

**Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intentions Among Survivors of
COVID-related Layoffs**

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April 25th, 2021

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the outlook and operations of many organizations over the past year. Unfortunately, many companies needed to downsize their operation in order to continue running smoothly. This research study will continue to contribute to previous studies regarding organizational commitment and turnover intentions. The study's purpose is to find out whether there is a lower commitment and higher turnover intentions among survivors of layoffs within the last year (April 2020 - April 2021). Participants were surveyed to collect data on these two constructs and sub-constructs of affective commitment, continuous commitment, and normative commitment. Results found that continuous commitment was the highest form of organizational commitment among lower-level employees. The higher the continuous commitment a participant had, the more likely they were to have turnover intentions. Also, those with higher affective commitment were less likely to have turnover intentions.

It is no surprise that the global COVID-19 pandemic has led to various organizations making the choice to perform layoffs. The reported U.S. layoffs in the year 2020 reached 2.305 million, with many more employees temporarily furloughed from their organizations (Mutikani, 2021). While it is easy to understand the negative effects on victims of layoffs, it is less clear how major downsizing affects the employees who survive the layoffs and remain working in the company. With a large influx of workers entering the job market, one would assume the individuals who were able to remain at their jobs would hold on for dear life. Some may think this is good news for the company, however, witnessing layoffs within an organization may hinder the organizational commitment of the surviving employee (Abuelnasr, 2020; Jamal & Khan, 2013).

The research question for this study is: how do layoffs affect the organizational commitment and turnover intentions of the employees who remain at the organization in the context of COVID-19? Since this quantitative study takes place during the COVID-19 pandemic and the job market is unfavorable towards job seekers, will there still be a significant impact in turnover intentions? It is important to measure these constructs during this time because organizations may be facing higher turnover than expected. If organizations had already laid off their employees to the point of a bare-bones operation, it is possible that voluntary turnover will negatively impact the organization's productivity. The results of this study could also highlight the importance of measuring organizational commitment prior to layoffs. The

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knowledge that layoffs may significantly affect the organizational commitment of those who remain in the organization could be used in structural decision making.

Previous studies have linked the construct of organizational commitment as an antecedent of turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 2006; Van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2010; Machado Dias Ramalho Luz et al., 2018; Ugboro, 2006), while others have factored in other possible antecedents such as job satisfaction, work engagement, diversity, and organizational trust (Tett & Meyer, 2006; Edwards-Dandridge et al., 2020; Campbell, 2011; Sivadahasan Nair & Salleh, 2017). While there have been a handful of research studies performed involving turnover intentions during COVID-19 (Abuelnasr, 2020), there have not been any previous U.S. studies on this specific phenomenon during the COVID-19 period. This study seeks to find out if there are significant correlations between the organizational commitment and turnover intentions of layoff survivors within the past year. This study will add value to the knowledge of organizational commitment and turnover intentions as there have been little to no studies conducted involving these variables during periods of economic turmoil.

Literature Review

Background

Past researchers have shown an interest in studying organizational turnover intentions and its related constructs, which is summarized in this

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section of literary review. Organizations have found that the costs of high turnover include hiring, recruiting, and training costs which total up to 213% of a parting executive's salary (Sivadahasana Nair & Salleh, 2017). Although this study will focus on organizational commitment as an antecedent of turnover intentions, several other studies chose to seek relationships with other constructs, the most popular being job satisfaction, work engagement, and trust (Oliveira & Rocha, 2017; Ramalho Luz et al., 2018; Sivadahasana Nair & Salleh, 2017; Tett & Meyer, 2006; Edwards-Dandridge et al., 2020).

Edwards-Dandridge et al. (2020) recently studied whether job satisfaction and work engagement are predictors of turnover intentions in the Nursing field. Their study found that job satisfaction is a strong predictor, but not work engagement. Similarly, Sivadahasana Nair & Salleh (2017) created a framework using organizational trust as an antecedent to turnover intentions. The researchers stated that "trust is labeled as the most crucial ingredient to ensure stability in an organization and contentment amongst its employees (Sivadahasana Nair & Salleh, 2017, p. 282)."

Additionally, trust is related to social exchange theory, which states that "an individual who supplies rewarding services to another obligates them to discharge this obligation, the second must furnish benefits to the first in return (Sivadahasana Nair & Salleh, 2017, p. 283)." In an organization context, this means that employees who provide good work to the company should feel satisfied with the benefits and compensation in return. These constructs of trust and job

satisfaction have been noted as antecedents of organizational commitment, one main variable in the current study.

