, committed, and pursue organizational objectives (Corey, 2001) of the organization. The interface between workers' felt-belongingness enhances the intent to connect their identity with the organization intrinsic (values) identity (Jones, 2009), mission<sup>16</sup> and psychological comfort (Vischer, 2008). The sense of oneness provides a reciprocal mechanism for the expression and demonstration of care, ownership or buy-in, and relevancy (Jaitli and Hua, 2013) to the organization they belong.

The need for belonging as theorized by Abraham Maslow<sup>17</sup> further provides robust explanation for human behaviours, intellectual, emotion and motivational processes. The organization's affectional experiences impact emotional and physical well-being during workers' professional or career progression. This was investigated by Sable (2008) with the result indicating that worker and organizational attachment occurs, when a relationship of affectionate bond exists. The position was previously established by Keller and Cacioppe, (2001) that maintaining lasting affectional bonds evokes organizational attachment. The fundamental dimensions of attachment and motivation theories are to: (a) produce effects readily under all but adverse conditions, (b) have affective consequences, (c) direct cognitive processing, (d) lead to ill effects (such as on health or adjustment) when thwarted, (e) elicit goal-oriented behavior designed to satisfy it (subject to motivational patterns such as object substitutability and satiation), (f) be universal in the sense of applying to all people, (g) not be derivative of other motives, (h) affect a broad variety of behaviors, and (i) have implications that go beyond immediate psychological functioning. Hence, Corey (2001) substantiates Maslow's perspective by stating that felt-belonging is instrumental to a person's courage to act, handling life problems, and was further augmented by Cartwright and Cooper (2009) that it leads to organizational well-being.

The foremost economic and moral duty of any business organization is to care for its employees, which Armstrong (2013) qualifies as germane to human social needs. In addition, Becker (1960) side-bets theory, and Maxfield (2008) sees these as indispensable. The care provided to workers gives emotional stability (Sable, 2008), acceptance, and resilience (Chughtai and Buckley, 2009) trust (Keller and Cacioppe, 2001) and commitment (Bryson and White, 2008) of workers. Literature (Maslow, 1954; Sable, 2008; Maxfield, 2008; Yalom, 2008, and Becker, 1998) have supported the assertion that self-acceptance is greatly instrumental and contingent upon received acceptance from others. With these, workers' self-esteem is possible under workplace connectedness and relationships with others (Ryan and Deci, 2000) in the network. Yalom (2008) simply synthesized his scholarly discourse on this through the term *people need people* – for initial and continued survival, socialization, and in the pursuit of satisfaction.

Scholars (Ronen and Mikulincer, 2012; Richard and Schat, 2011; Yalom, 2008) have offered strong empirical insights on worker's felt-belongingness, identity, support and emotional attachment, in providing solid platform for worker's performance. Wu, Parker, and de Jong, (2014) associated it with support and emotional attachment that drives workers' behaviours in the organization which, Buchanan (1974) alludes to as a psychological bond where employees identify with organization's people, goals, and beliefs. A similar perspective to the aforementioned assertion is Becker's (1960) side-bet theory. He argued that employees make side-bets into their employing organization and through these investments, follow a consistent course of action of identification with the organization. In light of the side-bets philosophy, investment like emotion, time and skills (Ryan and Deci, 2000) play significant role in normative, continuous and effective commitment.

Shochet (2010) however, re-examined human needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs with reference to physiological needs, safety, self-esteem, and to self-actualization. This arrangement is hierarchical and satisfaction order-based according to Ryan and Deci, (2000). The physiological and safety needs reiterate individual inter-personal orientation for progression into higher needs<sup>18</sup> or public self-consciousness<sup>19</sup>: if the first two needs attainment is impossible, then an individual's complete love for someone else is precluded. Hence, workers' immediate focus is felt-belongingness (Powell and Meyer, 2004): a derivate of physiological and safety need realization. In sustaining this perspective, Baumeister and Leary (2009) asserts the relative interdependence of human beings need for safety as determinant of social interactions. Inability to meet this need results in loneliness, mental distress, (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001) and a strong intrinsic desire to form new relationships. This proposition reaffirms other philosophical orientations towards the nature of humans and about theoretical insights into human disposition.

