The role of work centrality in the relationship between work alienation and organisational commitment: A study of Turkish SMEs*

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This study examines the moderating role of work centrality in the relationship between work alienation and organisational commitment on employees of Turkish SMEs. Past research has demonstrated an inverse association between alienation and commitment, but it has done so without incorporating other work-related variables. Therefore, in the current study, this inverse relationship is further examined and change in the direction of the relationship in accordance with different levels of work centrality is questioned. The results indicate that work centrality plays a significant moderating role in affective commitment–work alienation relationship. The article also discusses how other dimensions of organisational commitment can be tackled in future studies.

Key words: work alienation, work centrality, organisational commitment, Turkey (JEL: D23, J28, M14)

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Introduction

Understanding the dynamics of employee commitment has been an important issue for both practitioners and management scholars alike. While the origins of organisational commitment can be traced back to the works of Fayol (1949) and Weber (1947), its application as a distinctive construct did not come about until the 1960s (see Swailes 2002). Since that time, organisational commitment has become one of the most frequently studied constructs in the organisational context, mostly because it predicts important work variables, such as turnover, organisational citizenship behaviour, and job performance (Mathieu/Zajac 1990; Meyer/Stanley/Herscovitch/Topolnytsky 2002; Kell/Motowidlo 2012; Uçanok/Karabatı 2013). Concurrently, researchers have also sought to identify antecedents that improve commitment among employees (Johnson/Chang 2008). These predictors have ranged from situational variables (e.g., job characteristics) to personal ones (Mathieu/Zajac 1990; Coleman/Irving/Cooper 1999; Meyer et al. 2002; Banai/Reisel/Probst 2004). More recently, positive work experiences such as organisational support and organisational justice have been employed as important predictors of commitment (Meyer et al. 2002).

Despite this work, negative work attitudes and affects such as cynicism, work alienation, and workplace deviance have remained neglected in explaining certain organisational phenomena, such as commitment and citizenship (Nair/Vohra 2012). It has been proposed that the reasons for which negatively connoted concepts (e.g., work alienation) have been disregarded by organisational studies are the negative tone and conceptual ambiguity surrounding them. Recent work has underlined that the inclusion of work alienation in research models is important for understanding workplace phenomena (Hirschfeld/Field/Bedeian 2000; Dahms 2011) such as organisational commitment (Tummers/Den Dulk 2013) and organisational citizenship behaviours (Hirschfeld/Feild 2000; Suárez-Mendoza/Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara 2007; Hornung 2010). In this respect, investigating the impact of negatively connoted work attitudes in predicting organisational commitment can contribute to a more holistic understanding of this concept. This study therefore focuses on the effects of work alienation, work values, and work centrality on organisational commitment.

Work alienation has been understood as disenchantment with or disconnect from the world of work, and it has sometimes been seen as the opposite of engagement (Hirschfeld/Feild 2000) and commitment (Etzioni 1961). In early studies, alienation was also regarded as a component of commitment (Kobasa/Maddi/Kahn 1982, p. 169). But as discussed by Nair and Vohra (2012), alienation cannot be fully accounted for by engagement or commitment; it is a separate construct. A recent meta-analytical study by Chiaburu, Thundiyil, and Wang (2014) showed that work alienation could function as a strong predictor of various organisational outcomes, among which it had the strongest effect on organisational

commitment. These studies have provided support for the consideration of work alienation as an important measure for gauging organisational commitment.

Another important dispositional influence on the development of organisational commitment is work centrality (Dubin/Champoux/Porter 1975; Kanungo 1982; Brown 1996; Mannheim/Baruch/Tal 1997; Hirschfeld/Feild 2000). Work centrality represents an individual's views on the value and importance of work within the context of their life (Kanungo 1982; MOW 1987; Hirschfeld/Feild 2000; Miller/Woehr/Hudspeth 2002; Uçanok 2011) and is a function of one's cultural conditioning, or socialisation (Kanungo 1982). High work centrality means that one identifies with one's work role and sees work as an important aspect of their life (Diefendorff/Brown/Kamin/Lord 2002). Thus, individuals with high work centrality attach more importance to work than individuals who score low on work centrality (Bal/Kooij 2011). The link between work centrality and organisational commitment rests on the assumption that an individual with high work centrality is willing to invest in their relationship with their organisation and, therefore, is likely to build higher levels of commitment.

Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment has been the subject of a considerable amount of research. Although various definitions of commitment exist in the literature (for reviews, see Meyer/Allen 1997; Klein/Molloy/Brinsfield 2012; Klein/Molloy/Cooper 2009), there is a consensus that it refers to a psychological force that binds an individual to a variety of targets (Meyer/Hersovitch 2001; Meyer/Becker/Van Dick 2006). A widely adopted definition for organisational commitment is that it is the link between an employee and an organisation that makes it less likely that the former will voluntarily leave the latter (Allen/Meyer 1996).

This binding force can be accompanied by three mindsets, which are affective, normative, and cost-oriented in nature (Meyer/Maltin 2010). Significant progress has been made in distinguishing and defining these mindsets and the model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) is a widely cited instrument. According to this model, the affective component refers to positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in one's work organisation; the normative component is based on an employee's sense of obligation to remain with their organisation; and the continuance component is the extent to which an employee feels committed to their organisation by virtue of the costs they feel to be associated with leaving it (e.g., loss of investments, lack of attractive alternatives) (Meyer/Allen 1984). Sharma and Irving, in their study regarding family-owned firms (2005), have underlined the multi-dimensionality of continuance commitment. They have advocated for treating its dependence- and cost avoidance–based aspects as distinct dimensions and have labelled these calculative and imperative commitment. According to their view, the calculative aspect of

commitment is a consequence of a perception that remaining in the family business is the best out of a number of attractive opportunities, whereas imperative commitment is based on a perception that remaining in the business is either the only option available or the least bad of a number of unattractive alternatives.

Meyer and Allen (1997) have distinguished between commitment components by examining extensively the reasons behind the emergence of each. For instance, they explain that normative commitment differs from the other components because it requires that an employee perceive working for the organisation as a duty and an obligation. In the case of affective commitment, involvement flourishes through positive work experiences in the form of positive affect. According to Sharma and Irving (2005) an individual develops this mindset when there is an alignment between their own identity and that of their organization on the one hand and between the career interests and the opportunities available in that organisation on the other. Lastly, continuance commitment stems from calculations regarding losses that can be sustained from leaving one's job and the lack of job alternatives. In this mindset, the individual calculates the financial and social costs of leaving their company (Sharma/Irving 2005). Among these three types, normative commitment is the least investigated, and there is no certainty about its effects in the organisational settings (Wasti 2000).

Early studies on organisational commitment were mainly interested in its implications for employee retention (Mowday/Porter/Steers 1982; Meyer 2009). Subsequent research has demonstrated that commitment is also useful for understanding other organisational phenomena, such as organisational justice (Colquitt/Conlon/Wesson/Porter/Ng 2002), perceived organisational support (Rhoades/Eisenberger 2002; Wayne et al. 2009), and psychological contract (Beard/Edwards 1995; Gallagher/McLean Parks 2001; Hughes/Palmer 2007). Meta-analytical research has also established that commitment as a concept has systematic relations with various work-related constructs (Mathieu/Zajac 1990; Meyer/Stanley/Herscovitch/Topolnytsky 2002; Riketta 2002; Cooper-Hakim/Viswesvaran 2005; Morrow 2011). However, the majority of the studies have not found a causal direction among its correlates (Meyer/Jackson/Maltin 2008) and have preferred to target associations with positive work experiences, neglecting negatively toned work attitudes (Nair/Vohra 2012). A few recent studies have, however, turned their attention to one relatively understudied correlate of commitment: work alienation (Hirschfeld/Field/Bedeian 2000; Dahms 2011; Madlock/Booth-Butterfield 2013; Tummers/Den Dulk 2013).

Work alienation and organisational commitment

The concept of work alienation, rooted deeply in the sociological tradition, has not enjoyed popularity in the organisational studies domain (Kohn 1976, p. 113; Bratton/Callinon/Forshaw/Sawchuk 2007; Nair/Vohra 2010; Nair/Vohra 2012). Early theorists have suggested numerous correlates of alienation, such as apathy

(Keniston 1960), authoritarianism (Rosenberg 1951; Adorno/Frenkel-Brunswik/ Levinson/Sanford 1993), conformity (Fromm 1958), prejudice (Adorno et al. 1993), and suicide (Powell 1958). Studies that have investigated alienation in the context of work have traditionally approached it with respect to the manual, or blue-collar worker (Blauner 1964; Blood/Hulin 1967; Merker 1980). Theories regarding work alienation mostly tackled the concept as one related to contextual factors, such as formalisation and centralisation (Aiken/Hage 1966; Kohn 1976; Agarwal 1993), and have not explicitly investigated its relationship with individual-level concepts.

