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Understanding Commitment Among Different Tenured Employees. Case: Finnair

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ABSTRACT:

In today's dynamic organizational landscape, fostering employee commitment remains pivotal. This thesis, amidst Finnair's 100-year-long journey as an organisation, it explores the intricate facets shaping employee dedication within the aviation industry. Despite years of research, Finnair stands as a symbol of resilience, weathering global industry challenges, including the COVID-19 disruptions and macroeconomic setbacks. As such, this study reveals the unique cultural elements in Finnair that sustain employee commitment. Weaving these into established motivational theories offers a complete view of Finnair's commitment strategies. Anchored in the Three-component model and guided by Morrow and McElroy's tenure-based framework, this research uncovers how intrinsic motivations and fair compensation drive employee commitment. A notable finding is the deep sense of "Finnair citizenship" reflecting employees' unwavering loyalty, regardless of their tenure. The concept of meaningful work, evident in academic literature and empirical findings, aligns with Finnair's goals. The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the vital role of adversity and transparent communication, valued by employees. Tailored compensation strategies yield insights: long-serving staff seek diverse experiences, while newcomers value recognition. The research also delves into Finnair's career development, emphasizing the interplay of growth opportunities. This exploration offers insights for nurturing commitment in contemporary contexts. It builds on Finnair's century-long journey, laying a foundation for further research into employee commitment dynamics. Methodologically in this study employs a qualitative research approach, drawing on empirical insights obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with eighteen participants. These participants encompass employees with varying tenures, categorized into three groups: less than 2 years, 2-10 years, and more than 10 years. Thematic analysis, complemented by interpretation and analytic generalization, serves as the tools for dissecting the research findings. This study both enhances existing literature and introduces novel perspectives to the identified factors. It approaches the multifaceted nature of employee commitment holistically, addressing the gaps in academic literature. In sum, this thesis offers a comprehensive study, extending current understandings and presenting practical implications related to the focal topic.

Keywords: organizational commitment, organizational tenure, compensation, motivation, meaningful work

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	Background of the research	6
1.2	Target organization: Case Finnair	8
1.3	The Key Concepts of This Thesis Research	9
1.4	Research Structure	11
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1	Organizational Commitment	14
2.1.1	The “Side Bet” Theory	15
2.1.2	The Three-Component Model	18
2.1.3	Contemporary Discourse on Commitment	20
2.2	Organizational Tenure Impacting Commitment	21
2.2.1	Navigating Newcomers Through The ”Honeymoon” Stage	23
2.2.2	The Social Exchange Theory	25
2.2.3	Social Network Influence	28
2.2.4	Tenure-Based Employee Motivation	29
2.3	Meaningful Work	30
2.3.1	Herzberg’s Theory and Meaningful Work	32
2.3.2	Influence of Values on Commitment	34
2.4	Compensation and Commitment	35
2.4.1	Attraction, Motivation, and Performance	36
2.4.2	Tangible vs Intangible Compensation	37
2.4.3	How Compensation Types Shape Employee Dedication	40
2.4.4	Employee Commitment: From Origins To Contemporary Insights	42
3	METHODOLOGY	45
3.1	Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews	45
3.1.1	Analyzing Data Through Thematic Analysis	49
3.1.2	Validity and Reliability	50

4	RESULTS	51
4.1	"Finnair Citizenship": Commitment Among Employees	51
4.1.1	Insights From Tenured and Newcomer Employees	52
4.1.2	Communication as a Cornerstone of Commitment	55
4.1.3	Feedback: Cultivating a Sense of Purpose	56
4.1.4	Meaning in Measurable Results	58
4.1.5	Aligning With Personal Values and Vision	59
4.1.6	Tenure Groups' Outlook on Growth and Commitment	59
4.2	Monetary and Non-Monetary Drivers of Commitment at Finnair	61
4.2.1	Salary: The Influence of Monetary Compensation	61
4.2.2	Beyond Salary: The Multifaceted Nature of Compensation	62
5	DISCUSSION	66
5.1	Dimensions of Commitment	66
5.1.1	Social Exchange Theory and Finnair's "We Spirit"	67
5.1.2	Workplace Friendship and Organizational Culture	68
5.1.3	Intrinsic Motivation and Adaptability	68
5.1.4	Peer Support and Networks in Employee Commitment	69
5.1.5	Commitment Challenges in Compensation	70
5.2	Theoretical Considerations	72
5.3	Practical Implications	74
5.4	Future Research Suggestions	76
5.5	Limitations of The Research	77
	Bibliography	80
	Appendices	91
	Semi-Structured Interview Question Set	91

1 INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary workplaces, cultivating employee commitment emerges as a cornerstone for organizational success, demanding a nuanced grasp of its many underlying factors (Piccoli et al., 2017). This encompasses understanding the complex relationships that bind employees to their organizations in today's rapidly evolving workforce (Chauhan, Howe, & Nachamias, 2023). Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran (2005) assert that such employees consistently outperform others, highlighting the cross-disciplinary interest in this phenomenon (Cohen, 2007). As such, this thesis embarks on a comprehensive exploration of employee commitment, recognizing its pivotal role in organizational success, and therefore delves beyond traditional explorations of employer branding and talent acquisition practices to emphasize the often-overlooked intricacies shaping employee commitment levels (Chauhan et al., 2023).

While a plethora of studies have previously explored various determinants of organizational commitment, a gap exists in understanding the nuanced differences in commitment drivers between newcomers and more tenured employees (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023, p.9; Solinger, Hofman & Van Olffen, 2015). Organizational tenure significantly impacts commitment levels, with research indicating variations across different stages of tenure (Morrow & McElroy, 1987; Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023). This distinction is crucial, given the different factors such as generational shifts, workplace expectations, value systems, and career trajectories affecting commitment (Benson & Brown, 2011). In addition, the organizational socialization process, commonly referred to as onboarding, influences commitment levels from the outset of employment by facilitating an understanding of organizational norms, values, and expectations (Filstad, 2011; Cheng et al., 2022). Meaningful work also provides intrinsic satisfaction, which is closely linked to employee performance and commitment. Therefore, employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and motivation (Autin et al., 2022). Preceding the final point, compensation plays a critical role in talent retention and fostering commitment and loyalty. Competitive compensation packages not

only attracts top talent but also inspires commitment and loyalty towards the organization (Puranama et al., 2022; Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015; Hu et al., 2019).

1.1 Background of the research

Employee commitment, also known as organizational commitment in the literature, constitutes a vital element crucial for the overall prosperity of any organization, given its close association with employee engagement and motivation, as substantiated by previous research (Cohen, 2007; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005).

A primary framework for the inquiry is the Three-component model, which suggests that commitment is rooted in three main elements: an emotional bond to the organization (affective commitment), the perceived cost of departing the organization (continuance commitment), and a sense of duty to remain within the organization (normative commitment) as per Meyer & Allen (1990). While foundational, these theories are further enriched when combined with perspectives from self-determination and compensation models. The self-determination theory, which underscores the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in shaping behavior, elucidates how personal motivations can mold one's commitment intensity and type. When tasks resonate with an employee's intrinsic values and are found rewarding, their organizational loyalty is bolstered (Autin et al., 2022; Van den Broeck et al., 2021).

While existing scholarly work, exemplified by contributions from Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004), and Faqih and Munajat (2023), have extensively explored various factors influencing employee motivation and engagement, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivators like salary and financial incentives. Competitive compensation packages not only attract top talent but also inspire commitment and loyalty towards the organization (Puranama et al., 2022; Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015; Hu et al., 2019). On the other hand, the compensation model provides a lens to view commitment through the lens of rewards. Equitable and competitive compensation not only motivate but also retain

employees, solidifying their affiliation with the organization (Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas 2013; Victor & Hoole, 2021).

Delving deeper, this thesis examines theories connecting tenure and commitment. Given that an employee's duration within an organization can sway their loyalty, it's crucial to grasp the nuances of commitment evolution over time. Interestingly, this exploration is anchored in Morrow and McElroy's (1987) framework which categorizes employees based on tenure into three distinct phases: the "trial stage" (less than 2 years), the "stabilization stage" (two to ten years), and the "maintenance stage" (over a decade). Research suggests that the commitment level and job performance vary across these tenure stages (Wang, Weng & Jiang, 2020, p. 381). While a plethora of studies have previously explored various determinants of organizational commitment, a gap exists in understanding the nuanced differences in commitment drivers between newcomers and more tenured employees (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023, p.9; Solinger, Hofman & Van Olffen, 2015). This distinction is crucial, given the different factors such as generational shifts, workplace expectations, value systems, and career trajectories affecting commitment (Benson & Brown, 2011).

The organizational socialization process, commonly referred to as onboarding, influences commitment levels from the outset of employment by facilitating an understanding of organizational norms, values, and expectations (Filstad, 2011; Cheng et al., 2022). Moreover, meaningful work, which provides intrinsic satisfaction, is closely linked to employee performance and commitment. Employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and motivation over time (Autin et al., 2022).

Another crucial dimension explored is the significance of meaningful work. Theories in this domain emphasize that employees who derive purpose from their roles naturally develop a stronger attachment to their organizations. This underlines the intertwined nature of job significance and organizational dedication. The tenure of an employee within an organization often correlates with their evolving perception of meaningful work. Over time, as employees become more familiar with the organization's values, goals, and cul-

ture, they can better align their values with their roles. By seamlessly integrating these diverse theories and perspectives, the research aspires to paint a holistic portrait of the multifaceted realm of organizational commitment (Autin et al., 2022; Allan, Duffy & Collisson, 2018).

Given the reasoning for the thesis, three questions arise and work as the basis of this thesis:

- What are the key factors behind employee commitment?
- How do the factors vary between different tenured employees?
- If factors vary, how does commitment change between different tenured employees?

1.2 Target organization: Case Finnair

The backdrop of Finnair's 100th year serves as a pivotal starting point this thesis qualitative research in the research chapter, inspired by the airline's fascinating legacy of long-standing employees. (N.Laakko & T.Anttila, personal conversation, 17.3.2023). While exploring this target organization, an in-depth analysis reveals nuanced layers to various commitment levels backed by academic theory which has been an evolving focal point of research since the 1950s (Piccoli et al., 2017). Within this landscape, Finnair emerges as a beacon, having maintained its allure through significant industry disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (N.Laakko & T. Anttila, personal conversation, 17.3.2023). By juxtaposing elements contributing to employee commitment with established motivational constructs, the aim is to understand the differences between tenured employees.. Finnair is renowned for its numerous employees who boast remarkably long tenures within the company (N.Laakko, personal discussion, 17.6.2023). Nonetheless, as highlighted by Noesgaard and Jorgensen (2023), there may be disparities in the commitment levels among employees with varying lengths of tenure. They emphasize the significance

of examining employee commitment and investigating whether tenure influences employee commitment levels.

In conjunction with the aforementioned, it is imperative to investigate whether specific elements within the organizational environment of Finnair exert a significant positive influence on employee commitment. Therefore, this thesis aims to look into the often overlooked intricacies, such as motivational differences between different tenured employees as identified by Chauhan et al. (2023), that play a pivotal role in shaping commitment levels, specifically within the context of Finnair's organizational landscape. Lastly, this thesis addresses a notable knowledge gap, aiming to discern the factors influencing organizational commitment, with a specific focus on differentiating between newcomers and seasoned employees (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023, p.8). By exploring classic commitment theories, the research offers a detailed insight into the subtleties of organizational allegiance.

1.3 The Key Concepts of This Thesis Research

In this thesis, we focus on several key concepts: employee commitment, organizational tenure, meaningful work, organizational socialization process, and compensation. These concepts will be introduced in the following sections to provide a comprehensive understanding for the reader. The concepts addressed in this thesis are derived from literature examining factors that influence employee commitment across different tenures within organizations.

Employee Commitment

The term employee commitment refers to the level of dedication, loyalty, and enthusiasm that an employee has toward their organization and its goals. It signifies the extent to which employees are emotionally invested in their work, identify with their organization, and are willing to go above and beyond to contribute to its success. Employee

commitment encompasses various dimensions. In addition, employee commitment as found in the literature is also referred to as the term organizational commitment. Usually, when referring to the definition, the most common forms are affective commitment, which refers to an employee's emotional attachment to an organization, normative commitment, which refers to the perception of costs associated with the leaving organization and continuance commitment, which refers to a sense of obligation to an organization. (Meyer & Allen, 1991.)

Organizational tenure

Organizational tenure refers to the length of an employee employed in an organization (Morrow and McElroy, 1987). In this thesis, employees are referred to as tenured, more tenured employees, or newcomers. Morrow and McElroy (1987) categorize employees into three distinct groups based on their tenure. Additionally, these groups, namely the "trial stage" (less than 2 years), "stabilization stage" (more than 2 years), and "maintenance stage" (over 10 years), each of which have an impact on employees' commitment levels. Moreover, various factors may influence employee commitment differently across these three stages (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023, p.8).

Organizational socialization process

The organizational socialization process is sometimes also called the onboarding process, during which employees learn about the organization's habits, values, procedures, and norms, eventually becoming full-fledged members. This process is often synonymous with assimilating into the organization's culture. (Filstad, 2011; Cheng et al., 2022.)

Meaningful work

Meaningful work encompasses those aspects of work that provide employees with intrinsic psychological satisfaction. It has been established that meaningful work is closely connected to employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment. (Autin et al., 2022.)

Compensation

Compensation refers to the tangible and non-tangible rewards and benefits provided by organizations in exchange for their work. It also serves a crucial factor in talent retaining. Employees evaluate various compensation factors, influenced by age, tenure, and economic conditions. Organizations use compensation to express appreciation, inspire commitment, and exceptional performance, and foster loyalty. This fosters a harmonious work environment and strengthens the bond between employees and the organization. (Puranama et al., 2022; Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015; Hu et al., 2019.)

1.4 Research Structure

This thesis comprises several key chapters, each serving a distinct purpose within the research framework. The structure of this thesis is organized into the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, analysis, and conclusions. The structure of this thesis can be seen in the figure below.

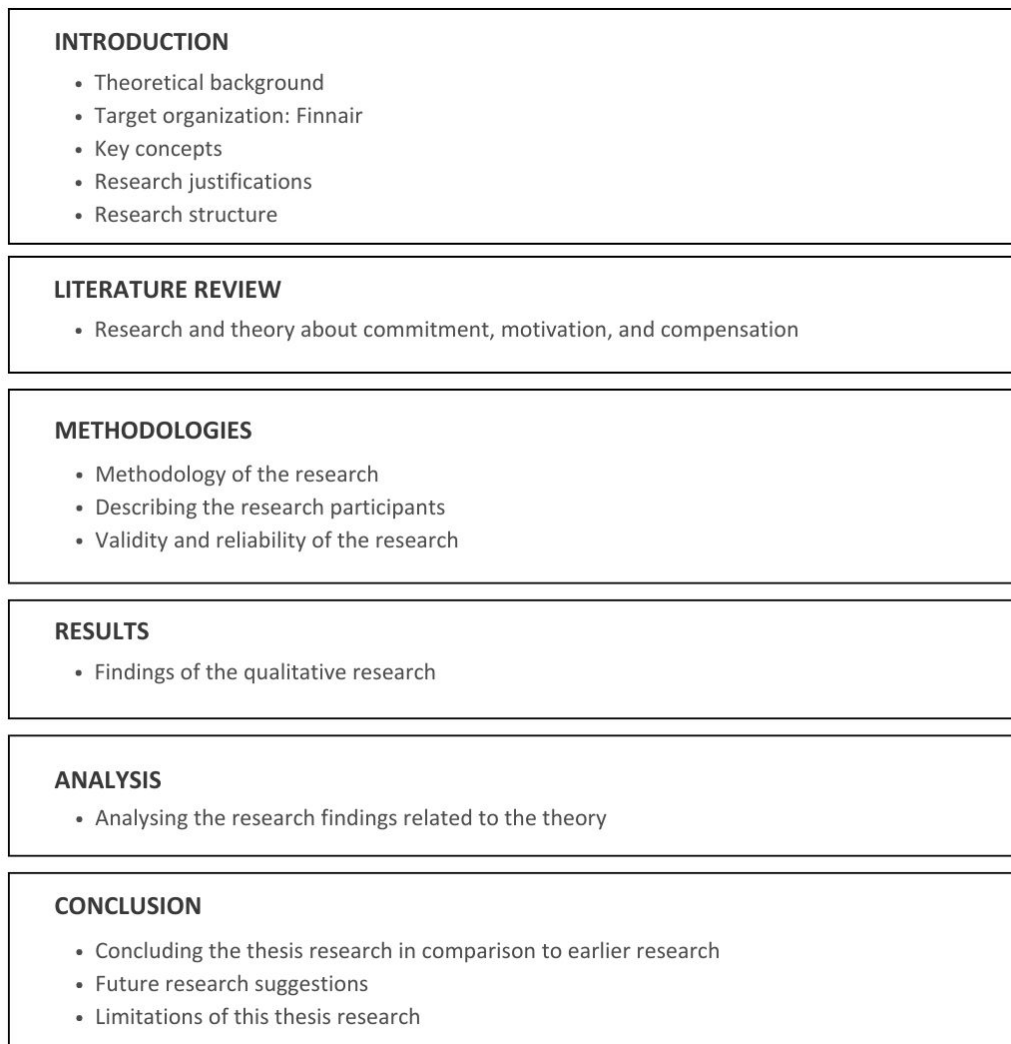


Figure 1. Research structure.