The need to belong and form attachments is universal and cultural<sup>20</sup> among humans. Its universality and cross-cultural dimensions imply that humans, irrespective of their race, education and position, seeks affection<sup>21</sup>, social identity<sup>22</sup> and sense of community in attaining self-actualization. Scholars (Becker, 1960; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Bandura, 2004; Powell and Meyer, 2004; Baumeister and Leary, 2009, Maslow, 1954, and Shochet, 2010) have provided theoretical individual differences in people's motivation to belong. Workers who demonstrate strong motivation to belong are less satisfied with their relationships (Pierce, *et al.*, 2001) and tend to be relatively lonely. Hence, seek social attachment (Blum, 2004) and inter-personal orientation with reference to power, intimacy, approval, achievement and affiliation (Maslow, 1954), triggered by the need to belong.

<sup>12</sup> Bible: New International Version. Genesis Chapter 2:18.

<sup>13</sup> Bakker, A. B. and Demerouti, E. (2008). Towards a Model of Work Engagement. *Career Development International*, 13 (3), 209-223.

<sup>14</sup> Chughtai, A. A. and Buckley, F. (2009). Linking Trust in the Principal to School Outcomes: The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification and Work Engagement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 23(7), 574-589

<sup>15</sup> Tan, H. H. and Lim, K. H. A. (2009). Trust in Coworkers and Trust in Organization. *Journal of Psychology*, 143(1), 45-66.

<sup>16</sup> Maxfield, S. (2008). Reconciling Corporate Citizenship and Competitive Strategy: Insight from Economic Theory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80(2), 367-377.

<sup>17</sup> Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper

<sup>18</sup> Bandura, A. (2004). Cultivate Self-Efficacy for personal and organizational effectiveness. In E. A. Lockes (ed.). *Handbook of Principles of Organizational Behavior* (pp.120-136). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

<sup>19</sup> Deci, E. and Gagnes, M. (2005). Self-determination and Work Motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 337-362.

<sup>20</sup> Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York, NY: Harper

<sup>21</sup> Tay, L and Diener, E. (2011). Needs and subjective well-being around the World. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775.

<sup>22</sup> Cianci, R and Gambrel, P. A. (2003). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Does it apply in a Collectivist Culture. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), 143-161.

The foregoing literature did assert that felt-belongingness contributes towards sustaining a healthy, happy (Harter, 2000) and productive workforce. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that felt-belongingness through workers engagement<sup>23</sup>, social identity, and sense of a community has many benefits for individuals, organization and wider society. The works of Macey and Schneider (2008) demonstrates that it fosters increased productivity and performance while Little and Little (2006) made reference to innovation and full utilization of workers' skills for organizational benefits. However, this article looks at information sharing, participation and involvement, and success sharing as variables to encourage and promote felt-belongingness.

Information sharing undeniably contributes to person-work environment fit<sup>24</sup>. Scholars from the field of organizational learning and learning organizations (Jones, 2009 Madlock and Booth-Butterfield, 2008) have re-emphasized the relevancy of information sharing in contributing to talent, knowledge, skills and collective insights in the organization. In addition, exchange of information and ideas appears to reinforce and open workers' mind and broaden their thinking about how they can do more to succeed. Information sharing, thus mediates the relationship between felt-belongingness, performance (Harter, *et al.*, 2002) and person work-environment fit (Harter, 2000). From this perspective, employees' cognitive and emotional involvement are derivative of felt-belongingness and strong desire to remain (Corey, 2001) in the workplace.

