

From Employee Motivation to NGO Performance: A Conceptual Framework with Organizational Commitment as a Mediator

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Abstract:

Employees may be strongly motivated by socially valuable work yet weakly attached to the organization providing it. Explaining this distinction is central to understanding how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) sustain employee contributions under resource insecurity.

This conceptual paper develops a differentiated framework linking employee motivation to NGO performance through organizational commitment. An integrative synthesis combines Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory with the three-component model of commitment, while Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory informs the interpretation of employment conditions.

Six propositions specify direct and commitment-mediated pathways. The framework proposes that intrinsic motivation and identified regulation support affective attachment when employees perceive the employer as enabling valued work experiences; identified regulation may support normative commitment when organizational responsibility is personally endorsed; and external material regulation may support continuance commitment when leaving entails valued employment losses. These pathways connect with different behavioral contributions, separating cooperation and dependable service from retention and knowledge continuity. Organizational commitment is consequently positioned as a differentiated, partial mediator.

The paper's contribution lies in specifying conditions under which motivation becomes employer attachment and explaining why continued membership does not necessarily imply broader performance contributions. Applied to multidimensional NGO performance, the framework offers a basis for aligning workforce practices with service quality, efficiency, stakeholder relationships, and sustainability. It also establishes propositions for future examination across organizational and resource conditions.

Keywords: Employee motivation; Organizational commitment; NGO performance; Self-Determination Theory; Social Exchange Theory; Resource insecurity.

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I. Introduction

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) depend on their employees to translate social objectives into services, coordinated activities, and sustained organizational functioning. Understanding this contribution requires attention to both the conditions under which employees work and the psychological processes shaping their involvement. Nonprofit human resource management varies according to organizational priorities and workforce characteristics, while organizational effectiveness encompasses multiple dimensions that extend beyond financial results (Ridder & McCandless, 2010; Sowa et al., 2004). Employee motivation is therefore relevant to NGO performance, but its explanatory value depends on specifying how employees' reasons for working become behaviors that support organizational objectives. Organizational commitment offers a potentially important mechanism for explaining this relationship.

This question becomes particularly salient when NGOs operate under prolonged economic and institutional instability. Research on Lebanese NGOs documents resource-management challenges associated with overlapping crises and funding difficulties affecting organizational sustainability (Kabbara & Ozgit, 2023; Makdissi et al., 2022). Related research on Lebanese SMEs examines workforce vulnerability through arbitrary employee dismissals, situating employment continuity within the wider organizational challenges associated with the financial crisis (Makdissi et al., 2023).

Such conditions make it necessary to examine how organizations sustain employee contributions when financial resources and employment continuity are uncertain. They also raise a theoretical question about the

relationship between motivational experiences and organizational attachment: why might employees with strong reasons for undertaking socially valuable work differ in their commitment to the organization employing them? Addressing this question requires distinguishing motivation, organizational commitment, and performance while explaining the relationships connecting them.

Self-Determination Theory provides a foundation for understanding these distinctions because it differentiates the quality of motivation rather than treating motivation solely as an amount of effort or enthusiasm. Intrinsic motivation concerns the interest and satisfaction inherent in an activity, whereas extrinsic motivation encompasses regulations that differ in their degree of internalization. Identified regulation reflects endorsement of the value of an activity; introjected regulation involves internal pressure; and external regulation concerns externally administered consequences, including material rewards and social approval (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gagné et al., 2015). Consequently, an employee may undertake demanding NGO work because it is enjoyable, personally important, socially expected, or financially necessary. These reasons can coexist, but their implications for organizational attachment should not be presumed equivalent.

Organizational commitment likewise requires a differentiated treatment. Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguish affective commitment, reflecting emotional attachment; continuance commitment, reflecting the perceived costs of leaving; and normative commitment, reflecting an obligation to remain. These components describe different psychological bases of the employment relationship, rather than interchangeable expressions of loyalty. An employee who remains because of organizational identification may contribute differently from one whose continued membership primarily reflects limited alternatives. Furthermore, commitment to the employing organization must be distinguished from attachment to an occupation, a mission, or beneficiaries. The importance of specifying commitment targets is consistent with Meyer et al.'s (1993) distinction between organizational and occupational commitment. For NGO research, this precision helps avoid attributing every expression of dedication to organizational commitment.

The performance construct introduces a further requirement for conceptual clarity. NGO performance encompasses mission achievement, service quality, operational efficiency, stakeholder relationships, and the capacity to sustain activities. Research on nonprofit effectiveness and performance measurement supports treating these outcomes as multidimensional and sensitive to organizational purposes and stakeholder expectations (Lecy et al., 2012; Sowa et al., 2004; Treinta et al., 2020). Individual effort and organizational performance therefore represent related but distinct levels of analysis. Explaining their connection requires attention to the behaviors through which employees contribute to collective functioning, including cooperation, reliable service delivery, and the preservation of organizational knowledge. A motivation–performance framework must make these connections explicit rather than treating favorable employee attitudes as equivalent to organizational effectiveness.

The literature reviewed for this paper provides complementary foundations for examining these relationships. Gagné and Deci (2005) explain how motivational regulations relate to workplace functioning. Meyer and Allen (1991) specify the psychological components of organizational commitment. Within nonprofit research, Wang (2022) examines how organizational support and stakeholder-related processes are associated with employee commitment. Kluijtmans and Crucke (2024), drawing on Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory, investigate how nonprofit social responsibility relates to organizational citizenship behavior through employees' perceptions of organizational support and social impact potential. These contributions establish relevant theoretical and empirical foundations, while leaving a focused analytical task: explaining how differentiated motivational regulations and commitment components can be connected within a framework of NGO performance.

Accordingly, this paper addresses the following research question: ****How and why does organizational commitment help explain the relationship between employee motivation and NGO performance?*** Its objective is to develop a conceptual framework that retains both a direct relationship between motivation and performance and an indirect relationship operating through organizational commitment. Commitment is thus proposed as a partial mediating mechanism. The framework accommodates the possibility that motivation contributes to performance through effort and persistence while also shaping a psychological relationship with the employer that supports sustained organizational contributions. The relative roles of these pathways are developed as theoretical propositions for subsequent empirical investigation.

The theoretical architecture assigns complementary roles to the perspectives already identified. Self-Determination Theory explains employees' reasons for acting and the significance of autonomous and controlled regulation. Social Exchange Theory informs the explanation of how valued organizational experiences and perceptions of support may generate reciprocated attachment. Their joint use is directed toward clarifying the mechanism connecting motivation and commitment, rather than treating their combination as a contribution in itself. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides a supplementary perspective on work content and employment conditions, including achievement, responsibility, remuneration, and security (Herzberg et al.,

1959). It informs the contextual discussion without assigning these conditions the status of empirically established moderators.

This paper contributes a conditional explanation of how work motivation becomes organizational attachment and how that attachment supports different organizational contributions. It specifies the employer's perceived enabling role in connecting autonomous motivation with affective commitment, distinguishes organizationally directed responsibility from broader dedication to a social purpose, and separates continuity-related contributions from cooperation and dependable service. These connections explain why strong motivation need not produce equivalent employer attachment and why continued membership need not imply equivalent performance contributions. The framework develops this argument for paid NGO employment, with prolonged resource insecurity informing its contextual interpretation.

