

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Commitment and Performance of Academic Support Staff

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses changes in commitment and performance of academic support staff in higher education. Work situations and locations changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are suspected to affect the commitment of academic support staff, both affective, normative, and continual commitments, which in turn can affect their performance in serving academic units. The research was conducted by collecting data using a purposive sampling. Analysis of differences in commitment and performance of academic support staff based on differences in gender, position, and proportion of telework (between work from home and work from office), tested with One-Way Anova and effect analysis from commitment to employee performance was tested using Structural Equation Model. The results of the research show that female staff with positions as division heads who work from home, are more loyal to institutions, have higher improvement efforts, and perform better work efficiency than male staff. Furthermore, continual commitment, which is measured in staff readiness to learn the online system, take initiative in conditions of social restriction, and improvement efforts, has the strongest impact on employee performance.

Keywords: *Affective Commitment, Normative comittment, Continual commitment, Higher education performance, Academic support staff.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During this COVID-19 pandemic, most higher education institutions imposed restrictions on activities, reduced direct contact related to the teaching and learning process of lecturers and students, limited offline meetings between academic staff and academic support staff. In this difficult situation, most higher education institutions, work online and work from home (WFH). Working from home is a big challenge for academic staff and also academic support staff. They are not used to the culture and organizational climate at home, lack of attention due to frequent disruption of family members, work-life conflicts, and work-life imbalances faced by personnel. Many staff do not have the readiness to run an online work system, nor do they have adequate IT equipment. Most of the staff are stressed and dissatisfied with their jobs. Staff are unsure about their institution's performance, their job security, and also about their future [1].

The main responsibility of institution is to look after the well-being of their staffs and engage them properly so that they always feel committed and satisfied. Staffs who are committed to their institution are always satisfied with their work. Leaders must provide

motivation, increase their morale, provide security, and an open environment, so that staff can easily contact them if they encounter problems. Leaders can use multimedia for communication in this difficult situation. There must be a transparent policy, so that staffs do not feel stressed about their work [2].

During this pandemic, many changes have occurred. Ways and mechanisms of work must change according to circumstances that are all limited. The volume of work that in normal times was a lot, suddenly decreased drastically during the pandemic. The possibility of a reduction in income due to a reduction in the volume of work worries the staff. The commitment of the staff can be disrupted, it can reduce the institution performance. It is very important to maintain staff commitment during difficult times as one of the important assets for higher education institutions [3].

In order to make decisions effectively in managing resources in these difficult times, it is necessary to know whether changes in work mechanisms and situations, possible reductions in income and increased uncertainty about the future, will affect staff commitment. Also, whether the background of the staff, differences in income and family burdens, affect

their commitment. Furthermore, whether differences in commitment affect their performance. This change is important for higher education institutions to know, so that HRD managers can manage them more precisely. Research on staff commitment as a very vital aspect of a company's human capital, as well as research on the relationship between commitment and staff performance in an institution, have been carried out by previous researchers [4, 5, 6, 7, and 8]. However, during this prolonged pandemic, it is necessary to examine changes in staff commitment and performance, especially academic support staff of a higher education institution.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee commitment or work commitment can take different forms. Some definitions of commitment in different contexts. Goal-related commitment is goal-bound, believing in goals and wanting to achieve them reflects a level of commitment [5]. Organization-related commitment is a psychological state that binds individuals to the organization, employees are more loyal to the organization and less likely to leave it [9]. Work-related commitment is the possibility that a person continues to work in a job and feels psychologically attached to it [4].

Employee commitment can be divided into three dimensions, namely affective commitment, Continuance commitment, and normative commitment [9]. Affective commitment is positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in the organization, is associated with the emotions that the employee shows towards the organization. Describes the type of bond that forms between these two entities. The level of affective commitment gives the opportunity to assess the level of employee identification with a given enterprise. An employee who has this type of commitment is satisfied with his job (work is not a compulsion) [8]. Affective commitment is indicated by are feeling happy to spend the rest of the career in the organization, feeling that organizational problems are also their own problems, feeling the organization as part of the family, feel emotionally attached to the organization, the organization has multiple meanings, and a strong sense of belonging to the organization [9]. Continuance commitment is the result of the perceived cost associated with leaving, relates to how much employees feel the need to stay at their organisation. In employees that are continuance committed, the underlying reason for their commitment lies in their need to stay with the organisation. Possible reasons for needing to stay with organisations vary, but the main reasons relate to a lack of work alternatives, and remuneration. Continuance commitment is indicated by difficulty leaving work even though the employee

wants to. Too many things will be disrupted if the employee leaves the organization. Staying with a job in an organization is an employee's need and desire. Employees believe they have few options when considering leaving the organization. A negative consequence of leaving a job in today's organizations is the dearth of alternatives available elsewhere. One of the main reasons employees continue to work for the organization is that leaving will require considerable personal sacrifice [9]. Normative commitment is feelings of obligation to remain with the organization resulting from values and beliefs, shaped mainly by the norms found in a given society. In addition, the employee feels that the work done is his duty. He thinks he should have a special level of loyalty. A person with this type of commitment believes that it is appropriate to follow moral principles, therefore, the so-called obligation to continue employment [8]. Normative commitment is indicated by feel obliged to remain in the organization, feel guilty if leaving the organization, feel obliged to be loyal to the organization, feel owed a lot to the organization [9].

Employee commitment is one of the key factors affecting the success of an organization [8]. Employee commitment is very important for organizational performance. Employee commitment affects profitability, increased sales, customer satisfaction, and decreased staff turnover. Employee commitment can be influenced by several factors such as gender, nature of work, length of service, and management style [7]. Organizational performance is strongly influenced by employee performance, no organization can stand alone. Employees are the most valuable asset that an organization has, because humans coordinate all other resources to achieve optimal results. Committed employees are very important for the organization, committed employees have an impact on higher organizational performance and very low employee turnover rates. Furthermore, the performance of an organization is directly related to the level of employee commitment. Employees who are committed to their organization, not only stay with their organization, but also exert more effort and tend to perform better than employees who are not committed. Employee commitment can benefit the organization in several ways such as improving performance, reducing absenteeism, and turnover resulting in sustainable productivity [7].

During this pandemic, employee commitment must continue to be maintained and developed. Because employee commitment is an important cause of employee loyalty and organizational performance. It should be realized, that the pressures and obstacles experienced by organizations during this pandemic continue to increase, the competition is getting tougher than before. These increased pressures and barriers have resulted in reduced commitment by employers to

employees. Employee commitment to work and to the organization is also reduced. This decline in commitment needs to be anticipated and controlled by the organization. In contrast, committed employees bring added value to the organization, including through determination, proactive support, relatively high productivity, and awareness of quality. However, employees who are not committed to work can hinder organizational success [6].

3. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Based on the literature study above, it is necessary to test the following hypotheses:

H1. There is no significant difference in affective commitment among male and female, among different work position, among different proportion of work from home (WFH) and work from office (WFO) of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

H2. There is no significant difference in the continuance commitment among male and female, among different work position, among different proportion of work from home (WFH) and work from office (WFO) of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

H3. There is no significant difference in the normative commitment among male and female, among different work position, among different proportion of work from home (WFH) and work from office [WFO] of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

H4. There is no significant effect of affective commitment to employee performance of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

H5. There is no significant effect of normative commitment to employee performance of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

H6. There is no significant effect of continual commitment to employee performance of academic support staff of higher education during Covid-19 pandemic.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was designed using a descriptive method, which compares affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, overall commitment, and performance among male and female, different family burdens, different levels of responsibility, and different sources of additional income of academic support staff of higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research population is all academic support staff of all private higher education in Indonesia, the sample is taken from the academic support staff of a private higher education in Surabaya, the samples is taken by purposive sampling procedure. Data were collected using a questionnaire that has been developed by Allen and Meyer [9]. The questionnaire consists of several question items for the affective commitment scale, continuance commitment scale, and normative commitment scale. Staff performance was measured in four statement items using a Likert scale consisting of five categories (agree-disagree). The validity and reliability of this instrument have been tested and it was found that the instrument is valid and reliable with Cronbach's alpha of 0.8, indicating that this performance scale is reliable. Data collection was carried out offline in July-September 2021, a total of 375 questionnaires were distributed, 242 questionnaires were answered completely in all aspects by respondents, so the response rate was 64.5%. Furthermore, data analysis with descriptive statistics, where the assumption of normality of the data is tested with the Shapiro-Wilks test, the assumption of homogeneity of variance with Levene's test, and to compare groups of respondents with the Mann-Whitney test [10]. The causality relationship between construct of commitment and employee performance was tested with Structural Equation Modelling using SmartPLS 3.0 software [11].

5. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The respondents of this study (Table 1) are academic support staff of a leading private higher education institution in Surabaya. Where the percentage of men and women were balanced (55% and 45.0%), most of them held positions as staff 71.1%, and almost equal their proportions were more WFH (35.5%) and more WFO (28.5%), and balanced WFH - WFO (35.5).

Table 1 Respondent Demography

Gender	Men 55.0%	Women 45.0%		
Position	Head of unit 3.7%	Head of Div 8.7%	Staff 71.1%	Field officer 16.5%
Telework	More WFO 28.5%	Balanced 35.5%	More WFH 35.5%	

5.1. Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Gender

Based on Levene's test for equality of variances and t-test for equality of means (Table 2), male and female academic support staff differ significantly in the dimensions of affective commitment, especially in indicators of loyalty and honesty. Female staff feel the need to be more open, more honest than male staff in expressing what problems they face when working during a pandemic, women also show more loyalty to the institution. Meanwhile, in other dimensions of commitment, it is no different. Based on employee performance, the work efficiency of women and men is significantly different, women staff are described as working more efficiently during the pandemic.

5.2. Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Position

The difference in commitment when analyzed by position (Tabel 3), using One Way Anova, it is found that most of the indicators are not different. On the Affective Commitment dimension, significant differences only occur in the loyalty and responsibility indicators. The head of division has higher loyalty than the field officer, meanwhile the head of division has more responsibility than the head of the unit. In the Normative Commitment dimension, significant differences only occur in the indicators of obey orders, head of unit and head of division higher obey orders than field officers. On the Continual Commitment dimension, significant differences only occur in the indicators of take initiative and improvement effort. Head of division has higher initiative than field officer, meanwhile head of unit and head of division have higher improvement effort than field officer. Furthermore, if analyzed on employee performance, the head of division has significantly higher efficiency performance than the field officer, and the timely performance of the head of division is significantly higher than the head of unit.

5.3. Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Proportion of Telework

The difference in commitment when analyzed by proportion of telework (Tabel 4), more work from the office (more WFO), from home (more WFH), or balanced between WFH and WFO. Analyzed with One Way Anova, it is found that most of the indicators are not different. The difference only occurs in the indicators of loyalty, sense of belonging, and honesty from the Affective Commitment dimension, the obey order indicator on the Normative Commitment dimension, and the improvement effort indicator on the

Continual Commitment dimension. Academic support employees who have a higher proportion of WFH and balanced WFH and WFO have higher levels of loyalty than staff who are more WFO. The sense of belonging to the institution from staff who are more WFH is significantly higher than staff who are more WFO, while it is not different from staff who work balanced between WFH and WFO. Likewise with honesty levels, staff who work more WFH feel their honesty levels are significantly higher than staff who work more WFO, while this is not the case for balanced staff WFO and WFH. Furthermore, for indicators from the Normative Commitment dimension, it was found that staff with more WFH and a balanced proportion of work WFH and WFO had a significantly higher obey order than staff with more WFO. Likewise, if measured by improvement effort, staff with more WFH significantly higher improvement effort than staff with more WFO. but staff who are balanced WFH and WFO there is no difference.

5.4. Effect of Commitment to Employee Performance

Following is a structural equation model (Figure 1) to examine the impact of affective, normative, and continual commitment on employee performance. Prior to analyzing the impact relationship, this model has been tested for goodness of fit using the coefficient of determination R^2 . Obtained $R^2 = 0.828$, meaning that 82.8% of the variance of the employee performance variable was contributed by the variance of the three predictor variables, namely the affective, normative, and continual commitment variants based on the sample data of this study. This means that this structural equation model is quite good at representing the sample data and is suitable for further analysis.