Lee and Mowday (1987) also surveyed 445 employees of a financial institution to test certain variables that lead to the decision to stay or leave an organization (job expectations, individual characteristics, alternate job opportunities, market conditions). In summary, many studies have examined the antecedents of turnover intentions without the extra impact of a layoff event within the organization.

What is Organizational Commitment?

One of the main antecedents that will be examined in this research is organizational commitment. This construct is important to scrutinize because “lowered commitment of employees after painful downsizing periods is identified as one of the reasons why downsizing often does not show the intended long-term effects (Van Dierendonck & Jacob, 2010, p. 87).” It has been observed that employees who survive a downsizing event, such as massive layoffs, would no longer feel as committed to the organization as they were before.

The construct of organizational commitment has been defined by multiple scholars and will be summarized in this section for clarity. The general term refers to the level of attachment employees feel to their own organization. According to Jamal et al (2013, p. 4), “committed workers contribute to the organization in a more positive way than less committed employees.” As such, it

is of great importance that employers and organizations work to uphold their employee's feelings of commitment as much as possible.

Components of Organizational Commitment

Studies have dedicated time to having a deeper understanding of organizational commitment, including the substantial study performed by Meyer and Allen (1991) which conceptualized a three-component model of commitment. This model was broken down into affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The researchers emphasized that these are strictly “components”, not “types” of commitment as an individual can feel “all forms of commitment at varying degrees (Meyer & Allen (1991), p. 68).

Affective Commitment. The first component, and what seems to be the most popular of Meyer & Allen's three components to study, is called affective commitment. Affective commitment has been defined in literature as “the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Tett & Meyer, 2006, p. 261).” Researchers have categorized affective commitment as “involving a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and value, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a desire to stay in the organization (Tett & Meyer, 2006, p. 261).” This component of commitment has individuals feeling very close to the personal brand that the organization exudes. These employees have an emotional bond to the organizations and feel involved enough to the point of truly wanting to be a part of it for the long-term (Ramalho Luz et al., 2018).

Continuance Commitment. Continuance commitment is focused less on the individual's desires and instead places a higher emphasis on their personal needs. Those who feel continuance commitment will remain at an organization because if they do not, they may lose valued benefits (Ramalho Luz et al., 2018). This could be as simple as employees fearing that if they leave the company, they will no longer have necessary health insurance or compensation. It could also refer to the individual's commute to work, retirement benefits, expected pension, or more. These employees may also fear that they will not be able to find new opportunities that will aid their financial well-being. This type of commitment is simply "based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the company (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 79)." This component has also been named "instrumental" by some sources and is described as when "the individual feels themselves stuck in a place because of the high costs associated to abandon it (Ramalho Luz et al., 2018, p.88)."

Continuance commitment is also related to the "side-bet theory" where "employees attach themselves to organizations through investments such as time, effort, and rewards (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999, p. 309). One example of this phenomena could be when employees decide to remain working in the organization because of personal investments in workplace relationships and skills that are specific to the organization (Ugboro, 2006). Another example may be that an individual may feel that they have spent many years learning the ins and outs of a company's products, services, and policies. It may then be more

difficult to decide to leave the company just to have to build new knowledge with another organization.

Normative Commitment. Finally, the normative component of commitment refers to a “willingness to remain with an organization due to a sense of obligation (Tett & Meyer, 2006, p. 262). One reason why a person may feel obligated to stay within a company may be because the organization paid for their education through tuition reimbursement, and they feel that staying would be the right thing to do. Others may feel a normative commitment because they started their career with a certain organization and feel obligated to stay since the company has shown them commitment and advanced them through their career. Normative commitment is focused more on the individual’s morals. As stated by Ramalho Luz et al. (2018, p.88).” “the conjunct of normative pressures is internalized by the individual behavior according to the objectives and interests of the organization.”

Overall, “employees with strong affective commitment remain because they *want* to, those with strong continuance commitment because they *need* to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they *ought* to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 3).” Each of these components of organizational commitment will be measured in this study.