This is a conceptual paper grounded in existing theoretical and empirical literature; it reports no original empirical findings. Its propositions organize an explanatory argument and identify relationships requiring future investigation. The following section explains the approach to conceptual development. The paper then establishes its theoretical foundations before presenting the integrated framework and propositions. The discussion identifies the framework's theoretical implications and its relevance to NGO management, followed by its limitations and directions for empirical research.

II. Approach to Conceptual Development

II.1 Research Design

This paper adopts a conceptual research design to explain how organizational commitment connects employee motivation with NGO performance. Drawing on established theories and published research, it develops an integrated framework that differentiates motivational regulations, components of organizational commitment, and dimensions of organizational performance. The purpose is to clarify the mechanisms underlying their proposed relationships and formulate theoretically grounded propositions.

The analysis follows an integrative approach, bringing together complementary contributions from work motivation, organizational commitment, and nonprofit management. Its organizing question concerns how employees' reasons for working may become organizational attachment and how this attachment may support organizationally relevant behavior. The synthesis therefore emphasizes conceptual distinctions, explanatory mechanisms, and contextual conditions. It does not seek to provide an exhaustive inventory of publications or estimate the aggregate strength of relationships across studies.

II.2 Literature selection and analytical relevance

The literature informing the framework is selected for its contribution to construct definition, relationship explanation, and contextual interpretation. Foundational sources establish the meaning and boundaries of the principal concepts. Gagné and Deci (2005) explain the distinction between autonomous and controlled work motivation, while Gagné et al. (2015) specify differentiated motivational regulations. Meyer and Allen (1991) provide the three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment, and Meyer et al. (1993) establish the importance of distinguishing commitment toward different targets.

Nonprofit scholarship informs the organizational scope of the framework. Ridder and McCandless (2010) explain variation in nonprofit human resource management arrangements, supporting attention to differences among NGO employment environments. Sowa et al. (2004), Leczy et al. (2012), and Treinta et al. (2020) inform the multidimensional interpretation of organizational performance. Research on Lebanese NGOs provides contextual insights into resource-management challenges and funding difficulties relevant to organizational functioning under prolonged instability (Kabbara & Ozgit, 2023; Makdissi et al., 2022).

Published empirical studies are used according to the constructs, relationships, and populations they examine. Wang (2022), for example, informs the discussion of organizational support and nonprofit employee commitment. Kluijtmans and Crucke (2024) inform the explanation of how nonprofit organizational practices relate to employee perceptions and citizenship behavior. These contributions support particular elements of the argument without being treated as direct examinations of the complete motivation–commitment–performance sequence. Evidence from adjacent organizational settings is interpreted with attention to its relevance and the conditions affecting its transfer to NGO employment.

II.3 Construct clarification and theoretical integration

The analysis begins by separating concepts that may overlap in organizational discourse but perform different explanatory roles. Employee motivation concerns the reasons underlying work behavior. Organizational commitment concerns the psychological bond connecting an employee to the employing organization. Organizational performance concerns the achievement and continuity of collective objectives. Maintaining these distinctions prevents motivation, loyalty, effort, and effectiveness from being treated as interchangeable indicators of favorable organizational functioning.

Within motivation, intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are distinguished from introjected and external regulation. Organizational practices, including recognition, remuneration, and professional development, are treated as conditions that may shape motivational experiences rather than as motivational regulations themselves. Within commitment, affective, continuance, and normative components are examined as distinct psychological bases of attachment. Commitment to the employer is also differentiated from dedication to a social mission, occupation, or beneficiary group.

The theoretical integration assigns each perspective a specific role. Self-Determination Theory explains motivational quality and the significance of psychological need satisfaction in work settings (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Social Exchange Theory supplies the relational logic through which valued organizational treatment may generate reciprocated attachment. The three-component model identifies the forms organizational commitment may take (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides a complementary perspective on work content and employment conditions, informing the interpretation of motivational experiences under resource constraints (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The connection between these perspectives requires attention to the origin of employees' motivational experiences. Enjoying an activity or valuing its social contribution does not automatically imply attachment to its organizational provider. The argument therefore examines how experiences associated with the employing organization may connect work motivation to organizational commitment. This distinction makes the proposed mediating mechanism explicit while preserving a direct pathway through which motivation may influence performance-relevant behavior.

II.4 Proposition development and scope

The propositions connect clearly defined constructs through explicit theoretical reasoning. Each proposed relationship is developed by identifying the relevant motivational regulation or commitment component, explaining the expected behavioral mechanism, and considering conditions that may qualify the relationship. Alternative explanations are considered where similar observable behavior could arise from different psychological processes, particularly when continued organizational membership may reflect emotional attachment, obligation, or the perceived costs of leaving.

Organizational commitment is specified as a partial mediating mechanism because motivation may also influence effort and persistence through pathways that do not depend on attachment to the employer. The framework further distinguishes employee-level behavior from organizational outcomes. Cooperation, dependable service delivery, and the retention of organizational knowledge are examined as potential connections between individual psychological states and collective functioning.

The principal scope is paid employment in NGOs, with prolonged resource insecurity informing the contextual discussion. Conceptual consistency, faithful interpretation of published evidence, explanatory clarity, and the potential for future examination guide the development of the framework. Its contribution rests on explaining differentiated relationships among motivation, commitment, and performance within these stated boundaries.

III. Theoretical Foundations

III.1 Employee motivation through Self-Determination Theory

Employee motivation concerns the psychological processes underlying the direction, intensity, and persistence of work behavior (Latham & Pinder, 2005). In NGO employment, these processes may involve interest in professional activities, endorsement of social objectives, concern for social approval, or the need to secure an income. Understanding motivation therefore requires examining why employees undertake their work, alongside how much effort they invest. Similar levels of observable effort can arise from different reasons and may have different consequences for organizational attachment and sustained contribution.

Self-Determination Theory provides the principal foundation for this differentiated interpretation. It distinguishes autonomous motivation, through which individuals experience their behavior as self-endorsed, from controlled motivation, through which behavior is experienced as externally or internally pressured (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Autonomy in this sense concerns volition rather than unrestricted independence. An employee can willingly accept demanding responsibilities or organizational procedures when their purpose is understood and personally endorsed. Conversely, apparent discretion does not necessarily produce autonomous motivation if employees experience their responsibilities primarily as obligations enforced through pressure.

The theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs relevant to motivational functioning. Autonomy concerns experiencing choice and self-endorsement; competence concerns experiencing effectiveness; and relatedness concerns meaningful connection with others. Workplace conditions that support these needs can facilitate the internalization of work-related goals and regulations (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Within NGOs, opportunities to exercise professional judgment, receive constructive feedback, and develop supportive working relationships may therefore influence motivational

quality. Their relevance depends on employees' experiences of these conditions rather than their formal presence in organizational policies.

Intrinsic motivation refers to undertaking an activity because the activity itself is interesting or satisfying. An NGO employee may, for example, enjoy solving operational problems, designing educational activities, or applying professional expertise. Identified regulation, by comparison, concerns undertaking an activity because its purpose is personally important. An employee may find a particular task uninteresting while willingly performing it because it contributes to an outcome they value. Both forms belong to autonomous motivation, but they remain conceptually distinct (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gagné et al., 2015). Consequently, commitment to socially valuable work should not automatically be classified as intrinsic motivation.

Controlled motivation encompasses introjected and external regulation. Introjected regulation involves internal pressures, such as avoiding guilt or protecting self-worth. External regulation concerns consequences administered by others, including material rewards and social approval. Gagné et al. (2015) distinguish external material regulation from external social regulation, allowing financial reasons for working to be differentiated from concerns about recognition, respect, or criticism. These distinctions are relevant to NGOs because socially valued work can be undertaken through personal endorsement or through pressure to demonstrate dedication. The social purpose of an activity does not, by itself, establish the autonomous character of an employee's motivation.

Amotivation represents the absence of an intention to act and is distinct from controlled motivation (Gagné et al., 2015). Employees who work primarily to secure remuneration still possess an identifiable reason for acting. Employees experiencing amotivation may instead question why they should invest effort or whether their contribution can produce a meaningful result. Retaining this distinction prevents material dependence from being interpreted as motivational absence. It also makes clear that autonomous and controlled regulations can coexist within an employee's motivational experience.

This differentiated structure provides the starting point for the framework. It suggests that the relationship between motivation and organizational commitment should depend partly on the reasons underlying work behavior. It also requires separating organizational practices from motivational responses. Remuneration, recognition, and training are features of the employment environment; their motivational significance depends on how employees interpret them. Recognition experienced as informative feedback may support competence, while recognition administered as pressure may encourage controlled regulation. The conceptual task is therefore to explain how motivational experiences relate to organizational attachment without assuming a fixed psychological meaning for each managerial practice.

III.2 Organizational commitment as a differentiated psychological bond

Organizational commitment describes the psychological relationship connecting an employee to the employing organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualize this relationship through affective, continuance, and normative components. These components concern different reasons for maintaining organizational membership and can coexist within the same employee. Their distinction is central to a framework that seeks to explain how motivation acquires organizational consequences.

Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment, identification, and involvement. Employees with strong affective commitment wish to remain because the organization has personal significance. In an NGO, this attachment may develop through shared values, supportive relationships, or experiences that connect employees' contributions to organizational purposes. However, valuing the social cause does not necessarily imply valuing the organization delivering it. An employee may endorse a humanitarian objective while questioning the practices of a particular employer. Affective organizational commitment therefore concerns attachment to that employer rather than an undifferentiated enthusiasm for socially meaningful work.

Continuance commitment reflects the perceived costs of leaving. These costs may involve lost benefits, disrupted relationships, accumulated investments, or limited employment alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Under resource insecurity, continued membership may partly reflect the comparative value of existing employment. This psychological basis differs from emotional attachment, even when both produce the same immediate outcome of remaining. Continuance commitment should consequently not be treated as evidence that employees positively identify with the organization or willingly undertake additional responsibilities.

Normative commitment reflects a felt obligation to remain. It concerns the employee's sense that continued membership is appropriate or expected (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In NGOs, such obligation requires careful interpretation because responsibilities may be directed toward the employer, colleagues, beneficiaries, or a wider community. These targets are not interchangeable. The distinction between organizational and occupational commitment established by Meyer et al. (1993) reinforces the broader need to identify what an employee feels committed to. An obligation to continue serving beneficiaries may persist even when the employee chooses to serve them through another organization.

The three components therefore provide an analytical account of the quality of organizational attachment. Treating them as a single favorable attitude would obscure why employees remain and what their continued membership may imply for organizational functioning. The framework retains their distinct meanings while recognizing their potential coexistence. It examines organizational commitment as a possible mechanism connecting motivation to behavior, without assuming that every component carries the same relationship or produces equivalent consequences.

III.3 Social Exchange Theory and the development of organizational attachment

Social Exchange Theory explains the employment relationship through ongoing exchanges in which valued treatment can generate expectations of reciprocity. Its relevance extends beyond contractual compensation to experiences of fairness, support, recognition, and consideration. As discussed by Kieserling (2019), social exchange involves obligations that are not fully specified in advance and whose development depends on the relationship between the parties. This perspective helps explain why employees may respond to organizational experiences through attachment and contributions exceeding formally prescribed requirements.

Within the proposed framework, the exchange explanation concerns the organization's perceived role in providing valued experiences. Employees may appreciate meaningful work while attributing its value primarily to the activity, profession, or beneficiaries. Organizational commitment becomes more readily explicable when employees also perceive their employer as supporting their contribution and treating them appropriately. The theoretical connection therefore involves how motivational experiences are situated within an employment relationship, rather than an assumption that motivation necessarily produces loyalty.

Nonprofit research supports examining organizational support within this relational explanation. Wang (2022) reports associations between organizational commitment and organizational practices involving leadership, stakeholder engagement, formalization, and intangible support. These findings position employee attachment within a wider organizational environment. They also indicate why the social mission alone is an incomplete basis for understanding commitment: employees encounter the organization through its everyday practices and relationships as well as its stated objectives.

Kluijtmans and Crucke (2024) provide a complementary contribution by combining Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory in their examination of nonprofit social responsibility and organizational citizenship behavior. Their findings connect organizational practices with perceived organizational support and social impact potential. For the present framework, this work supports distinguishing experiences related to the value of one's contribution from experiences related to organizational treatment. These processes may reinforce one another, but their conceptual separation helps explain why meaningful work and employer attachment should not be presumed identical.

The exchange perspective is especially relevant when resources are constrained. Limited financial capacity can restrict what an organization provides, while leaving variation in communication, procedural fairness, and interpersonal support. Resource adequacy and perceived organizational treatment are consequently related but distinct considerations. The framework uses this distinction to examine how employment conditions may influence the connection between motivation and commitment. It does not assume that nonfinancial support necessarily compensates for inadequate material conditions.

III.4 Employment conditions through Herzberg's complementary perspective

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes work-content motivators, such as achievement and responsibility, from hygiene factors associated with the employment environment, including remuneration, supervision, and working conditions (Herzberg et al., 1959). Its contribution here is to direct attention to the possibility that positive experiences of work can coexist with dissatisfaction concerning employment conditions. An NGO employee may value professional responsibility while remaining concerned about salary continuity or workload.

This perspective complements the motivational and relational explanations by identifying different features of the work environment. It does not provide an alternative classification of motivational regulations. Recognition, for example, is a workplace experience whose psychological meaning still requires interpretation through the employee's reasons for acting. Similarly, satisfaction with working conditions is not equivalent to organizational commitment. The framework therefore keeps environmental conditions, motivational responses, and organizational attachment conceptually separate.

Research on Lebanese NGOs establishes the contextual relevance of examining resource management and funding difficulties (Kabbara & Ozgit, 2023; Makdissi et al., 2022). These contributions inform the discussion of conditions under which organizations seek to sustain employee involvement and operations. They do not establish how particular employment conditions modify the proposed relationships. Herzberg's distinction is accordingly used as a supplementary interpretive perspective, with attention to how prolonged scarcity may complicate rigid assumptions about the functions of remuneration, security, or responsibility.

III.5 NGO performance and the connection between individual and organizational outcomes

NGO performance concerns the organization's capacity to achieve its purposes and sustain effective functioning. Sowa et al. (2004) distinguish management and program dimensions of nonprofit effectiveness, while Lecy et al. (2012) emphasize the limitations of unidimensional approaches. Treinta et al. (2020) further demonstrate the importance of aligning performance measurement with nonprofit organizational characteristics. Together, these contributions support examining performance through several related dimensions rather than a single financial or productivity indicator.

The framework retains four dimensions: service quality and mission achievement; operational efficiency; stakeholder satisfaction and trust; and organizational sustainability. Service quality and mission achievement concern the organization's substantive contribution. Operational efficiency concerns how resources and activities are coordinated. Stakeholder satisfaction and trust concern relationships with beneficiaries, communities, partners, and donors. Sustainability concerns the capacity to maintain organizational functioning and core activities over time. These dimensions may be related without moving together uniformly.

Connecting employee motivation and commitment to these outcomes requires an explicit account of intervening behavior. Motivation may influence effort, persistence, and attention to work. Organizational commitment may influence employees' willingness to maintain contributions, cooperate with colleagues, and preserve continuity within the employing organization. The framework proposes that such behaviors become organizationally consequential through coordinated activity, dependable delivery, and retained knowledge. These connections require organizational conditions that enable individual contributions to support collective objectives.

This distinction preserves the level of analysis of each construct. An employee's positive attitude or individual performance does not independently establish that the NGO performs well. Funding, governance, and operational capacity also shape organizational outcomes. The framework focuses on the psychological and behavioral contribution of employees within that wider setting. Its theoretical foundations therefore support a differentiated explanation in which motivation can relate to NGO performance directly through work behavior and indirectly through organizational commitment, with the precise pathways developed in the following section.

IV. Conceptual Framework and Proposition Development

IV.1 Structure and explanatory logic of the framework

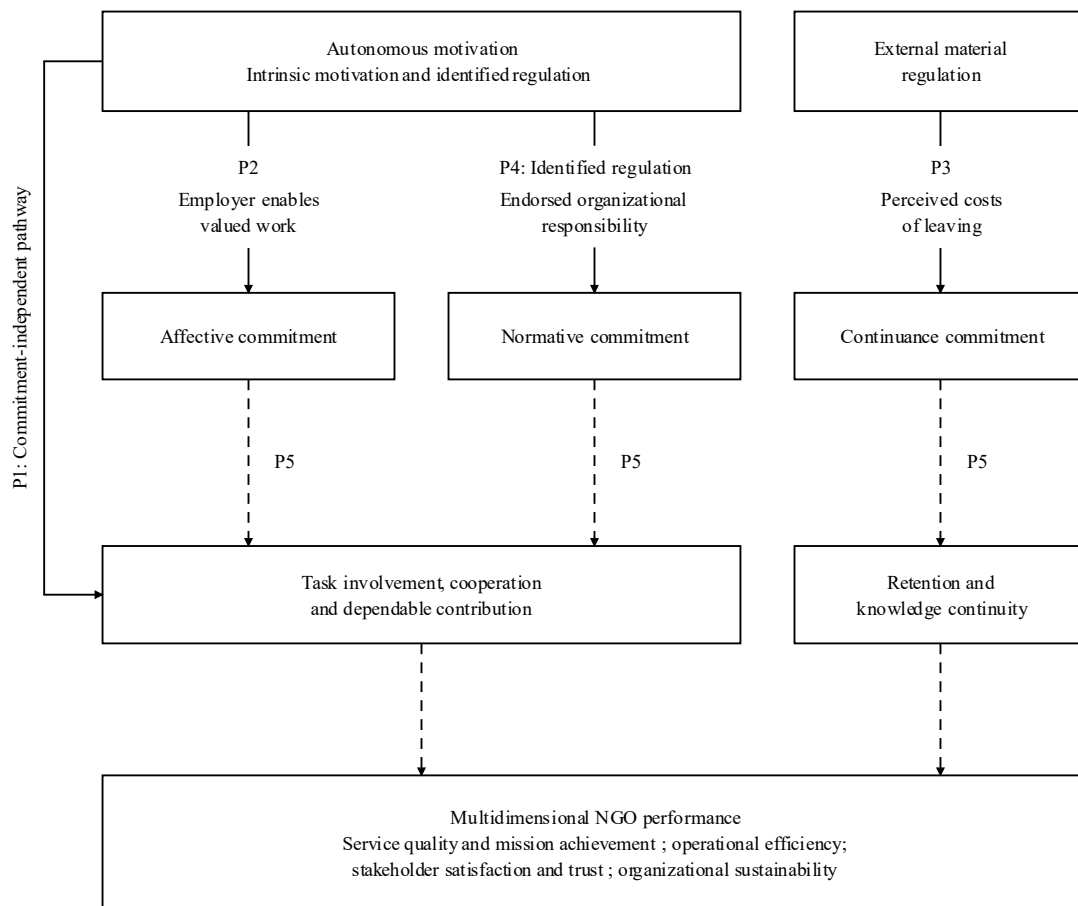
The proposed framework connects employee motivation with NGO performance through direct and commitment-mediated pathways. Employee motivation is differentiated into intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external social regulation, and external material regulation. Organizational commitment comprises affective, continuance, and normative components. NGO performance encompasses service quality and mission achievement, operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction and trust, and organizational sustainability. These distinctions allow the framework to examine relationships that would be obscured by treating motivation, commitment, or performance as undifferentiated constructs.

The direct pathway concerns employees' contributions arising from their reasons for undertaking work. Interest, personal endorsement, internal pressure, and external consequences may each stimulate behavior, although they need not sustain the same kinds of contribution. The mediated pathway concerns the additional role of attachment to the employing organization. Motivational experiences may become associated with this attachment when employees connect those experiences with organizational membership, valued treatment, or the benefits and obligations embedded in the employment relationship.

Organizational commitment is therefore positioned as a partial mediator. Employees can perform effectively because they enjoy their activities, endorse their purpose, or respond to external requirements without necessarily experiencing strong attachment to the employer. Commitment adds an explanation of why contributions may be directed toward, and sustained within, a particular organization. The propositions below differentiate these pathways while retaining their connection within a single framework.

Figure 1 presents the principal pathways developed in the propositions. It distinguishes contributions arising directly from autonomous motivation from those operating through organizational commitment and identifies the behavioral processes through which these pathways may become relevant to NGO performance.

Figure 1: Differentiated Pathways Linking Employee Motivation, Organizational Commitment, and NGO Performance



P6 synthesizes the commitment-mediated pathways.

Source: The Authors

Note: Dashed arrows identify explanatory behavioral connections, not separately validated mediators. NGO performance comprises service quality and mission achievement, operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction and trust, and organizational sustainability. P6 synthesizes the commitment-mediated pathways. Introjected and external social regulation remain discussed in the text without predetermined directional commitment pathways.

The pathways specify different reasons why employees may contribute and remain. Their implications for organizational performance depend on the behaviors sustained and the organizational arrangements enabling individual contributions to support collective outcomes.

IV.2 Employee motivation and the direct contribution to NGO performance

Self-Determination Theory suggests that the reasons underlying effort matter for understanding its persistence and quality. Intrinsic motivation supports involvement through interest in the activity, while identified regulation supports involvement through endorsement of its value (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Both can provide reasons for continuing to work when immediate external reinforcement is limited. In NGO settings, this distinction is relevant because socially necessary activities may include both inherently engaging tasks and routine responsibilities whose significance lies in their contribution to a wider purpose.

The proposed direct pathway operates through work behavior. Interest may encourage attention, exploration, and the application of professional expertise. Identified regulation may sustain effort on necessary activities that employees do not find enjoyable but regard as worthwhile. These mechanisms can support dependable service delivery and the completion of organizational responsibilities. Their organizational consequences nevertheless depend on whether individual activities are appropriately coordinated and directed toward relevant objectives.

Controlled regulation can also generate effort. External material consequences may support task completion, while external social consequences may encourage employees to meet expectations. Introjected

regulation may motivate effort through concerns about guilt, self-worth, or personal adequacy. The framework therefore does not classify controlled motivation as an absence of motivation or assume that it cannot support performance. Its distinctive feature is that behavioral persistence remains connected to pressure or contingent consequences rather than solely to interest and endorsement (Gagné et al., 2015).

Evidence from Lebanese SMEs provides complementary support for examining the motivation–performance relationship. Makdissi and Mekdessi (2024) report a positive association between employee motivation and financial performance. Their study concerns a commercial setting and does not test organizational commitment as a mediator. It therefore informs the direct pathway while leaving the differentiated commitment mechanisms and multidimensional NGO outcomes addressed by the present framework open to theoretical development.

This distinction matters when performance requires judgment and cooperation beyond explicitly monitored tasks. An employee can comply with a requirement while investing little in activities that are less visible or less directly rewarded. Conversely, an employee who endorses the purpose of the work may have a reason to maintain effort across activities that contribute to that purpose. The framework consequently differentiates sustained, self-directed contribution from immediate compliance. It does not predict that every dimension of organizational performance responds identically to motivational quality.

Proposition 1. Autonomous motivation, comprising intrinsic motivation and identified regulation, is positively related to NGO performance through sustained task involvement and cooperative work behavior, with a stronger contribution to activities requiring self-direction than motivation based primarily on pressure or contingent consequences.

This proposition concerns a behavioral pathway that does not require organizational commitment to carry the relationship. It establishes why a direct motivation–performance connection remains necessary alongside the proposed mediating mechanism.

IV.3 Autonomous motivation and affective organizational commitment

Enjoying work or endorsing its purpose does not necessarily generate emotional attachment to the employing organization. An employee may find professional activities meaningful across several potential employers. Explaining affective commitment therefore requires identifying what connects the positive motivational experience to membership in a particular organization.

The proposed connection concerns employees' perceptions of the organization's role in enabling valued work experiences. When employees associate opportunities for meaningful contribution, professional competence, and supportive relationships with their employer, organizational membership can acquire personal significance. Self-Determination Theory explains the motivational value of these experiences, while the exchange perspective helps explain why their perceived organizational provision may be reciprocated through attachment.

Wang's (2022) findings concerning organizational support and nonprofit commitment support examining this organizational relationship. Kluijtmans and Crucke (2024) likewise distinguish perceptions of organizational support from perceptions concerning the potential social impact of employees' work. These contributions inform the present argument that valuing one's contribution and valuing one's employer are connected through identifiable experiences rather than equivalent by definition.

Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation may contribute to affective commitment through somewhat different experiences. Intrinsic motivation can make organizational membership attractive when the employer enables engaging professional activity. Identified regulation can connect membership with the employee's endorsement of organizational purposes. In both cases, the employer must have a meaningful place in the explanation. If employees value the work despite organizational practices they regard negatively, autonomous motivation may remain strong without a corresponding level of affective commitment.

Proposition 2. Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are positively related to affective organizational commitment when employees perceive the employing NGO as enabling the work experiences and valued contributions underlying those motivations.

The proposition specifies a condition within the explanatory mechanism. It does not introduce organizational support as a separately established moderator. Instead, it clarifies why autonomous work motivation may become attachment to the employer and why that connection should not be assumed automatically.

IV.4 Controlled motivation and the bases of organizational attachment

Controlled motivational regulations require a differentiated explanation because pressure to work and attachment to an organization are conceptually distinct. External material regulation concerns working to obtain material consequences or avoid their loss. Continuance commitment concerns the perceived costs of leaving the

organization (Gagné et al., 2015; Meyer & Allen, 1991). These constructs can become connected when the material reasons for working depend on benefits associated with continued membership in a particular NGO.

An employee who works primarily for financial reasons need not have strong continuance commitment if comparable alternatives are readily available. The connection becomes more plausible when leaving would involve a perceived loss of income security, benefits, accumulated advantages, or access to employment. The mechanism therefore concerns the organizational dependence of valued consequences. It does not follow from the importance of remuneration alone.

Proposition 3. External material regulation is positively related to continuance organizational commitment when employees perceive that leaving the NGO would involve the loss of valued material benefits or access to comparable employment.

External social regulation and introjected regulation require additional care. Working to obtain approval does not necessarily imply emotional attachment to the organization providing that approval. Similarly, working to avoid guilt does not necessarily imply a felt obligation to remain with the employer. The pressure may concern professional standards, family expectations, beneficiaries, or personal self-evaluation. Assigning these regulations directly to normative commitment would therefore conflate the reason for working with the target and meaning of organizational attachment.

The framework consequently leaves the direction of these relationships conditional on how employees interpret the source and target of the pressure. Approval associated with organizational relationships may help maintain involvement, but involvement based on approval remains distinguishable from affective attachment. Internally experienced pressure may support continued effort, but its organizational consequences depend on whether employees associate that pressure with membership, task completion, or a wider responsibility. This differentiation prevents the model from imposing a uniform positive motivation–commitment relationship across all regulations.

IV.5 Identified regulation and normative organizational commitment

Normative commitment concerns an obligation to maintain organizational membership. Its explanation must specify why the employee considers that obligation to be directed toward the employer. In the exchange account, valued organizational treatment may provide a basis for reciprocation. Employees may regard the organization's investment in their development, support during difficult periods, or consistent treatment as generating a responsibility to contribute in return.

Identified regulation can become connected to this responsibility when employees personally endorse continued organizational contribution as appropriate and worthwhile. The connection concerns the endorsement of an obligation rather than the mere experience of pressure. It therefore differs from equating normative commitment with introjected regulation. An employee may willingly endorse a responsibility toward an employer, while another may experience a similar expectation as an unwanted demand.

Meyer and Allen's (1991) distinction among commitment components provides the conceptual basis for treating obligation separately from desire and perceived necessity. The distinction among commitment targets further requires separating responsibility toward the NGO from responsibility toward its mission or beneficiaries (Meyer et al., 1993). This separation is particularly relevant when employees could continue serving the same cause through another organization.

Proposition 4. Identified regulation is positively related to normative organizational commitment when employees personally endorse continued contribution to the employing NGO as a responsibility arising from their organizational relationship.

This pathway allows affective and normative commitment to coexist without treating them as identical. Employees may value their membership emotionally and also consider continued contribution appropriate. Alternatively, they may experience obligation without comparable emotional attachment. The framework retains these possibilities because their behavioral implications may differ.

IV.6 Commitment components and organizational performance

The relationship between commitment and performance depends on the behaviors associated with each component. Affective commitment provides a plausible basis for organizationally directed contributions because membership is personally valued. Employees who identify with the organization may have reasons to cooperate, preserve working relationships, and contribute to activities supporting collective objectives. The framework proposes that these behaviors connect attachment with performance; it does not treat attachment itself as an organizational outcome.

Normative commitment may support dependable contribution through a sense of responsibility. Its implications depend partly on what employees understand that responsibility to require. An obligation to maintain service standards or support colleagues may contribute to collective functioning. An obligation interpreted only as remaining employed may sustain membership without generating the same breadth of

contribution. The distinction between continued membership and effective contribution is therefore relevant to normative as well as continuance commitment.

Continuance commitment has a more direct conceptual connection with retention. Remaining can preserve experience and reduce disruption, but these benefits depend on employees continuing to contribute effectively and on the relevance of their knowledge to organizational activities. High perceived costs of leaving do not, by themselves, explain initiative, cooperation, or service quality. The performance implications of continuance commitment should accordingly be specified through the consequences of continuity rather than assumed to match those of emotional attachment.

Proposition 5. Affective commitment and normative commitment grounded in endorsed organizational responsibility are positively related to NGO performance through cooperative and dependable contributions; the contribution of continuance commitment is more specifically associated with retention and the preservation of operational continuity.

This proposition differentiates the expected behavioral pathways without assuming that any commitment component independently determines organizational effectiveness. Service quality, efficiency, stakeholder relationships, and sustainability also depend on organizational resources and coordination (Lecy et al., 2012; Sowa et al., 2004). Employee commitment constitutes one explanatory element within this broader organizational setting.

IV.7 Organizational commitment as a partial mediating mechanism

The preceding propositions provide the basis for the integrated mediation argument. Motivational regulations help explain why employees undertake work, while commitment components help explain their attachment to the organization within which that work occurs. Mediation is proposed when a motivational experience becomes connected to organizational attachment and that attachment subsequently supports behavior relevant to organizational functioning.

The autonomous pathway is expected to operate particularly through affective commitment when employees associate valued work experiences with their employer. Identified regulation may also connect with normative commitment when employees endorse a responsibility toward the organization. The external material pathway may operate through continuance commitment when valued consequences depend on remaining. These pathways differ in their psychological meaning and expected behavioral consequences.

The proposed sequence does not exclude alternative relationships. Organizational experiences may influence motivation and commitment in parallel, and attachment may subsequently affect how employees interpret their work. The conceptual framework focuses on the motivation-to-commitment sequence because it addresses the paper's explanatory question, while recognizing that empirical evaluation would need to distinguish it from these alternatives. A statistical association among the three principal constructs would not, on its own, establish the proposed mechanism.

Proposition 6. Organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between employee motivation and NGO performance through differentiated pathways: affective and endorsed normative commitment transmit contributions associated with autonomous motivation, while continuance commitment transmits continuity-related contributions associated with organization-dependent material regulation.

Partial mediation is essential to this formulation. Employees may sustain valuable effort without strong employer attachment, and commitment may influence where contributions are maintained rather than whether employees are motivated to work at all. Retaining the direct pathway therefore preserves the distinction between motivation toward activities and commitment toward an organization.

IV.8 Contextual interpretation and synthesis

Prolonged resource insecurity provides a context in which these distinctions become especially consequential. Funding difficulties can restrict organizational capacity, while demanding service obligations continue to require employee contributions (Kabbara & Ozgit, 2023; Makdissi et al., 2022). Employees may remain motivated by professional interest or social purpose while experiencing uncertainty about the conditions under which they can continue working.

Herzberg's distinction between work content and employment conditions helps interpret this coexistence (Herzberg et al., 1959). Positive experiences of achievement or responsibility do not establish that employment conditions are adequate. Equally, dissatisfaction with those conditions does not establish the absence of meaningful motivation. The framework consequently treats resource insecurity as a context informing the proposed mechanisms, rather than assigning it a uniformly strengthening or weakening effect across every relationship.

Table 1 summarizes the propositions and the mechanisms through which the principal constructs are connected.

Table 1: Conceptual Propositions Linking Employee Motivation, Organizational Commitment, and NGO Performance

Proposition	Proposed relationship	Principal explanatory mechanism
P1	Autonomous motivation relates positively to NGO performance, particularly through activities requiring self-direction.	Interest and personal endorsement sustain task involvement and cooperation.
P2	Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation relate positively to affective commitment when valued work experiences are associated with the employer.	Organizational membership acquires personal significance through its perceived enabling role.
P3	External material regulation relates positively to continuance commitment when leaving entails perceived material losses.	Valued consequences become dependent on continued organizational membership.
P4	Identified regulation relates positively to normative commitment when continued organizational contribution is personally endorsed as a responsibility.	Employees accept an obligation directed toward the employing organization.
P5	Commitment components contribute to performance through different behavioral pathways.	Affective and endorsed normative commitment support cooperation and dependability; continuance commitment primarily supports retention and continuity.
P6	Organizational commitment partially mediates the motivation–performance relationship through differentiated components.	Motivational experiences become organizational attachment that supports specific forms of contribution, alongside direct motivational pathways.

Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis drawing on Gagné and Deci (2005), Gagné et al. (2015), Meyer and Allen (1991), Meyer et al. (1993), Wang (2022), and the nonprofit performance literature discussed in this paper.

The propositions establish a differentiated explanation of the motivation–commitment–performance relationship. Their central implication is that the organizational significance of motivation depends on its psychological basis, its connection to the employing organization, and the behavior through which attachment contributes to collective functioning. This explanatory structure provides the foundation for examining the framework's theoretical and managerial implications.

V. Discussion and Implications

V.1 Explaining differentiated pathways from motivation to performance

The framework addresses how organizational commitment helps explain the relationship between employee motivation and NGO performance. Its central argument is that this relationship depends on the psychological basis of motivation, the form of organizational attachment, and the behavior connecting individual experiences to collective outcomes. Motivation provides reasons for undertaking work, while organizational commitment helps explain why employees maintain their contributions within a particular organization. Their relationship therefore requires an account of how reasons for working become associated with organizational membership.

This distinction develops the multidimensional interpretation of motivation advanced by Gagné and Deci (2005) and Gagné et al. (2015). Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation provide different autonomous reasons for acting, while introjected and external regulations involve different sources of pressure or contingent consequences. These regulations may coexist, but a common level of effort does not imply a common organizational relationship. Employees can complete the same responsibilities while differing in their emotional attachment, perceived obligation, or dependence on continued employment.

The framework connects this motivational differentiation with Meyer and Allen's (1991) components of organizational commitment. It proposes that motivational experiences acquire organizational significance through specific mechanisms rather than through a general increase in loyalty. Autonomous motivation may become affective attachment when employees associate valued work experiences with their employer. Identified regulation may connect with normative commitment when employees endorse a responsibility toward the organization. External material regulation may connect with continuance commitment when valued consequences depend on remaining.

The theoretical contribution sought is therefore an explanation of differentiated pathways within an established relationship. Applying motivational and commitment distinctions jointly makes it possible to examine why apparently similar employee contributions may have different foundations and different implications for organizational continuity. It also identifies why a positive association between overall motivation and overall commitment would provide an incomplete account of the processes involved.

Table 2 locates the framework's proposed contribution in relation to the established foundations it draws upon. The comparison identifies the additional explanatory connections developed in the paper.

Table 2 : Established Foundations and the Proposed Explanatory Contribution

Analytical issue	Established foundation	Contribution developed in this paper
Motivational differentiation	Autonomous and controlled regulations explain different reasons for working (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gagné et al., 2015).	Connects selected regulations with distinct commitment pathways instead of assuming a uniform motivation–commitment relationship.
Organizational attachment	Affective, continuance, and normative commitment represent distinct psychological bonds (Meyer & Allen, 1991).	Specifies conditions connecting valued work, material dependence, and endorsed responsibility with attachment to the employing NGO.
Organizational support	Organizational practices and support inform nonprofit employee attitudes and behavior (Wang, 2022; Kluijtmans & Crucke, 2024).	Identifies the employer’s perceived enabling role as part of the explanation linking autonomous work motivation to affective attachment.
Commitment targets	Commitment to an organization is distinguishable from commitment to other targets (Meyer et al., 1993).	Applies this distinction to explain why dedication to work or beneficiaries may coexist with limited employer attachment.
Organizational outcomes	Nonprofit effectiveness is multidimensional (Sowa et al., 2004; Lecy et al., 2012; Treinta et al., 2020).	Distinguishes cooperation and dependable contribution from retention and continuity as behavioral connections to NGO performance.

Source: The Authors

The framework’s contribution resides in these conditional connections rather than in the individual constructs. It explains why motivation can remain strong without equivalent employer attachment and why continued membership can support continuity without necessarily supporting broader organizational contributions.

V.2 Clarifying how work motivation becomes organizational attachment

A central implication concerns the distinction between valuing work and valuing the employing organization. The framework does not assume that employees’ interest in their activities or endorsement of a social purpose necessarily produces organizational commitment. The connection depends on how employees understand the employer’s role in enabling those experiences. This condition gives the organization an explicit place in the explanation of attachment.

Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory contribute complementary perspectives to this argument. The former explains why work experiences support particular motivational regulations. The latter explains why valued organizational treatment may become associated with reciprocated attachment. Kluijtmans and Crucke (2024) already demonstrate the relevance of bringing these perspectives together in nonprofit research. The present framework uses their complementary logic to specify the proposed commitment-mediated relationship with performance, rather than treating theoretical combination itself as the contribution.

This interpretation also distinguishes two potentially concurrent processes. Organizational conditions may support employees’ autonomous motivation, and those same conditions may encourage attachment through perceptions of organizational support. Alternatively, autonomous motivation may become a source of attachment when employees attribute the opportunity to undertake valued work to their employer. The second process corresponds more closely to the proposed mediation pathway. Distinguishing it from parallel responses to organizational conditions is necessary for explaining what commitment contributes to the model.

Wang’s (2022) research supports placing organizational commitment within employees’ experiences of organizational practices and stakeholder relationships. It suggests that attachment should be examined in relation to what organizations do and how employees interpret those actions. The framework develops this relational emphasis by specifying that the organizational origin of valued experiences matters. An employee who finds work meaningful despite the employer’s practices may remain motivated without developing equivalent organizational attachment.

For NGO research, this distinction directs attention toward the target of commitment. Dedication to beneficiaries, an occupation, or a social cause can coexist with limited attachment to a particular employer. Meyer et al.’s (1993) differentiation of organizational and occupational commitment provides an established basis for maintaining this conceptual separation. The implication is that statements expressing social dedication should be interpreted according to their target rather than automatically classified as organizational commitment.

V.3 Distinguishing retention from effective organizational contribution

The framework also clarifies why continued employment and organizational performance should not be treated as equivalent outcomes. Affective, normative, and continuance commitment can each help explain remaining, but they do so through different psychological bases (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Their organizational significance depends on the contribution maintained through that continued membership.

Affective attachment provides a plausible basis for cooperation and organizationally directed involvement because employees personally value their membership. Normative commitment may support

dependable contribution when employees understand their responsibility as involving effective service and support for colleagues. Continuance commitment more directly concerns the perceived consequences of leaving. It can support continuity without independently explaining the quality or breadth of employees' contributions.

This distinction is consequential for the interpretation of retention. Stable staffing can preserve working relationships and organizational knowledge, but its benefits depend on how employees remain involved and how their contributions are coordinated. Low turnover therefore cannot, by itself, establish strong affective attachment or high organizational effectiveness. Equally, continuance commitment should not automatically be interpreted as organizationally unproductive. Its potential contribution lies in continuity, whose value depends on the surrounding work arrangements.

The multidimensional performance literature reinforces this interpretation. Sowa et al. (2004) and Lecy et al. (2012) establish the importance of distinguishing aspects of nonprofit effectiveness rather than assuming a single outcome. Treinta et al. (2020) further emphasize the relationship between performance measurement and nonprofit organizational characteristics. Within the proposed framework, a commitment pathway supporting continuity may have a different relationship with sustainability than with service innovation or stakeholder satisfaction. A complete explanation must therefore identify the outcome to which a particular behavioral mechanism is expected to contribute.

The resulting theoretical implication is that commitment should be assessed through both its psychological meaning and its organizational consequences. Treating all components as uniformly beneficial would obscure the distinction the framework seeks to explain. Treating retention as sufficient evidence of performance would likewise omit the behavioral and organizational processes connecting them.

V.4 Interpreting prolonged instability within the framework

Prolonged instability makes the coexistence of different motivational and commitment processes especially relevant. Research on Lebanese NGOs documents funding difficulties and resource-management challenges affecting organizational functioning (Kabbara & Ozgit, 2023; Makdissi et al., 2022). These conditions provide a setting in which employees may value their activities while questioning the continuity or adequacy of their employment arrangements.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory helps interpret why positive work experiences can coexist with dissatisfaction concerning employment conditions (Herzberg et al., 1959). Within the framework, this perspective directs attention to the difference between the content employees value and the conditions under which they undertake it. It does not establish that meaningful work compensates for material insecurity or that financial difficulties necessarily eliminate autonomous motivation.

Instability may also alter the practical importance of particular attachment mechanisms. When comparable employment opportunities are limited, the perceived costs of leaving may become more salient. At the same time, employees may retain emotional attachment or a sense of responsibility toward the organization. The framework accommodates this coexistence without assuming that one commitment component necessarily replaces another.

The contextual implication is therefore one of differentiated interpretation. Resource constraints do not supply a uniform prediction for every relationship in the framework. Their significance depends on the employment consequences employees anticipate, the organizational treatment they experience, and the commitments they maintain. Lebanon informs this reasoning as a context in which these conditions are relevant; the proposed mechanisms remain applicable to other NGO settings only where comparable conditions can be established.

V.5 Managerial implications for NGOs

The framework offers a basis for examining motivational practices according to the experiences they create and the organizational relationships they support. These implications follow from the proposed mechanisms and should be treated as theoretically informed considerations for managerial judgment.

A first implication is to distinguish employees' reasons for contributing. Visible effort provides limited information about whether employees find their work interesting, endorse its purpose, seek approval, experience internal pressure, or depend on its material consequences. Managers can develop a more accurate understanding through discussions of work experiences, supervisory feedback, and opportunities for employee voice. Such inquiry should allow multiple motives to coexist rather than assigning employees to fixed motivational categories.

A second implication concerns the organization's role in enabling valued work. Where employees endorse the mission, managers can strengthen the connection between that endorsement and organizational membership by providing conditions that support effective contribution. Clear responsibilities, constructive feedback, appropriate discretion, and supportive relationships can make the employer's enabling role visible in

everyday practice. These considerations follow from the emphasis on psychological need support developed by Gagné and Deci (2005) and Rigby and Ryan (2018).

A third implication is to interpret recognition and incentives through their perceived meaning. Recognition can communicate that an employee's contribution is valued, but it can also create pressure to maintain approval. Material incentives can provide valued support while remaining distinct from emotional attachment. The framework therefore encourages attention to how practices are administered and understood, alongside their formal design. Employees' responses cannot be inferred solely from whether a practice is classified as financial or nonfinancial.

A fourth implication concerns the distinction between retention and attachment. An NGO experiencing stable staffing may still contain substantial variation in why employees remain. Understanding whether membership reflects identification, endorsed responsibility, or perceived exit costs can help managers interpret workforce continuity. Decisions concerning supervision, development, and work organization should consequently draw on employees' experiences rather than treating low turnover as sufficient evidence of a strong organizational relationship.

A fifth implication is to avoid treating dedication to the mission as an unlimited organizational resource. Employees may remain committed to beneficiaries while encountering conditions that make continued employment difficult. The framework suggests that mission-related motivation and employment adequacy require separate attention. Under financial constraints, transparent communication and consistent treatment can clarify the organizational relationship, while practical efforts to address workload, remuneration, and continuity remain consequential. Nonfinancial support should not be presumed to resolve material insecurity.

Finally, workforce practices should be connected to specific organizational outcomes. Where service continuity is the concern, staffing stability and knowledge preservation may be especially relevant. Where coordination or service quality is the concern, cooperative behavior, professional judgment, and dependable execution require attention. The multidimensional view of NGO performance encourages managers to examine these connections explicitly rather than interpreting an improvement in employee attitudes as evidence that every aspect of organizational performance has improved.

V.6 Implications for organizational performance assessment

The framework suggests that performance assessment should preserve the distinction between employee experiences, work behavior, and organizational outcomes. Measures of motivation and commitment describe psychological states. Indicators of cooperation, dependability, and retention describe possible behavioral connections. Assessments of service quality, efficiency, stakeholder relationships, and sustainability concern collective functioning. Combining these categories without distinction would make it difficult to determine where an organizational improvement or difficulty originates.

This implication is consistent with the emphasis on appropriate nonprofit performance measurement developed by Treinta et al. (2020). An organization may maintain committed employees while facing resource constraints that prevent their contributions from producing the intended outcomes. Conversely, favorable organizational results may depend on funding or operational arrangements that are not captured by employee attitudes. Interpreting motivation and commitment within a broader assessment therefore helps identify their contribution without attributing organizational performance exclusively to workforce psychology.

The framework ultimately supports an integrated but differentiated managerial understanding. Employees' reasons for working, their attachment to the employer, and the organizational conditions enabling their contribution should be considered together while retaining their separate meanings. This approach provides a basis for directing managerial attention toward the mechanisms most relevant to particular workforce and performance concerns.

VI. Conclusion

This paper developed a conceptual framework explaining how organizational commitment connects employee motivation with NGO performance. It proposes that employees' reasons for working contribute to organizational outcomes both directly, through work behavior, and indirectly, through attachment to the employing organization. The framework differentiates motivational regulations, affective, continuance, and normative commitment, and the dimensions of NGO performance. These distinctions explain why similar levels of employee effort or continued membership may reflect different psychological processes and produce different organizational consequences.

The paper's originality lies in the explanatory differentiation developed within this relationship. Its contribution goes beyond placing organizational commitment between motivation and performance: it specifies how particular motivational regulations may become connected with particular forms of organizational attachment and how these connections may support different contributions. Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are proposed to support affective commitment when employees perceive the NGO as enabling valued

work experiences. Identified regulation may also support normative commitment when employees personally endorse responsibility toward the employer. External material regulation may connect with continuance commitment when valued employment consequences depend on remaining.

A central conceptual distinction concerns the difference between valuing work and valuing the organization providing it. Dedication to professional activities, beneficiaries, or a social purpose does not automatically establish attachment to a particular NGO. The framework makes this connection explicit by examining the organization's perceived role in employees' motivational experiences. It similarly distinguishes retention from effective contribution: remaining may preserve organizational knowledge and continuity, but does not independently establish cooperation, service quality, or operational efficiency. The proposed framework therefore connects psychological states with organizational performance through specified behavioral processes.

The integration of Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory supports this explanation, while the three-component model differentiates organizational attachment and Herzberg's perspective informs the interpretation of employment conditions. Prolonged resource insecurity provides a context in which these distinctions become particularly relevant. Meaningful work and organizational attachment may coexist with dissatisfaction or uncertainty concerning employment. The framework accommodates these experiences without assuming that mission-related motivation compensates for material insecurity or that instability affects every pathway uniformly.

For NGO managers, the framework encourages attention to employees' reasons for contributing, the bases of their organizational attachment, and the conditions enabling their efforts to support collective objectives. Motivational practices should be interpreted through employees' experiences rather than their formal designation as financial or nonfinancial incentives. Workforce continuity should likewise be considered alongside cooperation, dependability, and knowledge preservation. This differentiated approach connects managerial decisions with specific dimensions of NGO performance.

The framework remains bounded by its selected literature foundation, its focus on paid NGO employment, and the theoretical status of its propositions. Its mechanisms require examination across organizations with different missions, employment arrangements, and resource conditions. Future research should distinguish motivational regulations and commitment targets, investigate temporal ordering and alternative explanations, and connect employee experiences with organizational outcomes using multiple information sources. Particular attention should be given to the proposed endorsement-based normative pathway and to the conditions under which retention contributes to effective organizational functioning.

The paper ultimately advances an explanation in which the organizational value of motivation depends on how reasons for working become attachment to an employer and how that attachment supports collective activity. Organizational commitment represents a differentiated, partial mechanism within this process. Understanding its components and behavioral consequences provides a more precise basis for explaining how NGOs sustain employee contributions and organizational performance.

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