

# PREDICTORS OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT IN ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this study consists in the analysis of relationship between the level of psychological contract fulfillment, affective commitment and the satisfaction level of teachers' needs. Data were collected from 168 teachers, 89.3% are women, 10.7% are men with age between 19 and 61 years. A cross-sectional survey research was used. All 4 hypotheses of the research were confirmed. The data shows that affective commitment has two significant predictors (degree of psychological needs satisfaction and intensity of psychological contract) on a sample of 168 teachers from pre-university education. In our study, the need for autonomy dimension is approached in correlation with affective commitment and the fulfillment's degree of psychological contract. The autonomy feeling at workplace is extensively analysed in self-determination theory; the sense of choice for your own action in order to get a higher performance at workplace seems to become a major point of research in organizational psychology and human resource management. The theoretical and applied underpinnings of this research are detailed in the conclusions.*

**Key words:** *psychological contract, basic psychological needs, affective commitment.*

## 1. Introduction

Educators, teachers, professors are the ones bearing an essential role in the development of human personality, embodying extremely valuable human resources for the evolution of the entire society and carrying a major social responsibility. Teachers have the moral obligation of exerting a constructive influence on students and passing on to them, the set of values that students will follow during their entire professional and social evolution.

While performing such a role, the teacher does not represent a neutral element, but he/she engages in this profession everything he/she believes in, says and does, and depending on a certain degree of psychological and material comfort. It is only fair that teachers should be properly valued and gratified for the resources they invest into their work, so that their satisfaction in terms of effort and motivation for the teaching process should not diminish significantly. More than that, it was discovered that people who are content with their work, tend to have a better performance (Bono, Judge, Patton, &

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Thoresen, 2001; Chughtai & Zafar, 2006) and that individuals that have a high level of commitment towards their work also will show a lower level of leaving intention to the company they work for (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006).

Darie (2011) conducted a research with the aim of identifying the extent in which the organizational justice perceived by teachers relates to the level of satisfaction they feel, in terms of the work they perform, but also to their commitment towards the organization they are part of. Results indicate that “interactional justice” seen as sensitivity in the treatment offered for the teachers, during the process of being gratified, it is the single factor that is associated with a high level of work satisfaction, consistency commitment and affective commitment.

Before developing their three-component model, Meyer and Allen (1984) introduced a bi-dimensional model of organizational commitment and named it affective and continuance commitment. In their later study, Allen and Meyer (1990) added a third dimension called normative commitment and it was incorporated it along with affective and continuance commitment into their model. Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 67) define affective commitment as “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization”; so far, it is shaped that the organization’s expectations and the individual needs are reality based, which is reflected by the psychological contract (Mc Donald & Makin, 2000). Within this frame, the affective commitment of an employee may be considered part of the agreement between employee and organization (Angle & Perry, 1983; Rousseau, 1995).

Therefore, once an employee feels that the psychological contract has been breached, he/she will stop having confidence in the company and will be convinced that the organization will never make up for it (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). The employee will perceive this breach as an imbalance in the exchange relationship and will struggle to bring back the balance in the employee-employer relationship. Empirical studies show positive correlations between affective commitment and some aspects of work experience, including the supervisor support (Dixon, Cunningham, Sagas, Turner, & Kent, 2005) and mentorship (Payne & Huffman, 2005).

Based on the social exchange theory, employees will decrease the level of their affective commitment in order to restore the balance. Empirical evidence indicates that the perceived level of breach and commitment are negatively related to each other (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino, 2000). When the affective commitment of an employee is strong, he/she will want to stay with the company due to the emotional bond existing between them (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Millward and Hopkins’ statement (1998), the psychological contract and the affective commitment are related. Shapiro-Coyle and Kessler (2000) asserted that when the employer complies with the obligations towards the employee, the employee’s response will be on the same level and he/she will feel appreciated and will prove his commitment to the employer.

The relationship between the psychological contract fulfillment and the affective commitment will be explained by using the three elements suggested by Nelson and Quick in their study (2008); confidence in the organization’s goals and set of values, the willingness to make an effort for the organization he/she works for, the desire to stay a member of that company. It is more likely that a strong fulfillment of the psychological contract would positively influence the employee’s willingness to make efforts for the company. Additionally, when an employee feels that the promises of the company made through the psychological contract are not being fulfilled, it is very probable that the

employee's trust in the company goals and values would decrease, and his/her desire to be part in that company as well (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002, Nelson & Quick, 2008).

In a study conducted by Flood, Turner, Ramamoorthy and Pearson (2001), the authors identified a positive correlation between the psychological contract's fulfillment and the affective commitment. The psychological contract relies on mutual promises. These promises render possible or not the fulfillment of the psychological contract on the part of the employee (Morisson & Robinson, 1997). Thus, the concept of psychological contract fulfillment is related to the level of obligation fulfillment of one part to the other (Rousseau, 1989).

Psychological contract fulfillment gives the employee a feeling of being appreciated, it leads to a higher level of confidence, and has a positive impact on the performance for the employee and the organization as well (Conway & Briner, 2002; Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Shapiro-Coyle & Kessler, 2000). If employees feel that their employer does not respond with the same level of commitment, there is always a possibility for them in perceiving such lack of commitment as a breach in their agreement, and they will have the tendency to balance the relationship by developing a lack of trust or a lack of commitment to the company (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

In a longitudinal study having the purpose of evaluating the relationships between psychological contract fulfillment, work commitment, and turnover intention, Matthijs and Kooij (2011) analyzed the existence of a significant positive relation in time between the psychological level of fulfillment and work commitment, as well as a lower level of turnover intention, but only with employees with little seniority. Rayton and Yalabic (2014) did not confirm the existence of a direct relationship between the psychological level of fulfillment and work commitment, but they rather supported the theory of a significant positive relationship between the two constructs, having the work satisfaction as a mediator.

According to the Self-Determination Theory (Tanculescu, 2014) motivation, performance, and development will reach the maximum level within the contexts that provide the possibility of satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and bonding. The competence is called experiencing the feeling of efficiency in bonding with the environment and satisfying a need that is closely related to the individual's motivation in his/her activities (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Clarkson and Shaw (1992, p. 23) refer to the relationships between the members of an organization, relationships through which employees are encouraged, "... to find their own source of meaning and scope inside them, self-expression being easier to manifest. This type of relationship allows the development of natural desires and values that lie in the individual, apart from the leader or the organization". This is the type of relationship in terms of being supervisor and being supervised, which allows us a development in an original manner – a relationship which grants maximum performance. Later, Sluss and Ashfort (2007) promote the idea of identity level for an organization and the importance of a relationship between work colleagues, relationship that may have a major impact on the professional development of employee.

The organization is the base of negotiation process between the individual's identity (the individual with his/her set of skills and traits), the group identity (the individual's traits as part of a system with values and skills belonging to the organization), and the bonding identity (the individual's opinions on the nature of his/her role and the other

roles in the organization). When this negotiation is a healthy and solid one, it represents the permanent intention of getting approval from all the other parties involved. Autonomy is the most analyzed dimension of the self-determination theory, and it refers to the testing of one's willpower, the testing of feeling able to choose when undertaking an action, an action working on one's best interest (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

According to Van den Broeck (2012), a fundamental necessity implies a certain tension which if it is satisfied, leads to a state of good health and wellness and if not, it may cause illness and psychological discomfort. The important aspect is that all three types of needs must be satisfied in order for the state of wellness to manifest itself in full. An environment which only satisfies the need of competence but not the need of autonomy and bonding, will not lead to a very high level of comfort and wellness.

Many studies came to support the self-determination theory and it is proved that satisfying the basic psychological needs it is related to an optimal functioning such wellness (an increase of work commitment and work satisfaction), a positive attitude manifested through a higher level of commitment to the organization, through an adaptive behavior and higher performance (Lian, Ferris & Brown, 2012; Lynch, Plant & Ryan, 2005; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, de Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). Implicitly, researchers mention the fact that satisfying the basic psychological needs related to work has an impact on the individual's life outside that context as well and is associated with a better overall accommodation (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004).

Also Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov and Kornazheva (2001) proved that supervised support and autonomy help raise the level of commitment, self-esteem and diminish anxiety. Additionally, Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte and Lens (2008) mentions the fact that requests and resources, as work features, are closely related to frustration and necessity satisfying, and therefore they are associated with the burnout phenomenon and work commitment. Greguras and Dieffendorf (2009, as cited in Van den Broeck, 2012) indicated that the feeling of compatibility with the organization, the team and with work itself contribute to the fulfillment of such needs as autonomy, bonding, and competence and it refers to the organizational commitment and performance.

## **2. Method and Hypotheses**

In this study we started from the premise that psychological contract and the level of fulfillment for basic psychological needs could be significant predictors for affective commitment.

H1: We presume that there is a positive correlation between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the affective commitment of employees.

H2: We presume that there is a positive correlation between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the degree of psychological contract fulfillment.

H 3: We presume that there is a positive correlation between the degree of psychological contract fulfillment and affective commitment.

H 4: We presume that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the degree of psychological contract fulfillment are significant predictors for affective commitment.

The sample consists of 168 teachers from several educational institutions (Brasov and Sibiu county); about 89 % are women and 10 % are men, aged between 19 and 61 years,

the mean is 37.86, and standard deviation is 11.08; 74.1% of teachers were working full time (8 hours per day) and 25.9% part-time (less than 8 hours per day); 97.6% of respondents working in the public sector, 2.4% in the private sector; 65.5% have an employment contract concluded for an indefinite period and 34.5% over a period of time.

Regarding the professional training: 13.1% have secondary education; 4.8% college; 56% of them have bachelor's degree and 25% of them have doctoral and/or master's degree. The surveys were applied in paper and pencil format in September-November 2016. The teachers participated in the study as volunteers, without being offered money or other benefits. For the analysis and interpretation of data, we used SPSS, version 21.

For the investigation we have used one questionnaire for each construct. The *Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale* (W-NBS), made by Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens and Lens (2010), was adapted in Romania by Țănculescu and Iliescu (2014). For our group of 168 participants, teachers, the coefficient Alpha Cronbach is .82 - need for autonomy coefficient  $\alpha = .79$ ; need for competence coefficient  $\alpha = .73$ ; need for relationship  $\alpha = .81$ .

Organizational commitment was assessed using the *Organizational Commitment Scale* (Allen & Meyer, 1990). For our group, of 168 participants the coefficient Alpha Cronbach for the entire scale is  $\alpha = .75$ , and we used the subscale which measures the affective commitment, Alpha Cronbach  $\alpha = .76$ .

To measure the degree of fulfillment for psychological contract, we used *Psychological Contract Inventory* (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). The inventory provides an assessment of the content and achievement of psychological contract in the first instance by specific terms ("I offer training opportunities") that may be encountered on the employment relationship; it evaluates the respondent's perception of fulfillment's degree towards organizational obligations and conversely, organization's perception towards employees. For our group of 168 participants the Alpha Cronbach's is .76.

### 3. Results

In Table 1 are presented the Pearson's correlations between the variables (N = 168).

Table 1  
*Means, standard deviations and Pearson's coefficients between variables*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. W-NBS	71.21	9.51					
2. Affective commitment	28.11	5.68	.59**				
3. Psychological contract	15.71	2.48	.35**	.39**			
4. Need for autonomy	21.97	3.83	.78**	.52**	.45**		
5. Need for competence	26.55	3.86	.80*	.31**	.08**	.46**	
6. Need for relationship	22.72	4.22	.80**	.57**	.31**	.43**	.46**

\*\*p<.001, \*p<.05

The result reveals a positive correlation between the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs at work and affective commitment ( $r = .59$ ;  $p < .001$ ). So, there is a significant correlation between the satisfaction's level of basic psychological needs and the level of affective commitment at work, and also there are positive correlations between the level of satisfaction for the basic psychological needs and the degree of

fulfillment for the psychological contract ( $r = .39$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and between fulfillment's degree for the psychological contract and the affective commitment ( $r = .35$ ;  $p < .001$ ); hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 are confirmed. Between the need for autonomy and affective commitment, the correlation is medium and significant ( $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ); between the need for autonomy and the degree of psychological contract fulfillment there is a moderate correlation ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ); also, the correlation between the need for relationship and fulfillment's degree of psychological contract is low but significant ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the analysis of the results, the linearity condition was maintained for the use of regression as a method of data analysis.

Table 2

*The linear regression between affective commitment (dependent variable) and predictors: psychological contract fulfillment and basic psychological needs*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2113.743	2	1056.872	53.006	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	3289.876	165	19.939		
Total	5403.619	167			

Analyzing table 2 and table 3 we can see that hypothesis 4 is confirmed: affective commitment is predicted by two significant predictors: the degree of fulfillment of basic psychological needs ( $\beta = .52$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the intensity of the psychological contract fulfillment between employer and employee ( $\beta = .205$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In the table 4, the data show a significant main effect of W-NBS (total psychological needs) on dependent variable "affective commitment" ( $F = 3.10$ ;  $p < .001$ ); the cumulative effect of the two independent variables (W-NBS and psychological contract fulfillment) is statistically insignificant.

It can be concluded that although we achieved a significant causal relationship between affective commitment and the independent variables ( $F = 3.10$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $\eta^2 = .849$ ), the cumulative effect of the two factors, (also significant predictors) is statistically insignificant ( $F = 1.03$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $\eta^2 = .677$ ); between the two predictors there is no strong association on affective commitment, which signals the fact that the two independent variables (satisfaction of psychological needs and psychological contract) can function as significant predictors in a singular way for the dependent variable "affective commitment".

Table 3

*Standardized Coefficients Beta in linear regression with affective commitment as dependent variable*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.489	2.93		-.50	.61
	W-NBS	.312	.039	.52	8.02	.001
	CP	.469	.149	.20	3.15	.002

a. *Dependent Variable: Affective commitment*

Table 4  
 MANOVA for variables: “affective commitment” as dependent variable, psychological contract fulfillment (independent variable) and “satisfaction of the basic psychological needs”

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4586.45 <sup>a</sup>	128	35.832	3.10	.027	.84
Intercept	57752.50	1	57752.50	2756.28	.001	.98
W-NBS	1638.24	38	43.11	2.058	.014	.66
CP	289.82	10	28.98	1.383	.224	.26
SNPM * CP	1710.66	79	21.65	1.033	.465	.67
Error	817.16	39	20.95			
Total	138238.00	168				
Corrected Total	5403.61	167				

a.  $R$  Squared = .849 (Adjusted  $R$  Squared = .35)

It can be concluded that although we achieved a significant causal relationship between affective commitment and the independent variables ( $F = 3.10$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $\eta = .849$ ), the cumulative effect of the two factors, (also significant predictors) is statistically insignificant ( $F = 1.03$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $\eta = .677$ ); between the two predictors there is no strong association on affective commitment, which signals the fact that the two independent variables (satisfaction of psychological needs and psychological contract) can function as significant predictors in a singular way for the dependent variable “affective commitment”.

#### 4. Conclusions

In our study, a very important dimension “the need for autonomy” is approached in correlation to affective commitment and the fulfillment’s degree regarding the psychological contract fulfillment. All 4 hypotheses of the research were confirmed. The data shows that affective commitment has two significant predictors (degree of satisfaction for the basic psychological needs and intensity of psychological contract) on a sample of 168 teachers from pre-university education.

The need for autonomy at workplace, social sharing activities and the need for competence in teaching activities are very important dimensions in the development of affective commitment towards the profession and the employer (schools).

The feeling of “autonomy” at workplace is analyzed extensively in self-determination theory; the sense of choice for your own action in order to get a higher performance at workplace seems to become a major point of research in organizational psychology and human resource management. When the need for autonomy is satisfied, it seems that the “employee teacher” expresses a behavior with a more initiative in his work; also, he tends to fulfill his obligations from psychological contract and it is possible to increase his confidence in the organization's goals and values (a matter of loyalty and fair-play toward

the employer, two dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior).

As a limitation of our research, we identified the following: the relatively large difference between male and female participants could have affected the effects sizes of the statistical coefficients obtained in our research. This is mainly due to the higher number of female participants than men participants who are enrolled in the organizations concerned. Another aspect was the lack of tools for assessing a more in depth external validity of our measurement. In the structure of the methodology we used tools based on self-report measurements; therefore, we consider that using an experimental methodology would increase the internal validity of the measured constructs. Also, this would have led us to more significant results regarding the connection psychological contract- affective commitment- basic psychological needs.

In order to expand the issues of our research, the study should be developed for a large number of participants, including professors from academia environment.

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