A sense of felt-belonging to a community that is greater than self is an important element of employee engagement, involvement, participation, commitment and a basic human need as demonstrated by Baueister and Leary (2009). Workplace decision that affect employees requests that their opinions are harvested and their involvement in decision-making influence their interest, broaden their scope of thinking and acting (Yalom, 2008 and Sable, 2008) as members of an organization. Friendship and cordial work environment appear vital (Harter, 2000) and as key differentiators between successful work execution<sup>25</sup> and less successful work group. This enables manager to create opportunities for people to know one another towards fostering organizational egalitarianism.

Creating an environment in which employees have opportunities to discuss their progress, success and growth leads to positive affective emotions that can build intellectual resources at work. What is instrumental in building the intellectual resources depend on social exchange (Jones, 2009), learning opportunities and progress discussions, which invariably depends on positive emotion, trust (Powell and Meyer, 2004) and social benefits that results from feeling of contributions and felt-belonging. When positive emotions are part of organizational ecology (Becker, 2007), they filter through employees' learning and progress discussion and enable them to focus and commit to organization's functioning with reference to learning, improvement, and outcomes<sup>26</sup>. Felt belonging is facilitated by acceptance (Yalom, 2008) within organization that support clear outcomes (Jaitli and Hua, 2012) expectancies, hedonic well-being and encourage individual contribution and fulfillment through participation, involvement, information sharing and success or progress discussions. How these elements lead to commitment constitutes the focus on the next phase of literature review.

#### EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

In knowledge-driven economies and organizations, commitment remains indispensable in work performance, quality of work-life and productivity. This perspective was illuminated by the work of Luchak and Gellatly (2007) that workers' performance is a derivative of affective commitment. Although loyalty is often advocated, it remains insufficient and produces exacerbating-effect without workplace relations, social benefits (Bennet, 2000), and acceptance. Hence, employee commitment is relatively akin to felt-belongingness (Shook and Clay, 2012). Employees' commitment thus seems relative with reference to its multi-dimensional nature (endogenous and exogenous) as workers maintain congruence and membership (Hartman and Bambacas, 2000) with organizations. In light of the foregoing, commitment and felt-belonging constitute hidden forces that bind employees to organization's purpose (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001), existence and experience. However, the attachment display by workers differs in an organization. The differences is anchored on divergent conceptualization and multifaceted abstraction (Hartman and Bambacas, 2000) of an organization with reference to its purpose and values. These diverse approaches to an organization: co-workers, top management, and the relevant constituency (Rowden, 2003) (i.e. prominent groups both inside and outside the organization that help define its effectiveness) have close linkages to employees' behaviour, attachment (Sable, 2008), and commitment. The works of Madlock and Booth-Butterfield (2008) associated commitment to communication with others and relationship which improves productivity (Tubbs and Moss, 2008) and decrease conflict (Miller, 2009).

The nexus between communication, commitment and felt-belonging (relationship) was examined by scholars (Brown, 2003; Miller, 2009; Madlock and Booth-Butterfield, 2008), which conclusively indicated that organizational communication (information sharing) builds workplace relationship, emotion, and felt-relevancy. Brown (2003) thus found that relations-oriented behavior is the strongest predictor of affective commitment and less for continuance and normative commitment. The results obviously emphasized the complexity involved in workers' communication, attitude and behavior towards employing organization. This accordingly outlined the distinction between attitudinal commitment (Brown, 2003): a mindset in which individuals consider the congruency of their goals and values with those of their employing organizations. The complementarity of attitudinal and behavioral commitment was integral in Meyer and Allen's (2005) conceptualization of a multidimensional model of organizational commitment.

#### AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

Affective commitment consists of employee's positive emotional attachment (Sable, 2008) to the organization which Meyer and Allen (2005) pegged as the "desire" component of organizational commitment. An employee affective commitment emerges from felt identification (Jaitle and Hua, 2012) with self-alignment to the goals and organizational ecology (Becker, 2007). This perspective was previously examined by Meyer and Allen (2005) which described as desire or wants to with the organization as person-specific<sup>27</sup>. As such, Meyer and Allen (1997) identified demographic characteristics such as age, tenure, sex, and education to influence commitment. The problem with these characteristics is that while they can be seen, they cannot be clearly defined. Meyer and Allen gave this example that positive relationships between tenure and commitment maybe due to tenure-related differences in job status and quality<sup>28</sup>.