Past Studies Featuring Organizational Commitment & Turnover Intentions

A few researchers have connected organizational commitment to turnover intentions. First, Tett & Meyer (2006) used the Organizational Commitment

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Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure the influences of both job satisfaction and affective commitment on turnover intentions. The scope of this particular study was more general and did not make any connections to layoffs, however the results did find that job satisfaction and organizational commitment contribute independently to turnover intentions. The researchers used a satisfaction to commitment mediation model which stated that job satisfaction indirectly influences organizational commitment, as it takes longer for commitment to develop. The study also found that job satisfaction generally has a stronger correlation with turnover intentions, but again this study did not perform these tests with the variable of layoffs included.

A similar study was conducted in one information technology organization in Brazil by Ramalho et al (2018, p.88) found that the variables that most impacted turnover intention among their employees were “affective commitment, satisfaction with salary, and normative commitment.” Another study on male firefighters by Iverson & Buttigieg (1999) found that affective commitment was the most beneficial variable to preventing turnover intentions. Those who had high affective commitment were most likely to stay with the company, less likely to call in sick, and more accepting of change.

Turnover Intentions

Voluntary turnover intentions are defined as a “conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 2006, p. 262).” Turnover intentions have been described as the last stage of withdrawal cognitions,

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following “thinking of quitting” and “intention to search for a new job (Dwivedi, 2015, p. 465).” By measuring voluntary turnover intentions, organizations and researchers can gauge the likelihood that employees within an organization will soon decide to leave the company entirely. Turnover intentions have been measured by using the TISCALE, which has been validated in a pilot study of call center turnover intentions (Dwivedi, 2015).

Turnover intentions have been found to be the strongest predictor of actual organizational turnover (the action of termination from the company) (Tett & Meyer, 2006). There are several negative consequences for the organization that can occur due to turnover including financial costs, loss of productivity, negative impact on social networks and customer perceptions, and loss of top talent (Ramalho et al 2018). A related research study found that people are more likely to want to leave the company after they have been laid off and rehired to either the same company or a different company (Davis et al., 2015). These victims of layoffs are more likely to keep their eyes open to other opportunities in their future career.

Defining Layoff Survivors

Layoffs are a form of organizational downsizing, which is defined as “the planned elimination of positions and jobs (Ray & Maheshwari, 2017, p. 294)”.

Organizations that perform layoffs intentionally terminate a certain number of workers in their organization. This could be for many different reasons, including to reduce company costs, slim down and minimize the organizational structure, and competitive strategies (Ray & Maheshwari, 2017, p. 295). Many of

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the surviving employees experience negative thoughts after a downsizing event as they feel the loss of contact with certain job colleagues and/or confusion towards a new organizational work structure or tasks (Ramalho et al, 2018). “Surviving employees may perceive that the organization is not committed to them (Spreitzer & Mishra 2002, p. 708).” Additionally, some researchers stated that “the raised fear and anxiety of those left behind in the organization is described as survivors’ syndrome (Jamal et al, 2013 p. 3).

Past Research Involving Layoff Survivors

Comparing Layoffs Vs. No Layoffs. One study provided a comparison of negative perceptions between employees in organizations who performed downsizing and the employees of those that had not. “Much research has focused in understanding the negative aspects of downsizing, including reduced survivor attachment to the organization and retention (Maertz et al., 2010, p. 284).” This study also focused on any differences between other kinds of downsizing, such as offshoring and outsourcing. It also discussed many related constructs, such as lower organizational performance, job security, and affective attachments.

Comparing Survivors Vs. Victims. In addition to studying the survivors of layoffs compared to employees who have not witnessed layoffs, another study by Van Dierendonck & Jacobs (2010) analyzed the organizational commitment between survivors and victims of layoffs. This research was focused on the specific procedures used to perform the layoffs and how they had an impact on the individual’s perceptions of fairness. This study found a positive relationship between the perceptions of fairness and the resulting organizational commitment

of employees who were both victim to and survivors of the layoffs. The study stated that “the way in which a company manages its layoff impacts the layoff survivors’ fairness perceptions, organizational commitment, and intent to leave.”

Most Relevant to Current Study. Finally, studies focused on the association of organizational commitment with survivors of downsizing and layoffs (Jamal et al, 2018). While this study did not factor in turnover intentions, the researchers tested the organizational commitment of layoff survivors, stating “survivors are the greater loser than the laid off because they have to bear cynicism, irritation, and in general have a perception of being insecure (Jamal et al, 2018, p. 2).”