The introduction section serves as the initial point of entry for readers, providing an overview of the research topic and its key definitions. Additionally, this section delineates the limitations of the study, offering readers a clear understanding of the scope and boundaries of the research. Within the literature review chapter, readers will encounter a comprehensive exploration of relevant theoretical frameworks and perspectives on employee commitment within the context of Finnair. This chapter delves into various commitment theories, motivational aspects and theories, as well as discussions on the interplay between compensation and commitment. Furthermore, it offers insights into how commitment can differ among employees with varying lengths of tenure.

The methodology chapter is dedicated to elucidating the intricacies of the qualitative research process. It spans participant selection procedures, methodological approaches to data analysis, and discussions on the assessment of validity and reliability when conducting qualitative research. The results, right after the methodology chapter present the findings derived from the qualitative research, offering readers an in-depth understanding of the empirical outcomes. Subsequently, the analysis chapter meticulously examines the relationship between the research results and the literature review, providing insights into how the empirical findings align with or deviate from existing theoretical frameworks. Finally, the conclusions chapter encapsulates the key takeaways from the research, including implications for future studies and an acknowledgement of the research's limitations. The report concludes with a section dedicated to references and relevant attachments on this thesis.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to elucidate the theoretical underpinnings upon which this thesis is constructed. As highlighted by Puusa, Juutti, and Aaltio (2020), theories serve as analytical instruments that enable us to describe, predict, and comprehend various phenomena. Consequently, it's crucial to grasp the theories deployed in characterizing specific occurrences. Furthermore, the literature assessment provides the foundation for the empirical segment of this thesis, with themes being drawn directly from theoretical considerations. The forthcoming literature review embarks upon a methodical exposition of organizational commitment, commencing with its foundational definitions and seminal theories, including the noteworthy Side-Bet Theory and the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment. This foundational understanding sets the stage for a discourse on the evolution of these concepts, elucidating their contemporary relevance in the shifting landscape of organizational studies.

Further enriching this exploration, the literature review delves into motivational paradigms, spotlighting the Self-Determination Theory and its intricate ties to organizational com-

mitment. Given the established correlation between heightened organizational commitment and elevated job satisfaction, the significance of meaningful work in the context of commitment will be examined. Concurrently, the literature underscores the multifaceted concept of organizational tenure, probing into how commitment determinants manifest distinctively among employees of varied tenure durations. Simultaneously, while it's a prevalent postulation that compensation acts as a linchpin for commitment (Sorn et al., 2023) this review will provide an analytical perspective on the role and intricacies of compensation as a pivotal determinant in fostering commitment. However, it's worth noting that certain areas pertinent to this thesis, like the fluctuations in employee commitment over time, have not been extensively explored. This gap in the literature is exemplified by Noesgaard & Jorgensen's (2023) observation that studies analyzing the influence of organizational tenure on commitment, as well as the progression of organizational commitment, are relatively scarce.

2.1 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a concept that holds a central place in the realm of human resource management and organizational behavior. It is a fundamental aspect of the employee-organization relationship, shaping the way individuals engage with their work and their allegiance to the institution they serve. (Faqih & Muajanat, 2023.) Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) suggest that commitment can take various forms, from intrinsic dedication to the work at hand to a strong sense of loyalty towards the organization. In the context of this discussion, we aim to explore the factors that underlie organizational commitment, a topic guided by our ongoing dialogues with this renowned entity. While the terms "commitment" and "engagement" are often used interchangeably (Faqih & Muajanat, 2023), this thesis leans towards the exploration of commitment as a more fitting perspective. A review of the existing literature reveals that organizational commitment yields substantial benefits for both the organization and its workforce. This chapter seeks to shed light on the multifaceted nature of commitment, its impact, and its importance in the modern workplace.

The literature indicates that organizational commitment yields salutary effects for both the entity and its workforce. Such commitment emerges as a pivotal catalyst for numerous positive outcomes, including prolongation of employees' tenure, enhancement in their performance, and augmentation of job satisfaction. These facets are advantageous for both individuals and organizations. For instance, committed employees are less inclined to divert energy to job searches, allowing them to channel their fervour and motivation into their extant roles, thereby benefiting the organization. (Chen et al., 2023; Allen, Bryant & Vardaman, 2010.) Conversely, organizations can allocate resources more judiciously by circumventing the recurrent hiring and orientation of new staff. Furthermore, employee satisfaction, a byproduct of commitment, amplifies overall well-being, a metric of immeasurable value for organizations and, by extension, society at large. In conclusion, the profound impact of organizational commitment on both individuals and the institutions they serve cannot be overstated. It serves as a powerful catalyst for fostering employee longevity, performance excellence, and job satisfaction, while also contributing to efficient resource allocation and overall well-being. As affirmed by recent research (Chen et al., 2023; Lee & Jacobs, 2023; Allen, Bryant & Vardaman, 2010), the value of organizational commitment is undeniable, making it an essential attribute for organizations striving to thrive in today's dynamic and competitive landscape.

2.1.1 The "Side Bet" Theory

The concept of employee commitment is widely recognized as multifaceted, with its various dimensions influenced by numerous factors (Salminen & Miettinen, 2019). However, the historical evolution of this concept reveals a more simplistic understanding in its early stages. For instance, when the topic of employee and organizational commitment was first introduced in the 1960s, it primarily focused on a one-dimensional aspect. During this period, commitment was primarily defined as a sustained course of action driven by the acknowledgement of costs associated with discontinuing one's affiliation with an organization. (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023.) Since its inception in the 1960s, the understanding of employee commitment has evolved through three distinct stages over several

decades (Altidindis, 2011, p.8602). The earliest established theory that described organizational commitment was the "side-bet" theory, introduced by Becker (1960). According to this theory, commitment was akin to "side bets," which represented valuable but often hidden aspects that employees would forfeit if they chose to leave the organization. "Side bets" can encompass a wide range of elements, such as holding a senior-level position with a substantial salary that employee values so greatly that leaving the organization would result in the forfeiture of this significant "side bet" (Griffin & Hepburn, 2005).

Becker (1960) viewed commitment primarily through the lens of turnover intention, positing that an employee's departure would inevitably result in the loss of all these "side bets." In other words, the more an employee places these "side bets" in the organization, the more difficult it becomes for an employee to leave. Thus, the greater amount of "side bets" the greater the difficulty it is to leave. In essence, as an employee invests more heavily in these "side bets" within the organization, their ability to depart from the organization becomes increasingly challenging. Consequently, the greater the number of "side bets," the greater the difficulty associated with leaving the organization. (Griffin & Hepburn, 2005.) Becker (1960) defined commitment as a tendency to consistently pursue certain actions or goals. He believed that commitment arises when a person recognizes that their involvement in social organizations has created certain obligations or constraints that limit their future options. In other words, employees become committed to certain activities or goals when they feel that they have made "side bets" that require them to follow through within their organization. Furthermore, one of the commitment categories proposed by Becker in 1960 is "individual adjustments to social positions," which refers to the actions taken by an individual employee to adapt to a particular organization, potentially leading to reduced adaptability to other organizations. For example, investing time and effort to acquire skills that are specific to an organization can make the individual less competitive in other organizations. Another commitment category proposed by Becker is "impersonal bureaucratic arrangements," which refers to organizational policies or rules designed to incentivize or reward long-term employment, such as a compensation system based on seniority. (Becker, 1960.)

Becker's "side bet" theory has been extensively discussed by researchers, such as Meyer and Allen (1984) and Powell and Meyer (2004) to examine the validity of the commitment categories proposed by Becker across different organizational contexts. Despite many decades of testing the theory in multiple settings, the question remains as to whether the theory is indeed valid. However, it is worth noting that Becker did not intend for his theory to be an exhaustive list of categories describing organizational commitment (Powell & Meyer, 2004, p. 158-159). Furthermore, recent contributions, like those of Scales and Brown (2000), highlight that Becker's theory was originally intended to explain why employees remain in organizations by making various "side bets." It was never meant to stand alone but rather to provide a foundation for understanding the continuum of commitment within organizations. This perspective has influenced subsequent researchers to further develop the theory, as seen in the work of Powell and Meyer (2004) and others. In the 1970's the concept of employee commitment started to recognize that employees commit to organizations, not only because they receive tangible assets such as monetary compensation, gained, but also because there lies psychological affection in their commitment to their organization. In addition to the aforementioned, commitment was also seen as employees identifying themselves with the organization they are working with. This view still holds relevant today when discussing employee commitment. (Solinger et al., 2012). Below, Figure 2 visually represents the "Side Bet" Theory proposed by Becker (1960) to explain organizational commitment, illustrating the concept of commitment as driven by the perceived costs associated with leaving an organization, including investments in skills and adjustments to social positions, as well as impersonal bureaucratic arrangements such as seniority-based compensation systems.

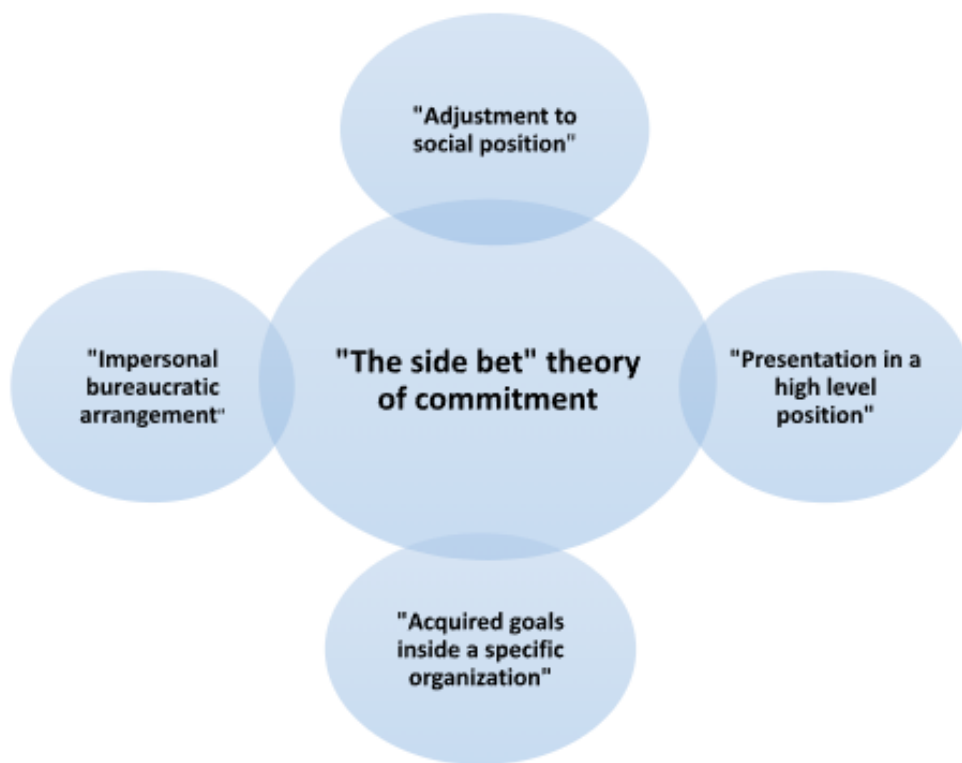


Figure 2. The "side bet" theory of commitment by Becker (1960).

2.1.2 The Three-Component Model

Building on the "side bet" theory as explained in section 2.1.1, advancements were developed later in the 1980s to expand on commitment theories, notably by Meyer and Allen (1984). They introduced the three-factor model (TCM) of commitment, which sought to refine and expand upon earlier notions of commitment. Meyer and Allen (1984) initially posited that the "side bet" theory by Becker (1960), could be better understood and defined by the continuance aspect, one of the dimensions within the TCM model. This dimension, termed continuance commitment, is founded on an employee's perception of the costs associated with leaving the organization. These costs may encompass tangible factors, such as lost income or benefits, as well as intangible elements, including a loss of status or social connections. An employee's commitment to the organization, therefore, hinges on their perceived need to continue working due to the belief that the costs of

leaving are excessively high (Wasti, 2005, p.290).

Today, the TCM model remains prominent and frequently cited in discussions about employee commitment (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023). This model posits that commitment is primarily rooted in an employee's psychological state or mindset, encompassing three distinct forms of commitment to an organization: affective commitment, normative commitment, and the aforementioned continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is characterized by an emotional attachment to the organization and the work performed within it. This form of commitment is akin to a deep bond between the employee and their work, marked by a desire to stay with the organization due to feelings of loyalty and a strong identification with the company's goals and values (Brunetto, et. Al, 2012, p. 431; Meyer & Allen, 1990). However, in contrast, normative commitment is marked by a sense of obligation to the organization. This obligation may stem from a sense of indebtedness to the organization for providing specific benefits, such as training or promotion opportunities, or from a desire to uphold a positive reputation and maintain relationships with colleagues (Meyer & Allen, 1990). It is essential to recognize that while each type of commitment reflects dedication to the organization, the primary source of commitment may differ among employees. From an organizational standpoint, gaining insight into the prevailing form of commitment among their workforce holds significant importance. Nevertheless, a pertinent question emerges: Is there an optimal form of commitment? Could an organization thrive and maintain stability as long as it has committed employees, regardless of the specific form of commitment they exhibit?

Cohen (2010) highlights that the type of commitment demonstrated by an employee can have an impact on their job performance, turnover intentions, and job satisfaction. Notably, affective commitment is associated with employees going above and beyond the fundamental requirements of their roles (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023; Leroy, Palanski & Simons, 2012). This suggests that the form of commitment may indeed influence employees' job performance, raising questions about which form organizations should prioritize to achieve their goals effectively.



Figure 3. The three different forms of commitment according to The Three-Component Model.

2.1.3 Contemporary Discourse on Commitment

A deeper exploration of how changes in workforce dynamics, cultural contexts, and the evolving nature of work have prompted a reevaluation of commitment theories. Cohen (2010) underscores the substantial influence of Triandis and Bhawuk's (1996) theoretical model, particularly the Three-Component Model (TCM), in organizational commitment research. However, global workforce changes have indeed shifted the focus of commitment to various aspects beyond the organization itself, such as work nature, tasks, or organizational citizenship behavior (Takashima, Nishigaki & Takeshita, 2019; Wang, Weng & Jiang, 2019). Organizational citizenship behavior refers to employees embracing workplace values and acting as "citizens" of the organization (Vanderberg & Scarpello, 1994), challenging traditional commitment definitions. Cultural variations also require careful consideration when applying commitment theories (Cohen, 2010). Commitment may manifest differently in diverse contexts (Mercurio, 2015), and the Three-Component Model, while recognized, faces criticism for oversimplification (Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, 2012).

Nevertheless, The topic of commitment remains an ongoing and relevant subject of discussion (Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2007). This leads to the intriguing notion that commitment, to some extent, may manifest differently in different organizational cultures, with

different factors influencing commitment levels in distinct ways. Given the aforementioned, it is vital to reevaluate the meaning of commitment in today's context and understand how it continues to hold significance. Regardless of these critiques, TCM continues to serve as a source of inspiration and a basis for many subsequent studies on organizational commitment to this day (Solinger, van Olffen & Roe, 2008).

2.2 Organizational Tenure Impacting Commitment

Organizational tenure, which refers to the length of an individual's employment within an organization (McEnroe, 1988), is commonly used and studied as an indicator of job-specific skills and knowledge that accumulate over time (Uppal, 2017). As employees spend more time in an organization, they develop commitments and obligations that become difficult to relinquish, aligning with the "side bet" theory (Uppal, 2017, p. 554). Consequently, longer organizational tenure tends to be associated with higher levels of affective commitment towards the organization. That is, because the more time an employee spends in an organization, the more familiar they become with the organization and its practices. (Hu et al, 2019, p.3.) This effect is not necessarily an automatic outcome of tenure; usually, longer-tenured employees have also gone through an organizational socialization process which as an outcome, has led them to being and feeling a member of that organization. (Uppal, 2017; Gilmore & Harding, 2022, p.583.) Organizational socialization commences when a new employee joins a company and unfolds through three stages - trial, stabilization (around two years), and maintenance (around ten years), following Morrow and McElroy's model (1987). These stages require distinct motivational factors to align with evolving employee needs (Uppal, 2017, p. 1554).

Job characteristics theory emphasizes the significance of specific aspects of job design in motivating employees and effectively utilizing their personal resources. These motivational job characteristics, including skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, foster a sense of meaningfulness and responsibility, leading to intrinsic motivation and resource investment in work (Uppal, 2017; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017).

Motivational job characteristics play a significant role in preventing job-relevant knowledge and organization-specific knowledge from becoming less valuable over time among more tenured employees. They also help reduce the negative impact of continuance commitment (Uppal, 2017, p. 1555; Ahmad, 2018.) This is because if employees become complacent in their role due to lack of e.g., actively upgrading their skills and knowledge relating to their work, they may instead only rely on the perceived ease of performing their current tasks and prioritize maintaining their commitment to stay (Becker, 1960, p.37). Consequently, in jobs that have these motivational characteristics, the benefits of staying with the organization for a longer period and staying motivated are likely to be more sustained because employees consistently utilize their skills and knowledge. (Autin et al., 2022.) However, in jobs that lack motivational characteristics, the negative effects of continuance commitment are more pronounced. Employees in such roles may start to underuse or conserve their skills and knowledge, which eventually leads to a decline in their value and the emergence of additional commitments. (Uppal, 2017, p. 1555.)

Tenured employees, who have acquired job-related resources such as organization-specific knowledge over time, tend to invest more effort in their work roles. In response, organizations can enhance their more tenured employees' work roles through HR practices that support the motivational aspects of these roles (Hu et al., 2019). This approach can help mitigate the potential negative effects of continuance commitment and delay the point at which the relationship between organizational tenure and job performance starts to decline (Uppal, 2017). Considering that employees at different stages of organizational tenure have distinct personal goals, organizations should tailor motivational aspects and factors to meet the specific needs of tenured employees (Wang, Weng, & Jiang, 2020, pp. 480-483; Uppal, 2017, p. 1565).

Interestingly, organizational tenure has a stronger association with job performance in the initial trial stage compared to extensive tenure over time (Wang et al., 2020). While research on the impact of organizational tenure on employee commitment and its evolution over time is limited (Noesgaard & Jorgensen, 2023), different career stages influence work motivations, attitudes, and concerns (Kooij & Bon, 2017; Weng et al., 2020).

Organizational commitment is therefore dynamic (Maia, Bastos, & Solinger, 2016), and variations in commitment changes exist among different subgroups (Bastos & Solinger, 2016). Chapter section 2.2.1 elaborates these distinctions which are focused on newcomers, tenured employees and their evolving commitment to the organization.

2.2.1 Navigating Newcomers Through The "Honeymoon" Stage

Vanderberghe et al. (2011, p. 653) discuss the potential decline of affective commitment among new employees, particularly after their initial "honeymoon" stage in the organization. The honeymoon stage is described as a time when new employees make an overly positive assessment of the organization, before making a more realistic assessment of their new workplace during the "honeymoon hangover" period. As such, the "honeymoon hangover", described e.g., by Boswell et al., (2009) and Valero & Hirschi, (2019), refers to the period after which the initial stage of new employees joining an organization has come to an end and the new employee has started to become more familiar with the organization's ways of working. When the novelty of a new organization wears off, a new employee starts to see their new workplace with different eyes than at the beginning of the employment. This phenomenon is rather common among new employees, and it does not necessarily exclude employees who do not have previous work experience from other organizations. However, earlier experiences may mediate the "hangover effect" and some employees who have e.g. voluntarily changed to a new job might not at all experience and go through the hangover stage. (Valero et al., (2019, p. 150-151.)

Expanding upon the observation that new employees undergo a shift in their commitment, in part due to their tendency to view the organization with a highly positive and perhaps overly optimistic outlook. As such, numerous factors can facilitate the development of affective commitment in new employees towards their organization. One such factor is being in the early stages of their career and not having completed the socialization process within the organization. As a result, during the initial phase of their employment, the factors that promote commitment in new employees may be centred on the

organization's presentation of a favourable image. However, as new employees become more familiar with the organization's values and their role within it, the factors that initially contributed to their affective commitment may be replaced by other elements in the organization. (Vanderberghe, et al., 2011, p. 653; Kowta, 2018; Son & Ok, 2019.) This shift does not necessarily mean that the new employees' commitment to the organization ceases over time, but rather that their affective commitment towards the organization may shift to showing commitment e.g. towards a specific group of colleagues and their shared values and goals, which align with new employees' values. Research, such as by Uppal (2017) suggests that during "the honeymoon stage" new employees may be immune to any possible negative factors that could weaken their affective commitment to the organization at the beginning. This reason gives an explanation why the new employees may show affective commitment towards an organization at the beginning but over time their commitment shifts over to another subject or changes its form. (Vanderberghe et al., 2011.)

On the other hand, Bauer and colleagues (2007) propose that affective commitment in organizations decreases when the socialization process between the employee and the organization has only been partially achieved. This is because the socialization process involves the employee becoming acquainted with the organization's culture, which includes elements such as its values. Consequently, the socialization process plays a critical role in cultivating affective employee commitment, and a partially achieved process may not effectively foster such commitment. While this argument may appear to contradict the notion put forth by Hu and colleagues (2019) that employees with longer tenures in an organization also exhibit greater commitment, Bauer and colleagues (2007), as well as Filstad (2011), suggest that new employees may experience a decline in organizational commitment as a result of incomplete socialization processes.

Boswell et al. (2009) and, also Son and Ok (2019) contend that while the socialization process of new employees is generally perceived as a universal phenomenon, individual differences play a significant role in shaping this process. These individual differences, rooted in employees' pre-existing values and expectations, influence their attitude to-

ward the organization. The socialization process can encompass various highs and lows, reflecting the unique characteristics of new employees and their alignment with internal motivations (Autin et al. 2022). Once new employees join an organization, they continue to anticipate specific forms of support from their managers that are consistent with their personal values and organizational expectations (Rousseau, Ho & Greenberg, 2006). Therefore, Son and Ok (2019, p. 84) propose that new employees should be given adequate time, around two to three years, and attention to fully adapt to the organization. This involves providing them with individualized and customized treatment that enables them to develop a deep commitment to the organization. By accommodating new employees' values and goals, organizations not only seek to align the newcomers with their own values and objectives but also allow the newcomers to comprehend the authentic aspects of the organization that may initially be unknown to them after joining (Kowta, 2018).

2.2.2 The Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers valuable insights into the dynamics of relationships within organizations. According to this theory, exchanges between employers and employees are rooted in reciprocity, where both parties provide each other with tangible and intangible work-related conditions and opportunities (Zhao et al., 2020). This exchange process is inherently social and involves employees reciprocating through their work ethics and the effort they invest in the organization they work for. Consequently, as employees engage in these reciprocal exchanges more frequently, their commitment to the organization is likely to grow (Geldenhuis et al., 2014; Autin et al., 2022). Importantly, the perspective of the social exchange theory is presented to highlight the potential variability in the levels of social exchange experienced by different tenured employees. It underscores the idea that tenure might influence the depth and intensity of these exchanges, with varying implications for organizational commitment. (Giaque & Varone, 2019, p.343.)

The effectiveness of the exchange process within an organization hinges significantly on the presence of favourable conditions, with trust and affective ties being of paramount importance among the parties involved. These conditions play a pivotal role in facilitating successful social exchanges within the organizational context (Giaque & Varone, 2019, p. 344). As employees are deeply netted in this reciprocal relationship, they naturally have expectations of receiving benefits in return for their contributions. When employees perceive that their part of the exchange is not being adequately fulfilled, it is likely to lead to a decline in their commitment to the organization (Moin, 2018, p. 181). The effectiveness of this social exchange process is intricately linked to how employees perceive the fulfillment of the promises made to them. It revolves around the employees' perception of whether the organization has fulfilled its commitments in a fair and balanced manner (Lee et al., 2018). Engaging in social exchanges within an organization can result in several forms of commitment. First, it can foster a sense of identification with the organization and a heightened alignment with its values and objectives which in turn lead to affective commitment (see figure 4, chapter section 2.2.2). Second, this exchange process can generate a moral sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate the benefits they receive from their employment, giving rise to normative commitment. Finally, the emotional investment from a supervisor can make discontinuing one's employment with the organization appear costlier, leading to continuance commitment (Moin, 2018, p. 181).

Lee et al. (2018) explain that organizational culture can impact affective commitment. This is based on the premise that affective commitment is a psychological form of commitment and part of an organizational culture that fosters a sense of belonging. For instance, Lee et al. (2018) note that organizations supporting communal and consistent values and empowering employees to participate in decision-making regarding their work enhance employees' affective commitment. Similarly, when a shared identity regarding the organization's strategy is communicated to employees, it fosters a sense of belonging (Campbell and Yeung, 1991). Communicating about the organization's strategy not only supports organizational commitment but also serves as a mechanism that directs employees toward a desired goal. Thus, meeting employees' expectations also benefits the organization's long-term goals by supporting employee affective commitment. (Campbell and Yeung,

1991; Lee et al., (2019.) A simple depiction of this is visualised in figure 4 below.

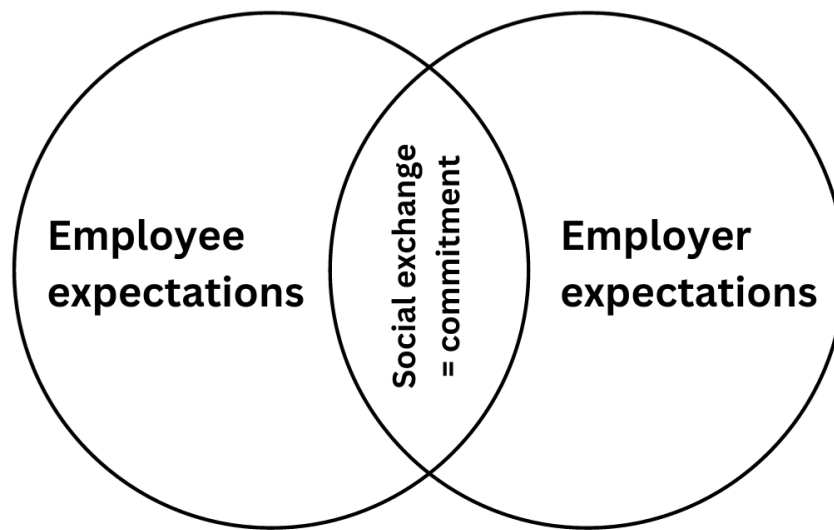


Figure 4. Social Exchange Theory. Authors own elaboration.

As previously noted, employee tenure is a central factor influencing their perception and expectations within an organization (Gilmore & Harding, 2022). According to research by Fey and Denison (2003), organizations that prioritize adaptability, particularly in the face of evolving workforce dynamics, often experience heightened affective commitment from their employees. This enhanced commitment stems from the perception that organizations are attuned to the changing business landscape and genuinely care for their employees' well-being. As tenure progresses, employees may prioritize different aspects of the social exchange process. For instance, Von Bonsford's (2013) proposition suggests that employees with varying tenures might have distinct preferences regarding compensation types and structures. Consequently, an organization's ability to recognize and adapt to these nuances, driven by employee tenure, directly correlates with fostering affective commitment. As such, the social exchange theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how interactions between employers and employees e.g. differing by their tenure can influence organizational commitment. By recognizing the importance of reciprocity, trust, and affective ties, organizations can cultivate stronger com-

mitment among their workforce, ultimately benefiting both parties involved. (Geldenhuys, et al., 2014.)

2.2.3 Social Network Influence

Research on organizational commitment has traditionally paid limited attention to the potential influence of social networks in shaping employees' attitudes toward their work. Specifically, the impact of social networks and an employee's social position within an organization, both of which can significantly affect individual behaviour, has been underexplored (Siciliano & Thompson, 2018). Some evidence e.g. by Mossholder et al. (2011) and Zhang et al. (2022) suggests that social networks, particularly informal relationships not mandated by organizational roles, can yield highly positive outcomes for organizations. Drawing upon the perspectives of Mossholder (2011) and Zhang et al. (2022), it is posited that the duration of an employee's tenure within an organization is positively correlated with the robustness of their social networks. For instance, Mossholder et al. (2011) discuss commitment-based work systems, fostering promotive interdependence within organizations by establishing shared goals and a common work identity. In contrast, Zhang et al. (2022) and Cooper et al. (2019) highlight the importance of informal, voluntary friendships, as described by Pillemer and Rothbardt (2018).

Many organizations have attempted to enhance employee commitment through various human resource practices and work-based systems, as emphasized by Mossholder et al. (2011) which aim to cultivate a sense of belonging among employees. However, genuine informal friendships can potentially yield even more positive outcomes for employee well-being and, consequently, commitment. When employees are true friends, there exists a genuine willingness to assist one another with work tasks and go the extra mile, ultimately strengthening commitment. Zhang et al. (2022) suggest that organizations should view their employees as crucial stakeholders and promote opportunities for colleague friendships to thrive. O'Neil and Salas (2018) also emphasize the increasing importance of relationship-building in a work environment increasingly reliant on diverse

teams. Moynihan and Pandey (2008) shed light on the significance of group culture in influencing organizational commitment. They found that in organizations fostering a culture of mutual commitment among members and a familial atmosphere, employee commitment tends to be higher. Siciliano and Thompson (2018) argue that this phenomenon is rooted in how individual employees value each other within the organization. Valuation can be based on various factors, including a peer's prestigious education, expertise, or influence in their role across different work-related situations. This valuation-based perspective on peers within an organization cultivates a sense of connection, ultimately bolstering organizational commitment. A noteworthy aspect of commitment formed through these bonds is mutually reinforcing. Committed employees seek advice and support from peers whom they value (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007). Consequently, committed employees seek guidance from one another, creating a reciprocal effect that acts as a binding force, resulting in a high level of organizational commitment. Siciliano and Thompson (2018) refer to this phenomenon as the "positional effect," which is linked to an employee's attributes, such as their education, and how these attributes affect their position within the organization. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the effects of these social bonds that cultivate commitment are contingent on the specific context and dynamics of an organization.

2.2.4 Tenure-Based Employee Motivation

Motivation doesn't automatically result in commitment; conducive circumstances are essential for channeling motivation into action. Affective commitment, which doesn't necessarily rely on external motivation, raises the question of how motivation can foster commitment, especially with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) mechanisms in mind (Krajcsak, 2020). Hu et al. (2019) suggest that engaged employees, particularly those with longer tenure, show stronger affective commitment when they perceive opportunities for skill enhancement through HR practices. However, external opportunities like attractive job offers can weaken the link between internal practices and commitment, particularly for longer-tenured employees (Hu et al., 2019; Ju and Li, 2019).

To counteract this, organizations should personalize HR practices, especially for long-tenured employees, to cultivate stronger affective commitment (Hu et al., 2019). Additionally, Gagne and Deci (2005) emphasize self-determined motivation rooted in personal values for fostering commitment and long-term tenure. Affective commitment, marked by emotional attachment and autonomy, is crucial (Kaur & Mittal, 2020; Meyer et al., 2004), aligning with SDT's principles (Deci & Ryan, 2017) and acknowledging the influence of social exchange theory (Palos & Galanaki, 2022).

While extrinsic motivation driven by external rewards offers short-term gains, intrinsic motivation aligned with personal values leads to longer commitment (Autin et al., 2022; Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Giaque and Varone (2019) propose work orientations like altruism and intrinsic factors that positively impact tenure. In summary, the intricate connection between motivation and commitment highlights the significance of diverse motivational types and their profound impact on organizational dynamics, particularly regarding tenure (Geldenhuys, Laba & Venter, 2014).

2.3 Meaningful Work

Building upon the varied concepts and theories addressing organizational commitment as a multidimensional idea anchored in an employee's evaluation of the worth of their allegiance, it is discernible that such commitment is intrinsically molded by the employee's perspective. Notably, the duration of an employee's tenure within the organization can significantly shape this subjective viewpoint, thereby influencing their level and nature of commitment. This viewpoint hinges on the employee finding something meaningful in their work. (Autin et al., 2021; Allan et al, 2018; Jiang & Johnson, 2018.) Dai, Spencer, and Blazek (2021) introduce the concept that work carries significance beyond being a mere job undertaken for financial compensation. They argue that perceiving work as meaningful transcends the influence of extrinsic motivational factors, such as a high salary. This perspective aligns with the self-determination theory as pointed out in chapter section 2.3, which posits that the innate human needs for autonomy, relatedness, and compe-

tence cannot be fully satisfied through simply monetary rewards alone (Cockrell, Stone & Wier, 2018, p. 57). To support their argument, Dai and Blazek (2021) refer to findings from the American Social Survey conducted in 2016, revealing that a substantial 70% of Americans would continue working even if they no longer required the income for a comfortable life. This suggests that for many individuals, work encompasses a dimension beyond mere financial necessity. Similar insights regarding work being driven by factors other than income have been reported by Wielers and van der Meer (2021) and Wilner et al. (2020), further underscoring the idea that employees are driven to engage in meaningful work.

Kalliciu et al. (2022) contribute to this discussion by suggesting that when employees are presented with the well-known "lottery question" – whether they would continue working if financial considerations were removed – some employees may opt to continue working because they find their work intrinsically meaningful. This connection between work and meaning holds a positive association with employee autonomy and self-growth, concepts that Wielers and van der Meer (2021) argue are closely related to key determinants of commitment. In essence, these perspectives collectively emphasize the importance of recognizing the intrinsic value individuals find in their work, highlighting that meaningful work serves as a significant driver of commitment, even when financial incentives are not the primary motivator.

According to Wielers and van der Meer (2020), work commitment can be seen as an assessment of intrinsic work motivation, which depends on "the extent to which paid work satisfies the human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness." Interestingly, even though employees are compensated based on their contributions to the company, which can be considered extrinsically motivating, employees can also act with a sense of psychological freedom, fulfilling their psychological need for autonomy. This aligns with the self-determination theory, reflecting how employees willingly commit to their work by investing their time and energy based on their non-controlled, intrinsic motivation (Autin, et al., 2021, p. 80). Dai, Spencer, and Lazek (2021, p. 68) demonstrate a significant correlation between work purposefulness and employee engagement, sug-

gesting an alternative approach to enhancing employee commitment. Instead of relying on interventions and "manipulations" of the work environment, organizations may benefit from granting employees greater autonomy to pursue their intrinsic motivations. By creating a supportive atmosphere for authentic self-expression, employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and commitment (Cable et al., 2013).

In the current era, self-leadership is emerging as a prevailing trend. Rather than implementing standardized employee engagement programs that are broadly applied across many employees, companies and managers can adopt a more facilitative role, empowering individual employees of different organizational tenures to embrace their unique work identities and express their purposes. This personalized approach reflects the notion that intrinsic motivation stems from within. When employees' unique work identities are supported through a more personal approach, it naturally enhances their intrinsic motivation, leading to important outcomes such as employee well-being and productivity. This positive cycle of employee commitment is fostered when employees feel cared for, not solely relying on factors supporting their extrinsic motivation (Dai, Spencer et al., 2021, p. 68).

2.3.1 Herzberg's Theory and Meaningful Work

The hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory, distinguishes between hygiene factors (maintenance factors) and motivational factors as determinants of employee motivation. Hygiene factors, including salary, benefits, and interpersonal relationships, provide the foundation for motivation but are insufficient on their own. To truly motivate employees, aligning factors like recognition and intrinsic job satisfaction with their interests and aspirations is crucial. (Herzberg, 2005.) Despite originating in the 1950s and receiving critique from scholars afterwards such as Bockman (1971) due to the theory not being conclusive enough, the hygiene theory remains relevant in discussions of meaningful work and its relationship with employee commitment (Lee & Lee, 2022). Many scholars have criticized descriptions of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, however, according to

Sachau (2007, p. 381) often accompanied by common misinterpretations. One such misinterpretation is the belief that hygiene factors cannot motivate employees, with money simply being the sole motivator. Herzberg (2005) made a distinction between hygiene and motivator factors and acknowledged that money could induce movement. However, he did not emphasize this as a primary motivator and could have clarified his terminology better. See figure 5 of Herzberg Two-Factor Theory of Motivation as depicted below.

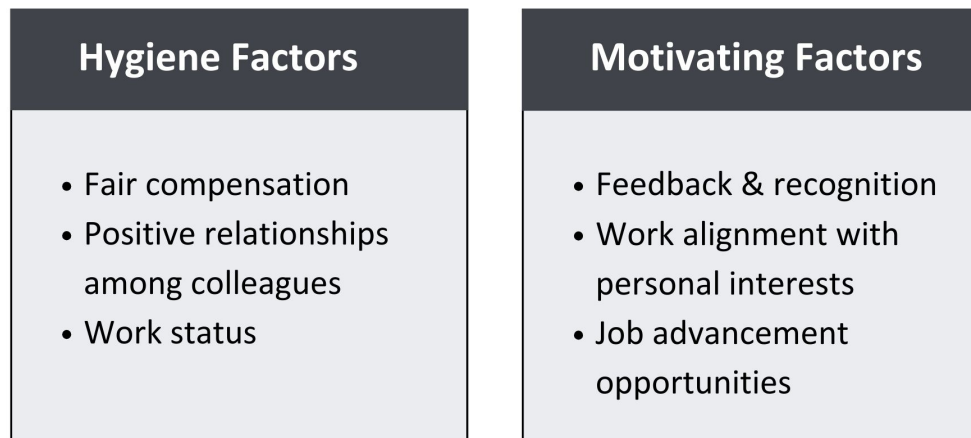


Figure 5. Based on: Herzberg Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (1982 p.286).

Additionally, another misunderstanding is that Herzberg advocated never using hygiene factors for motivation. In reality, Herzberg (1982, p.286) recognized situations where it might be reasonable to use them, particularly in uninteresting jobs. Nevertheless, he provided caveats: employees may not become enthusiastic about such jobs, demands for hygiene factors may rise, and employees may prioritize them over motivators. In essence, Herzberg's theory is sometimes misinterpreted due to terminology, but he acknowledged the strategic use of hygiene factors in specific contexts while emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivators. (Sachau, 2007, p.382.) What is significant is that hygiene factors establish the basis for motivation, while motivational factors enhance commitment and engagement with work. For example, Lee & Lee (2022 p.13) note that the important message suggested by the original motivation-hygiene theory is that strengthening motiva-

tors at work is essential for workforce management in an organization because they are important variables for employee's intention to stay, and that the dissatisfaction of employees can be reduced by improving the dissatisfiers, or the work environment. Hence, this way employee commitment inside an organization can be enhanced.

In terms of meaningful work, both hygiene and motivational factors influence employees' perceptions. Hygiene factors, like fair compensation and positive relationships, create a baseline job satisfaction that contributes to meaningfulness. Motivational factors, such as recognition and work alignment with personal interests, elevate job satisfaction to the realm of meaningful work. (Lee & Lee, 2022.) Additionally, research on need satisfaction and its connection to meaningful work reveals that fulfilling basic psychological needs significantly impacts work engagement and career-related outcomes. Studies by Wang et al. (2020) and Dahling and Lauricella (2017) show that addressing psychological needs like competence, autonomy, and relatedness leads to increased engagement, autonomous motivation, career satisfaction, and ultimately job commitment.

2.3.2 Influence of Values on Commitment

Meaningful work and the influence of values on commitment are strongly interlinked. The process of internalizing an organization's values, norms, and beliefs can significantly influence how employees approach their work (Groen, Wouters & Wilderoem, 2017). Drawing parallels with the SET discussed in chapter (2.2.2), one can infer that the internalization of organizational values typically occurs during a similar phase. However, the progression of this process might be influenced by an employee's tenure within the organization. (Beck & Wilson, 2000, p. 115.) In addition to the aforementioned, affective commitment, as described in the Three-Component Model earlier in chapter number 2.1.2, and similarly in this context are correlational. When employees internalize these organizational elements, they not only become emotionally attached to the organization but also embrace its values as their own. This sense of ownership and alignment with the organization's values can be a driving force behind employees' internal motivation and

purposeful meaning. (Singh, Tyagi & Bamel, 2021.; Kaur & Mittal, 2020)

Furthermore, affective commitment fosters a deep connection between employees and their work, making them more likely to approach their tasks with enthusiasm, dedication, and a genuine desire to contribute positively to the organization. This internal motivation is driven by a sense of personal investment in the organization's success, as employees view their work as a reflection of their own values and beliefs. As a result, they are more likely to go above and beyond to achieve both personal and organizational goals. (Kaur & Mittal, 2020) Nevertheless, understanding the role of affective commitment in shaping employee behaviour and motivation is crucial for organizations seeking to create a workforce that is not just externally motivated by rewards or compensation but internally driven by a genuine commitment to the organization's mission and values. This, in turn, can lead to higher levels of engagement, satisfaction, and performance among employees. (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Kaur & Mittal, 2020.)

2.4 Compensation and Commitment

This chapter delves into the nuanced notion of compensation. Recognizing the significance of compensation is crucial, as employees typically seek employment primarily for monetary remuneration. This, in turn, forms a tangible link to commitment. The chapter illuminates how employees discern and appraise diverse compensatory facets, a theme underscored by the introduction of the "Side Bet Theory" by Becker (1960) which is introduced in the section of 2.1.1. It is noteworthy that employees often accord different levels of importance to various elements that influence their organizational commitment. Frequently, they engage in a meticulous evaluation of the advantages they garner in exchange for their allegiance to the organization (Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee, & Seruma-Zake, 2019). As highlighted e.g. by Hu et al (2019) preferences for compensatory factors can fluctuate depending on employees' age or their tenure within the organization. Furthermore, research by Doering, Rhodes, and Schuster (1983) and Chawala, Dokadi, and Rai (2017) emphasizes the influence of various factors such as age, cultural

background, and global economic conditions on employees' compensation preferences.

The rationale behind compensating employees is multifaceted; organizations, as employers, and utilizing compensation as a means to express appreciation for their workforce. This tangible gesture of appreciation not only generates feelings of gratitude among employees but also inspires them to reciprocate with heightened commitment and exceptional performance. Moreover, it serves as a concrete demonstration of an organization's regard for its employees' significance and contributions. (Shtembari, Kufo & Haxhinasto, 2022; Babu, Prince & Chacko, 2016.) By embodying these principles in practice, organizations effectively communicate their commitment to fostering a harmonious and mutually beneficial work environment. This, in turn, solidifies the bond between employees and their organization, nurturing a sense of loyalty and dedication among the workforce. (Babu, Prince & Chacko, 2016.)

2.4.1 Attraction, Motivation, and Performance

Compensating employees serves as a multifaceted tool within organizations, extending beyond the common goal of retaining high-performing employees (Babu, Prince & Chacko, 2016). It plays a pivotal role in achieving several key objectives. One such purpose is the attraction of the right talent to an organization, a critical endeavor given that employees represent one of the most vital assets for any company (Dineen & Williamson, 2012). Moreover, compensation is also a dynamic tool for motivating employees, cultivating their commitment, and driving enhanced performance. This phenomenon can be attributed to the far-reaching influence of compensation in various facets of daily life. It is exemplified by common saying phrases such as "money talks" or "follow the money," which underscore the significance of compensation in our everyday lives (Gupta & Shaw, 2014).

Despite its evident significance, recent research in the field of human resource management (HRM) has somewhat overlooked the intricate domain of employee compen-

sation, as highlighted by Gupta and Shaw (2014). However, there is a notable upswing in research that delves into various dimensions of compensation practices. For instance, Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee, and Seruma-Zake (2019) conducted a study that scrutinised the total reward framework. Their research explores the nuanced art of rewarding employees across different age cohorts, a pertinent consideration in today's rapidly changing business landscape characterized by a diverse, multi-generational workforce. Hence, that indicates the topic of compensation is highly relevant in the context of today. Interestingly, despite the observation by Gupta and Shaw (2014) regarding the relative neglect of research in employee compensation, recent evidence from Finland suggests (Hulkko-Nyman, 2022) that employees perceive compensation plans as much more motivating than initially anticipated by organizational management.

Furthermore, it's essential to recognize that an organization's compensation practices have a direct bearing on its reputation as an employer. This, in turn, significantly influences the organization's attractiveness to potential candidates. In certain scenarios, individuals faced with a choice between two prospective employers may base their decision on the allure of compensation packages (Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee & Zake, 2019; Sorn, et al., 2023). Compensation serves a multitude of purposes, encompassing motivation, talent attraction, and the enhancement of employee commitment, both among newcomers and existing employees. As noted by Von Bonsdorff (2011) and Boudreaux (2021), effective compensation strategies should harmonize with other human resource practices and align with broader organizational strategies. When thoughtfully designed and implemented, compensation becomes a powerful tool, supporting recruitment initiatives, optimizing performance management, and fostering employee development.

2.4.2 Tangible vs Intangible Compensation

Within the realm of employee compensation, organizations employ diverse strategies to recognize and reward their workforce. Two prominent approaches, tangible and intangible compensation, offer distinct mechanisms for motivating and retaining employ-

ees. While tangible compensation entails concrete, often monetary rewards as a reciprocal acknowledgment of employees' contributions, intangible compensation delves into non-monetary, intrinsic factors that underpin job satisfaction and commitment. Both approaches play integral roles in shaping the organizational landscape, yet their impacts and applicability differ. (Koskey & Sakata, 2015; Bender, Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas, 2018.) In this section, we delve into the nuances of tangible and intangible compensation, examining their unique characteristics, the factors influencing their effectiveness, and the considerations in their deployment. By exploring these approaches in depth, we aim to draw comparisons that shed light on their respective contributions to employee motivation, retention, and organizational success (Koskey & Sakatam 2015).

Tangible compensation, as the name suggests, encompasses concrete rewards, often with monetary value, offered to employees as a form of recognition and reciprocity for their contributions (Puranama et al., 2022). This concept aligns with Nylander and Hakonen's (2014) perspective which portrays compensation as a reciprocal process: employees dedicate their efforts, time, and skills, and in return, employers provide tangible rewards. At its core, tangible compensation is straightforward, involving the provision of tangible assets to employees. However, as Puranama et al. (2022) elaborate, tangible compensation can be categorized into various forms, including regular salaries, performance-based bonuses tied to specific achievements, and indirect compensation that seeks to enhance employees' well-being. Ylikorkiala and Sweins (2015) emphasize that the blend of these tangible compensation methods depends on an organization's strategic goals and financial circumstances. For instance, Bordeaux (2020) challenges the common assumption that all benefits contribute equally to organizational performance. His study on startup organizations reveals that certain benefits, such as providing healthcare to ensure employee stability, have a more pronounced impact on supporting startup success. This suggests that, especially in resource-constrained settings, specific benefits can better serve an organization's success than others that do not prioritize employee stability. Furthermore, Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee and Serumaga-Zake (2019) argue against a one-size-fits-all approach to monetary compensation, asserting that organizations must closely examine individual preferences and the overall compensation package to better

align with the needs of the current workforce and the dynamic operational environment. In summary, the choice of compensation approach lies within an organization's purview, allowing them to tailor their compensation strategies to align with their specific objectives and the evolving needs of their workforce in today's business landscape. (Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015.)

In contrast, intangible compensation encompasses a wide array of non-monetary rewards and benefits, making it a crucial component of an organization's comprehensive compensation strategy. This recognition stems from the understanding that monetary incentives alone may fall short in motivating and retaining employees over the long term. (Bryant & Allen, 2013.) Ylikorkkala and Sweins (2015) introduce the concept of intangible compensation as a form of psychological compensation. This intrinsic form of reward is deeply rooted in work tasks, encompassing psychological dimensions such as meaningfulness, a sense of responsibility for work outcomes, task enjoyment, and achievement. Notably, meaningful work has been associated with intrinsic work motivation and rewards, however, its perception is inherently subjective and varies among individual employees (Victor & Hoole, 2021). Lunenburg (2011) highlights the role of managers in enhancing employees' sense of task identity, enabling them to connect with their work outcomes and find meaning in their roles. Intangible compensation further includes factors that influence employees' opportunities for personal growth, skill development, feedback reception, and involvement in significant organizational decisions. These factors play a pivotal role in bolstering employees' job satisfaction and commitment to both their roles and the organization. For instance, Pregolato et al.(2017) emphasize the rewarding nature of feedback, which, when aligned with an individual's or team's contributions to organizational goals, fosters a sense of accomplishment and reward.

In the pursuit of understanding the factors shaping employee commitment, it is pertinent to acknowledge the role of age and tenure as distinct yet significant considerations. Pregolato et al. (2017) and Von Bonsdorff (2011) have explored age disparities within various cohorts, revealing that diverse age groups may find motivation in the availability of flexible work arrangements, such as part-time options. This underscores the value of work-

life balance as a rewarding incentive. Notably, in today's highly multi-generational workforce, where different segments harbour varying compensation preferences, as noted by Von Bonsdorff (2011), it becomes increasingly intriguing to dissect the intricacies of commitment factors. Moreover, it's crucial to dispel the notion that long tenure necessarily equates to advanced employee age, as according to Pregolato (2017) tenure itself can manifest differently among different employees. Pregolato et al. (2017) further highlight the significance of career development opportunities as a binding mechanism, emphasizing that the longer an employee remains within an organization and the more diverse opportunities they encounter, the stronger their commitment becomes.

In conclusion, organizations retain the flexibility to tailor their compensation approaches to align with their unique objectives and adapt to the evolving demands of the contemporary business landscape (Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015). Effective reward systems strike a balance between tangible and intangible incentives. Madhani (2021) remarks that the need for organizations to refrain from merely copying compensation systems from others, as what works for one may not necessarily apply to another, given distinct business contexts and goals. While tangible rewards, such as salaries, primarily serve to attract talent, intangible rewards, such as recognition and growth opportunities, play a pivotal role in nurturing long-term job satisfaction and commitment, echoing Herzberg's motivation and hygiene theory (1959). This dual approach to compensation ensures that employees not only join the organization but also remain motivated and engaged in their roles over time (Madhani, 2021).

2.4.3 How Compensation Types Shape Employee Dedication

While the connection between commitment and compensation has been acknowledged in previous chapters, particularly in the context of discussing various compensation methods, it is essential for this thesis to emphasize specific aspects of this relationship. Numerous studies, such as those conducted by Koskey & Sakataka (2015) and Bender, Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas (2013), have demonstrated that different types of compensation, in-

cluding monetary rewards, intangible benefits such as feedback mechanisms, and fringe benefits, indeed influence employee commitment. However, the level of commitment achieved through different compensation methods may vary significantly. For instance, Koskey and Sakataka (2015) discovered that certain benefits, like promotion opportunities and health benefits, had the most pronounced impact on employee commitment. This is because promotion opportunities and health benefits can be categorized as “maintenance” benefits, which seem to, according to Koskey and Sakaka (2015) prevent employee turnover compared to some other employee benefits. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the influence of compensation on commitment is not universally consistent across all organizations. Thus, in all organizations, the same type of compensation and benefits do not have the same effect. As previously mentioned, each organization should tailor its compensation plan to align with its distinct organizational culture and strategic objectives. (Zaitouni et al, 2011; Groen, Wouters & Wilderoem, 2017.)

Moreover, Hakonen, Nylander, and Sweins (2015) and Zaitouni et al. (2011) note that even when compensation is well-structured, it may not yield the desired results. This can occur when employees perceive compensation as unequal among colleagues or work teams. In such cases, the perception of fair compensation can lead to stronger and longer-tenured commitment within the organization (Zaitouni et al., 2011). Although there is ample evidence of compensation positively impacting employee commitment, it is not always a straightforward relationship. Seijaakka and Kaawaase (2014) as well as Groen, Wouters and Wilderoem (2017) argue that the link between compensation and commitment may not be as strong as traditionally believed. Seijaakka and Kaawase (2014) suggest that job satisfaction could be a better indicator when exploring the correlation between compensation and commitment. Consequently, if compensation indeed influences job satisfaction, it can be inferred that job satisfaction, in turn, impacts commitment. It is important to recognize, however, that job satisfaction itself can independently contribute to fostering stronger commitment among employees (Zaitouni et al., 2011).

2.4.4 Employee Commitment: From Origins To Contemporary Insights

In this chapter, the literature review is consolidated to provide an integrated perspective on employee commitment. Drawing from the theories and research discussed, the aim is to offer a holistic understanding of how the concept of employee commitment can be interpreted and understood, before moving onto the methodology part of this thesis

Employee commitment, as a concept, has seen substantial evolution since its inception in the 1960s. Initially, commitment was narrowly perceived through Becker's "side bet" theory, suggesting employees remained with organizations due to assets they'd forfeit upon leaving. As per Becker (1960), actions or investments made by employees, like acquiring specific skills or adjustments to social positions, effectively "tied" them to their current organizations. Moreover, impersonal bureaucratic arrangements, such as seniority-driven compensations, served as other forms of "side bets". By the 1970s, the discourse surrounding commitment began to evolve, recognizing that it wasn't solely tied to tangible benefits. Research began to underscore the importance of individual factors and how they influenced commitment. It became apparent that emotional and psychological bonds played a significant role in shaping an employee's dedication to their organization. (Ballestor & de las Heras Rosas, 2021, p.3; Cohen, 2007.) Later, the 1980s brought forth Meyer and Allen's seminal three-factor model (TCM) of commitment (see chapter 2.1.2). In this frame, Becker's "side bet" theory found its niche within the continuance commitment dimension, emphasizing the perceived costs tied to leaving an organization. Beyond this, the TCM introduced affective commitment, representing an emotional bond with the organization, and normative commitment, highlighting a sense of obligation to stay. (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Cohen, 2007.)

Navigating the complexities of the modern workplace, the understanding of commitment has become even more nuanced. Factors like motivation, as highlighted by the self-determination theory, and varied compensation mechanisms are now recognized as pivotal in shaping commitment (Baluku et al., 2020).

Interpersonal relationships with colleagues and the social environment within organizations also play a substantial role. Moreover, there's a realization that an employee's tenure significantly impacts their commitment perspective. Newcomers may have different commitment drivers than their more seasoned counterparts, making tenure an essential variable in the commitment equation (Bauer et al., 2007; Maia, Bastos & Solinger, 2016.) Today, organizations are coming to terms with the multi-dimensional nature of commitment. Recognizing that balancing varying employee preferences, tenure lengths, and compensation structures is crucial for driving optimal performance. A one-size-fits-all approach is fading, making way for more personalized, tailored HR strategies that cater to diverse employee needs. Understanding these intricate facets of commitment is paramount in the contemporary workspace. (Chauhan, Howe, & Nachamias, 2023; Hu et al., 2019.) Figure 6 below visually represents the focal points related to employee tenure that contribute to organizational commitment, highlighting the various factors discussed in the text that influence employee commitment in contemporary workplaces.

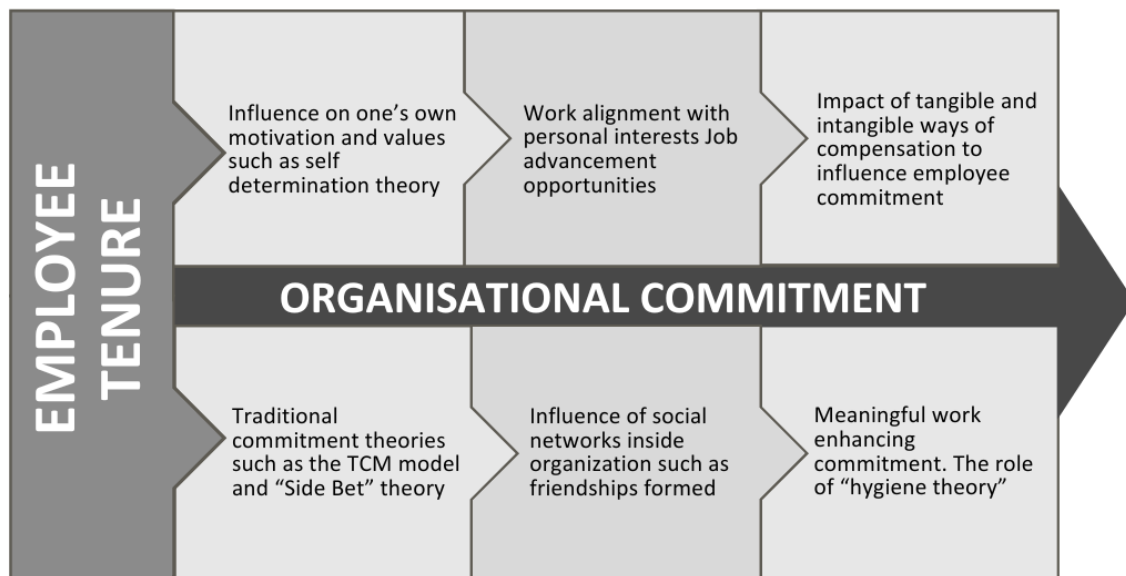


Figure 6. Focal points related to employee tenure which lead to organisational commitment. Authors own elaboration.

However, in all its dimensions, commitment profoundly influences job performance, turnover intentions, and overall job satisfaction, with the relationship being reciprocal (Maia, Bastos & Solinger, 2016). This intricate interplay makes the exploration of employee commitment exceptionally captivating in many ways. Therefore, it can be concluded that, just as with employee compensation, as noted by Hulkkonen, Nylander and Sweins (2015) no organization can completely mirror another's compensation strategy due to the unique makeup and dynamics of each entity. It's plausible that a similar principle holds for commitment; what proves effective for one organization in fostering commitment might not achieve the same intensity or type of commitment in another. Designing nuanced and well-structured mechanisms that bolster commitment diversely, catering to employees of varying tenures, becomes paramount. (Boudreaux, 2021; Hu et al., 2019.) As readers delve deeper into this thesis, they'll gain insights into the determinants of employee commitment at large. Therefore, as the realm of commitment theories expands and deepens, both researchers and organizations grapple with a pivotal question: How can they harness the most effective forms of commitment in an ever-evolving work environment? (Hu et al, 2019.) The challenge, it seems, lies in navigating the balance between diverse employee preferences, external motivators like compensation, intrinsic motivators as encapsulated in the self-determination theory, and the undeniable influence of workplace relationships. The figure below syntehitises the various elements and theories discussed, which affect commitment.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces and explains the methodology on which this thesis is built, the approach that is taken to structure and conduct the data collection process as well as how the data is analyzed and compared to existing literature.

3.1 Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are widely recognized as a valuable research tool, particularly suitable for exploring phenomena of a holistic, complex, or sensitive nature (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020, p. 318). In the present study, interviews were conducted with knowledgeable individuals at Finnair, with expertise relevant to the themes under investigation. The interview themes encompassed commitment, the interrelation of meaningful work and commitment, and the influence of compensation factors on commitment. In the appendix of this thesis details the questions derived from these thematic areas. Consequently, interviews were considered the most appropriate data collection method for this thesis research endeavor.

In qualitative research, a range of interview methods exist, including structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, theme interviews, and open-ended interviews (Hirsjarvi et al., 2022, pp. 195-196). For this study, the semi-structured theme interview approach was chosen due to its inherent advantages, including flexibility in data collection, the capacity to gather comprehensive and in-depth information, and the opportunity to seek further clarification when needed (Hirsjarvi et al., 2022, p. 192). By employing the semi-structured interview method, the researcher follows a predetermined path while allowing for adaptability during the interview process. This adaptability allows the researcher to ask extra questions from the interview participant during the interview situation if needed. Although interviews can be time-consuming and costly, they offer the invaluable opportunity to establish meaningful connections with participants and obtain nuanced insights through in-depth discussions. However, it is important to emphasize

that interview questions should be purposeful, aiming to uncover meaningful answers aligned with the research objectives of the thesis. (Sarajärvi & Tuomi, 2018.) A total of 18 participants were purposefully chosen for this research project. This number was determined with the anticipation of approaching data saturation, as described by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) as the point where no new information emerges, and to facilitate categorization based on their organizational tenure at Finnair. The participants were selected using a random sampling method from Finnair's employee database, specifically targeting individuals in specialized and managerial roles within the organization. Notably, employees with purely operational roles, such as pilots and cabin crew members, were intentionally excluded due to these positions' unique and airline-specific nature. Furthermore, the 18 interviewees were categorized according to their organizational tenure at Finnair. This classification involved dividing them into three distinct groups: those with more than 10 years of tenure, those with 2-10 years of tenure, and newcomers with less than a year of tenure. This categorization aligned with prior research findings, such as Morrow and McElroy (1987) which suggested that employees with less than two years of tenure may be influenced by different factors compared to their more tenured counterparts. Particularly noteworthy is the presence of numerous long-tenured organizational members at Finnair, boasting careers exceeding a decade within the organization. This distinction assumes particular relevance given the airline industry's inherent volatility and recent organizational adjustments triggered by external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of Russian airspace due to the Ukraine conflict. Thus, it becomes compelling to explore deeper into the factors influencing commitment among these long-tenured Finnair employees, especially in light of research findings by Wang, Weng & Jiang (2020 p. 482) who contend that individuals at various stages of their organizational tenure have distinct personal objectives and place varying importance on the resources they may gain through demonstrating high job performance, highlighting the significance of employees with long tenures in this context.

Consistent with the perspective of Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018), qualitative dissertations emphasize the importance of in-depth data interpretation rather than broad statistical generalizations. This highlights the essential reasoning for viewing qualitative research

not simply as a tool to identify the most accurate answers, but more so as a means to reveal authentic insights and feedback from research participants. As widely acknowledged by scholars, the primary goal of qualitative research is to grasp human experiences and to focus on subjective interpretations rather than objective realities (Silverman, 2020, p.4). In agreement with Tuomi and Sarajärvi's (2018) assertion, qualitative inquiries typically consist of a smaller pool of interviewees. Therefore, Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2020, p. 317) contend that the purpose of qualitative studies is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the specific phenomenon being investigated, rather than the broad statistical conclusions frequently associated with quantitative research. Therefore, as Sarajärvi and Tuomi (2018) suggest, a meticulous approach to interview participant selection was imperative, emphasizing their substantial knowledge and experience relevant to the research domain. Hence, as the topic entails researching commitment, each person working at Finnair would have their personal views and experiences regarding the topic. Consequently, participants were chosen based on their roles, focusing on those engaged in specialized or managerial functions, while those solely occupying operational roles were purposefully omitted. This decision was rooted in the recognition that operational roles at Finnair entail highly specialized responsibilities, such as aircraft maintenance and piloting, distinct from the non-airline-specific roles held by marketing or human resources specialists. Consequently, the factors influencing commitment to Finnair as an organization might diverge between these distinct employee groups, such as those working in purely operational roles versus those working in the commercial side of Finnair.

The interviews were conducted throughout July, August, and September 2023. Prospective interview participants were initially contacted through email invitations, giving them the choice between a Microsoft Teams meeting or an in-person interview. Of 21 email invitations sent out, 18 elicited responses. Interestingly, only one participant opted for an in-person interview, while the remaining interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. This choice was intentionally made, considering the participants' existing work model, characterized by a hybrid work model and a substantial reliance on Microsoft Teams for work-related meetings. The duration of the interviews varied, with the shortest lasting 40 minutes and the longest extending to an hour and a half, however, the

most common interview time was one hour. The selected approach for conducting semi-structured interviews is based on predefined themes, although it does not rigidly specify the exact format or order of questions, as highlighted in the work of Hirsjärvi et al. (2009, p. 195). The guide for these semi-structured thematic interviews is provided in the appendix chapter. Following the methodology proposed by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) the initial question invited interviewees to share insights about their background and experiences concerning subjects such as commitment and meaningfulness regarding interviewees' role at Finnair. Subsequent pre-established follow-up sub-questions were posed, contingent upon the theoretical discourse and the interviewee's responses, enriching the depth of the interview data. This approach aims to avoid applying undue influence on the interviewees' responses while ensuring comprehensive coverage of pertinent research-related topics, even if the interviewee does not spontaneously address them during the unstructured phase of the interview (Sarajärvi and Tuomi, 2018; Silverman, 2020). Consequently, the thematic interview guide was not provided to the interviewees before the interview to encourage more spontaneous and unrestricted responses that remain free from researcher influence (Magnusson, & Marecek, 2015).

The interview settings were designed to be conversational, aligning with the research's goal of uncovering personal reasons for commitment. This approach fostered a natural and comfortable atmosphere during the interviews. Participants felt like they were engaged in a conversation rather than being subjected to an interrogation. All interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and were subsequently transcribed for analytical purposes. These recorded responses were supplemented with notes taken by the author. Furthermore, all respondents were explicitly asked for their consent to participate in the interview, be recorded, and have their responses utilized for research purposes. As a result, all the respondents consented participating to in this thesis research and were included in the results of this research, with no identifying information beyond their job role of working in specialists or managerial roles at Finnair. Thus, in the answers, in the result chapter of this thesis, a reader cannot identify any of the research participants excluding the fact that they are all employed at Finnair and working in specialists or managerial roles. Quotes in italics were extracted from the interviews and were

carefully anonymized to remove any potential identifying details.

3.1.1 Analyzing Data Through Thematic Analysis

This thesis employed thematic analysis, a well-suited method for conducting in-depth qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis typically involves a structured process consisting of six primary steps: data familiarization, initial code generation, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report production (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). The data underwent analysis involving content coding and theme-based categorization. The initial phase of this process encompassed immersing in the collected data, which was achieved by transcribing the verbal interview content obtained through Microsoft Teams. Transcription, in this context, refers to the meticulous transformation of spoken interview content into written form. This meticulous approach aimed to capture the essence of each question-response pair (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Subsequently, descriptive labels were assigned to these identified themes, facilitating their correlation and grouping. The theoretical framework underpinning the research played a pivotal role in supporting this phase of analysis, particularly aiding in the conceptualization of empirical findings. Thus, Hirsjärvi et al. (2022) describe that qualitative research analysis is an ongoing process which can be described as a form of a spiral. This means that the analysis is also an ongoing process which takes place throughout the whole research process, not only in a particular part of the research process. To further systematize the analysis, coding was employed. Coding entails the systematic labelling of transcribed content based on topics or themes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Through coding, relevant data items are carefully identified and marked as "codes," signifying their relevance to the research questions. Notably, not all data is pertinent to the research objectives and, consequently, not all data is subjected to coding (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Since the interviews were recorded, the transcription process allowed revisiting the inter-

views, ensuring the accuracy of the transcribed data. The theoretical framework underpinning the research played a pivotal role in supporting this phase of analysis, particularly aiding in the conceptualization of empirical findings. Thus, Hirsjärvi et al. (2022) describe that qualitative research analysis is an ongoing process which can be described as a form of a spiral. Lastly, the analysis then proceeded by categorizing the interview data by the identified themes. Following the coding of each interview, redundant content was eliminated, and similar codes were merged. Codes that had limited representation or did not align with the final themes were excluded. The remaining pertinent codes were analyzed for shared meanings and patterns, leading to the initial identification of overarching themes that encapsulated key insights from the interview data and aligned with the research questions and the thesis theory. Themes, in this context, refer to unifying patterns discerned across multiple instances within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.1.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity ensures that the research genuinely investigates its intended subject and that the analytical claims derived from the data are credible (Silverman, 2020, p. 456). Specifically, it evaluates if responses from interviewees truly mirror their beliefs or are potentially influenced by the interview's context (Silverman, 2020, p. 456). The interview setting was intentionally relaxed, with the use of camera functions fostering a deeper connection. Each session began with an exchange of pleasantries, followed by the topic introduction and presentation of credentials, creating an environment where participants felt at ease to share authentically. Such an atmosphere, as argued, greatly enhances the research's validity (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020, p 316).

The appropriate selection of theoretical frameworks is pivotal in refining research inquiries and enhancing validity (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). This research is anchored in both traditional and contemporary theories of organizational and employee commitment, as detailed in chapter two. Though qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalizations, it achieves validity via the interplay between observations and

theory (Silverman, 2020, p. 457). Despite typically smaller datasets, qualitative methods like interviews offer in-depth real-time engagement, enabling researchers to extract richer and more contextual data (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2019, p.315-316). In this research, the qualitative interview method was instrumental in capturing nuanced responses, enhanced by the flexibility to adjust questions based on participants' input. To further solidify validity, the research employed coding, which, as detailed in the methodology chapter, enables data pattern identification without compromising depth (Brown & Clarke, 2022, p. 65). A rigorous and iterative process was adopted throughout, from data analysis to revisiting transcriptions, strengthening the validity of the investigation. Reliability, on the other hand, ensures consistent results upon replication. This research maintained a uniform approach throughout data collection, using identical questions, and meticulously documenting data (Henninks, Hutter & Bailey, 2020, p. 317). Moreover, comprehensive descriptions provided in the results chapter amplify the research's reliability by offering readers insights into the research process.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the semi-structured theme interviews are presented and organized according to different themes based on the findings. Four themes were identified and labelled as "Finnair citizenship", communication and feedback, meaningfulness at work and compensation impacting commitment. Similarities and differences between different tenured employees were also analyzed and results are discussed within each theme.

4.1 "Finnair Citizenship": Commitment Among Employees

The respondents were invited to contemplate the factors that drive their commitment to their roles within Finnair. Additionally, they were encouraged to examine the distinctions between committing to their specific work roles and committing to Finnair as a

whole. They reflected on potential changes in these commitment factors throughout their tenure at Finnair, considering whether the elements that initially drew them to the organization still hold the same weight. Correspondingly, the respondents shared their perspectives on what it means to embody the identity of a "Finnair citizen". Those who've joined Finnair recently, especially with less than two years in the organization highlighted the appeal of their roles. Compared to previous jobs, roles at Finnair offer new opportunities for skill development and career growth. A significant point made was the link between commitment and the chance for growth. Many stated that they might have stayed with previous employers if similar opportunities had been available. Their dedication to Finnair goes beyond personal growth; it's tied to the company's culture and reputation. The term "Finnair citizen" came up, signifying a deep sense of pride in being part of this Finnish airline, which goes beyond day-to-day tasks, especially when seeing the dedication of more experienced and tenured colleagues.

4.1.1 Insights From Tenured and Newcomer Employees

In this section, we delve into the insights shared by Finnair employees regarding their commitment to the organization and the underlying organizational culture. We categorize these insights into three groups from the respondents: those with tenures exceeding a decade and those with tenures ranging from 2 to 10 years, as well as newcomers with less than two years of experience.

Respondent with tenure of over a decade articulated, "It is about this 'we spirit' (Finnish translation: *me henki*) that we have here at Finnair". This encapsulates the profound sense of unity and collective purpose that characterizes the commitment of long-tenured employees. They view their roles at Finnair as more than just jobs; they see them as integral components of their lives because of their extensive tenure within the organization. Many long-term respondents expressed this sentiment by explaining that committing to their work and organization was simply a choice they made years ago when they joined. Thus, there was no question of whether commitment is something they can reconsider.

Furthermore, the allure of the airline industry and Finnair was mentioned. Thus, many respondents also emphasized that perhaps they could have committed to another organization if not Finnair. However, they still value and look up to the airline industry as well as Finnair after all these years.

They also express a unique perspective on commitment, understanding that it can also be recognized when it's lacking, highlighting its role in driving change within the organization. This notion many long-tenure respondents linked to COVID-19 times, believing in the future of the organization. Respondents in this segment mentioned their colleagues and people whom they have known for a long time inside the organization to be a pillar they could lean onto during the tough COVID times.

One respondent in this segment of over than 10 years of tenure stated the following. "When I joined Finnair many years ago, nobody asked me if I want to commit to this organization. It was just something you did, when you started working. I guess, it is a little bit different these days."

Another respondent with a similar tenure stated, "*It is hard to explain what was first, the egg or the chicken,*" offering a metaphorical glimpse into the complex organizational culture and "*Finnair citizenship*" at Finnair. This highlights the intricacies of Finnair's unique culture and how it is shaped by the employees' commitment. Thus, new comers and as well as more tenured employees mentioned the allure of the airline industry itself being a committing factor. Among newcomers, a prevalent pattern emerges: many have long harbored dreams of working for an airline, particularly Finnair. Conversely, more tenured employees often express a lasting commitment to the airline industry as a whole, finding its allure enduring. Interestingly, they note that they could have easily been just as committed to another organization had they commenced their careers elsewhere.

The last respondent from the tenure group of over than ten years of tenure mentioned, "*There is something mystical about this industry. However, it is not like 'wow, I work for an airline kind of feeling every day. You just have to commit to this and do what is needed.'*"

Their perspective emphasizes that commitment is not about grandeur but rather about dedication to fulfilling the organization's requirements.

A respondent with tenure of less than two years shared, *"I would say that this role I am currently in is a huge committing factor to me. I just find what I do so interesting. Besides this role, I find Finnair so interesting company to work for. This industry is so complex and so inspiring."* This reflects the commitment of newcomers, who are drawn to Finnair's operational culture and find their roles both challenging and captivating.

The respondent with tenure of 2-10 years stated, *"Finnair citizenship" (Finnish translation: finnairilaisuus) is about the we spirit and the people from different departments who are always doing the best for the common good."* This underlines the essence of *"Finnair citizenship,"* where commitment is deeply tied to the organization's collective objectives. The commitment of these employees goes beyond their job descriptions; it's about contributing to the greater good of the organization.

Another newcomer with less than 2 years of tenure stated, *"I would say that if I was offered a similar role to where I am now at Finnair at my previous organization, I think I most likely would have stayed there. However, I also find Finnair a very interesting company to work for so maybe even if I had been offered a similar role I would have said yes to Finnair."* This highlights the appeal of Finnair as an organization and how it can entice employees from other potential career paths.

A respondent with tenure of 2-10 years noted, *"I think that being a Finnair citizen is about always doing your job well and with great pride. I have noticed that regardless of someone's position here, they do it with pride and perform well. I think that is influential and works as committing factors to others."* This reflects a sense of collective pride and a shared commitment to excellence among employees in this tenure group.

One other respondent from this group also mentioned, *"Commitment to your work is just not 'wow' I am working for an airline, it is this company I want to give my input for and*

also walk along with it in some way.” This perspective underscores that commitment goes beyond the surface level and is about actively contributing to the organization’s journey.

One respondent in this group shared, *”I am a little bit old-fashioned in the sense that I would change the organization every two years. It would otherwise be just way too short a time frame for me. Sometimes things of course don’t go as you wish here and there. And there are some annoying things here, but I guess that is how it is in other organizations as well. Having said that I am so proud that we have gone through this crisis (Covid-19).”* This reveals the individualistic nature of commitment and how it can manifest differently among employees with similar tenures.

Concluding Thoughts

These diverse narratives highlight the multifaceted nature of commitment at Finnair. Whether it’s the enduring *”we spirit”* among long-tenured employees, the vibrant culture that attracts newcomers, or the pride and shared dedication of those with mid-length tenures, commitment is a defining characteristic of Finnair’s organizational culture. These insights provide valuable perspectives on the factors that drive employee commitment in a complex and ever-evolving industry.

4.1.2 Communication as a Cornerstone of Commitment

During the interviews, it became apparent that effective communication stands as a fundamental element in cultivating meaningful work experiences at Finnair, regardless of employees’ tenure. Both long-serving and newer employees uniformly stress the importance of robust communication, emphasizing that it contributes significantly to their commitment to the organization.

However, respondents with more than ten years of tenure at Finnair recognize the practical constraints that management teams face when conveying as many intricate details

to employees as possible. They acknowledge the sheer volume of information within Finnair, given its complexity and size of organization. Thus, making it challenging and perhaps overwhelming to deliver well. Respondents argued that prioritizing the communication of information relevant to employees' work roles and clearly articulating its connection to broader organizational goals can also create a more meaningful work environment which then ties into commitment. They firmly believe that effective communication holds the transformative potential to foster a greater sense of purpose among each other as employees. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the need for clear objectives behind their tasks is desired. They believe that a deeper understanding of the "why" behind specific actions and how they align with the organization's vision would enhance commitment by infusing their work with a clear sense of purpose.

"Explaining what is behind this change and why are we making these changes is important because by opening up about why we make these changes brings meaningfulness to people. Of course, this is a matter of having enough resources, such as time, which is always very limited. However, we have hard-working specialists working on these changes and they are experts in what they do. If they shared with a larger audience (within Finnair) what are the reasons behind the changes, that could enhance everyone's commitment to"
- Respondent tenure of 2-10 years.

"I believe that if we could instead of talking about all that we need to save from here and save from there, but instead focus more on how can we do this better and create a more open communication culture between different departments, we could enhance commitment." - Respondent tenure of 0-2 years.

4.1.3 Feedback: Cultivating a Sense of Purpose

Corresponding to sub-chapter 4.1.2, the intrinsic value of feedback within the workplace was conveyed as a cornerstone, reinforcing that it leads to a profound sense of purpose, motivation, and commitment. Respondents, regardless of their tenure, deeply value the

feedback they receive on their everyday tasks. This feedback provides them with a profound sense of assurance that their contributions, that need to be not only recognized but also integral to the realization of Finnair's goals. Additionally, it was found that respondents unanimously value feedback mechanisms delivered in person, via digital platforms, or through various streamlined communication channels.

Throughout the findings, respondents reinstated that they find a greater sense of purpose when they can perceive that their work directly contributes to the attainment of the company's strategic objectives. It's not solely about the specific job roles they occupy or whether they occasionally shift positions within the organization; it's fundamentally about effective communication and collaboration between employees and the organization itself. However, while acknowledging Finnair's strong communal work culture, respondents are aware of individual work objectives and differing ideas that may not always align with the organization's long-term goals. This notion was expressed throughout the interviews, regardless of tenure. Therefore, they stress the need for enhanced communication, advocating for a culture that places a strong emphasis on the giving and receiving of feedback. In turn this would signal that they are indeed on the right track, working toward shared goals, and a collective sense of purpose.

"The experience of having that meaningfulness comes from knowing that you do your work according to the commonly agreed goals. Those goals are part of the agenda we have and when you receive feedback based on your doing, you feel that your work is meaningful because you are contributing towards that strategy." - Respondent with a tenure of more than 10 years.

"If we had this kind of vision, let's just say for the next three years. That would help us find meaning in what we do every day." - Respondent with tenure of 2-10 years.

"When you know what is required from you and you receive feedback based on it, brings meaning to you. I believe, it also supports commitment at work." - Respondent with a tenure of less than 2 years

4.1.4 Meaning in Measurable Results

In correlation to the topic of feedback as discussed in sub chapter 4.1.3, one of the significant and recurring themes discovered from the research respondents is the strong desire to see concrete results and progress in their daily work. This theme cuts across various job roles at Finnair, including flight crews, ground staff, and management. While the feedback in this regard mainly comes from specialists and managers, it's important to note that operational roles are not represented in this specific feedback. The common thread among all employees, regardless of their positions or how long they've been with the company, is the sense of fulfillment they derive from observing tangible outcomes of their efforts. For example, this could be successful flight planning, cost-saving measures, or improvements in customer experiences. Witnessing these tangible results enhances the feeling of meaningfulness in their work.

However, a challenge arises in the corporate office environment, where the results of their efforts are often less visible compared to those in more hands-on roles. An analogy described by one of the respondents was that of "*painting a chair*," where the transformation is immediately evident, and office-based tasks that may take longer to yield results are often intangible. To bridge this perceptual gap, employees suggest that managers have a crucial role to play. As such, managers are seen as facilitators who can create opportunities for teams to not only see but also appreciate tangible results. It was mentioned by the respondents that this can be achieved through open and transparent discussions that provide insight into the progress of ongoing projects, for example. Additionally, feedback mechanisms are considered essential in enhancing the overall sense of meaningfulness in the workplace. Therefore, the core idea is that employees, regardless of their roles, find meaning in their work when they can see the real impact of their contributions. In an office setting, where outcomes may not be as immediately visible, effective management practices, including open communication and feedback, are crucial in ensuring employees feel their work is meaningful.

4.1.5 Aligning With Personal Values and Vision

Implications from the respondents, and on behalf of their fellow employees, showed that they often grapple with a complex aspect of their work: their personal values. They describe situations where their job decisions clash with their held values, creating an internal dilemma that affects their sense of meaning in their roles at times. As such, the relationship between their personal values and Finnair's values is intricate. For instance, some employees appreciate values related to environmental sustainability in particular, even in an industry with a reputation of not being Eco-friendly. This example may help them find personal significance in their work, especially in today's sustainability-focused world. However, some respondents disagree with Finnair's various cost-cutting decisions. They worry that these choices contradict their personal values, causing a mismatch between their beliefs and their work, which affects their job satisfaction and commitment to the company. These conflicts between personal values and job responsibilities have a significant impact on the respondents' well-being and their overall sense of fulfillment, which, in turn, affects their commitment to the organization. Nonetheless, one respondent suggests that people can adapt and find meaning in their work over time, highlighting their resilience in the face of these challenges.

"I believe we are freaking good at finding meaning in what we do. But of course, it (meaningfulness) needs to be there. Why else would you want to wake up in the morning for work?" - Respondent tenure of 2-10 years.

4.1.6 Tenure Groups' Outlook on Growth and Commitment

Within Finnair's unique culture, the narratives from various respondents vividly illustrate the critical role of career development opportunities in shaping organizational commitment. These insights underline the profound connection between employees' dedication and their growth within the company.

For employees with over a decade of tenure, there is a remarkable sense of enduring commitment. As one respondent notes, *"My work has been so interesting during the years here that I believe they have been impacting my strong commitment to Finnair, and I haven't had to look for other opportunities outside Finnair"*. Another long-tenured employee expresses a desire for continued growth, saying, *"I have been here for so many years, I know. However, I still feel like there are more doors to open, and I would like to move into a new role"*. Their commitment is unwavering, yet they remain open to new challenges. These sentiments are complemented by the perspective of another respondent with over a decade of tenure who articulates, *"At this point, I think some kind of opportunity to rotate to a new role, maybe for a year or two, would be nice. I don't need anything special, but maybe just a change from what I am doing now"*. It's a testament to the connection of commitment and growth within Finnair.

However, it's not just long-tenured employees who recognize the importance of career advancement. Those with 2-10 years of tenure emphasize that employees also need to take an active role in their own development. As one respondent puts it, *"It is not only the manager that needs to offer you the opportunities to move forward. Also, you as an employee need to be active and tell your manager what your desires are. This requires open and honest discussion"*. This reflects the proactive approach that many employees take in shaping their career paths.

Finally, even those with 0-2 years of tenure see the value of having a long-term purpose within the organization. As one respondent in this group highlights, *"Of course, when you feel like you have a longer purpose inside the organization and that you can help the organization move forward is committing. It helps when early on, you have some kind of bigger picture in your mind where you are heading to"*. This illustrates how a clear vision and sense of purpose can fuel commitment, regardless of tenure. In conclusion, the narratives from these different tenure groups paint a comprehensive picture where dedication is nurtured by the interplay between personal ambition and the wealth of opportunities available.

4.2 Monetary and Non-Monetary Drivers of Commitment at Finnair

The relationship between compensation, encompassing salary and other monetary rewards, and employee commitment at Finnair is a multifaceted phenomenon. This chapter explores the intricate interplay between financial incentives and intangible elements that influence employee dedication within the organization. By examining the perspectives of both newcomers and longer-tenured employees, we gain valuable insights into how compensation and its various dimensions shape commitment at Finnair. In this chapter, we uncover the various aspects that make up the wide range of employee experiences and their strong dedication to Finnair.

4.2.1 Salary: The Influence of Monetary Compensation

At Finnair, the role of salary in fostering employee commitment is a multi-faceted topic. During our interviews, we observed different viewpoints across various tenures, reflecting the complex interplay between salaries and commitment.

Newcomers at Finnair, for instance, are acutely aware of the impact of inflation. They stressed the importance of maintaining competitive salary structures in a dynamic economic environment. Respondents with 2 to 10 years of tenure shared similar concerns about the lack of salary increments during challenging economic times. Those with over a decade of tenure highlighted the extended periods without salary adjustments, reinforcing the significance of monetary compensation. A striking observation emerged during these discussions. Some newcomers indicated that, for them, salary, as long as it remains competitive, does not significantly influence their commitment. They believe the nature of their work is of greater importance. In contrast, employees with more experience at Finnair tend to place a higher emphasis on their remuneration packages. One respondent with over a decade of tenure noted that competitive salaries might serve as a compelling attraction strategy for prospective employees. However, the importance of salary as a primary motivator varies greatly. Some with over a decade of tenure revealed that mon-

etary compensation has never been their primary driver. Meanwhile, respondents with 2 to 10 years of tenure expressed that only a substantial increase in pay would tempt them to consider other job opportunities.

As one respondent with over a decade of tenure aptly put it, *"If I was only motivated by salary, I could have left a long time ago."* This sentiment underscores the broader perspective that while compensation is crucial, it isn't the sole determinant of commitment.

"When I joined Finnair, I already knew that Finnair is not able to attract talent by monetary rewards. However, money is not the reason I am here. But yes, of course, you need to receive good compensation in return for the time you give to your company." (Respondent with 0-2 years of tenure)

"I am happy about my salary level at the moment. However, it is normal in my opinion that one expects their salary to increase over the coming years. No one would want to keep working for the same salary level they started with." (Respondent with tenure of 2-10 years)

"If you are only motivated by money, it will be a very long run, and you will also need to run yourself for very long." (Respondent with tenure of over a decade)

4.2.2 Beyond Salary: The Multifaceted Nature of Compensation

Compensation at Finnair extends beyond just numbers on a paycheck. Respondents of various tenures emphasized the importance of monetary rewards for enhancing well-being, highlighting the multidimensional nature of financial compensation. Newcomers were surprised by the absence of perks they had experienced elsewhere, such as lunch & wellness benefits. More experienced employees also stressed the allocation of financial resources for employee well-being, showcasing the broader perspective of monetary compensation.

Newcomers and employees with less than a decade of tenure highlighted the significance of receiving praise and recognition as a cost-free advantage that fosters commitment within the organization. Acknowledging their contributions has a profound effect on their commitment to their immediate teams. Moreover, the complexity of Finnair's compensation dynamics, especially in the context of collective labor agreements, emerged as a topic among more tenured employees. They emphasized the need for clear and open communication regarding compensation packages to mitigate misunderstandings and promote unity within the company. Additionally, employees, irrespective of their tenure, noted that the way compensation is communicated at different stages of employment can impact commitment. For instance, newcomers associated commitment communication with transparency, at the beginning of their employment, ensuring they have an honest understanding of how they are compensated without facing disappointment later on.

More tenured employees related communication to highlighting already existing forms of compensation.

"I don't always mean that rewarding should be something very valuable and based on a big sum of money. However, I think some personal ways how employees can be rewarded might enhance your commitment." (Respondent with tenure of 0-2 years)

"If you want to keep employees motivated and committed, you cannot do that with a budget of 0 euros or with that 'Finnair spirit.' You have to put some money and effort into well-being, and that will cost money. However, putting that money will benefit the organization, as having committed employees, and that is what we will also need in the future." (Respondent with tenure of over a decade)

"I think that employee's well-being benefits are usually the first thing that organizations will start to save from when they need to make cutbacks. In some ways it is understandable. But not everything needs to cost so much money." (Respondent with tenure of 0-2 years)

Respondents also discussed staff travel tickets and their value, with varied opinions among employees. While some cherished these tickets, others found them less enticing, primarily due to misconceptions about their costs and accessibility. Notably, some respondents did not perceive staff travel tickets as particularly rewarding, as they are uniformly accessible to all employees, regardless of performance. Meanwhile experienced employees also considered the interplay between current monetary compensation and other opportunities within Finnair, such as job rotations, as a motivator for their commitment.

"Having Finnair on your CV is like having another feather in your cap." (Respondent with tenure 0-2 years)

"We have not had any salary raises in such a long time. Many years. If I was younger, I might look for opportunities elsewhere." (Respondent with tenure of over a decade)

"Of course, how you are compensated affects your commitment. I know we might not get any salary increases anytime soon. On the other hand, maybe some kind of opportunity to do job rotation would enhance my motivation and commitment at this point of my career." (Respondent with tenure of over a decade)

In Figure 7 below, the categorized themes are depicted, along with an illustrative example for each theme. The visualization in the figure aims to provide insight into the common themes and associated quotes from the interviews. It should be noted that the figure does not encompass every interviewee; rather, it serves to convey an overview of the prevalent themes and the corresponding narratives discussed in the research.

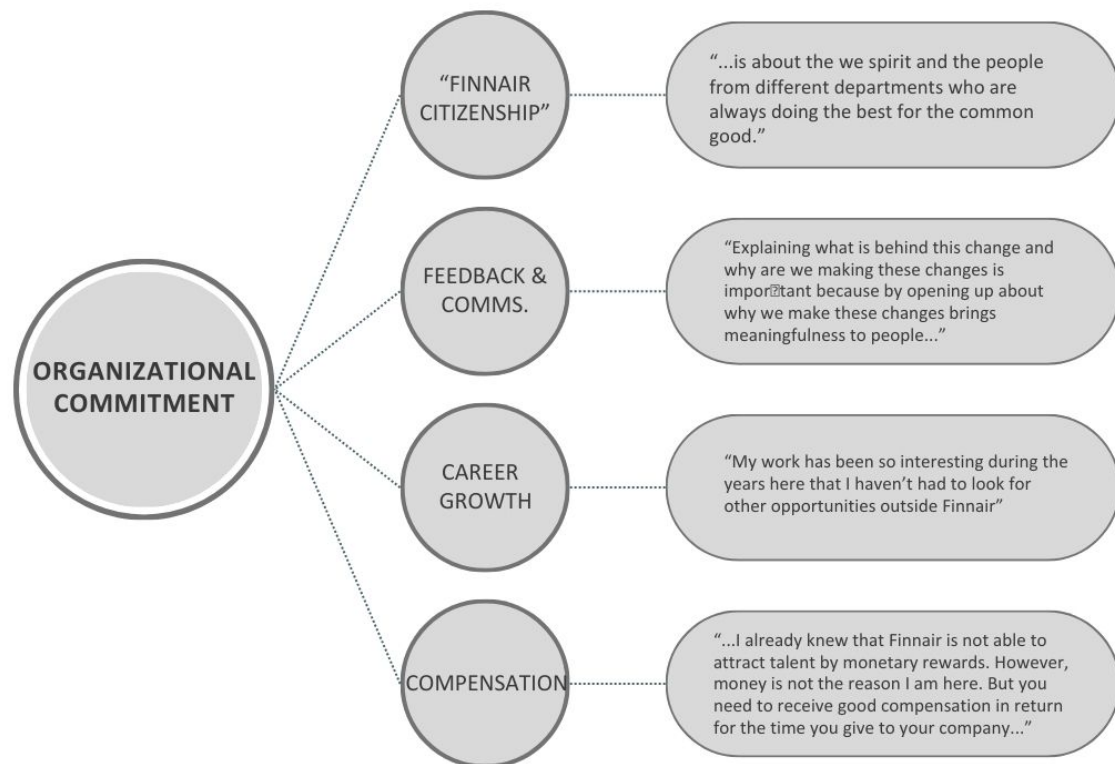


Figure 7. Highlighted dimensions and quotes related to the theme findings.

Figure 6 above visualizes key dimensions with quotes from the interviewees that relate to the main themes concluded. The findings from this chapter section reveal that Finnair employees share a deep sense of loyalty, driven by the allure of the aviation industry and the concept of "*Finnair citizenship*." This intrinsic connection transcends the duration of their tenure, shaping their professional experiences and commitment. Meaningful work at Finnair is a tapestry woven with diverse threads, representing essential elements of purpose and commitment. It is a lived experience for employees, regardless of their role or tenure.

The alignment of individual contributions with Finnair's overarching goals and the value of feedback are vital components of this tapestry. Transparent and effective communication, both formal and informal, plays a pivotal role in fostering trust and commitment. In conclusion, competitive salaries and a mix of monetary and non-monetary benefits are

recognized as factors that enhance commitment among Finnair employees. The organization's long-term vision and the understanding of individual goals, along with communication and feedback, further fortify their commitment. Career development opportunities, especially for longer-tenured employees, strengthen their loyalty to Finnair. Therefore, Finnair's investment in the growth and well-being of its employees is evident in the deeply intertwined nature of career opportunities and loyalty. Regardless of tenure, employees remain deeply committed, contributing to Finnair's ongoing success.

5 DISCUSSION

In this discussion chapter, the research findings are examined to unveil the underlying reasons that drive employee commitment at Finnair. The aim is to not only present these findings but also to scrutinize them in the context of existing research across several critical dimensions. These dimensions include employee commitment at Finnair, the significance of meaningful work, the impact of compensation, intrinsic motivation, the unmistakable "*We spirit*" embedded within the organization, the insights offered by Social Exchange Theory, the pivotal role of workplace friendships, and adaptability.

The primary objective is to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of what fuels employee commitment at Finnair, taking into account the organization's unique attributes, the industry-specific aviation context, and the dynamic interplay of meaningful work and compensation. The body of existing research, initially introduced in the literature review chapter, serves as a lens to both contextualize and validate the findings, thereby shedding light on areas of agreement and contrast.

5.1 Dimensions of Commitment

In discussing further about commitment dimensions at Finnair, there emerges what can cautiously be termed a fundamental "*we spirit*." This "*we spirit*," deeply ingrained in

Finnair's organizational culture, serves as a powerful concept that warrants a thorough examination. It provides a unique lens through which the application of Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the significance of peer support and networks in understanding employee commitment can be scrutinized. However, as these elements are navigated through, it's vital to critically evaluate their strengths and potential limitations.

5.1.1 Social Exchange Theory and Finnair's "We Spirit"

The SET framework, as elucidated by Giaque and Varone (2019) and Autin et al. (2022), offers a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms behind employee commitment. At Finnair, it is evident that the concept of perceived rewards and costs is a pivotal component of SET. The company adeptly provides both tangible and intangible rewards, encompassing opportunities for career advancement, alignment with the company's values, and the distinguished reputation it enjoys. This perspective aligns seamlessly with our earlier theory in chapter 2.2, emphasizing the importance of commitment to its employees. However, it is crucial to question whether SET comprehensively captures the intricate facets of Finnair's unique "we spirit." In conjunction, the notion of a "*Finnair citizen*" transcends a simplistic cost-benefit analysis. It signifies more than just a job; it symbolizes a profound connection, a sense of identity, and a strong sense of pride. While SET undoubtedly provides a valuable framework, there is a need for adaptation to fully encompass the essence of this unique phenomenon.

Moreover, the SET framework does not explicitly address the informal relationships and networks within Finnair, which, as highlighted by Zhang et al. (2022), play a crucial role in strengthening employee commitment. These connections add a layer of personal and emotional investment, making the prospect of leaving the company not merely a professional decision but an emotional one. Here, SET could be further refined to encompass the emotional dimension of these relationships.

5.1.2 Workplace Friendship and Organizational Culture

Workplace friendships have a pivotal role in driving organizational success, as emphasized by Lee et al. (2018). Rooted in mutual trust, these friendships not only foster collaboration but also enhance operational efficiency. Finnair's "*we spirit*" is a testament to this, aligning closely with the "*Finnair citizenship*" ethos, which highlights the deep connection between organizational culture and employee loyalty. However, it's essential to recognize that a robust organizational culture such as Finnair's, can significantly impact affective commitment, a form of psychological attachment. Company cultures that champion communal values, encourage employee participation in decision-making and communicate a shared organizational vision inherently bolster this affective commitment. Furthermore, organizations that transparently convey their strategies not only solidify commitment but also guide employees toward common objectives, as proposed by Campbell and Yeung (1991).

5.1.3 Intrinsic Motivation and Adaptability

In the examination of Finnair employees' commitment, a recurring theme emerges - loyalty and attachment deeply rooted in the essence of Finnair and the aviation industry. The allure of air travel and the complexity it entails are not just external motivators; they seem to be intrinsic drivers for those naturally drawn to the fascination of aviation and travel. This intrinsic inclination suggests that individuals are inherently inclined to pursue careers within the industry, driven by their genuine passion. Hence, it may be challenging to discern whether the commitment among long-tenured employees stems primarily from their dedication to the aviation industry itself or from the prolonged duration of their tenure within the organization, whereby the organization itself becomes the primary driver of commitment. This aligns with notions from Vanderberghe et al. (2011), Kowta (2018), and Son & Ok (2019), suggesting that the initial factors that commit employees to their organizations may change over time during their tenure within the organization.

Interestingly, this also aligns with a quote from one of the respondents, who explained that it is challenging to determine which came first, the egg or the chicken. This sheds light on the idea that distinguishing factors in organizational culture, which are fundamental to supporting commitment, may be difficult to discern (Kowta, 2018).

Furthermore, adaptability, as emphasized by Fey and Denison (2003), holds paramount significance for both the organization and its employees. Regarding adaptability, what serves as a commitment factor for newcomers may not necessarily produce the same results for long-term employees. Therefore, adaptability emerges as a crucial skill for both employees and organizations, manifesting differently at various stages of tenure.

Organizations that swiftly adapt to changing workforce dynamics, taking into account the needs and preferences of employees at different tenure levels, are better positioned to foster affective commitment, signaling their attentiveness and care for their employees. This is reinforced by Von Bonsford's (2013) insights on how employee tenure influences compensation preferences, emphasizing the connection between affective commitment and an organization's ability to respond to workforce shifts.

5.1.4 Peer Support and Networks in Employee Commitment

Turning the attention to peer support and networks, it becomes evident that these elements play a significant role in enhancing employee commitment at Finnair, especially among long-standing employees. SET principles suggest that enduring relationships stem from mutually beneficial interactions, and this is corroborated by the experiences of our respondents in this thesis. Early growth discussions, for shorter tenured employees, in particular, emerge as a key factor, indicating Finnair's investment in employee well-being. Newcomers perceive this investment as a sign of Finnair's commitment to their professional development, fostering loyalty toward the organization. However, as implications of this are considered, it's essential to recognize that the impact of peer support and networks might be influenced by individual differences (Kowta, 2018; Son & Ok, 2019).