Felt-belonging could trigger continuance commitment (Kegan, 1982): the component of gains verses losses of working in an organization. The side bets (Becker, 1960) or investments, are the gains and losses that may occur should an individual stay or leave an organization (Becker, 2007). An individual commitment becomes a progenitor of perceived cost of losing organizational membership (Becker, 1960 and 2007) and attachment (Kegan, 1982). Economic costs (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; 2005, and Jaitli and Hua, 2012) and social costs (Yalom, 2008) would be costs of losing organizational membership without availability of alternatives. This disrupt personal relationships (Becker, 2007 and Coates, 2004) and other side bets (Kegan, 1982) that would be incurred from leaving their organization. The problem with this is that these side bets do not occur at once but that they accumulate with age and length of staying with an organization according to Meyer and Allen (1991).

#### NORMATIVE COMMITMENT

The relative interdependence within an organizational ecology might generate workers' feelings of obligation to the work community, social identity<sup>29</sup>, and social attachment (Blum, 2004) to the co-workers. The normative commitment becomes a moral duty that originates from a person's self-acknowledgement membership to a social network for emotional dependency (Baumeister and Leary, 2009) and valuable significance of protect it. The group membership invokes collective sense of "us" and self-identification (Becker, 2007) within the organization to which departure constitutes a moral act. The social identity (Hogg, 2006) thus influence social outcome such as cohesion, altruism, and positive evaluation, loyalty and pride in the organization. In addition, Becker (1960) addressed this from invested

<sup>23</sup> Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., and Haynes, T. L. (2002). Business unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2), 268-279.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, T. A. and Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5, 89-94.

<sup>25</sup> Harter, J. K. (2002). The linkage of employee perception to outcomes in a retail environment: Cause and effect? *The Gallup Research Journal-Special Issues on Linkage Analysis*, 3(1), 25-38.

<sup>26</sup> Becker, F. (2007). Organizational Ecology and Knowledge networks. *California Management Review*, 49, 2. 9

<sup>27</sup> Meyer, J. P. and Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research and Application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication

<sup>28</sup> Meyer, J. P. and Allen, N. J. (1991). A three component conceptualization of organization commitment. *Human Resources Management Review*, 1(1), 61-89

<sup>29</sup> Hogg, M. A. (2006). Social Identity Theory. In P. J. Burke (ed.), *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*. (pp.111-136). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

resources in training an employee who then feels a moral duty to work and stay with the organization<sup>30</sup> to repay the psychological debt. This could be attributed to internalized norm or culture (Lam, *et al.*, 2010), developed before joining the organization through family or other socialization processes, that a person should be loyal (Blum, 2004) to one's community or organization. In light of the aforementioned literature, the theoretical evidences are anchored on the principles that people work to achieve and maintain social identity that is instrumental in workers' decision to stay with an organization.

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The methodological foundation for this work was anchored on quantitative data harvested or collected from forty organizations (profit and non-profit oriented organizations) located in Kigali City, Rwanda. The core objective of the work was to examine relationship between work-oriented commitment and social-emotional-oriented belongingness among staff of different distinctive organizations. These organizations were uniquely heterogeneous: diverse characteristics which make them comparable even though they belong to different industries, ownership structures, and social-political or strategic orientations.

The work was designed to employ correlation and descriptive statistical tools. The quantitative method of data collection was adopted to explore and obtain principal variables' data as regards to employee's felt-belonging and its instrumental role in workers' commitment. The utilization of descriptive statistical analysis provides insightful scholarly knowledge on respondents' perception on the categorical variables of commitment and felt-belongingness. In a similar perspective, the relationships between these variables were determined through correlational statistical tool so as to decipher the strength and direction of relationships between and among variables.

