The Well-Being of a University: The Relationship Between Gratitude and Organizational Commitment on Faculty Members' Intention to Stay

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Retaining good employees can be difficult, and no organization is immune. This study investigated the relationship between gratitude and organizational commitment to determine if they can predict the intention to stay among university faculty. Specifically, this study analyzed gratitude, a construct that has not been researched much in the workplace. There was a significant relationship between gratitude on organizational commitment. Gratitude and organizational commitment were important predictors of intention to stay. Gratitude was supported as a moderator between organizational commitment and intention to stay. Organizations should incorporate positive reinforcements to express gratitude to increase organizational commitment and intent to stay.

Keywords: gratitude, organizational commitment, intention to stay, higher education, faculty

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Higher education continues to be affected by adversity, stemming from various factors that range from the lingering impacts of COVID-19 to the education cliff. These continuing changes in university environments influence not only the working conditions and workload but also the retention and organizational commitment of university faculty. University faculty are usually assigned a minimum of both teaching and research. The various faculty assignments can lead to conflict between the different identities and hamper teacher development (Kassila et al., 2021), not to mention any negative connotations that may occur during continuous higher education university environment shifts and changes. There is a need to find management strategies that assist with positive change and impact the well-being of the higher education landscape.

Companies and organizations across the globe strive to maintain and retain employees, including those of higher education institutions. An employee's willingness to leave an organization impacts loss of productivity, recruitment costs, organizational knowledge, and training costs (Cho, Johnson, & Guchait, 2009; Saeed et al., 2014; Alkahtani, 2015). Employee turnover has been linked to organizational commitment (Bluedorn, 1982; Hollenbeck & Williams, 1986; Joo, 2010; Sterman, Trevor, Boudreau, & Gerhart, 2006).

Faculty members within higher education institutions choose to leave the position for various reasons. As faculty members leave, retaining the remaining employees for the institution becomes a challenge, especially if the fluctuations become too frequent (Ryan et al., 2012; Pavlovic, 2018). Detecting a faculty member's intention to stay or leave can assist the higher education institution create a sustainable competitive advantage (Rozsa, Formanek, & Manak, 2019) and help guide retention strategies.

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of gratitude and organizational commitment on a higher education faculty member's intention to stay with a higher education university. Social cognitive theory provided a framework for this study as it investigated faculty behavior and environmental determinants of staying with a higher education institution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher Education

Higher education continues to be impacted by adversity from the lingering impacts of COVID-19, the education cliff, and continuing changes in university environments. Positive management strategies that impact higher education institutions are limited, and positive reinforcements are needed (Cownie et al., 2022). Higher education faculty members play a significant role in institutions by assisting with creating a competitive advantage, maintaining high standards of performance, and displaying commitment to areas of content and expertise (Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004).

Little attention has been given to management challenges within the higher education industry, while it continues to be a large employment sector within the United States (Jo, 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), there were 3,931 Title IV degree-granting institutions in 2020-2021. Several factors can impact the "probability that faculty members may decide to leave one institution for another or leave academia all-together" (Ryan, et al., 2012, p. 422) can impact retention and turnover. Research that continues to investigate and improve upon understanding the role of higher education faculty regarding gratitude, organizational commitment, and intention to stay is limited.

As higher education faculty split time between teaching and research, role conflict may develop due to the difficulty in functioning between both research and teaching. Role conflict has been associated with various negative outcomes such as job burnout, stress, dissatisfaction, and a sense of uncertainty (Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Singh, 2011; Lei et al., 2021, Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Addressing these negative outcomes is important as it adds to the stressors within the changing higher education landscape. Limited research examines the positive management strategies rather than negative outcomes to understand better the role of higher education faculty regarding gratitude, organizational commitment, and intention to stay. One study found higher levels of perceived organizational support led to decreased reported work-related stress and increased organizational commitment (Yew and Ramos, 2019).

There is limited understanding and research on the overall well-being of faculty in higher education institutions. Universities continue searching for strategies to reduce turnover and address stressors, such as role conflict and burnout, within a highly demanding academic environment. Outcomes from work-related burnout can decrease the quality of work, productivity, and other challenges (Hyatt, 2022). The literature is rich with research regarding burnout as a three-dimensional construct including exhaustion, feelings of detachment from the job, and a lack of accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001).

Burnout influences teaching quality and output and decreases engagement and job satisfaction (Yew & Ramos, 2019). It can also be driven by increased workload (Burke & Greenglass, 1995) and by role conflict (Kyriacou, 1987). A lack of resources and organizational support can also produce burnout (Sabagh et al.,

2018). It is important to note that faculty perception should be considered a part of the burnout related to lack of resources and organizational support. There is literature to support that the higher the perception regarding organizational support, there is a decrease in burnout (Hyatt, 2022).

Gratitude

Gratitude is a term familiar to most people as we learn at a very young age to say thank you for the generosities shown and given to us. It hasn't been until recently that researchers in the work domain have become interested in gratitude's impact on the workplace (Youssef-Morgan, et al., 2022). Gratitude is "a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift can be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty" (Emmons, 2004, p. 554). Gratitude allows us to recognize that we have been given something of value, and are thankful for the benefit it provides (Emmons & Mishra, 2011).

Research recognizes Gratitude as a stable personality trait (Portocarrero, et al., 2020). When recognized as a trait, gratitude is seen as a stable, affective trait that can be experienced through various contexts including personal, institutional, and cultural (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). This means that gratitude could be present but would be hard to develop and change in individuals who did not possess high levels of gratitude. In line with trait-like characteristics, Peterson and Seligman (2004) recognize gratitude as one of the virtues that are consistent over time.

Other research studies have supported gratitude as a state-like criterion (Dickens, 2017; Karns, et al., 2017). One field of thought building on positive psychology is positive organizational behavior (POB). POB refers to "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychology capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed from performance improvement in today's work place" (Luthans, 2002, p. 59). According to POB, a construct such as gratitude is conceptualized as being state-like when it is malleable and open to development (Luthans, et al., 2015). This means that an individual can complete activities or attend training to increase their level of gratitude. This could include a simple individual activity, such as writing in a gratitude journal to an organizational-wide activity such as volunteerism.

Workplace gratitude is "the intentional choice to engage in positive appraisals and feelings of thankfulness and appreciation present in one's work context" (Youssef, et al., 2022, p. 3). Workplace gratitude differs from workplace satisfaction in that gratitude accounts for the contribution of another individual or individuals (Cain, et al., 2019). In the context of the work environment, gratitude has many positive benefits. Gratitude has been shown to have a relationship with personal well-being (Dickens, 2017; Wood, et al., 2010). Gratitude has also led to a decrease in stress and depression (Wood, et al., 2008).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the psychological attachment of an employee to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is characterized as those individuals who attend to work daily, protect organizational assets, share organizational goals, and remain with the organization through both good and bad times. As it pertains to this study, the theoretical framework guiding organizational commitment is grounded in the three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

According to Meyer and Allen, affective, continuance, and normative commitment are distinguishable components of commitment. These three components, representing the psychological state of commitment, include (a) a desire (affective commitment), (b) a need (continuance commitment), and (c) an obligation (normative commitment). The following section will review their work and examine each component in more detail.

Affective Commitment

Employees with a high level of affective commitment component tend to stay working for an organization because they *want* to do so. "Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer and Allen, 1991, p.67). In addition, the antecedents of affective commitment include the following four categories: personal

characteristics, structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

Continuance Commitment

While employees may be linked to all three components of commitment, those with a main connection to continuance commitment remain voluntarily employed with their organization because they *need* to do so. Continuance commitment is a commitment component that focuses on the cost associated with leaving the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). This component has similarities to Becker's (1960) side-bets theory. Commitment develops as one makes "side-bets" that increase the perceived potential cost of leaving an organization.

Normative Commitment

As previously stated, individuals with a main connection to affective commitment stay with an organization because they *want* to do so, and those with a main connection to continuance commitment remain with an organization because they *need* to do so. However, those with a main connection to normative commitment tend to stay with an organization because they *ought* to remain with the organization. An employee with a high level of normative commitment feels obligated to continue employment with the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

The level of normative commitment may increase when an organization offers such things as extensive on-the-job training and support of the employee's professional growth. In addition, it is suggested that cultures may play a role in the normative commitment levels of individuals (Meyer and Allen, 1991). For example, suppose a culture stresses the importance of collectivism rather than the individual. In that case, this may increase the individual's level of normative commitment to an organization – the feeling that they *ought* to stay with the organization.

One study examined the influence of commitment on organizational performance and intentions to stay within government administration in Ghana (Sencherey, Kamil, Zakari, & Ameza – Xemalordzo, 2022). The study posited that employee organizational commitment is a recipe for increased organizational performance and their intention to stay. This study suggested that management can provide ways to influence employees to remain loyal to the organization. Some ways include providing employees with training and career development programs and increasing their compensational packages.

Research has shown a link between employee commitment to the organization and turnover intention (El-Nahas, Abd-El-Salam, & Shawky, 2013; Fayole, 2014; Thanacoody, Newman, & Fuchs, 2014). Employee turnover is an important issue across any organization. Studies also confirm that the sense of faithfulness and responsibility are underlying normative commitment factors that influence the individual to stay with the organization (Khan, Razi, Ali & Asghar, 2013; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

In order to uphold quality higher educational systems, there must be the ability to not only attract, but retain, committed employees. Employee organizational commitment has been linked to employee turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Hollenbeck & Williams, 1986; Joo, 2010; Sterman, Trevor, Boudreau, & Gerhart, 2006).

Intention to Stay

Intention is considered a psychological precursor and impacts one's behavior performance (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Abraham & Sheeran, 2003; Shanker, 2014), reflecting one's decision. Previous research has examined the intention to stay, which indicates an employee's willingness to stay at a chosen organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Studies imply that various factors such as job satisfaction impact an employee's decision and intention to stay (Chiang et al., 2005; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Zeytinoglu et al., 2012.)

Job satisfaction can impact and predict a faculty member's intention to stay at a higher education institution. Studies have examined the relationship between faculty member job satisfaction and the intention to leave an institution if unhappy with the job (Ryan et al., 2012; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Zhou & Volkwein, 2003). Post et al., (2009) linked job dissatisfaction with turnover intent, while other

scholars have examined whether satisfaction is a factor of commitment to an organization (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Curry et al., 1986).

Another factor that can impact the intention to stay is organizational climate and commitment. Shanker (2014) argues that organizational climate may be one of the most essential factors that impact an employee's intention to stay with an organization. Organizational climate and commitment are linked to an employee's intention to stay or leave a position (Suliman & Obaidli, 2011).

Higher education, much like other companies, has faculty members who choose to leave the institution for various reasons. This can become a retention challenge when employee fluctuations become too frequent (Ryan et al., 2012; Pavlovic, 2018). A higher education institution's ability to detect early a faculty member's intention to stay or leave can provide the institution with a sustainable competitive advantage (Rozsa, Formanek, & Manak, 2019) and assist in creating effective retention strategies.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emerged from the Social Learning Theory in 1986 and posits that individual learning occurs in a social environment when three determinants come together (Bandura, 1986). These determinants include personal, behavioral, and environmental, and the interaction between the three determinants is shown below. See Figure 1. SCT has been used in several disciplines, including health, communication, and education (Carillo, 2010). SCT considers the interaction of the personal internal determinants of the individual, such as thinking and reflecting on one's own experience, with the external environmental determinants, such as organizational policies and opportunities, and how that interaction impacts behavior (Bandura, 1986). For instance, an employee who expresses gratitude in their personal life will be motivated to demonstrate appreciation for positive initiatives and policies at work, provided that the culture supports it. As the number of employees showing gratitude increases in the workplace, a culture of gratitude will develop. Employees will start creating and supporting workplace policies and procedures that employees will support and endorse.

FIGURE 1
INTERPLAY OF DETERMINANTS IN THE CASUAL MODEL OF
SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY
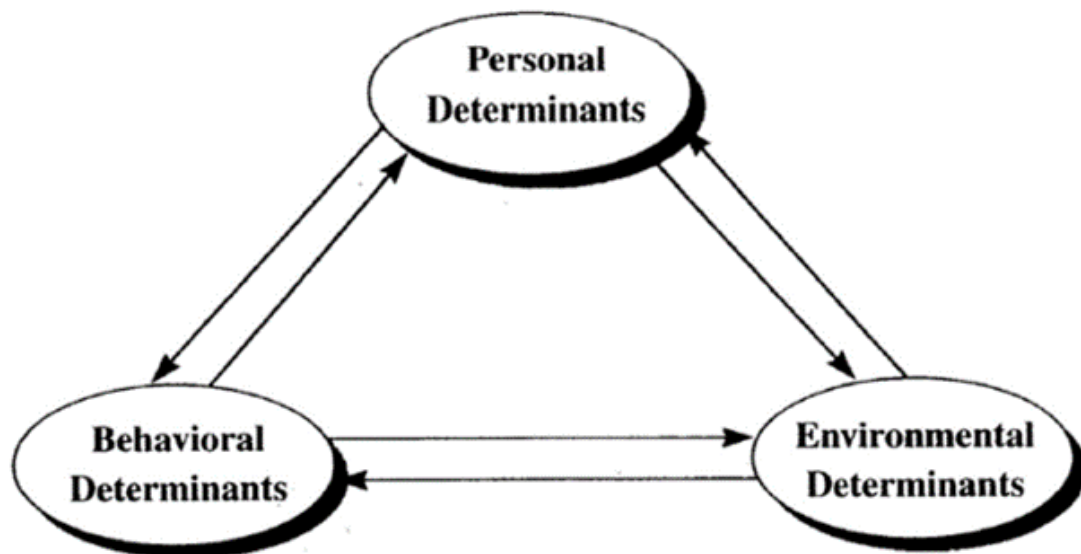
(Bandura, 2018, p. 131; Bandura, 1986).

A key tenet of the SCT is self-efficacy. Stojkovic & Luthans (1998) define self-efficacy as "an individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive

resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (p. 66). Self-efficacy lies within the personal determinant of the triatic model of SCT. Individuals' belief in their ability to accomplish something will impact their behavior. This directly connects to the environmental determinant where the outcome of the behavior can be seen. Individuals can determine if the behavior aligns with the possible reward or consequence. Through this interactional process, all three determinants are crucial to an individual's actions and decisions.

Regarding gratitude and organizational commitment in higher education, the SCT can help explain the organizational behavior by analyzing the interactive relationship between the faculty's personal gratitude and organizational commitment to their intention to stay. In this study, intention to stay represents the behavior, and the environmental determinants would be the consequence of staying with the organization. For faculty, the consequences of staying could include promotion and tenure, pay raises, and increasing retirement benefits. Other consequences that do not include monetary value could be represented through job and/or satisfaction, stronger relationships with colleagues and students, and community connections.

Gratitude can increase a faculty member's organizational commitment by allowing the individual to be grateful for the institution's many opportunities and experiences. This will vary by institution, just as the wants of the faculty members will differ. However, when an individual seeks out the resources and experiences they are looking for, the grateful individual will be more likely to be committed to the organization. Research supports gratitude's positive benefits, including healthy relationships (Portocarrero, et al., 2020) and life satisfaction (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). These benefits and others will help promote organizational commitment through gratitude.

Hypothesis 1a: *Gratitude is Positively Related to Affective Commitment.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Gratitude is Positively Related to Continuance Commitment.*

Hypothesis 1c: *Gratitude is Positively Related to Normative Commitment.*

As it relates to this study, organizational commitment is experienced by the employee as three simultaneous outlooks on an employee's commitment to their organization. These outlooks encompass affective, normative, and continuance organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Because of this, several factors may also contribute to the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay.

Zhao and Zhao (2017) suggest that higher affective commitment leads to a lower intention to leave an organization due to higher work engagement and a willingness to invest effort in their work. Continuance commitment is associated with the cost of an employee leaving an organization. Therefore, employees who perceive high personal costs of leaving the organization are more likely to stay. Normative commitment refers to the employees' obligation to stay with their organization. Thus, "employees are more likely to remain as a member of the organization if they have stronger normative commitment (Uraon, 2018, p. 23)."

Hypothesis 2a: *Affective Commitment is Positively Related to Intention to Stay.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Continuance Commitment is Positively Related to Intention to Stay.*

Hypothesis 2c: *Normative Commitment is Positively Related to Intention to Stay.*

Gratitude is a positive emotion that promotes social behavior (McCullough, et al., 2002). As faculty interact with other faculty and staff at a university, they will be grateful for the relationships and opportunities present at the university. As faculty become more aware and thankful for the relationships and experiences in their current position, they will be more inclined to stay at the university.

Hypothesis 3: Gratitude is Positively Related to Intention to Stay.