Three commitment variables have a significant positive impact on employee performance (Table 5) based on a significance level of $\alpha = 5\%$. Continual commitment variable has the highest impact on employee performance, path coefficient 0.619, meaning that an increase in one level of continual commitment will have an impact of 61.9% on employee performance. Furthermore, normative commitment has a significant positive impact, 0.205 on employee performance, meaning that an increase in one level of normative commitment will have an impact of 20.5% on employee performance. Affective commitment has a significant positive impact too, 0.174 on employee performance, meaning that an increase in one level of affective commitment will have an impact of 17.4% on employee performance.

Continual commitment reflected by employees who are ready to learn, full of initiative, always trying to make improvements, trying to always be present on time, and always ready to work, has the highest and

most significant impact on employee performance during this pandemic Covid-19. This is compared to normative commitment and affective commitment. Where normative commitment is measured by the desire of employees to cooperate, the desire to serve,

obey orders or regulations, and always appreciate suggestions. While affective commitment can be observed from the sense of belonging, honesty, and a sense of responsibility of the employees.

Table 2 Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Gender

Employee Commitment		Levene's Test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		
Dimension	Indicators	F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Affective Commitment	Loyalty	18,84	0,00*	-2,09	0,04*	-0,08
	Sense of belonging	5,34	0,02*	-1,33	0,18	-0,07
	Honesty	12,18	0,00*	-1,96	0,05*	-0,09
	Responsibility	0,31	0,58	-0,78	0,43	-0,04
	Obey orders	0,59	0,44	-0,96	0,34	-0,05
Normative Commitment	Willingness to serve	0,24	0,62	-0,10	0,92	-0,01
	Willingness to cooperate	0,00	0,95	-0,50	0,62	-0,03
	Appreciate suggestion	6,34	0,01*	0,68	0,49	0,04
	Always present	2,04	0,15	-2,15	0,03*	-0,15
Continual Commitment	Ready to work	0,34	0,56	-1,35	0,18	-0,10
	Take initiative	7,13	0,01*	-0,32	0,75	-0,02
	Improvement efforts	1,00	0,32	-2,63	0,01*	-0,18
	Ready to learn	5,66	0,02	0,85	0,40	0,06
Employee Performance	Indicators	F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	Accurate work	3,94	0,05*	1,75	0,08	0,13
	Efficient work	4,60	0,03*	-2,69	0,01*	-0,16
	Finish on time	12,70	0,00*	-1,40	0,16	-0,09
	Works results as expected	0,15	0,70	-1,68	0,10	-0,10

Table 3 Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Position

Commitment score on a scale of 1-5	Affective Commitment				Normative Commitment		Continual Commitment				Employee Performance			
	Loyalty		Responsibility		Obey orders		Take initiative		Improvement efforts		Efficiency		On time	
Group Position	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Head of Unit	3,89	3,89	3,56			3,89	3,44	3,44		3,78	3,78	3,78	3,33	
Head of Div		3,98		3,95		3,91		3,79		3,79		3,83		3,81
Staff	3,97	3,97	3,85	3,85	3,82	3,82	3,48	3,48	3,52	3,52	3,67	3,67	3,66	3,66
Field officer	3,75		3,68	3,68	3,54		3,29		3,32		3,46		3,62	3,62

Table 4 Difference of Employee Commitment and Performance based on Proportion of Telework

Commitment score on a scale of 1-5	Affective Commitment						Normative Commitment		Continual Commitment	
	Loyalty		Sense of belonging		Honesty		Obey orders		Improvement efforts	
Group Position	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
More WFO	3,84		3,70		3,77		3,63		3,38	

Balanced WFH &WFO		3,95	3,85	3,85	3,87	3,87		3,83	3,52	3,52
More WFH		3,98		3,89		3,94		3,86		3,63

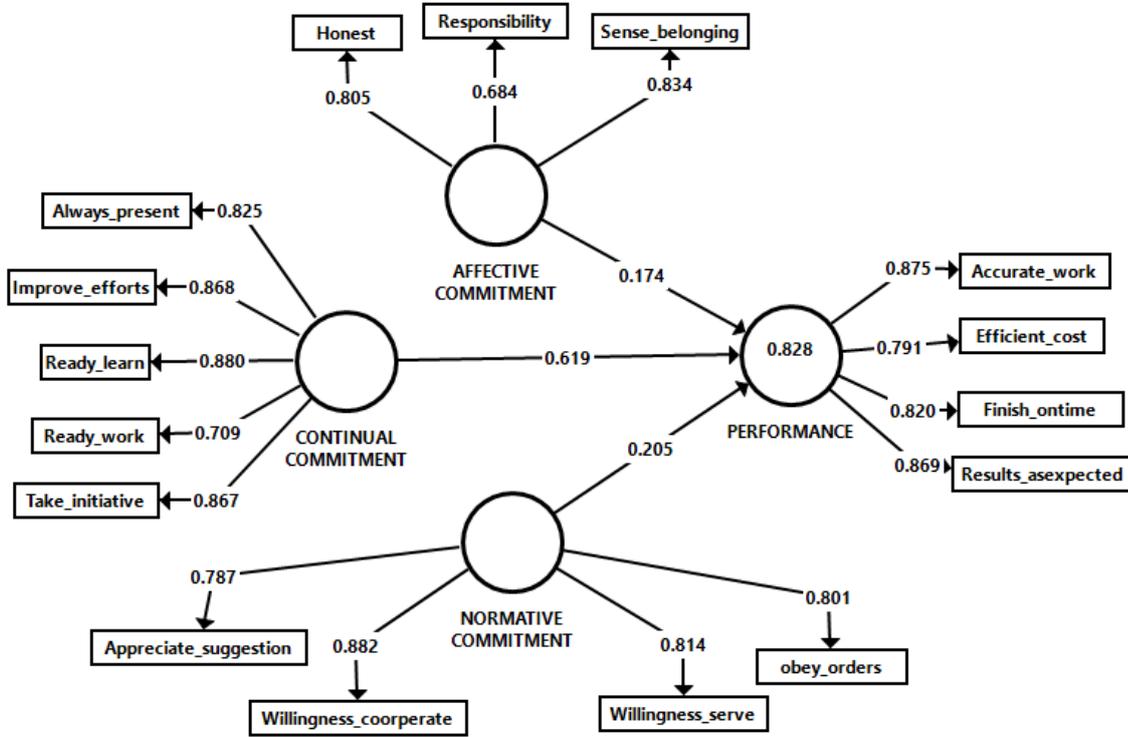


Figure 1 Structural Equation Model of the Effect Relationship between Commitment (Affective Normative, and Continual) and Employee Performance

Table 5. Significance of effect relationship between Commitment (Affective Normative, and Continual) and Employee Performance

Effect relationship	Path coefficient	p-Value
Affective commitment → Employee performance	0.174	0.049*
Normative commitment → Employee performance	0.205	0.000*
Continual commitment → Employee performance	0.619	0.000*

)* significant level for $\alpha = 5\%$

6. CONCLUDING REMARK

Working during the Covid-18 pandemic for the past two years, it turns out that female academic support staff are more committed than male staff, especially in affective commitment, namely women express themselves more honestly and are more loyal to institutions, and work more efficiently than male staff. Furthermore, based on position, academic support staff in the head of division position have the highest commitment, while staff in the field officer position have the lowest commitment. This difference in the level of commitment occurs in indicators of loyalty, responsibility, compliance with orders or rules,

initiative, improvement efforts, efficiency and accuracy of work results. Meanwhile, observed from the proportion of working from home or working from the office, staff who work more from home have higher loyalty, honesty, sense of belonging, obeying rules, and efforts to improve work, compared to staff who work more in the office. Thus, it can be stated that in difficult working conditions during this pandemic, female staff with the position of division head and working from home, are more loyal to the institution, have higher improvement efforts, and perform better work efficiency than male staff.

Furthermore, continual commitment from academic support staff during this pandemic has a more prominent impact on performance, compared to other commitment variables. The staff's readiness to learn to optimally utilize information technology tools, take the initiative in solving new problems that have never been encountered before, and efforts to make continuous improvements even in conditions full of limitations, is very prominent.

This research has limitations, only observing differences in the commitment of support staff or non-academic staff. On another occasion, it is necessary to observe the commitment of all higher education staff, academic staff and non-academic staff. It is also necessary to observe the factors that trigger commitments that can increase the competitiveness of higher education during this pandemic.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author participated in the development of the research model, questionnaire, data analysis, and report writing while the second and third authors only contributed to the questionnaire design, data collection, data processing, and data analysis.

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