The respondent firms were purposively selected from different industries and organizations but the eligibility criteria specified certain set of characteristics: firm existed for more than ten (10) years, located in Kigali, and employing more than twenty (20) employees. From the aforementioned, a worker was judged fit to participate in the research provided she/he have worked with the organization for more than six (6) months. The minimum six months' threshold becomes the basis of purposive selection among the workers. The rationale for the six months' threshold was anchored on the proposition that organization's psychological and social dynamics/social-network determine absorption/assimilation (belonging) of newly recruits and could influence exit decision. Thus, workers' perceived alienation/social exclusion and felt-belongingness could trigger turnover or stay-put within a short period.

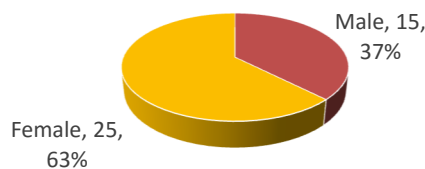
The selection of the respondent firms and individuals was purposive-driven. The sampled firms were forty (40) with each organization accounting for one (1) respondent. This sampling was purposive: firms and individual were technically judged fit to provide robust information for statistical analysis. The questionnaire for the article was adopted from existing literature (Becker, 2007; Hogg, 2006; Blum, 2004; Sable, 2008) and adjusted to suit Rwanda context before use. The questionnaire's construct, face, and content validity was established before administered to the selected respondents. The Cronbach's alpha reliability test for the questionnaire was (0.81) which translated into 81%. The questionnaire used a Likert four-point scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = strongly agree). Ethical issues with reference to principles guiding good human conduct within research: getting reliable information, consent, openness, personality, privacy, and crediting scholars were respected. The data was collected over a period of two weeks and processed for statistical results.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The statistical results are presented in three dimensions: demographical characteristics of respondents, perceptions of respondents on the principal elements of felt-belongingness and commitment, and the relationships between variables of commitment and felt-belongingness. With reference to the respondents' demographics, the gender element of the respondents' statistical results demonstrates that the female (63%) dominated vis-à-vis the male (37%) component.

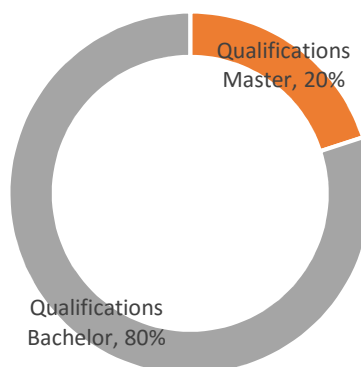
**FIGURE 1: GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS**

*Respondents by Sex*



The gender numerical differential is not a reflection of female sex group domination in the workforce in Kigali, rather the total number of respondents that participated in the survey. However, this indicates more females occupying managerial or administrative positions among the surveyed. This was followed-up with the analysis of respondents' educational attainment with all the respondents possessing post-secondary level education: bachelor 80% and master 20%. The findings thus show that although the respondents are educated, the level of educational attainment differs and most of the respondents held a bachelor degree.