Work alienation has traditionally been treated as a global construct. But its global nature is more of a theoretical proposition rather than an empirical finding (Banai/Reisel 2007), and special care is required when applying it in international settings. Kanungo (1983) was one of the early authors to underline the problems of a singular interpretation and to investigate its relation to job quality from a pan-cultural perspective. In his view, deterioration in the quality of working led to more alienated and unproductive, less efficient employees. Kanungo (1983) noted that the singular, Western view of work alienation adopted in most studies rested on two basic premises: (1) work-alienated attitudes result from past socialisation that has not emphasised Protestant Ethic norms (e.g., individualism, personal responsibility, achievement, etc.) and (2) alienation at work stems from the lack of an intrinsic need for job satisfaction. These premises are problematic because, if they are accepted as the main causes of work alienation, they would lead us to interpret the Eastern world as victim to mass alienation. Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to the specific conditions and precursors underlying the concept.

Job quality is one of the major factors that have been acknowledged to impact work alienation (Kanungo 1983). Improving the quality of jobs leads to greater job satisfaction, commitment, health, and psychological well-being (Hackman/ Suttle 1977; Green 2006; Findlay/Kallerberg/Warhurst 2013; Okay-Sommerville/Scholarios 2013); conversely, a deterioration in job quality leads to a sense of alienation (Kanungo 1983). There has been increased recognition, in recent years, that improving job quality promotes well-being at the individual, organisational, and societal levels. International organisations, including the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), try to promote more and better jobs (Green 2006) and to raise the issue of higher job quality (Spencer 2011). Academic initiatives have also focused attention on investigating the antecedents to and consequences of job quality and on advising policymakers on job design and implementation (see special issue Findlay/Kalleberg/ Warhurst (ed.) 2013).

In addition to the investigation underlying causes and precursors of alienation and international attempts regarding the improvement of work conditions, references to its dimensionality has also drawn the attention of researchers. The first

attempt to conceptualise the alienation construct and to define its systematic constituents was by Seeman (1959). Seeman introduced a five-dimensional work-alienation scale, which consisted of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. A later study by Mottaz (1981) focused on the effects of alienation in the context of work and introduced a shortened version of Seeman's conceptualisation, retaining only powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement.

According to Seeman (1959) the first of these dimensions, powerlessness, is the expectancy held by an individual that their behaviour cannot secure the outcomes, or reinforcements, they seek. Marcuse (1941) refers to powerlessness as a worker's separation from loss of effective control over their economic destiny. The second component, meaninglessness, is a situation related to the comprehension of and level of information had by a person regarding their job (Seeman 1959). Meaninglessness is observed when an employee believes that their contribution to total production is too little or too unimportant. This aspect of alienation is characterised by a low expectancy of satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behaviour. Finally, self-estrangement occurs when an employee does not find their job satisfactory. As an employee instrumentalises their job for a certain objective, work is not seen as internally rewarding and becomes simply a necessary means to reach a particular goal (Mottaz 1981). According to Seeman (1959), self-estrangement is generally characterised by the loss of intrinsic meaning and pride in work – a loss that Marx and others have held to be an essential feature of modern alienation. In this respect, the worker who works merely for a salary is self-estranged because they are unable to engage in self-rewarding, or self-consummatory, activities (Seeman 1959).

These three dimensions of work alienation stress a loss of connection between the personal meaning of work and the work environment. This disconnect has been predicted to prevail in the form of being disengaged from one's work organisation. In line with this reasoning, researchers have posited that work alienation is negatively related to organisational commitment (Organ/Greene 1981; Michaels/Cron/Dubinsky/Joachimsthaler 1988). The rationale behind this association is that an individual who is psychologically separated from their work will not be able to establish affective ties with their organisation (i.e. Michaels et al. 1988; Wittig-Berman/Lang 1990; Agarwal 1993; Agarwal/Ramaswami 1993; Michaels et al. 1996; Meyer/Maltin 2010; Tummers/Den Dulk 2013). Kobasa et al. (1982) have also underlined that work alienation represents a generalised, unenthusiastic outlook toward the world of work and that it indicates a low level of engagement with the work role. Alienation from work, in this respect, is conceptualised as an affect-inclusive phenomenon characterised by a low level of positive affect for the world of work. Hirschfeld and Feild (2000) have found work alienation to be negatively correlated with affective organisational commitment, supporting the contention that people alienated from work are unlikely

to experience positive interactions and engagements in work settings. Taking into consideration that organisational commitment is considerably influenced by the general disposition to experience positive affect and activation (Cropanzano et al. 1993), and that alienation refers to the inability to experience positive affect (Kobasa et al. 1982; Tellegen 1985), it has been postulated that alienation has a negative impact on organisational commitment.

Another important connection between these two variables is established by an employee's involvement in goal setting. According to Kanungo (1992), when an employee is allowed to participate in goal setting, they accept the goals of their organisation and, in turn, their commitment to the organisation increases. As stressed earlier, alienation encompasses the feeling of having lost control over work and presents itself as an inability to participate in effective goal setting. This, in turn, leads to apathy and negligence (Moch 1980), to the linking of performance to nothing but financial motivations and extrinsic rewards (Brannen/Peterson 2009), and, consequently, to a decrease in organisational commitment.

In line with the empirical evidence and the above reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *Hypothesis 1: Work alienation will be a strong predictor of organisational commitment and will have a significant negative effect on all its dimensions.*

Work centrality as a moderating influence

Hirsfield and Feld (2000) have posited that work centrality, along with work alienation, captures distinct aspects of commitment. Work centrality is defined as the normative belief about the value and importance of work in the configuration of one's life (Kanungo 1982). People who consider work a central life interest believe it is the most important part of life; it is something to be engaged in for its own sake (Hattrup et al. 2007). Work centrality motivates the worker to engage deeper in their work and to make use of their knowledge and skills for a worthy production. This, in turn, benefits their organisation (Uçanok 2011).

An international research project carried out in the 1980s (Meaning of Work: MOW 1987) constituted an important cornerstone of our understanding the centrality of work. The MOW team (1987) investigated the importance and commitment that different groups attached to work and found that work centrality differed significantly given differences in job quality (Oliver 2006). Workers in occupations with high job quality, such as engineers and teachers, rated work as more important than workers in occupations with lower job quality, such as manufacturing workers. These results are not surprising considering that good-quality jobs offer a degree of challenge and that they invite individuals to deploy and further develop their skills (Findlay/Kallerberg/Warhurst 2013; Hollman

2013) – a situation that can have beneficial outcomes for their organisations, including higher levels of organisational commitment.

Work centrality has been shown to have an important influence on the development of organisational commitment (Mannheim 1984). According to Mannheim, Baruch, and Tal (1997), organisational commitment, in its affective aspect, is an outcome of work centrality. Mannheim et al. (1997) have assumed that work centrality provides an impetus to the individual in the form of commitment. Studies that devised work centrality as a predictor of organisational commitment have found significant positive results (Mannheim et al. 1997; Kuchinke/Kang/Oh 2008; De Stefano 2012). These studies have shown that when work is central to a person's life, that individual is more likely to invest affective and cognitive energies that foster organisational commitment.

Work centrality has been conceptualised as the positive antipode of work alienation (Bal/Kooji 2011). The latter has been identified as a construct inversely capturing psychological engagement (Hirschfield/Feld 2000) and as potentially having a negative impact on work commitment. Work centrality, rather than containing elements of psychological engagement, represents a judgment representing the relative importance of work to an individual's life. Thus, it is a function of the relative value placed on work and has the potential to influence work-related attitudes and behaviours. Individuals who place greater importance on work are inclined to experience positive work outcomes, such as organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (Uçanok/Karabati 2013). In this respect, it seems plausible to assume that work centrality may suppress the alienation–organisational commitment relationship. The intensity and even the direction of the negative influence of work alienation on organisational commitment might change as work centrality intervenes. In order to understand the dynamics of this association, it is proposed in this study that the relation between work alienation and organisational commitment will change according to different levels of work centrality.

> *Hypothesis 2: Work centrality will moderate the relationship between work alienation and organisational commitment such that the negative relationship between the two will be weaker when work centrality is high.*

Method

This study is based on a cross-sectional design and a self-reported survey that collected data from employees working in a sample of geographically dispersed SMEs in Turkey. An online version of the questionnaire was sent via e-mail to employees listed in a non-official directory developed by a private company specialising in market research. The directory contained contact information for approximately 4,000 employees working in SMEs in various cities in Turkey. A total of 1,800 of these e-mail addresses were reported to be active at the time of the study and 341 of those participants who have received the link responded to

the questionnaire. After careful examination, all the incomplete returns and missing data were discarded, leaving 209 responses for analysis. The findings are based on data from a convenience sample of which 64 of these participants were female (31 per cent) and 144 male (69 per cent). The average age was 31.7, ranging from 20 to 71, and 68.4 per cent of the participants held university diplomas or higher degrees.

Measures

The measures used for this research were adapted from scales translated into Turkish by earlier studies. Brief descriptions of each scale along with the results of their confirmatory factor analyses are provided below.

Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment was operationalised using Meyer and Allen's (1997) organisational commitment scale (OCS). Their 18-item instrument was designed to measure the extent to which employees were committed to their employer organisations, and a Turkish version has been prepared by Wasti (1999; 2003). The scale measures the three distinct dimensions of commitment mentioned above: affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC).

Confirmatory factor analyses of the commitment items revealed a poor fit (CFI = 0.878, RMSEA = 0.085, NFI = 0.814, TLI = 0.855). Two items in the continuance commitment and one in affective commitment were found to have non-significant regression weights. Exclusion of these resulted in a 15-item configuration that showed a better fit (CFI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.075, NFI = 0.880, TLI = 0.913). The reliabilities of the resulting dimensions were as follows: an alpha score of 0.807 for affective commitment, 0.686 for continuance commitment, and 0.823 for normative commitment.

Work alienation

Work alienation was measured using a 21-item test developed by Mottaz (1981). The powerlessness dimension was measured using seven items, including statements such as "I am not able to make changes regarding my job activities" and "My daily activities are largely determined by others". The meaninglessness dimension, also measured using seven items, included statements like "Sometimes I am not sure I completely understand the purpose of what I'm doing" and "I understand how my work role fits into the overall operation of this organisation"(R). The self-estrangement dimension, which, too, consisted of seven items, included statements like "I do not feel a sense of accomplishment in the type of work I do". A six-point response scale was employed for the work alienation test, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6).

The confirmatory factor analysis for the alienation items revealed a poor fit (CFI = 0.667, RMSEA = 0.101, NFI = 0.585, TLI = 0.618). The inspection of the items showed that each of the reverse-worded statements had comparatively poorer associations with their corresponding latent variables. The exclusion of these items resulted in an 11-item configuration that showed a better fit (CFI = 0.926, RMSEA = 0.077, NFI = 0.876, TLI = 0.901). The overall reliability of the test was calculated as 0.823, and the reliabilities of the three dimensions were as follows: an alpha score of 0.756 for powerlessness, 0.720 for meaninglessness, and 0.741 for self-estrangement.

Work centrality

Kanungo's (1982) six-item scale was used to measure work centrality. Participants were asked to rate the items on a scale ranging from "definitely agree" (1) to "definitely disagree" (6). This scale had previously been translated into Turkish by Uçanok (2008). The analysis of the reliability of the scale in that earlier analysis had resulted in a 0.836 alpha score. In the current study, the reliability was found to be 0.880. The factor analysis for work centrality showed five out of six items loaded on one factor (KMO = 0.829 and Bartlett's Test significant at .000 level), explaining 68 per cent of the total variance.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in the study. The highest correlation among dependent-independent variable pairs is for normative commitment and the powerlessness dimension of work alienation ($r = -0.284$). All study variables appear correlated in the expected direction. However, work alienation's self-estrangement dimension does not significantly correlate with any of the other variables, and continuance commitment seems to be uncorrelated with all of the alienation dimensions.

Regression results for organisational commitment

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 provide supportive regression results for hypothesis 1, which tested the main predictive effects of the work alienation dimensions. They show the effects of powerlessness and meaninglessness on affective and normative organisational commitment. Higher levels of the former led to lower levels of the latter. Hypothesis 1 was not supported for the predictive effect of work alienation on continuance commitment, however, since none of the work alienation dimensions had significant correlations with that variable; therefore, further regression analyses were not conducted. The self-estrangement dimension of work alienation was also not tested for predictive effects on organisational commitment, since it did not have significant correlations either (see Table 1).

Table 1: Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Affective Commitment	1						
2 Continuance Commitment	.247**	1					
3 Normative Commitment	.562**	.445**	1				
4 Powerlessness	-.245**	-.074	-.284**	1			
5 Meaninglessness	-.167*	-.071	-.244**	.007	1		
6 Self Estrangement	-.108	-.003	-.136	.033	.605**	1	
7 Work Centrality	.217**	.153*	.194**	-.018	-.019	.031	1
Means	*3.0640*	*3.0967*	*2.9323*	*3.9858*	*3.0103*	*3.0763*	*3.4013*
Std. Dev.	*.60800*	*.68380*	*.76300*	*1.33639*	*1.20629*	*.92277*	*1.07902*

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

After the inclusion of the other study variables, the interaction terms of powerlessness and meaninglessness with work centrality were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$) when predicting affective commitment (see Table 2 and Table 3). However, the moderating effect of work centrality when predicting normative commitment was not found to be significant, thus providing no support for hypothesis 2.

Table 2: Results of multiple regression: Powerlessness on affective commitment

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Variable	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Powerlessness	-0.111	0.031	-0.245**	-0.110	0.030	-0.241**	0.277	0.186	0.608
WC				0.120	0.037	0.213**	0.117	0.037	0.207*
Pow_x_WC							-0.055	0.026	-0.860*
R2	0.060			0.105			0.124		
F for change in R2	13.213**			12.130**			9.687**		

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table 3: Results of multiple regression: Meaninglessness on affective commitment

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Variable	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Meaninglessness	-0.084	0.035	-0.167*	-0.082	0.034	-0.163*	-0.611	0.201	-1.213*
WC				0.121	0.038	0.214*	0.119	0.037	0.211*
Mean_x_WC							0.077	0.029	1.065*
R2	0.028			0.074			0.105		
F for change in R2	5.932*			8.205**			8.014**		

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 4: Results of multiple regression: Powerlessness on normative commitment

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Variable	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Powerlessness	-0.162	0.038	-0.284**	-0.160	0.037	-0.282**	0.175	0.234	0.306
WC				0.134	0.046	0.189*	0.131	0.046	0.185*
Pow_x_WC							-0.048	0.033	-0.595
R2	0.081			0.117			0.126		
F for change in R2	18.214**			13.596**			9.815**		

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 5: Results of multiple regression: Meaninglessness on normative commitment

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Variable	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Meaninglessness	-0.154	0.043	-0.244**	-0.152	0.042	-0.240**	-0.526	0.252	-0.832*
WC				0.134	0.047	0.190*	0.133	0.047	0.188*
Mean_x_WC							0.055	0.036	0.600
R2	0.060			0.096			0.105		
F for change in R2	13.111			10.878			8.052		

The significant moderating effects of work centrality on the work alienation–affective commitment relationship are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The moderating effect of high versus moderate or low work centrality was found to be consistent with predictions for meaninglessness. The negative association between meaninglessness and affective commitment was weaker when work centrality was high (r = −0.044) when compared with moderate (r = −0.389) and low (r = −0.257) levels of work centrality. This means that when individuals placed greater emphasis on the importance of work, meaninglessness did not have as great a negative effect on affective commitment in relation to moderate and low levels of work centrality.

Figure 1: Moderating effect of WC on powerlessness-AC relationship

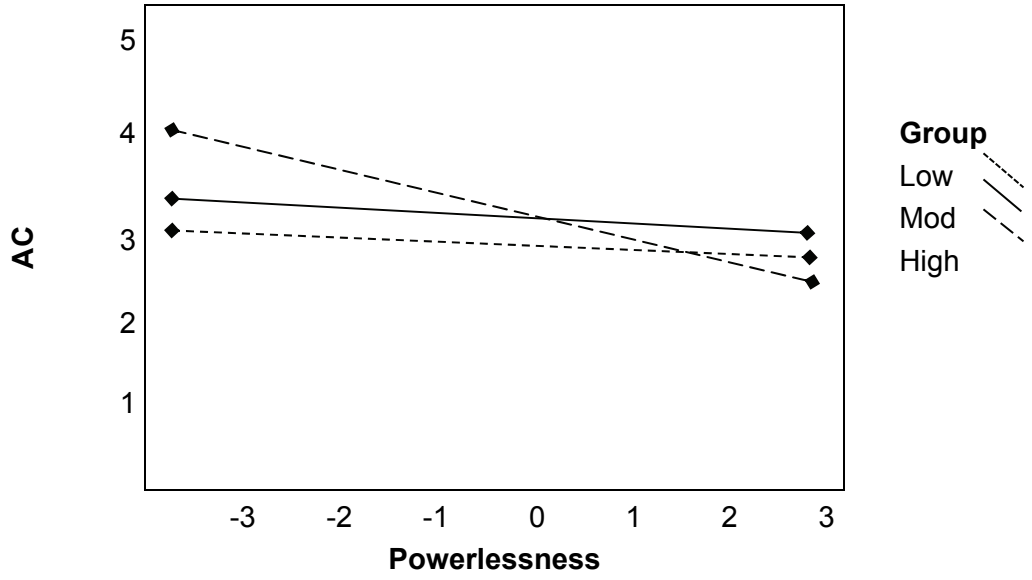
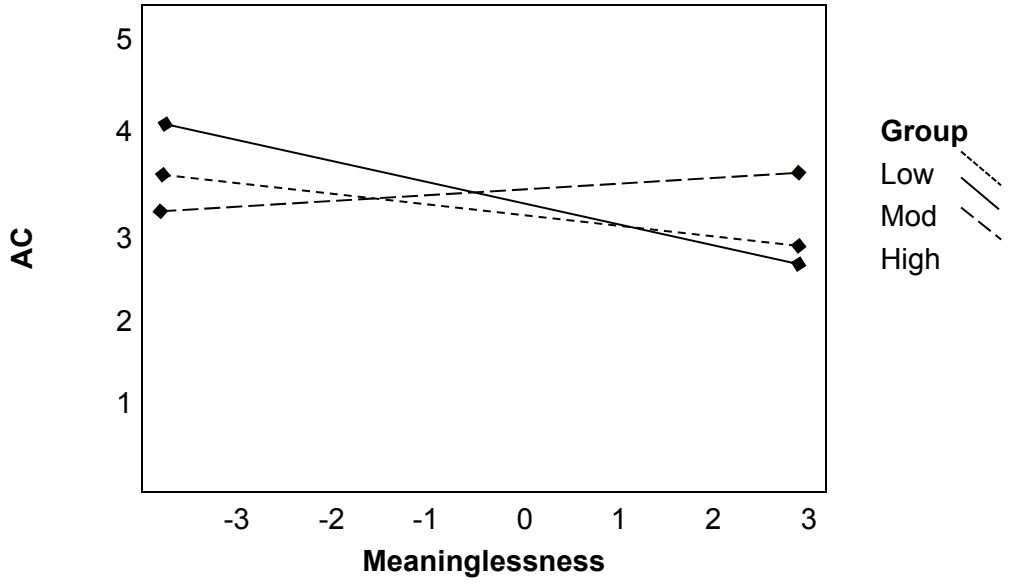


Figure 2: Moderating effect of WC on meaninglessness-AC relationship



The moderating effect of work centrality on the powerlessness–affective commitment relationship did not turn out as expected. The negative relationship between powerlessness and affective commitment was stronger when work centrality was relatively high ($r = -0.37$) when compared with moderate ($r = -0.145$) and low ($r = -0.109$) levels. So, for those high on work centrality, feelings of powerlessness led to lower affective commitment when compared with those moderate and low on this factor.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that organisational commitment is one of the most widely studied constructs in the field, the literature on its antecedents has been deemed inconsistent, disorganised, unsystematic, and lacking in theory (Meyer/Hersovitch 2001; Kell/Motowidlo 2012). According to Kell and Motowidlo (2012), in predicting organisational commitment, situational and experiential variables have received paramount importance and individual differences have been neglected. For this reason, the current study has concerned itself with investigating the effects of rather less popular antecedents and has operationalised work centrality and work alienation in order to explain commitment.

The current analysis is among a few studies that have used work alienation as a major predictor of organisational commitment (e.g. Hirschfeld/Feild 2000; Tummers/Den Dulk 2013; Chiaburu et al. 2014). The findings provide support for the contention that the meaninglessness and powerlessness dimensions of work alienation are significant predictors of affective and normative commitment. Both meaninglessness (i.e., the perception that work outputs are trivial) and powerlessness (i.e., lack of control over environmental circumstances) focus on deprivation conditions in the work environment and, as predicted, were shown to have negative effects on affective commitment. Since affective commitment is defined as an employee's emotional attachment to and involvement with their organisation (Meyer et al. 1993), an employee who feels that their work outputs are regarded as trivial (i.e., meaninglessness) is likely to withdraw their emotional investments in their organisation. In a similar vein, if an employee has a lack of control over their work (i.e., powerlessness), involvement in their organisation will be obstructed. Normative commitment concerns an employee's perceived obligation to remain with their organisation (Allen/Meyer 1990); thus, if an employee feels meaningless and powerless concerning their work, their feeling of commitment deteriorates because they have already been distanced from their work environment.

A finding worth highlighting is that, contrary to what was expected, self-estrangement did not have a significant effect on any of the commitment dimensions. This may be tied to the fact that self-estrangement posits a certain disidentification from and reification of the self (i.e., Seeman 1959; Costas/Fleming 2009; Chiaburu et al. 2014). Such alienation from oneself is markedly different

from alienation from work (i.e., Vallas 1988), where estrangement may be caused by perceived work impositions (Chiaburu et al. 2014). The idea that self-estrangement refers to a disengagement from the self; whereas meaninglessness and powerlessness project disengagement from work underlines the importance of differentiating the target foci of the various alienation dimensions. Nair and Vohra (2012) have underlined that powerlessness and meaninglessness can be viewed as antecedents to, and even consequences of, alienation rather than being descriptive of alienation. Since the most basic understanding of alienation involves a separation, or estrangement, its structure in connection with one's work, current job, and self should be investigated in future studies.

In the current study, continuance commitment – defined as the perception of the costs associated with leaving one's organisation (Meyer/Allen 1991) – was found to have no connection with any of the alienation dimensions. In Solinger et al.'s (2008) critique and reinterpretation of the three-component model of organisational commitment, the authors have argued that continuance commitment is not a form of organisational commitment. They have based this argument on the tenets of the attitude-behaviour model (Ajzen/Fishbein 1980; Ajzen 2005), which emphasises that attitudes target certain foci (i.e., an attitude is always directed toward something), and that continuance commitment is an attitude explicitly tied to acts toward remaining employed and not focused on an entity such as the organisation itself. Since meaninglessness and powerlessness refer to separation from work whereas self-estrangement refers to a separation from the self, the target foci of continuance commitment and the alienation dimensions are not congruent. The insignificance of the relationship between continuance commitment and work alienation might be explained by their having different targets as their foci.

The moderating effect of work centrality on the relationship between work alienation and organisational commitment has been partially supported. Analyses showed significant results regarding the moderation of work centrality with powerlessness and meaninglessness in predicting affective commitment. The negative association between meaninglessness and affective commitment was lower for those with high work centrality than with those with moderate and low work centrality. For those with high levels, meaninglessness did not have a negative impact on affective commitment; however, as employees placed less importance on work in their lives, feelings of meaninglessness tended to weaken their affective commitment. This result is in line with the prediction that as a person values work over other life spheres (i.e., work centrality), the tendency to feel engaged with work is higher. Even when an individual perceives that their work output is regarded as trivial (i.e., meaninglessness), if their work occupies a central place in their lives, they will retain an affective connection with their organisation.

Conversely, the moderating effect of work centrality on the powerlessness–affective commitment relationship did not turn out as anticipated. The negative relationship between powerlessness and affective commitment was stronger when work centrality was high when compared with moderate and low levels. So, for those who valued work over other life spheres, feelings of powerlessness led to lower affective commitment. The strength of the powerlessness–affective commitment relationship when work centrality was high may be related to frustration and anxiety felt due to powerlessness and to the belief that one's ability to bring about change in their work is low, something that has been shown to lead to psychological withdrawal from work (Schminke 1993). It must be stressed that future research is indeed essential in providing accurate explanations regarding these relationships.

Several limitations of the study deserve attention. First, that all data were self-reported may raise questions regarding common method bias (see Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, self-reports on work alienation may be appropriate in this context (Conway/Lance 2010) because, (a) employees may be reluctant to express feelings of estrangement or powerlessness for fear of losing jobs and (b) alienation seems to be an inherent condition which is not easily recognized by others (i.e. co-workers).

Second, it should be noted that the commitment measure used in this study did not differentiate between attachments to different targets, such as the supervisor, the job, and so forth. Work alienation may have varying effects upon the different foci of commitment, and future studies should investigate the effects on these various targets. New research should also examine the effects of other antecedents on organisational commitment alongside work centrality and work alienation. For instance, the effects of job quality that has close ties with both work centrality and alienation might be considered. Firm size may also have important implications on the variables studied.

Lastly, it is important to stress the small sample size and single cultural context on which this study was based. The length of the questionnaire may have caused reluctance to participate, thereby restricting the sample size. A cross-cultural replication of the study will provide valuable inputs for reliability and international comparability.

Despite these limitations, the study enriches our understanding of commitment by introducing relatively unpopular antecedents of the construct via data from Turkey. It is anticipated that these findings will help generate further insights into the antecedents of organisational commitment and prompt further research in that direction.

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