Gratitude can help faculty members truly appreciate the opportunity they have at their current institution. The grass isn't always greener somewhere else. A faculty member who is already committed to the organization will be more likely to stay there if they are grateful for the teaching position and all that it entails. In contrast, if the faculty member is not grateful for their position, the faculty member may not be as committed to the institution and may end up leaving. Thus, gratitude can, directly and indirectly, impact a faculty member's intention to stay.

Hypothesis 4a: Gratitude moderates the Relationship Between Affective Commitment and Intention to Stay.

Hypothesis 4b: Gratitude moderates the Relationship Between Continuance Commitment and Intention to Stay.

Hypothesis 4c: Gratitude moderates the Relationship Between Normative Commitment and Intention to Stay.

METHODS

Participants

An email was sent to 20 university presidents, provosts, or other academic leaders asking for their help in emailing their faculty the survey information. Included in this email was a sample email the president or provost could copy and paste into a new email and send to the faculty. The link to the survey, along with the informed consent form, was included in the sample email. The survey and research methods of the study, Protocol #2023-1-20A, were approved by an Internal Review Board associated with the researchers. Survey participants were asked to respond to the survey by March 10. Of those university contacts, five leaders agreed to email their faculty. There were 178 participants that submitted the survey and of those participants, 171 surveys were complete and used in the results.

Measures

Gratitude was measured using the 10-item Work Gratitude Scale (Youssef-Morgan, et al., 2022). The 10-scale items are categorized into three subgroups: grateful appraisals, gratitude toward others, and intentional attitude of gratitude. Scale items 1 - 3 make up grateful appraisals, scale items 4-7 represent gratitude toward others, and scale items 8-10 signify the intentional attitude of gratitude. A total work gratitude score can be computed by adding the means of the three categories and dividing by three. The responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Sample items from the three categories include the following: "Right now, I have so much at work to be thankful for" (grateful appraisals); "Currently, I couldn't have gotten where I am today at work without the help of many people" (gratitude toward others); and "Currently, I think that it's important to 'Stop and smell the roses' as it pertains to my work" (intentional attitude of gratitude).

Organizational commitment of faculty was measured through the TCM Employee Commitment Survey, which is based on the Three-Component Model of commitment from the original Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Additionally, the TCM Employee Commitment Survey measures and classifies commitment into the following groups – normative, affective, and continuance commitment, as previously mentioned. The measurement scale for organizational commitment is made up of a five-point Likert scale using 18 items to measure the three categories, normative, affective and continuance commitment. The scale uses 6 items for each category. The faculty measured these items as such: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Intent to Stay scale items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. "Under no circumstances will I voluntarily leave my present employer" is an example of an item on the scale (Kim, et al., 1996).

Survey participants answered demographic questions including gender, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, family income, and the importance of religion in their lives. Respondents were also asked questions about their education, faculty rank, tenure, years of teaching experience both at the current university and in total, the number of credits taught per semester, research release time if they have ever been granted a sabbatical if they serve as an advisor for academics and/or organizations, and if they believe their university makes decisions are mission-driven.

RESULTS

Major demographic characteristics used to carry out the quantitative analysis found below include a sample of 47 percent female, 90 percent white, 32 percent in the age range of 30 to 39 years old, and 72 percent being in a marriage/domestic partnership. The sample is highly educated, tenured, and relatively affluent, with over 77 percent having received a doctoral degree, 50 percent being at the associate or full professor level, and an average income of \$127,500. These faculty members primarily (94 percent) work in public institutions, with an average of 19 years of teaching experience. Finally, 42 percent of the sample believes that their current institution makes decisions with a mission-driven perspective. Full demographic data are available upon request.

Hypothesis (1): Gratitude is Positively Related to Organizational Commitment

To represent this hypothesis mathematically, we adopted the following quantitative framework:

$$Organizational\ Commitment\ Measure_i = \alpha + \beta Gratitude_i + X_i'\gamma + \epsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

where $Organizational\ Commitment\ Measure_i$ is a summary measure that captures either affective, continuance, or normative commitment for individual i. The coefficient of interest, β, documents the impact an individual's gratitude has on each type of organizational commitment measure. The vector X_i contains additional individual-level variables for gender, race, age, marital status, household income, importance of religion, tenure status, academic rank, institution type, and whether the respondent believes the organization's decisions are mission-driven and ϵ_i is the model's error term. Listed below are the results of the model. See Table 1.

Table 1 reports the results from Equation (1) where columns one, two, and three are affective, continuance, and normative commitment types. While gratitude is positively related to these organizational commitment measures, we do not find a statistically significant relationship with continuance commitment. Alternatively, there is strong evidence that increases in gratitude are associated with increases in an individual's affective commitment to the organization even after accounting for several demographic and educational variables. Specifically, an increase of one point on the gratitude scale is associated with an increase in the average individual's affective commitment by 0.613 survey points using the established scale in Allen and Meyer (2004). Likewise, there is strong evidence that higher levels of gratitude are associated with higher levels of normative commitment. This model indicates that an increase of one point on the gratitude scale increases the average individual's normative commitment by 0.321 points based on the scale used by Allen and Meyer (2004).

TABLE 1
HYPOTHESIS 1

	Dependent Variable: Type of Organizational Commitment		
	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Summary Gratitude Measure	0.613***	0.153	0.321***
	(0.112)	(0.131)	(0.080)
Observations	171	171	171
R-Squared	0.630	0.300	0.607
F-Statistic	5.920	1.470	5.370
F Significance (p-value)	<0.000	0.059	<0.000
Mean of Dependent Variable	18.370	18.086	16.483

Notes: Regression coefficients are expressed in levels and standard errors are listed in parentheses. Each column contains a separate regression where the dependent variable is a summary measure reflecting affective, continuance, and normative organizational commitments, respectively. Higher values of organizational commitment correspond to higher levels of commitment. The independent variable of interest is a summary measure that captures an individual's level of gratitude, where a higher value indicates more gratitude toward the organization. Additional variables include indicators for gender, race, age, marital status, household income, importance of religion, tenure status, academic rank, institution type, and whether the respondent believes the organization's decisions are mission-driven. The F-statistic and F significance tests the null hypothesis that the regression coefficients are jointly equal to 0. Coefficients are statistically significant at ***1%, **5%, and *10% levels.

Hypothesis (2): Organizational Commitment is Positively Related to Intention to Stay
    This hypothesis is modelled mathematically using the following quantitative framework:

$$Intent\ to\ Stay_i = \alpha + \beta Organizational\ Commitment\ Measure_i + X'_i\gamma + \epsilon_i \qquad (2)$$

where $Intent\ to\ Stay_i$ is a summary measure that captures individual i's intention to stay within the organization. The coefficient of interest, β, illustrates the relationship between the organizational measure of choice and an individual's intent to stay within the institution. The vector X_i contains additional individual-level variables for gender, race, age, marital status, household income, importance of religion, tenure status, academic rank, institution type, and whether the respondent believes the organization's decisions are mission-driven, and ϵ_i is the model's error term. Listed below are the results of the model. See Table 2.

    Table 2 reports the results from Equation (2) examining the relationship between organizational commitment types and an individual's intention to stay. Specifications (1) – (3) test for statistical significance based on affective, continuance, and normative commitment types individually, while specification (4) jointly examines this relationship. The results are robust across specifications – affective and normative commitment types remain significantly related to an individual's intention to stay after including all characteristics of interest. Specifically, after accounting for demographic and educational factors, an average one-point increase in the affective commitment score increases an individual's intention to stay with the organization by 0.252 survey points. Moreover, normative commitment plays a greater role in retaining employees. An increase in the average individual's normative commitment to the institution is associated with a 0.400 survey point increase in their intention to stay.

TABLE 2
HYPOTHESIS 2

	Dependent Variable: Intent to Stay Summary Measure			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Affective Commitment	0.386***			0.252***
	(0.046)			(0.052)
Continuance Commitment		0.056		0.023
		(0.053)		(0.041)
Normative Commitment			0.557***	0.400***
			(0.067)	(0.077)
Observations	171	171	171	171
Adjusted R-Squared	0.708	0.551	0.703	0.748
F-Statistic	8.400	4.270	8.220	9.660
F Significance (p-value)	<0.000	<0.000	<0.000	<0.000
Mean of Dependent Variable	11.322	11.322	11.322	11.322

Notes: Regression coefficients are expressed in levels, and standard errors are listed in parentheses. Each column contains a separate regression where the dependent variable summarizes an individual's intent to stay with the organization. An increase in this value reflects greater intention to stay. The first three specifications independently regress the intent to stay measure on affective, continuance, and normative organizational commitment measures. Specification (4) jointly evaluates this relationship with intention to stay. All regressions also include indicators for gender, race, age, marital status, household income, importance of religion, tenure status, academic rank, institution type, and whether the respondent believes the organization's decisions are mission-driven. The F-statistic and F significance tests the null hypothesis that the regression coefficients are jointly equal to 0. Coefficients are statistically significant at ***1%, **5%, and *10% levels.

Hypothesis (3): Gratitude is Positively Related to Intention to Stay

Hypothesis (4): Gratitude Mediates the Relationship Between Organizational Commitment and Intention to Stay

These hypotheses are modelled simultaneously through the following general quantitative framework:

$$Intent\ to\ Stay_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Gratitude_i + \beta_2 Organizational\ Commitment\ Measure_i + X_i'\gamma + \epsilon_i \tag{3}$$

where variables are modelled consistently with Equations (1) and (2). Listed below are the results of Hypotheses (3) and (4). See Table 3.

Table 3 reports the quantitative results behind Equation (3). Specification (1) focuses on establishing an initial relationship between an individual's level of gratitude and their intention to stay with the institution while specification (2) focuses on organizational commitment measures discussed above. Specification (1) results indicate a highly statistically significant relationship between an individual's level of gratitude and their intention to stay, providing evidence supporting Hypothesis (3). That is, after accounting for demographic and educational factors, as an individual's gratitude score increases by one survey point, their intention to stay with the institution increases by 0.389 points, on average.

<p align="center">**TABLE 3**
HYPOTHESIS 3 AND 4</p>

	Dependent Variable: Intent to Stay Summary Measure		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Summary Gratitude Measure	0.389***		0.153**
	(0.073)		(0.067)
Affective Commitment		0.252***	0.212***
		(0.052)	(0.054)
Continuance Commitment		0.023	0.015
		(0.041)	(0.040)
Normative Commitment		0.400***	0.323***
		(0.077)	(0.076)
Observations	171	171	171
Adjusted R-Squared	0.628	0.748	0.758
F-Statistic	5.860	9.660	9.860
F Significance (p-value)	<0.000	<0.000	<0.000
Mean of Dependent Variable	11.322	11.322	11.322

Notes: Regression coefficients are expressed in levels and standard errors are listed in parentheses. Each column contains a separate regression where the dependent variable summarizes an individual's intent to stay with the organization. An increase in this value reflects greater intention to stay. The independent variable of interest in the first column is a summary measure that captures an individual's level of gratitude, where a higher value indicates more gratitude toward the organization. Column (2) jointly evaluates the relationship between the summary commitment measures and intention to stay. The last column jointly evaluates the independent variables in columns (1) and (2). All regressions also include indicators for gender, race, age, marital status, household income, importance of religion, tenure status, academic rank, institution type, and whether the respondent believes the organization's decisions are mission-driven. The F-statistic and F significance tests the null hypothesis that the regression coefficients are jointly equal to 0. Coefficients are statistically significant at ***1%, **5%, and *10% levels.

Hypothesis (4) jointly evaluates the above variables of interest, gratitude, and organizational commitment measures. The results of such exercise are reported in specification (3). To evaluate whether an individual's level of gratitude mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and their intention to stay with the institution, we are interested in the coefficient's statistical significance and change in magnitudes from specifications (1) and (2) to specification (3). If, after accounting for the mediator, the effects of affective and normative commitments become statistically insignificant on an individual's intention to stay, we say that gratitude fully mediates this relationship. Otherwise, if statistical significance remains, we conclude that gratitude partially mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and one's intention to stay. That is, since our estimates are robust across specifications, specifically, affective and normative commitments, with the inclusion of our gratitude measure, we provide evidence that gratitude partially mediates the relationship between one's organizational commitment level and their likelihood of remaining with the institution.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined gratitude and organizational commitment's impact on a higher education faculty member's intention to stay. The study also investigated gratitude's impact on the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay. Based on the results of testing the hypotheses of the influence of gratitude and organizational commitment on a faculty member's intention to stay, it can be concluded that both gratitude and organizational commitment have a significant positive relationship with the intention to stay. Gratitude also partially mediates the relationship between organizational commitment

and intention to stay. This study contributes to a better understanding of faculty members' intention to stay and to further the literature on gratitude research in the workplace.

Hypothesis 1 analyzed the relationship between gratitude and organizational commitment's three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The results indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between gratitude and the affective and normative commitment components. These two relationships indicate that faculty with higher levels of gratitude will develop higher levels of affective and normative commitment. By increasing gratitude in the workplace, faculty will develop a stronger emotional attachment to the university and feel obligated to stay with the university.

Hypothesis 2 investigated the relationship between the three components of organizational commitment and intention to stay. Like Hypothesis 1, both affective and normative commitment were statistically significant to the intention to stay. In this case, normative commitment had a greater impact on the intention to stay, even though they were both statistically significant. These results align with Sencherey, et al.'s (2022) study. Universities can provide measures to help increase intention to stay through organizational commitment motivators.

The relationship between gratitude and the intention to stay was explored in Hypothesis 3. The results indicated a statistically significant relationship. Faculty who express feelings of gratitude or increase their level of gratitude will be more likely to remain at the university. Faculty who are grateful for their career and/or opportunity at their current institution are more likely to stay with their current organization.

The final hypothesis, Hypothesis 4, considers gratitude as a mediator between organizational commitment and intention to stay. The data indicated that gratitude partially mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay. This means gratitude plays a significant role in promoting the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay. This highlights the statistically significant relationship that gratitude has with organizational commitment. It also indicated that gratitude has a role in the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay. With partial mediation, however, the relationship between a faculty member's level of organizational commitment and intention to stay cannot be fully explained by gratitude.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations that present opportunities for future research despite providing useful theoretical and practical implications. First, our study is constrained by the limitations of quantitative scales, which are subject to perceptual and measurement bias. Future research on the topic may also use qualitative measures to examine intention to stay.

Second, another limitation of the study is that most of the sample identified as being employed at a public university. We would have hoped to have a more diverse sample, including many private and public university faculty, so that the sample more fully represented the faculty in the United States. It is assumed the survey participants represented the population in which the hypotheses are inferred. This is a limitation since the study was not conducted at all higher education institutions but rather a sample. In addition, this study surveyed a sample of higher education faculty in the United States, and thus there may be characteristics of the United States' cultural, economic or socio-economic conditions that differentiate the research results and undermine their applicability to other countries.

Lastly, the data significance, along with the perceived limitations, provides a variety of opportunities for future research. Future research may replicate this research in other countries and/or cultural contexts as a resolve to the applicability across countries. Also, this study considers gratitude as a mediator between organizational commitment and intention to stay. Future studies may examine other variables as potential mediators between organizational commitment and intention to stay.

Implications

For practical purposes, universities may look at integrating gratitude into the organizational culture through consistent and intentional practices. Additionally, universities can provide measures to help increase intention to stay through affective and normative organizational commitment motivators. Affective

organizational commitment motivators may include processes to reward employees fairly and provide opportunities for employees to increase their sense of belonging. Normative organizational commitment motivators may include activities to increase the faculty member's loyalty and moral connection to the university.

This study contributes to the current body of literature by researching the impact gratitude and organizational commitment had on a higher education faculty member's intention to stay with a university. The study expands the body of literature on the importance of gratitude in the workplace. The implications for future theoretical investigations include expanding the research to include a qualitative lens.

CONCLUSION

Whether from the lingering impacts of COVID-19 or the education cliff, higher education continues to see faculty burnout and employee turnover (Velez-Cruz & Holstun, 2022). This study aimed to investigate the impact of gratitude and organizational commitment on a higher education faculty member's intention to stay with a higher education university. Our findings showed that both gratitude and organizational commitment have a significant positive relationship with the intention to stay. Gratitude also partially mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and intention to stay.

This study contributes to a better understanding of faculty members' intention to stay and to further the literature on gratitude research in the workplace. Our findings expand the malleable concept of gratitude in organizations, specifically higher education. Previously, gratitude has been shown to have a relationship with personal well-being (Dickens, 2017; Wood, et al., 2010). As the well-being of an individual is a multi-faceted concept, so is that of an organization. With that, this study expands the literature on gratitude and organizational commitment to focus on organizational well-being through the lens of faculty's intention to stay.

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