Long-tenured employees seem to form deeper friendships, underlining the role of socialization. Yet, how this phenomenon plays out for employees with shorter tenures needs further exploration. SET might benefit from an expanded framework that delves into the nuances of these varying relationships and their impact on commitment. Furthermore, studies by Mossholder et al. (2011) advocate the concept of unified work goals and identities, while recent research, such as Zhang et al. (2022), highlights the value of informal workplace friendships. While many HR initiatives aim to instill a sense of belonging, the concept of genuine friendships offering deeper engagement and well-being benefits deserves more attention. SET, if modified, could incorporate this human and emotional dimension into its framework.

In conclusion, Finnair's "*we spirit*", is underpinned by Social Exchange Theory and reinforced by peer support, workplace friendships, intrinsic motivation, adaptability, and a strong organizational culture that serves as a powerful force in cultivating employee commitment and loyalty. However, it is essential to acknowledge that while these theoretical frameworks and empirical findings provide valuable insights, they might require adaptation to fully capture the multifaceted and emotionally charged phenomenon that is the "*we spirit*" at Finnair. As progression occurs, future research should delve deeper into these nuances to create a more refined understanding of employee commitment and the organizational dynamics that drive it. Nevertheless, the commitment of Finnair employees is deeply rooted in their intrinsic passion for aviation, the sense of belonging fostered by the "*we spirit*," and the informal relationships that bind them to the organization. These factors, coupled with an organizational culture that values communal ideals and transparent communication, contribute to a strong sense of affective commitment among Finnair employees across different tenure levels.

5.1.5 Commitment Challenges in Compensation

Within the discussion, Finnair's compensation dynamics and its implications for employee commitment reveal a complex interplay of theoretical frameworks. Meyer and Allen's

Three-Component Theory of Commitment, which encompasses affective, continuance, and normative commitment facets, remains relevant. Long-tenured employees express emotional attachment to Finnair and a commitment to its mission and values. Thus, discussions among both long and short tenured employees as well as new comers about competitive salaries and salary stagnation resonate with continuance commitment, as employees weigh the benefits of staying against the costs of leaving (Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee, & Seruma-Zake, 2019).

Herzberg's Hygiene-Motivation Theory is also proves relevant, with inadequate or stagnant salaries leading to dissatisfaction, while factors like recognition, job characteristics, and growth opportunities enhance job satisfaction and commitment. Hu et al. (2019) and Ju and Li (2019) emphasize personalization and the need for organizations to innovate in their HR practices, including compensation, to foster commitment. Contemplation of alternative job opportunities by some employees regardless of their tenure indicates potential dissatisfaction, in line with Cooper-Hakim and Visveran (2005). What's more, is that Koskey and Sakaka (2015) suggest that a single compensation blueprint is not universally effective, aligning with Ju and Li's (2019) emphasis on addressing the distinct expectations of the organisations workforce.

Regarding the aforementioned, aligning with Ju and Li's (2019) notions that compensation should be addressed by taking into consideration the differences between different employee groups, such as different tenure employee groups at Finnair, could support a positive organizational culture and outcomes. As such, it might have a positive impact on supporting commitment of different tenured employees, preventing long-tenured employees from leaving the organization, as mentioned by Hu et al. (2019) and Ju and Li (2019). This is supported by Boudreaux (2021) and Ylikorkkiala and Sweins (2015), who suggest that such alignment supports employee commitment and thus, positive organizational outcomes.

Lastly, the experiences of Finnair's employees emphasize the importance of competitive salaries, the nature of work, and individualized perks in shaping commitment. Finnair's

compensation strategy underscores the relationship between pay and loyalty. Competitive pay is essential, but recognition and growth opportunities also play vital roles. Some veteran employees ponder alternative job opportunities for better pay, or change in the nature of every day work, if there is no possibility to pay rise, while newer hires evaluate Finnair's benefits against past roles and thus, are satisfied with their compensation and salary within the organization. These nuances shed light on employees' perspectives, indicating that compensation plays a role in commitment. This consideration remains relevant even with regard to employee tenure.

Effective compensation is not just about the offer but also its perception (Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015). While salary holds importance, intrinsic job benefits like staff travel tickets and cultural nuances such as the renowned "Finnair spirit," along with personalized perks, significantly impact commitment levels across varying tenures, albeit with differing degrees of importance. Adopting a tailored and equitable compensation approach that aligns with the organization's culture and employee expectations is key (Ylikorkiala & Sweins, 2015).

5.2 Theoretical Considerations

In this section, the practical application and contributions of classic organizational commitment theories, particularly those outlined by Meyer and Allen (1984) and Chauhan, Howen, and Nachmias (2023), are summarized to better comprehend the commitment levels among Finnair employees. The experiences shared by these employees reflect elements of Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitments.

Affective Commitment is evident through the emotional attachment and identification with Finnair. It extends beyond specific roles, suggesting a broader emotional bond with the organization. Continuance Commitment is observed in newer employees who value the growth opportunities provided by Finnair and are concerned about the potential costs of leaving. Normative Commitment, emphasizing a sense of obligation, is partic-

ularly noticeable in long-tenured employees, whose commitment shifts from transactional aspects to align with Finnair's values. However, it's not a one-size-fits-all scenario, as some long-tenured employees might consider leaving if they were younger, hypothetically speaking (Hu et al., 2018). This challenges the assumption that they are solely driven by affective commitment. On the contrary, the sense of shared identity and collective goals, often referred to as "*Finnair citizenship*," enhances the affective component of commitment, emphasizing the importance of trust during challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

As pointed out earlier in section 2.2.2, The Social Exchange Theory sheds light on the mechanisms driving employee commitment at Finnair. Employees weigh perceived rewards (growth opportunities, cultural alignment, reputation) against costs, and the informal networks and friendships formed within the organization further cement their commitment. In addition to this, The "Side Bet" Theory by Becker (1960) offers insight into the commitment of long-tenured employees, who have invested time and effort in Finnair and developed valuable relationships. Whereas Herzberg's Motivational Theory highlights the importance of transparent communication and career advancement as motivators for employees. However, the lack of these opportunities may lead to dissatisfaction and turnover if not applied.

The role of personal and organizational values and preferences in creating commitment is evident. It would seem that Finnair's strategy emphasizes merging individual roles with the company's mission, fostering a sense of belonging and supporting employee aspirations. Thus a personalized approach to boost commitment is recommended. Furthermore, breaking down barriers and promoting open communication enhances loyalty and commitment. The principle of personal significance in one's role contributes to employees feeling valued and connected, aligning with Finnair's culture that treasures feedback. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators from the self-determination theory (see chapter 2.3), including tangible benefits and a sense of belonging, recognition, and personal growth opportunities, also contribute to overall employee commitment (Cockrell, Stone & Wier, 2018; Autin et al., 2021.)

Overall, Finnair's approach to commitment aligns with various theoretical perspectives, but also raises questions about the nuanced nature of employee commitment in different contexts which should be considered.

5.3 Practical Implications

This chapter is dedicated to exploring the managerial implications derived from a thorough analysis of the data findings. It serves as a roadmap for Finnair's leadership, offering in-depth tangible recommendations to cultivate a workforce marked by commitment and high-performance standards backed by theoretical research.

Interestingly, the findings show there is not a significant disparity in the commitment factors among employees of varying tenures. However, of course, some differences can be noted and used when designing strategies to enhance commitment along different tenured employees. One of the key takeaways from our data is the prevalence of a deficiency in effective communication across all tenure groups. This lack of effective communication appears to influence how employees perceive the significance of their roles and their overall job satisfaction. To address this, we recommend prioritizing improved communication practices, extending beyond operational contexts to encompass all facets of Finnair's functions. By doing so, the organization can amplify employees' feelings of job significance, satisfaction, and dedication. Moreover, regular feedback mechanisms should be instituted. Employees of all tenures highly value open communication and feedback. Establishing channels for employees to voice their opinions, concerns, and suggestions will foster a culture of engagement and continuous improvement. Furthermore, our insights, as highlighted by Hu et al. (2019), underscore the imperative of growth and development. To foster deep-rooted loyalty and cultivate a culture of continuous learning, investment in skill-enhancement and career progression opportunities should be considered further. This investment is even more crucial when viewed through the lens of transparent communication.

Another crucial recommendation revolves around customized commitment strategies. Since the factors driving commitment may vary between newcomers and long-tenured employees, Finnair should consider designing engagement initiatives tailored to the unique needs and preferences of these two distinct groups. This could involve creating specialized onboarding programs for newcomers and introducing options like sabbaticals or phased retirements for long-tenured employees, thus aligning with the varied motivations of these groups. In terms of retaining long-tenured employees, it's essential to acknowledge the emotional and professional investments they have made in Finnair. To tap into these investments, Finnair could explore the creation of platforms, such as "alumni" networks, where long-tenured employees can share their experiences and insights with newcomers. This would not only preserve institutional knowledge but also serve as a mentoring resource for incoming employees.

The findings also indicate that while employees, in general, are content with their compensation, there are nuances to consider. There is a variation in the responses, suggesting that compensation might indeed affect commitment levels, particularly for long-tenured employees. A successful compensation strategy should encompass more than just monetary figures. It should embrace the richness of both tangible benefits, such as competitive salaries, and intrinsic motivators, like job recognition. In alignment with Herzberg's philosophy (see chapter 2.3.1), for fostering true commitment, organizations need to combine hygiene factors with genuine motivators. Given the expressed concerns about stagnant salaries in an inflationary economic environment, it can be recommended that Finnair develop periodic compensation reviews. This will ensure that the organization remains competitive in the job marketplace but also stays in tune with its employees' financial needs and aspirations. Additionally, due to the diverse nature of Finnair's workforce, which spans from newcomers to long-tenured veterans, adopting a more customized approach to benefits is advisable. A one-size-fits-all approach might not resonate with all employees; therefore, providing flexibility in choosing benefits could enhance perceived value. However, compensation, regardless of its competitiveness, loses its luster if it is perceived as unfair. As proposed by Zaitouni et al. (2011), Finnair should then strive for an equitable compensation framework, where employees feel a sense of fairness and

consistency.

In conclusion, recognizing diverse employee priorities based on tenure is essential. Tailoring strategies to address varying needs, such as focusing on growth for younger employees and stability and recognition for more tenured ones, is crucial, as highlighted by Sejjakka and Kaawase (2014). To harness the full potential of its compensation strategy, Finnair must go beyond monetary aspects. It should combine competitive pay with growth opportunities, ensure equity, and consistently reinforce its unique cultural identity, in line with Boudreaux's (2021) perspective. The way forward involves an adaptable, transparent, and responsive compensation approach that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of employee commitment.

5.4 Future Research Suggestions

As previously discussed in the limitations chapter, this research, though comprehensive in its examination of employee commitment within Finnair, offers valuable insights into several facets. However, it is essential to recognize that there is ample room for future research to delve deeper into specific themes that have emerged throughout this study. This thesis revolved around exploring employee commitment within the context of Finnair, encompassing various factors such as meaningful work and compensation. The outcomes shed light on intriguing aspects, prompting the consideration of more focused investigations. One promising avenue for future research could involve a thorough exploration of the factors influencing the perception of work as meaningful. Notably, the concept of "job crafting", for example job rotation, emerged during interviews as a significant factor affecting employee well-being and commitment. This aspect, given its potential positive implications for both well-being and commitment, presents an opportunity for more in-depth and dedicated examination. Furthermore, Finnair operates within a diverse landscape, consisting of various departments and employee cohorts, each with unique characteristics and demands. Tailoring studies to investigate the determinants of commitment within these distinct groups could provide valuable insights. Such tar-

geted research may uncover specific factors capable of enhancing commitment, thereby yielding the multitude of benefits associated with high commitment levels. In conclusion, while this research has contributed significantly to the understanding of employee commitment, future studies could further explore the nuanced aspects that have arisen during this investigation. By conducting more specific and tailored inquiries, there could be a continuation to advance the knowledge established in the field and ultimately enhance organizational practices and employee well-being.

5.5 Limitations of The Research

While this study thoroughly adhered to established qualitative research methodologies, it is imperative to acknowledge inherent limitations that we will candidly address in this section. Firstly, as emphasized by Nowell et al. (2017), the research's credibility depends on the coherence of its primary argument and the effective use of data to substantiate key assertions. Secondly, due to the richness of data gathered from the interviews, it was not possible to incorporate all the insights into the study. This limitation, driven by the sheer volume of data, led to the selection and highlighting of key points, potentially leaving out valuable perspectives that could have further enriched the research. Over and above that however, a notable limitation arises from the linguistic translation of interviews from Finnish to English, which may have introduced potential nuances affecting the accurate portrayal of participants' sentiments. For instance, translating phrases such as "*finnairilaisuus*" to "*Finnair citizen*" may have led to subtleties being lost in translation, among other phrases from the data collected. Additionally, linguistic disparities between Finnish and English presented challenges; the term "compensation," used in the literature review and initial framing of questions, often translates to "*palkitseminen*" in Finnish, carrying connotations of "rewarding." What is more, the contextual backdrop within which this research was conducted presents another potential limitation. Situated in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era and amid macro-level economic conflicts and setbacks, these events significantly impacted Finnair's operations and organizational structure, which in turn had an influence on the research participants. For example, while participants fre-

quently referred to COVID-19 in their responses, quantifying its precise influence on their answers remains challenging. However, its relevance at this point may be subject to debate.

The choice of virtually meeting through Microsoft Teams for interviews, while convenient for participants who regularly use it in their professional capacity, may have had limitations due to the fact that conducting face-to-face interviews might have fostered a more candid atmosphere, enhancing the depth of the collected data.

Furthermore, a significant limitation is the research's broad theoretical focus, encompassing a wide range of theories related to commitment. A narrower theoretical focus might have also led to different interview questions. However, the scarcity of scholarly research on commitment variations among employees with different tenures, as highlighted by Noesgaard and Jorgensen (2023, p. 8), necessitated a more comprehensive, yet wide research scope, resulting in the inclusion of diverse theories related to commitment in organizational contexts. This expansiveness may have led to a research scope that, in retrospect, could have been much more refined and more focused. Another limitation relates to the author, where feedback was considered limited. Though not required, a more collaborative or supervised approach might have provided additional perspectives and insights given the demands of the commissioner of the thesis.

The research's methodology limitation stems from both the wide scope research topic and selection of interviewees, primarily comprising Finnair employees in managerial and specialist roles. As a result, the findings may not be universally applicable to the entire Finnair workforce, given the airline's diverse composition across various employee cohorts and departments. A comprehensive master's thesis encompassing the entirety of Finnair's workforce might require a more specific and distinct research methodology approach, along with increased resource allocation and an extended time frame. In hindsight, this limitation could have been addressed through a narrow scope thesis topic to investigate along with a more targeted selection of interviewees to align with the specific objectives of the study, providing a more refined focus on the research's central themes.

Lastly, the utilization of the AI tool ChatGPT facilitated the refinement of a small portion of the author's own writing and paraphrasing. Furthermore, inspiration for crafting some of the titles within the thesis was derived from this AI tool. While the use of this AI tool may be perceived as a possible limitation, it can also be considered to serve as a valuable resource for enhancing inspiration within the context of word formatting, structuring, and new ideas.

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Appendices

Semi-Structured Interview Question Set

Preliminary information given and asked by the interviewee prior to the interview:

- Tell the reason for this interview and that it will be recorded and ask the respondent to agree audibly on the recording.
- Tell that the results will only be used for the purpose of this thesis and published information will be anonymous.

Opening question

Tell me about yourself and your time and career at Finnair.

Questions regarding commitment

- What does commitment mean to you regarding your role and position at Finnair?
- Has it (commitment) changed over your time and career at Finnair? (In other words), how would you describe, what makes you stay at Finnair?
- What factors do you consider when you evaluate your commitment at Finnair?

Questions regarding meaningfulness at work

- In your view, how would you personally define what is “meaningful” work?
- In your view, how does this relate to your commitment in your role at Finnair?

- In your view, how could meaningfulness at work be enhanced?
- Could you describe what do developmental career opportunities mean regarding your commitment at Finnair at this point of career?

Questions regarding compensation and commitment

- At this current stage what does compensation mean to you in relation to commitment at Finnair?
- Could you provide a couple of examples of how non-monetary rewards have influenced your commitment to staying with Finnair?
- Based on your examples, what kind of things have contributed to that commitment?
- Apart from monetary rewards, what other factors do you consider when evaluating your commitment (when you think about your commitment) to Finnair?