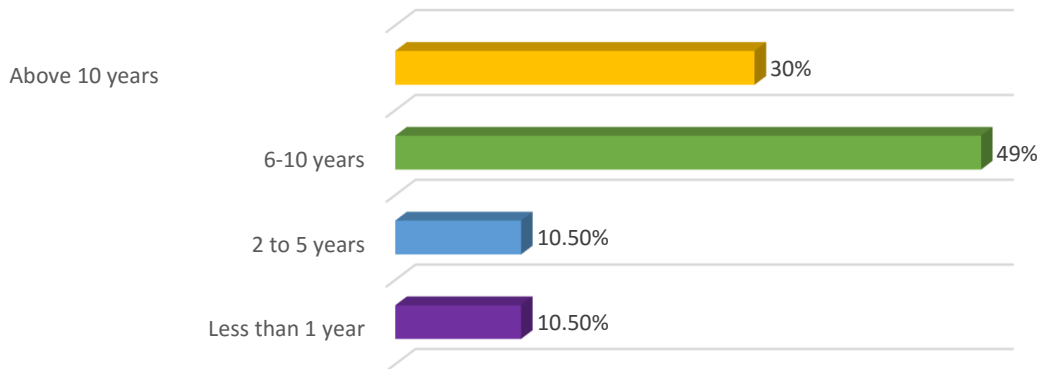
**FIGURE 2: LEVEL OF EDUCATION**



<sup>30</sup> Lam, S. K., Ahearne, M., Hu, Y., and Schillewaert, N. (2010). Resistance to Brand Switching when a radically new brands is introduced: A social identity theory perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 128-146.

The next unit of analysis was the length of stay with current organization without a categorical assessment of the workers' work-experience. Based on economic wealth maximization criteria, turnover should always be subordinate to commitment decision, provided workplace constitutes a means of returning economic and social surplus to the worker. Thus, length of staying becomes a miniature measurement or appraisal of opportunity cost and economic/social cost of commitment.

FIGURE 3: LENGTH OF STAY AT THE ORGANIZATION



The results indicate that 49% of the respondents have worked for more than five (5) years, 30% more than ten (10) years and 21% has worked between 1-5 years. From the aforementioned results, it becomes explicit that a majority 79% has worked within a particular organization for more than 5 years. It could tacitly imply that continuous and or affective commitment orchestrated this lengthy period of working within the different organization.

**WORKERS' PERCEPTION ON INFORMATION SHARING, PARTICIPATION/INVOLVEMENT, & SUCCESS SHARING**

The self-perception of the respondents' on information sharing, participation/involvement, and success sharing constitute the bedrock for organization's synergy, potential development and sense of togetherness. These were analyzed along respondents' perceptions. This further deepen insight on respondents as active designers of their work environment or as powerless victim of their fate. Although there are some other predictors of belonging behaviours, such as situational factors, educational & gender background, race/geo-political demarcations, and social/economic structural stratifications, this analysis is focused on information sharing, participation and success sharing.

The connectivity is empirically tested with results presented in Table 1 indicating that *team spirit* ( $M = 3.15$ ), *dialogue through meetings* ( $M = 3.07$ ), and *sense of community* ( $M = 3.02$ ) were considered paramount and imperative for information sharing. The results demonstrate that cross-functional synergy through information sharing can trigger positive feelings, perceived social status, and eliminate sense of social isolation/exclusion among workers. However, the challenge faced by the respondents is acknowledging reception of sufficient and important information.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON INFORMATION SHARING, INVOLVEMENT AND SUCCESS SHARING

Information Sharing	Mean	St.D
<i>I am usually not told about important things in this organization</i>	2.97	0.82
<i>Team spirit is high in this organization</i>	3.15	0.78
<i>Meetings are held to discuss work problems between my co-workers &amp; me</i>	3.07	0.89
<i>I receive sufficient information about things in the organization</i>	2.94	0.83
<i>I feel a sense of community in my organization and department</i>	3.02	0.74
<b>Participation/Involvement</b>		
<i>Employees are encouraged to take initiative with less supervision</i>	3.12	0.77
<i>I owe a great deal to my organization</i>	3.21	0.57
<i>I feel a sense of belonging/attachment to my organization</i>	3.21	0.52
<i>I am willing to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization</i>	2.92	0.87
<i>This organization deserves my loyalty</i>	3.28	0.60
<b>Success Sharing</b>		
<i>Financial success are shared at all levels</i>	3.00	0.82
<i>Ongoing results are provided to employees to recognize performance</i>	3.05	0.76
<i>Organization solicit ideas from employees to improve work process</i>	2.95	0.72
<i>Firm's employees are ready to discuss financial and non-financial success</i>	2.79	0.77

In a deconstructive analysis of participation/involvement in organizations' activities, participants reported high levels of participation with reference to *taking initiative* ( $M = 3.12$ ), sense of *indebtedness* ( $M = 3.21$ ), *attachment* ( $M = 3.21$ ), and *loyalty* ( $M = 3.28$ ). From the Mean scores, sense of less supervision, indebtedness, attachment, and loyalty were rated high, which were associated with psychological wellbeing, social relationship, and work environment domains. It could be deduced from the ratings that perceived strong peer relationship, attachment, and loyalty are associated with greater self-esteem and social adjustment to work environment. The Mean scores for the statements of success sharing indicate that shared financial success and recognition of performance were socially valued with Mean scores as ( $M = 3.00$ ) for *financial success sharing* and ( $M = 3.05$ ) *recognized performance* with profound perceived rates on felt-belongingness. It was therefore inferred that financial success sharing and recognized performance are crucial for positive reinforcement of felt-belongingness.

Respondents' perceptions on commitment along the categorical variables: continuance, affective and normative show some potential explanation to account for the implication of staying attached to a particular organization. The element of continuance with economic connotation vis-à-vis quit option indicated Mean scores between 2.59 - 2.96; a potential indication that *economic benefit* ( $M = 2.96$ ) constitute and influenced these workers' decision to stay. However, moderating this economic benefit could trigger exit with reference to *necessity/desire* ( $M = 2.87$ ) and *no-fear of quitting* ( $M = 2.89$ ). The results imply that economic bond and proximity of people with financial stability could have engineered their continuous commitment. However, privation could orchestrate workers' fear that quitting current job translates into economic backwardness.



TABLE 2: CONTINUANCE, AFFECTIVE AND NORMATIVE COMMITMENT PERCEPTION

Continuance Commitment	Mean
<i>The major reason for my continuous working in this organization is that leaving requires considerable sacrifices other organizations cannot offer</i>	2.96
<i>The consequences of leaving my organization is scarcity of alternative</i>	2.59
<i>I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job for another</i>	2.89
<i>At this point, leaving my organization is a necessity as much as desire</i>	2.87
<b>Affective Commitment</b>	
<i>I will be happy to spend my career at current organization</i>	2.85
<i>I enjoy discussing my organization with outsiders</i>	2.84
<i>I do feel like "part of the family" at my organization</i>	2.79
<i>I do feel a sense of belonging to my organization</i>	2.87
<i>I do feel emotionally attached to my organization</i>	2.89
<b>Normative Commitment</b>	
<i>The major reason I keep working for this organization is that loyalty is important and a moral obligation to remain</i>	3.94
<i>If I get another offer somewhere, I don't feel that its right to leave here</i>	2.51
<i>I do believe that a person must be loyal to his/her organization</i>	2.95
<i>Things were better in the old days when workers stayed with one organization in their career</i>	2.76

The sub statements under affective commitment show that employees are socially attached and bonded into relationship with reference to staying-stick to organization, sense of belongingness, and sharing information about their organization with others. From the perception ratings, emotionally and securely bonded workers are more likely to exhibit signs of loyalty and commitment to their organization. The score on moral obligation ( $M = 3.94$ ) and loyalty ( $M = 2.95$ ) are bridging social and economic commitment into normative commitment. The wider community of workers' moral duty and loyalty to co-workers' social welfare made it imperative to stay committed to the organization. In light of these scores, the research looks into the statistical relationships that exist between the elements of felt-belongingness and commitment.

**CORRELATION BETWEEN WORKERS' FELT-BELONGINGNESS AND COMMITMENT**

Table 3 presents evidences and statistics concerning the major assumption with reference to determining the nature of relationship that exist between workers' felt-belongingness and commitment. In light of this, the bivariate correlation between elements of felt-belongingness (information sharing, involvement/participation and success sharing) were correlated with elements of commitment (continuance, affective, and normative). The statistical scores indicated that there were positive significant relationships between *team spirit* and *difficulty in leaving* (Pearson Correlation = 0.553\*\*), and was significant at 1%, *Information sharing* with *difficulty of leaving* (Pearson Correlation = 0.372\*) significant at 5%, and with *considerable sacrifices* (Pearson Correlation 0.531\*\*), significant at 1%. A constructive analysis of the significant relationship indicates that information sharing was positively statistically correlated with elements of continuance commitment at different significant levels.

Further, on the scores of information sharing and affective commitment, information sharing had positive significant relationships with *spending entire career at current organization* (Pearson Correlation = 0.366\*) significant at 5%, *feeling part of a family* (Pearson Correlation 0.444\*\*) at 1%, and a *sense of belonging/attachment* (Pearson Correlation = 0.382\*) at 5%. Thus, information sharing within an organization was found to be positively statistically significant with categorical elements of affective commitment. However, evaluation of the strength or levels of significance showed that only feeling being a part of a family was stronger than spending entire career and attachment. The correlation analysis of information sharing and normative commitment recorded a positive significant relation (Pearson Correlation = 0.335\*), and was significant at 5%.

TABLE 3: CORRELATIONAL SCORES BETWEEN THE ELEMENTS FELT-BELONGINGNESS AND COMMITMENT

Information Sharing	Correlations
Continuance Commitment <i>Team spirit is high in this organization</i> <i>It would be very difficult for me to leave my organization right now even if I wanted to</i>	0.553**
I receive sufficient information about things in the organization <i>It would be very difficult for me to leave my organization right now even if I wanted to</i> <i>The major reason for my continuous work in this organization is that leaving requires considerable sacrifices other organizations cannot offer</i>	0.372* 0.531**
Affective Commitment I receive sufficient information about things in the organization <i>I will be happy to spend my career at my current organization</i> <i>I do feel like "part of the family" at my organization</i> <i>I feel a sense of belonging/attachment to my organization</i>	0.366* 0.444** 0.382*
Normative Commitment Meetings are held to discuss work problems between my co-workers & me <i>I do believe that a person must be loyal to his/her organization</i>	0.335*
Financial Success Sharing	
Affective Commitment Organization solicit ideas from employees to improve work process <i>I will be happy to spend my career at current organization</i>	0.374*
Normative Commitment Ongoing results are provided to employees to recognize performance <i>I do believe that a person must be loyal to his/her organization</i>	0.317*
Participation and Involvement	
Affective Commitment This organization deserves my loyalty <i>I will be happy to spend my career at current organization</i>	0.500**

With reference to financial success sharing, there is a significant relationship between affective commitment (Pearson Correlation = 0.374\*), and was significant at 5% and normative commitment at 5% with a Pearson correlation of 0.317. When the same correlational analysis was conducted for participation/involvement, affective commitment was only found to be positively correlated (Pearson Correlation = 0.500\*\*) and significant at 1%. From the statistical scores on the measurement of workers' felt-belongingness relationship with commitment, the investigation discovered that felt-belongingness is a human need, and it constitutes a springboard for workers' commitment. This is a strong evidence for organization to engage in information and success sharing and further involve workers as a sign of social inclusion to enhance commitment.

While felt-belongingness obviously precede workers' commitment, what ultimately concerns organizations is not profitability only, rather social relationship, emotional bond and proximity to each other. Hence, securely attached workers are more likely to be committed and further show signs of loyalty and community-hold. Literature from different academic fields make robust argument that felt-belonging is extremely important in various dimensions of people lives. To these scholars, this study explores in greater aspect by linking it to commitment and the evidences strongly support and validate the connectivity between felt-belongingness and commitment. This constitutes an additional valuable discourse to current literature in the fields that workers' felt-belongingness is instrumental in

workers' commitment. In this regard, the study recommends that managers and human resources practitioners should institute and operationalize activities that simulate belongingness within their organizations irrespective of operational orientation.

## CONCLUSION

The statistical results from both descriptive and correlations indicate strong evidences of high rating for elements of felt-belongingness and commitment and positive statistical significant relationship between felt-belongingness and commitment was discovered. Findings thus indicate that felt-belongingness is a strong springboard for workers' commitment among the surveyed organizations.

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