One research study has been conducted during COVID-19 from 5-star hotels in Arab nations indicated that “survivors” perceptions of job insecurity post-COVID have a strong positive relationship with the intention to quit (Abuelnasr, 2020, p. 167).” In addition, the study highlighted the fact that individuals with a higher organizational commitment had less intentions to leave the organization.” Limitations to this study include the cultural differences from the U.S. that may affect the results and researchers only surveyed employees working in 5-star hotels.

Linking Literature to the Current Study

According to Ugboro (2006, p. 245), prior to COVID-19, managers were most often the victims of layoffs because “they are more vulnerable to restructuring and downsizing than those in non-management positions,” In the current climate, this is not the case. Employees of all levels of the organization have been

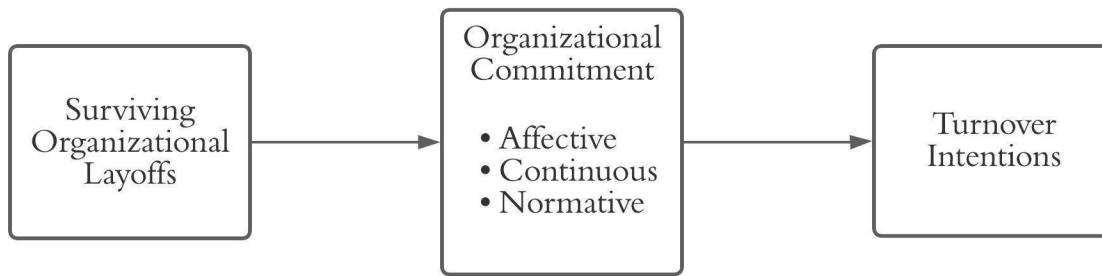
impacted and frontline operators that were absolutely necessary to keep the daily operations running were simply not needed as businesses were put on hold or adapted to half operations (such as restaurants only running drive through and pick up orders). The current study will fill a specific gap in research because it will measure the turnover intentions and organizational commitment of layoff survivors in all organizational levels and many different industries in the United States during COVID-19. Each of the studies summarized in this literature review have touched on one or more of these components, however this study will be the first of its kind to incorporate it all.

Hypotheses for Current Study

Figure 1 visually describes the research model for this study. A review of the past literature has led to the main research question of this study: How do organizational layoffs affect the organizational commitment and turnover intentions for employees who remain in the organization (survivors) during the economic downturn created by the COVID-19 pandemic? The proposed research study has three specific hypotheses to explore.

Figure 1.

Research Model for the Current Study



Studies such as (Tett & Meyer, 2006; Ramalho et al, 2018; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999) have provided support that in a normal environment, organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover intentions. In other words, the more committed to an organization an individual is, the less likely they will have intentions to leave the company. This study will test this again, in the context of COVID-19, to see if employees still have these feelings with the knowledge of the state of the current job market. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is the following:

H1. Organizational Commitment will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

In addition, this study will seek to answer if affective commitment is still the component of commitment that will most significantly oppose turnover intentions. According to the literature (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999), individuals who rate highest in affective commitment will have the smallest score of turnover intentions. This study will highlight whether this relationship is still strong, in relation to the other two commitment components, among layoff survivors during the pandemic. This correlation will be tested with Hypothesis 2 (H2):

H2. Affective Commitment will be more strongly related to turnover intentions than continuous or normative commitment.

Finally, this research study will examine the strength of the relationship between normative commitment and turnover intentions. In past literature (Tett & Meyer, 2006), normative commitment has not been a strong predictor of turnover intentions in a normal setting. When examining this component of commitment with survivors of layoffs, it is proposed that there will not be any significant correlation between normative commitment and turnover intentions. It is more possible that employees no longer feel any obligation towards staying with a company that has laid off employees during a global pandemic. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is:

H3. Normative Commitment will not be significantly related to turnover intentions.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of working adults (ages 18+) who have survived an organizational downsizing event within the last year. Participants ranged in regard to age, gender identity, work industry, and job level. All individuals currently reside and work within the United States and participation in the study was 100% voluntary. The study was able to reach 28 participants, however only 20 participants in this study were used to collect data because they

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are currently working in an organization that performed layoffs within the past year.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were given a consent form to fill out as the initial part of the survey in order to adhere to research ethics. The form explained the purpose of this research study and explained that the survey will take about 5-10 minutes of their time. It explained that participation in the study is voluntary and the participants may choose to withdraw at any point by closing out the survey window. It also explained that the participants personal information will remain confidential and only the researcher will have access to the raw data.

Since this study involved surveying participants about their own workplace, it was also specified that the study is for educational purposes and the data will not be shared with any company. The consent form specified that participants will not be compensated for this research study and each participant acknowledged that they are not a minor (under the age of 18). Finally, each participant had to check a box to give their consent to participate. Any participants who did not give consent or were minors were guided straight to the end of the survey and their data was not captured.

Materials

In order to recruit individuals to participate in the study, social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter were utilized to share a

Qualtrics survey. The participants only required a smartphone or computer in order to complete the survey on their own time.

Demographics Collection

Since it was required that participants be working in a company that has performed layoffs within the last year, a qualifying question began the survey process to ensure all participants who moved on to the rest of the survey had met this criterion. The last section of the Qualtrics survey requested demographic questions from participants. The survey asked for standard demographic information (Age, Gender, Industry, Position Level). After this, the participants moved on to scales that specifically measured the constructs of organizational commitment and turnover intentions.

Survey Details

Three validated questionnaires were adapted and used in this study: The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Allen & Meyer, 1990), the Turnover Intentions Scale (TISCALE) (Dwivedi, 2015), and the Turnover Intentions Questionnaire (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008). Each of the measures were issued to participants with a Likert-style format, a 7-point scale ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 7- Strongly Agree.

Organizational Commitment Measures. Organizational Commitment was measured with 15 of the original 24 items in the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Allen & Meyer, 1990). These questions were used to gauge the current commitment level the participant has to their organization.

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Researchers have previously validated this scale to ensure future studies can rely on the information they are collecting. According to research, “an alpha value of 0.60 and 0.70 or above is considered to be the criterion for demonstrating internal consistency of new scales and established scales respectively (Dwivedi, 2015, p. 459).” The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire contains items for each of the three components of organizational commitment and has a reliability (i.e. coefficient alpha) of .87 for affective commitment, .79 for normative commitment, and .75 for continuous commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In terms of validity of this scale, the components accounted for the following percent of the total variance in the scores: 58.8% for affective commitment, 25.8% for continuous commitment, and 15.4% for normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Only 15 of the original 24 items in the OCQ was used in order to keep the total survey concise. These items (see Appendix A) were developed to measure the specific components of organizational commitment (affective, continuous, and normative). There were 5 items for each component of organizational commitment. One example of an item that was removed from Allen & Meyer’s scale for this study is: “I do not think that wanting to be a ‘company man’ or ‘company woman’ is sensible anymore.” Items like these have been removed due to outdated language. Another example of a removed item is: “One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.” This item will be removed because it could be interpreted as two different questions by the

participant. The participant may be confused whether they are rating “loyalty is important” or “I feel a sense of moral obligation to stay.” To keep the survey as concise as possible, items like these were removed or adapted.

Turnover Intentions Measures. Turnover Intentions were measured in four items. Two items were adapted from the Turnover Intentions Scale (Dwivedi, 2015) and the other two were adapted from the Turnover Intentions Questionnaire (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008) (see Appendix B). These questions measured the level of intent each participant has with leaving their current organization.

Turnover Intentions Scale. The coefficient alpha for the Turnover Intentions Scale was calculated to be 0.839 (Dwivedi, 2015). This number is well above the criteria of .60 to .70 or above, therefore this scale is a reliable way to measure the construct of turnover intentions.

Turnover Intentions Questionnaire. The coefficient alpha for the Turnover Intentions Questionnaire indicated an acceptable reliability of 0.913 (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008). There were two items used from this scale. All 4 of the Turnover Intention items used different language in the Likert-type scale than the original language. Instead of choosing from a scale between 1- Strongly Disagree and 7- Strongly Agree, these items provided a scale from 1-Definitely not to 5-Definitely yes.

Procedure

The survey for this study was distributed from March 27th through April 10th. Participants were able to submit their survey at any point within the time period of two weeks. The Qualtrics survey link first opened to a consent form which allowed participants to read and understand the purpose of the study. The consent form also provided details explaining that the survey is completely anonymous, voluntary, and participants may choose to exit the survey at any point if they are uncomfortable. Each individual answered the 23-item survey which included questions that gathered demographic data and the qualifying question. Other questions in the survey measured their organizational commitment and turnover intentions.

After the survey collection period closed, the data was analyzed through SPSS Statistics. Each item in the survey that measured a construct was coded with 7 possible points (1- Strongly Disagree to 7- Strongly Agree) or 5 possible points (1-Definitely not to 5- Definitely yes). The mean of each of the survey items that measure each construct was then calculated to represent that participant's score. For example, if Participant A chose the score of 5 for 3 items regarding turnover intentions and 4 for the last item, their turnover intentions score will reflect in the raw data as 4.75.

Results

Statistical analyses were performed to examine the main research question for this study and several additional hypotheses. The main question of this study

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is how do organizational layoffs affect the organizational commitment and turnover intentions for employees who remain in the organization (survivors) during the economic downturn created by the COVID-19 pandemic? In previous studies that occurred well before the COVID-19 era, organizational commitment was found to be negatively correlated with turnover intentions (Ramalho et al, 2018, Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999). This study examined whether this is still true. Data was also collected in order to analyze each specific component of commitment (affective, continuous, and normative) and several hypotheses were formed. As a reminder, the 3 main hypotheses for this study are:

H1. Organizational Commitment will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

H2. Affective Commitment will be more strongly related to turnover intentions than continuous or normative commitment.

H3. Normative Commitment will not be significantly related to turnover intentions.

Descriptive Statistics

The first analysis performed in SPSS statistics (summarized below in Table 1) were the basic descriptive statistics for each variable measured in the survey (affective commitment, continuous commitment, normative commitment, overall commitment, and turnover intentions). On average, participants rated continuous commitment as the highest at $M=5.54$ ($SD=1.28$), followed by affective commitment ($M=5.19$, $SD= 1.24$). The variable with the lowest mean overall was normative commitment at $M=3.29$ ($SD=1.21$). The average overall commitment

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was calculated as $M = 4.47$ ($SD = .79$) and turnover intentions had an average score of $M = 3.14$ ($SD = 1.16$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Commitment components and Turnover Intentions

| | Affective Commit. | Continuous Commit. | Normative Commit. | Overall Commit. | Turnover Intentions |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Mean | 5.19 | 5.54 | 3.29 | 4.47 | 3.14 |
| Median | 5.40 | 5.90 | 3.70 | 4.52 | 3.00 |
| Mode | 5.40 | 3.80 | 3.80 | 2.75 | 2.00 |
| SD | 1.24 | 1.28 | 1.21 | .79 | 1.16 |
| Variance | 1.54 | 1.63 | 1.47 | .63 | 1.33 |
| Skewness | -.99 | -.84 | -.23 | -.45 | .21 |
| Kurtosis | -.11 | -.27 | -.31 | -.14 | -1.54 |

Note. $N = 20$. Survey scale for Commitment: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree, 4=Neither Agree nor disagree, 5=Somewhat Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly Agree. Survey scale for Turnover Intentions: 1=Definitely not, 2=Probably not, 3=Might or might not, 4=Probably yes, 5=Definitely yes.

Correlations

The next analysis run in SPSS was a Pearson's R correlation coefficient analysis, described below in Table 2. The correlation significance value of $p < 0.01$ explains that the probability of getting a coefficient at least this large if the null hypothesis were true is very low. In this case, the null hypothesis states that there are not any relationships between any of the variables. However, the null hypothesis is not true because the analysis shows that there are a few significant correlations.

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Firstly, there is a strong negative correlation between affective commitment and turnover intentions at a coefficient of $-.64$ ($p < 0.01$). In other words, as the employee's affective commitment increased in a significant way, their turnover intentions decreased. There is also a medium-sized, positive correlation between continuous commitment and turnover intentions at $.39$. This means that as the employee's continuous commitment increased, their turnover intentions also increased. It is important to note that this analysis does not determine causality, however it only denotes a significant relationship within variables.

The hypotheses for this study can be accepted or rejected from the results in the Pearson's R analysis, however further analysis follows this section to describe the possible strength of the variables as predictors of turnover intentions. The **H1** hypothesis was accepted because there was a small negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intentions ($-.05$). While this is not statistically significant, there is a slight negative correlation, which rejects the null hypothesis that there is no correlation or a positive correlation with turnover intentions. The **H2** hypothesis was also accepted because the affective commitment variable had the strongest correlation among the other two commitment components (continuous and normative) with turnover intentions at $-.64$. The **H3** hypothesis was also accepted because normative commitment did not have a strong statistically significant correlation with turnover intentions. However, the component did have a medium-sized negative correlation which should be noted.

Table 2*Pearson's R correlation coefficients for variables within the study*

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------|--------|-------|-------|------|---|
| 1. Affective | - | | | | |
| 2. Continuous | -.19 | - | | | |
| 3. Normative | .41 | -.10 | - | | |
| 4. Overall Commitment | .27 | .65** | .68** | - | |
| 5. Turnover Intentions | -.64** | .39 | -.37 | -.05 | - |

Note. N=20. ** denotes the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Hierarchical Regression

The results of a hierarchical regression analysis are displayed in Table 3. This analysis assessed whether the affective commitment of the employee accounts for a significant portion of the variance in the outcome of turnover intentions (1 constant), and how did it change with the added effects of the continuous commitment variable (2 constant)? The value of R^2 explains how much of the variability with the outcome of turnover intentions is due to the predictor(s). In the first model, the value is .41, which means that 41% of the variability of turnover intentions can be credited to the affective commitment of employees. However, when the variable of continuous commitment was added to the model, R^2 increased slightly to .48 or 48% of the variability of turnover intentions.

Additionally, the analysis describes the *b* values (the first column in the

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table) that would be used to predict the outcome of turnover intentions based on the value of X. The b value for affective commitment is a negative number (-.55), meaning that as the affective commitment increased by 1 unit, the model predicts that the turnover intentions will decrease by .55 units.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression matrix predicting turnover intentions from affective commitment and normative commitment

| Variable | B | SE | t | β | F | R ² | 95% CI |
|------------|------|------|-------|---------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| 1 Constant | 6.25 | .90 | 6.94 | | 12.60 | .41 | [4.40, 8.10] |
| Affective | -.60 | .17 | -3.55 | -.64 | | | [-.95, -.24] |
| 2 Constant | 4.62 | 1.37 | 3.37 | | 7.96 | .48 | [1.72, 7.50] |
| Affective | -.55 | .16 | -3.31 | -.59 | | | [-.89, -.19] |
| Continuous | .25 | .16 | 1.54 | .27 | | | [-.09, .58] |

Note. N=20. CI=Confidence Interval.

Discussion

The results of this study lead to several conclusions that can be made about organizational commitment and turnover intentions among survivors of layoffs during COVID-19. First, the descriptive statistics (visualized in Appendix C) show that the participants who work in an entry level, associate, or management position are currently feeling stronger continuous commitment as opposed to affective or normative commitment. This is a particularly interesting result,

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because previous studies had found that participants were more impacted by affective commitment and normative commitment (Ramalho et al, 2018). This suggests that workers who witnessed layoffs this year are currently attached to their organization because of the need to stay. These participants may feel the financial need to stay since the job market is not in favor of candidates and the competition is higher if they wanted to find a new job.

The correlations also describe the fact that those who feel continuous commitment are more likely to have higher turnover intentions. The participants felt committed to their organization due to the benefits, compensation, or other material factors. However, this component of commitment seems to drive the participants to have turnover intentions and want to seek employment elsewhere.

Additionally, the affective commitment variable was found to be negatively correlated with turnover intentions, supporting the hypothesis. This relates with the past 1999 Iverson & Buttigieg study which found affective commitment to be the most beneficial variable to prevent turnover intentions. The study also found that these people were more accepting to change, which may be why people who are feeling this type of commitment were not as negatively affected by the layoffs (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999). This demonstrates that even during this economic turmoil, when employees are personally connected with the values and mission of an organization, it will prevent them from having turnover intentions. It is also notable that the participants who work in higher-level jobs (CEO/President) were

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the only ones who felt affective commitment higher than continuous commitment at this time.

Overall, these results supported each hypothesis and conclusions can be made that organizational commitment does affect the turnover intentions among layoff survivors during COVID-19. There is enough support to determine that most participants are hanging on to their job within the company because they fear the possibility of a financial hardship due to the pandemic.

Limitations

There are a few limitations that should be considered for this research study. First, the survey was only able to reach about 20 participants in the allotted time frame, which is not ideal. In order to have a stronger chance of validity and reliability, future studies should have a goal to reach at least 50 or more participants. Also, these participants happened to be mostly from the hospitality industry (81.25%), so future studies need to be aware that this data may not be generalized to other industries.

Another limitation is that the data was not collected from any of the participants before the pandemic occurred. The fact that the study was not repeated limits the conclusions that can be made. If the study had begun before the pandemic and the same survey was distributed, it would have been possible to compare the organization commitment and turnover intentions of the participants before and after the layoffs occurred. