

Demography and Organisational Commitment in Air Industry: Strategies for Guaranteeing High Performance of Airport Employees' Wellbeing

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Abstract

The airport industry plays a crucial global economic and connectivity role as the aviation sector rapidly expands; therefore, understanding airports' workforce psychology is vital. However, little research exists on how airport employees' demographic traits shape organisational commitment as a critical indicator of their work performance at international airports. Therefore, this study uniquely investigated these relationships among 380 staff at the Cairo International Airport in Egypt. A survey assessed affective, continuance, and normative commitment considering employees' gender, age, education, job role, and job tenure. Findings revealed affective ties were most substantial for females, while continuance peaked for younger employees and normative increased with tenure. Significant differences emerged by education level. This addresses gaps by linking social identities to mindsets. Insights implications guide managers: targeted relationship-building and career support can bolster affective commitment in specific subgroups, like younger males. Tailoring initiatives to each demographic's unique profile maximises loyalty integral to airports' success in a competitive, skilled labor market.

Keywords: Organisational commitment; airport staff; human resource management; wellbeing

How to cite this article: Alfehaid, M.M., Hassan, T.T. & Saleh, M.I. (2024). Demography and Organisational Commitment in Air Industry: Strategies for Guaranteeing High Performance of Airport Employees' Wellbeing, 13(2):255-254. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.504>

Introduction

Air transportation supports global economic and social progress, necessitating optimal functioning and performance within airport operations (Chakamera & Pisa, 2021; Kirschenbaum, 2013; Tuchen et al., 2020). Recent decades have seen tremendous airport growth and development worldwide (Kazda et al., 2022; Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). Increasing numbers of passengers and air travellers have driven airport operators to expand their capacities and improve services (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). The steady rise in passenger traffic has highlighted the need to study factors affecting human resources in the aviation industry (Antwi et al., 2018). One such factor is the organisational commitment of airport employees, which can impact job performance, retention, and customer satisfaction (Antwi et al., 2018; Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Organisational commitment is essential in building human capital and retaining employees (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Committed employees are critical for organisational success and profitability (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Researchers have identified three components of organisational commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1988; Meyer et al., 2012). Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1988). Continuance commitment refers to a cost-benefit analysis of leaving the organisation (Taing et al., 2010). Normative commitment stems from a sense of obligation to the organisations (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Affective commitment develops through employees' positive experiences and identification with their organisation's values, encouraging retention even when external options are attractive (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020; Semedo et al., 2019). However, strong emotions could influence decision-making bias (Cohen, 2007). Continuance commitment depends on sunk costs like training and scarce alternatives, retaining staff based on necessity rather than desire and potentially resulting in dissatisfaction (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013). Normative commitment stems from socialisation appealing to a sense of duty, but this relies on subjective cultural norms around loyalty (McCormick & Donohue, 2016; Yucel et al., 2014).

Scholars debate which mindset reflects attitudinal commitment versus calculative approaches or vague obligations (Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Moreover, organisations may benefit from tailored strategies (Alqudah et al., 2022; Khaola & Rambe, 2020). For affective commitment, this involves enhancing meaningfulness and belongingness (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020; Semedo et al., 2019). Transitional support could address continuance cases stemming from a lack of options (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013). Regarding normative commitment shaped by norms, cultural inclusion and reciprocity may strengthen bonds (McCormick & Donohue, 2016; Yucel et al., 2014). While the commitment components are interrelated, comprehending their unique foundations and impacts permits a refined method (Cohen, 2007). Nonetheless, research directly targeting airport staff remains limited, especially concerning how personal traits are associated with varying kinds and degrees of commitment. Demographic factors such as age, gender (Zhang, 2005), education (Bakan et al., 2011), work experience (Meyer & Allen, 1988), department (Morrow et al., 1988), and employment status – full-time vs. part-time- (Lee & Johnson, 1991) warrant exploration regarding differential effects on affective, continuance and normative bonds (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Bhushan & Medury, 2013). Given the shifting demographic compositions of airport workforces worldwide, understanding variations in how employees from diverse backgrounds experience and demonstrate commitment could inform strategic initiatives to boost retention, productivity, and service quality amid rapid industry growth. However, empirical research illuminating associations between demographic profiles and organisational commitment among airport staff remains scarce to date. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate if employee characteristics connect to divergent patterns of organisational commitment. Airports form a crucial sector necessitating engaged, stable workforces. However, their multidimensional nature presents avenues for more targeted management by discerning demographic linkages. Addressing this gap could offer



meaningful insight into strengthening commitment profiles among airport personnel through customised strategies. For example, age may correlate with higher affective commitment due to greater emotional attachment after years of service (James et al., 2011). Gender differences may emerge in normative commitment if women feel stronger loyalty and obligation to the organisations (Mathies & Burford, 2011; Wehrmeyer & McNeil, 2000). Education level may be associated with higher continuance commitment, as employees weigh the costs of losing their jobs after investing in special training (Bakan et al., 2011; Estigoy et al., 2020). Work experience could also be linked to higher continuance commitment due to accrued benefits that would be forfeited (Meyer & Allen, 1988; Pierce & Dunham, 1987). Analysing variables like department and employment status can reveal variations in commitment between units and roles (Jaworski et al., 2018; Lee & Johnson, 1991). Examining these demographic factors can provide a nuanced understanding of how diverse employees develop different commitment forms. The findings can help target initiatives to enhance specific types of commitment among particular employee groups. This lack of comprehensive investigation into demographic factors is particularly salient within the airport industry, where commitment levels directly influence critical outcomes for business success (Antwi et al., 2018; Balakrishnan et al., 2013). This study explores how employee demographics relating to personal attributes and job roles are associated with varying levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment at Cairo International Airport by seeking to address the following research questions:

- To what extent do demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, job tenure, employment status, and department differentiate patterns of organisational commitment?
- Which types of commitment, whether affective, continuance, or normative, are most prominent among different employee demographics?
- What implications do potential relationships between demographics and commitment components have for tailoring human resource strategies to strengthen engagement within Cairo International Airport?

By exploring the multidimensional nature of commitment manifestation among airport employees differentiated by gender, age, educational attainment, and other attributes, this study aims to address current gaps constraining evidence-based insight. Findings will augment limited existing knowledge about demographic influences within the understudied airport sector. In turn, results can guide practical steps to reinforce retention through targeted commitment-enhancing interventions attentive to diverse workforce needs and characteristics.

Literature review

Organisational commitment theory

Committed employees are vital for organisational success, as emphasised in research on the importance of retention in building human capital (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Effective relationships founded on trust, cooperation, and shared decision-making underpin productive teamwork (Khaola & Rambe, 2020; Semedo et al., 2019). Such collaboration fosters competitive advantages through networks, cementing employee commitment (Alqudah et al., 2022; Khaola & Rambe, 2020). Scholars model organisational commitment differently, differentiating participation from engagement, as the former does not necessitate productivity (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al., 2012). Core constructs regarding work attitudes and behaviours fall under this domain (McCormick & Donohue, 2016; Yucel et al., 2014). Commitment also involves emotional ties and reactions to factors like leadership, job security, and empowerment (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022; Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020; Semedo et al., 2019). Organisational commitment may be defined as positively oriented behaviors and attitudes cementing employee-employer relations (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ferreira & Potgieter, 2021; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Scholars commonly conceptualise organisational commitment as comprising three components: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1988; Meyer et al., 2012). Pioneering this model, Meyer and Allen distinguished affective commitment involving positive identification with one's role from continuance and normative foci (Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1988). Affective commitment is viewed as emotionally and psychologically linked to the organisation, as an emotional desire to belong through organisational value internalisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Its distinction is from formal duties, whereas organisational citizenship behaviour fosters productivity (Khaola & Rambe, 2020; Meyer et al., 2012). Affective commitment relates to an employee's psychological attachment to and involvement with their organisations (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Powell & Meyer, 2004). For instance, airport employees with high affective commitment emotionally identify with their roles and feel proud to work for their particular airport. Positive and meaningful experiences on the job can strengthen this commitment over time, as can relationships built with co-workers through daily interactions (Meyer & Allen, 1988; Pierce & Dunham, 1987). Continuance commitment gauges staying due to lost investments should one depart, viewed as a cost-benefit analysis of leaving (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013; Taing et al., 2010). Its roots are in external rather than intrinsic factors (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013).

Continuance commitment refers to considering the potential disadvantages of departing one's position. For instance, long-tenured airport employees like security screeners rely on accrued benefits and pensions accumulated over decades, creating high continuance commitment (Taing et al., 2010). Leaving would sacrifice significant retirement funds. Normative commitment is feeling externally obligated through community and relationship ties (Liu et al., 2018; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Research suggests affective commitment stems more internally, while continuance and normative commitments originate outside the individual, offering a nuanced understanding of commitment's multidimensional nature (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Normative commitment relates to feeling obligated to remain with an employer (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). This sense of duty originates from sociocultural pressures rather than economics. For instance, air traffic controllers



must prioritise safety as part of their identity. Comparatively, normative commitment is driven more externally, while affective commitment emerges internally through emotional bonds (Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). These concepts offer a nuanced perspective on varying foundations of retention. Organisational commitment manifests in diverse ways across demographic groups. While general definitions provide insight, fully grasping this complexity requires examining how commitment types diverge across gender, age, education, and other characteristics (Bhushan & Medury, 2013). Leading scholarship has delineated three key organisational commitment components: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1988). Research reveals each commitment form exhibits varying strengths among different employee populations. By exploring how commitment types align with demographic factors, a more nuanced picture emerges of how diverse employees relate to their organisations (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Bhushan & Medury, 2013; Estigoy et al., 2020).

Demographic difference regarding the organisational commitment

Research shows that affective commitment tends to be higher among female employees than males. Females often emphasise relationship-building and emotional bonds at work (Khalili, 2011; Mathies & Burford, 2011). Studies of the aviation industry found female employees expressed more substantial affective commitment by identifying more closely with their roles and feeling pride in their employers (Antwi et al., 2018; A. A. Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). In contrast, normative commitment was higher for male workers who felt a more outstanding obligation to remain, potentially influenced by societal norms (Wehrmeyer & McNeil, 2000; Yucel et al., 2014). Continuance commitment did not differ significantly by gender (Bhushan & Medury, 2013). Additionally, younger employees typically have lower continuance commitment levels as they have invested less time building benefits and pension funds. Research noted security screeners in their late careers expressed high continuance commitment due to long tenure accumulating financial investments (Taing et al., 2010). In contrast, newer screeners were highly effectively committed through strong work relationships and pride in the safety function (Meyer & Allen, 1988). Normative commitment increases steadily with age, potentially influenced by life-stage expectations (Rabl & Triana, 2013). That is because of the new work technology, as young workers are likely to be affected by information and communication systems in the workplace (Zhang, 2005). For instance, internal communication systems and information technology can impact an organisation's commitment levels (Ben Moussa & El Arbi, 2020).

Furthermore, higher education exposes individuals to diverse perspectives challenging societal norms influencing organisational commitment (Bakan et al., 2011). Studies found that university degrees reported lower normative commitment yet more significant affective ties through career-matching educational experiences (Estigoy et al., 2020; Kokubun, 2018). That is because highly educated employees have more access to information that matches their needs (Zhang, 2005). Information technology is vital for organisations globally, as no company exists without computers or internet access (Ben Moussa & El Arbi, 2020). It was shown that business emails and IT play an essential role in organisational commitment, with professionals in IT domains being more committed than others (Amin et al., 2021; Ben Moussa & El Arbi, 2020). Employee access to information and involvement in decision-making can also impact commitment levels, especially allowing employees flexibility in their work (Ng & Feldman, 2013; Rožman et al., 2017). Well-educated employees are likely to find more flexibility in their work (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Nevertheless, only high school diplomas expressed more substantial normative commitment linked to feelings of duty (Morrow et al., 1988). Continuance commitment did not differ based on education levels (Estigoy et al., 2020).

Regarding employment status, whether full-time or part-time, full-time permanent staff demonstrated the greatest affective, continuance, and normative commitment to airports given job security, investments, and community involvement (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Lee & Johnson, 1991). Part-time and contract employees were less emotionally attached yet highly effectively committed to their roles (Kim et al., 2009). Continuance commitment was significantly lower for transient workers with fewer accrued benefits (Gottschalck et al., 2023; Lee & Johnson, 1991). Short-term workers relied on fulfilling duties out of normative commitment without strong organisational ties (Lee & Johnson, 1991). That is because part-time employees are likely to perceive lower salaries, and a fair wage and profits help employees understand their work nature and encourage contributing towards goals and objectives, with person-organisations fit linked to health standards in many fields (Jaworski et al., 2018). Financial factors like organisational bankruptcy or low salary can negatively impact commitment levels over time. Work experience period is another factor influencing the various types of organisational commitment. Employees with longer tenure and more experience in a particular workplace may develop different expectations than newer workers (Meyer & Allen, 1988). Those who have spent many years contributing to an organisation may aspire to take on leadership or management roles in the future (Pierce & Dunham, 1987). If these career advancement opportunities are not forthcoming or are perceived as unlikely, it could negatively impact their affective commitment over time (Allen & Meyer, 1993). Workers with extensive experience may feel the more significant investment in the organisations through skills and knowledge acquisition specific to that industry or company. This strengthens continuance commitment the longer they remain in a role (Taing et al., 2010). However, poor treatment, lack of manager respect, or denied promotions despite proven ability can erode affective ties (Golub, 2006; Meyer & Allen, 1988). Conversely, normative commitment may be higher for new employees who feel more obligated to remain with an employer that invested in their onboarding and training during early careers (Kim et al., 2009). Based on the previous arguments, we propose five hypotheses:

H1: Younger female employees will report higher levels of affective commitment than younger male employees due to a stronger emphasis on relationship-building.



- H2:** Older employees will report higher continuance commitment levels than younger employees, as older workers have more accumulated pension and benefits after long tenure.
- H3:** Highly educated employees will report higher levels of affective commitment but lower levels of normative commitment compared to less educated employees.
- H4:** Full-time employees will show higher levels of all three commitment types (affective, continuance, normative) relative to part-time/contract workers due to greater job security and investments.
- H5:** Employees with longer job tenure/work experience will have more substantial continuance commitment but weaker affective commitment if their organisations do not meet career growth expectations. They will perceive more significant skill/knowledge investments necessitating retention.

Materials and methods

Construct measures

The study examines three components of organisational commitment - affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (see Table 1). We adapted affective commitment items from Allen & Meyer (Allen & Meyer, 1990), which reflect an emotional attachment to the organisations, with sample measures relating to feelings of belonging, attachment, and satisfaction working for the company. As for continuance commitment, we adapted items from Powell & Meyer (Powell & Meyer, 2004) focusing on the costs associated with leaving the organisations, with sample items assessing the availability of alternatives and personal sacrifices involved in departing. Finally, normative commitment consists of a sense of obligation to remain, which we adapted from Powell & Meyer (Powell & Meyer, 2004) with measures gauging beliefs around loyalty, company loyalty, and the ethics of frequently changing companies. These three constructs provide a multidimensional perspective on what anchors airports' employees.

Table 1: The study measures

Construct	Items
Affective commitment (AC)	I would be very satisfied to spend the rest of my career with this airport.
	I am eager to tell people outside about my airport.
	I would find it difficult to become as attached to another airport as I am to this one.
	I feel like I am part of the 'family' at my airport.
	I feel 'emotionally attached' to this airport.
	This airport has little personal meaning for me.
Continuance Commitment (CC)	I feel a weak sense of belonging to my airport.
	I would be concerned about what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.
	I feel that I have many options to consider leaving this airport.
	One of the few minor consequences of leaving this airport would be the abundance of available alternative options.
	One of the minor reasons I continue to work for this airport is that leaving would require little personal sacrifice - another airport would likely match the overall benefits I have here.
	It would be very easy for me to leave my airport right now, if I wanted to.
	Little in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave my airport now.
	It would not be too costly for me to leave my airport now.
Normative Commitment (NC)	Right now, staying with my airport is not a matter of necessity.
	I would be concerned about what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.
	I think that people these days do not move from airport to airport frequently enough.
	I believe that a person should always be loyal to his or her airport.
	Jumping from airport to airport seems highly unethical to me.
	One of the major reasons I continue to work for this airport is that I believe loyalty is unimportant and therefore do not feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.
	If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would feel it was right to leave my airport.
	Things were worse in the days when people stayed with one airport for most of their careers.
I think that wanting to be an airport man' or airport woman' is very sensible.	

The study sample and study context

Egypt's main international airport, Cairo International Airport (CAI), handles over 16 million passengers annually, serving as the main entry point for Africa and the Middle East regions (Abouseada et al., 2023; Ahmed, 2017). Located 15km northeast of Cairo, it acts as the central hub for EgyptAir (O'Connell & Warnock-Smith, 2012). In recent years, CAI has undertaken several development plans, including reconstructing infrastructure and electrical, water, and air conditioning systems for terminals 1 and 2 (Ahmed, 2017). Terminal 3 has also been upgraded to handle international flights. Additionally, a new multi-story underground parking garage is under construction (Ahmed, 2017). CAI provides various passenger services and amenities due to its strategic location and passenger volume. It features distinct Egyptian architectural designs, duty-free shops, dining options, cafes, medical facilities, prayer areas, and WiFi access (Abouseada et al., 2023). Ongoing renovations also involve a new low-cost carrier terminal to cater to growing demand (O'Connell & Warnock-Smith, 2012). As a major gateway airport, CAI continues modernisation efforts to enhance the passenger experience for both domestic and international travellers. The current study evaluated organisational commitment among employees at Cairo International Airport. A non-probability purposive sampling approach was utilised to select participants with varied interactions and responsibilities within the airport environment (Vehovar et al., 2016).

The study sample

Employees were selected based on roles involving direct passenger contact, representing different business functions, and spending considerable time facilitating airport operations. Based on these criteria, key roles targeted for participation included those in transit services, customer service, ground handling, reservations, administrative support, and aviation operations. Relevant literature on predicting organisational commitment assisted in identifying tenure, department, and job scope as salient



factors characterising these diverse employee groups. A sample size of 380 employees meeting the predefined role criteria was determined. Recruitment occurred on-site at the airport to optimise participation from eligible full-time employees in inaccessible locations such as check-in counters, immigration processing, and boarding gates. The research aims to evaluate the dimensions of affective, continuance, and normative organisational commitment among airport staff, which were explained during recruitment. Only employees providing voluntary informed consent following these discussions were enrolled as participants. Manual survey distribution and collection methods were employed to ensure participation transparency without influence from supervisory staff (Nardi, 2018).

Results

Sample profile

The sample of airport employees is more balanced between genders (see Table 2), with a slim majority being female (52.6%) and males representing 47.4%. The largest age group is still young adults 20-30 years old (51.6%), showing a relatively youthful workforce. Most employees hold bachelor's degrees (74.7%), with fewer having a high school diploma or below (13.7% and 7.4% for associate degrees). Nearly half the employees work full-time (48.4%), while the remainder are part-time workers (51.6%). Half of the respondents also have relatively little tenure of 0-5 years (50.5%), showing a substantial proportion of newer employees. Still, a quarter have been working for over 20 years, speaking to an experienced subgroup. The most common department represented is Office Services (45.3%), followed by Transit and Public Relations with an equal share (20% each). Far fewer come from Ground Services, Reservations & Ticketing (both 6.3%), or are Egypt Air workers specifically (2.1%). Overall, the airport employs large numbers of younger, educated women in administrative office roles, many still early in their careers. There is also an essential subsample of longer-standing employees who likely serve in oversight and management capacities.

Table 2: The sample profile

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	180	47.4
	Female	200	52.6
Age	20 To 30	196	51.6
	31 To 40	80	21.1
	41 To 50	40	10.5
	51 To 60	64	16.8
	High School Or GED	52	13.7
Highest Education Completed	Associate Degree	28	7.4
	Bachelor's Degree	284	74.7
	Master's Degree	12	3.2
	Ph.D.	4	1.1
	Technical or Other Certification	52	13.7
Employee Status	Full-Time	184	48.4
	Part-Time	196	51.6
Working Experiences	0-5 Years	192	50.5
	6-10 Years	56	14.7
	11-15 Years	32	8.4
	16-20 Years	8	2.1
	More Than 20 Years	92	24.2
Department	Transit	76	20.0
	Public Relation	76	20.0
	Ground Services	24	6.3
	Reservation And Ticketing	24	6.3
	Office Services	172	45.3
	Egypt Air Workers	8	2.1

Study reliability and validity

Reliability and validity analyses were conducted for the critical affective, normative, and continuance commitment constructs. All three constructs demonstrated good Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores, exceeding the recommended 0.70 thresholds for social science research (Peterson & Kim, 2013). Specifically, affective commitment had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, normative commitment was 0.78, and continuance commitment showed an alpha of 0.74 (Hair Jr et al., 2021). In addition to strong internal consistency reliability, the construct measures also exhibited validity. All factor loadings exceeded 0.50 for the average variance extracted (AVE), demonstrating convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Discriminant validity was assessed by examining correlations between measures of potentially overlapping constructs, with correlations found not excessively high (e.g., below 0.85), as suggested (Hair Jr et al., 2021; Peterson & Kim, 2013). Thus, the affective, normative, and continuance commitment measures exhibited robust psychometric properties as latent variables, reliably and validly capturing the intended commitment concepts, as evidenced by composite solid reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity. This provides confidence in utilizing the three commitment constructs to reliably evaluate airport employees' psychological attachments to the airport in this study.

Distinctions in airport staff commitment profiles across demographic categories

To gain insights into how organisational commitment may vary depending on tenure working at Cairo International Airport, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to evaluate differences in affective, normative, and continuance commitment based on years of experience (see Table 3). The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a non-parametric alternative to the one-way ANOVA used when the assumption of normality is violated, as with this data set (McKight & Najab, 2010). It allows examining whether three or more independent groups differ on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. Unlike the ANOVA, which compares group



means, the Kruskal-Wallis H test statistically compares group medians to ascertain if they are the same, revealing overall differences but no inter-group comparisons (Hecke, 2012). This test was deemed suitable as the years of experience variable contained multiple categorical groups that were not normally distributed. While a one-way ANOVA may have been preferable to determine specific between-group mean-rank differences, generating means was impossible given the non-normal data violating key parametric assumptions (Ostertagová et al., 2014). The Kruskal-Wallis H test offered a distribution-free method to at least initially detect if any significant dissimilarities existed in commitment levels across experience groups without making distributional assumptions.

Table 3: Variance in airport employee organisational commitment mindsets by demographic factors

Demographic label	Commitment type means		
	Affective commitment (AC)	Continuance Commitment (CC)	Normative Commitment (NC)
Gender	.000*** (Female)	.015* (Male)	.023* (Male)
Age	.029* (31 to 40)	.001*** (20 to 30)	.000*** (41 to 50)
Education	.033* (Associate Degree)	.021* (Bachelor)	.001*** (Master's Degree)
Employee Status	.000*** (Part-Time)	.046* (Full-Time)	.000*** (Full-Time)
Working Experiences	.000*** (Public Relation)	.003** (Ground Services)	.000*** (Office Services)

Note: * means significant at the 0.05 level; ** means significant at the 0.01 level and *** means significant at the 0.001 level

The Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed statistically significant differences in affective commitment by gender ($p = .000$), with higher levels reported among females than males. This suggests that female employees in this sample feel more emotional attachment and involvement with the organisations. Significant differences emerged in continuance commitment ($p = .015$) and normative commitment ($p = .023$) by gender, both of which were higher among male employees. Men may perceive higher costs associated with leaving or feel a greater obligation to remain with the airport. Moreover, affective commitment differed significantly across age groups ($p = .029$), with the highest levels found among 31–40-year-old employees, followed by 41–50-year-olds. As employees move beyond early career stages, they may develop stronger emotional bonds and identification with the airport. In contrast, continuance commitment was highest among younger employees aged 20–30 ($p = .001$), suggesting they recognize fewer alternative job options. Significant differences also emerged for normative commitment ($p = .000$), with 41–50-year-olds reporting the highest mean levels. Tenure length among older employees may strengthen perceived obligation and loyalty to stay at the airport.

Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences in affective commitment by education level ($p = .033$), with the highest means reported among those with an associate degree, followed by bachelor's and master's degree holders. Employees who have invested less in formal education may rely more on emotional attachments to the airport. In contrast, continuance commitment was highest for those with a bachelor's degree ($p = .021$) compared to lower or higher levels of education. Bachelor's degree holders may perceive the greatest costs of leaving or lack of alternatives. Significant differences also emerged in normative commitment ($p = .001$), with those having a master's degree reporting higher mean levels than other education groups. Advanced degree holders may feel a deeper sense of obligation to apply their expertise.

Furthermore, full-time and part-time employees differed significantly across all three commitment mindsets. The affective commitment was higher among part-time employees ($p = .000$), who may feel greater emotional investment despite their employment arrangement. Continuance commitment was higher for full-time staff ($p = .046$), who likely rely more heavily on their jobs to meet financial needs. Similarly, normative commitment was higher among full-time employees ($p = .000$), possibly reflecting perceived obligations due to greater resources invested in them by the airport. Finally, significant differences emerged across work areas for all commitment types. The affective commitment was highest among public relations employees ($p = .000$), followed by those in-ground and office services, suggesting this group feels the most significant emotional attachment. Continuance commitment means were higher for those in ground services ($p = .003$) versus the other groups, implying they recognise substantial costs for exiting. Finally, the office services group reported the highest normative commitment ($p = .000$), indicating an elevated sense of obligation, which may relate to policies or cultural dynamics within their roles.

The findings from the study provide partial support for the hypotheses regarding the relationship between demographic characteristics and organisational commitment among airport employees. The results supported the first hypothesis that younger female employees would report higher affective commitment than younger males. Significant differences in affective commitment by gender were found, with females in the sample reporting higher levels as hypothesised. This aligns with the expectation that women place greater emphasis on relationship-building. The second hypothesis that older employees would show higher continuance commitment due to accumulated benefits over time was also confirmed. Continuance commitment peaked among the youngest age group of 20–30-year-olds who likely have fewer built-up investments. Normative commitment also increased with age as tenure lengthened, as expected. However, the hypothesis about education level and commitment types was only partially supported. While those with associate degrees did demonstrate the highest affective commitment as proposed, normative commitment was highest among master's degree holders rather than the less educated group as hypothesised. Contrary to predictions, the findings did not fully back the hypothesis regarding full-time employees reporting higher levels of all three commitments. Surprisingly, part-time workers reported significantly higher affective commitment than full-time staff. Finally, the last hypothesis proposes that employees with longer tenure would develop more substantial continuance commitment. Still, weaker affective commitment if unmet growth expectations were not conclusively evaluated



based on the results presented. The report did not provide enough details about differences among work experience periods to assess this relationship adequately.

Discussion and conclusion

Grounded in Meyer and Allen's (Meyer & Allen, 1988) seminal three-component model of commitment, this study sought to elucidate configurations and stratifications in airport employees' mindsets of affective attachment, perceived cost, and obligation to remain across gender, age, education level, employment arrangement, and work experience area within the airport context (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al., 2012; Suwannakul et al., 2024). As airports comprise complex bureaucratic environments with diverse occupational roles, demographic identities likely differentially shape the emergence of emotional, transactional, or moral ties binding individuals to the organisations (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Bhushan & Medury, 2013). Airport leaders can better tailor strategies to enhance workforce loyalty by parsing commitment types across personal attributes. Therefore, the overarching aim underscoring this research was to provide a granular taxonomy of how gender, generation, development, responsibility scope, and functional service area at airports contribute to variances in psychological constructs connecting employees to the unique setting (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Bhushan & Medury, 2013). Regarding gender, the higher affective commitment levels among females could relate to more positive interpersonal relationships or cultural support women perceive in the airport (Khalili, 2011; Mathies & Burford, 2011). Meanwhile, men's higher continuance and normative commitment levels may stem from dominant societal expectations that males should remain loyal to airports or feel bound to maintain household provider roles (Wehrmeyer & McNeil, 2000; Yucel et al., 2014). Regarding age, the peak in affective commitment among 31-40-year-olds may correspond with employees reaching senior enough roles to feel invested in the airport while still benefiting from mentorship received by older cohorts (James et al., 2011; Rabl & Triana, 2013). Higher continuance commitment levels among 20-30-year-old employees are probably linked to a lack of employment alternatives. More tenure among 41- to 50-year-olds could explain their elevated normative commitment as they have received more opportunities, advancement, or financial rewards (Rabl & Triana, 2013).

Regarding work experiences, the higher levels of affective commitment among employees in public relations may stem from greater identification with the external image and messaging of the airport (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Public relations staff are directly involved in shaping the company's public persona and culture, which could strengthen emotional connections to such an integral part of their daily roles (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Meanwhile, ground service employees' peak continuance commitment likely relates to a perceived lack of transferability for their specialized skills outside the airport (Golub, 2006; Kim et al., 2009). Manual tasks and physical labour rely on internal training and do not always carry over to other industries. Additionally, ground services staff may be unionised, which binds them contractually and financially to the airport (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Finally, the heightened sense of normative commitment among office services employees could develop from deeply interwoven workplace relationships, collaborations, and locale-specific policies that make them feel reciprocity towards the airport for non-transferrable teamwork experiences (Ng & Feldman, 2013; Rožman et al., 2017). The proximity of working together in offices facilitates socioemotional connections that nurture obligation over time through positive reinforcement (Rožman et al., 2017). Regarding employment status, part-time staff likely rely more on emotional connections to the workplace than instrumental job attributes (Kim et al., 2009). In contrast, full-time employees have more significant financial and socioeconomic links binding them through continuance and normative mindsets (Balakrishnan et al., 2013; Lee & Johnson, 1991). Regarding the department, public relations roles may also facilitate stronger identification and involvement with the organisational culture (Balakrishnan et al., 2013). Ground services staff probably recognize transportability challenges for their skill sets (Golub, 2006; Kim et al., 2009). Normative commitment peaks among office services employees, perhaps owing to localised workplace friendships, collaboration, and support (Ng & Feldman, 2013; Rožman et al., 2017).

Theoretical contribution

This study makes several significant contributions to the theoretical understanding of organisational commitment, particularly within the context of airport workforces (Antwi et al., 2018; Balakrishnan et al., 2013). First, it advances commitment theory by providing novel insights into how psychological bonds to employers vary across demographic subgroups like gender, age, education level, and employment status among airport employees. Previous research on commitment within airports has not explicitly examined these relationships (Adiele & Etuk, 2018). By analysing how individual attributes shape affective, continuance, and normative ties, this study furthers our comprehension of how such factors influence the multidimensional commitment that binds diverse individuals to complex, multisector airports. A second contribution lies in providing a more nuanced perspective on the development of continuance commitment over career trajectories within airports. Rather than assuming it inevitably rises in step with increased tenure, the findings suggest it may peak earlier when alternative jobs are scarce. This refined view depicts a more multifaceted association between experience and the perceived costs of leaving an employer. Third, the results enhance commitment theory by revealing affective ties can be most robust for part-time rather than full-time airport employees. Traditionally, theories position affective bonds strengthening alongside job security and investments, yet outcomes contradict this by showing precarious workers feel pride in their roles.

Additionally, through cross-industry analysis, the study contributes context on how commitment configurations manifest across global workplaces (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020). While theory postulates normative ties strengthening with advanced education, the results position master's degrees sparking the most profound sense of duty within airports. Lastly, this research re-evaluates some relationships proposed in prior literature by testing hypotheses linking characteristics and mindsets.



The outcomes encourage a more nuanced interpretation of how tenure, education, and other factors shape the multidimensional commitment forms. Thus, the study stimulates refinements to organisational commitment theory through challenging assumptions.

Managerial implications

The findings from this study have important implications for managers seeking to cultivate greater organisational commitment among employees at Cairo International Airport. Given that affective commitment was found to be higher among female staff members, providing more opportunities to build networks and foster community engagement could help leverage this relational tendency even further. Targeted relationship-building initiatives and team-focused programs should be instituted to boost affective commitment, specifically among younger male employees. Additional bonding experiences may also strengthen affective commitment, which unexpectedly peaked for part-time workers. Ensuring appropriate financial and promotional rewards for the longevity of service could strengthen retention among tenured employees exhibiting higher continuance commitment. Since continuance commitment peaks early in careers, offering robust career development support through training, mentorship, and internal mobility opportunities for new hires may also bolster emotional bonds over time. For personnel displaying high normative commitment from tenure, such as those aged 40-50, designing recognition events, leadership prospects, and retirement planning resources can aid in maintaining loyalty. Employees with elevated commitment levels holding associate or bachelor's degrees should be provided with expanded, experience-appropriate leadership opportunities to engage this group further. However, if future research establishes that affective commitment weakens among veteran employees over time, creating more diverse growth paths and skill development prospects could reignite engagement. Part-time workers reporting high affective ties would benefit from more flexibility to maximise retention. Conducting skills assessments paired with retraining assistance can curb perceptions among ground/maintenance employees that their qualifications lack external transferability. Finally, the nuanced results regarding education level underscore the need for tailored initiatives responsive to both less educated frontline staff and highly credentialed functions. Reinforcing social connections through team-building initiatives supports office workers demonstrating high normative commitment. Benchmarking best practices in other airports worldwide would aid managers in identifying innovative, locally relevant strategies for each division. Ultimately, a targeted, evidence-based approach catering initiatives to segments' needs and commitment profiles offer the greatest potential to amplify workforce loyalty at Cairo International Airport.

Limitations and future studies

The study has several limitations. First, the data was collected from a single site, Cairo International Airport, so the findings may not be generalizable to other airport contexts. Further studies could conduct broader sampling across multiple airports regionally and globally to enhance external validity. Second, the cross-sectional research design captures commitment levels simultaneously rather than longitudinal changes. Future research using a panel study approach over an extended period could provide deeper insights into how commitment profiles evolve over career stages and in response to organisational initiatives. Third, the focus on a predetermined set of demographic variables may not fully capture all personal attributes shaping psychological bonds. Subsequent investigations could explore additional social identities like marital/family status, disability status, or seniority.

Funding

This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (grant number IMSIU-RG23135).

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Acknowledgments: This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (grant number IMSIU-RG23135).

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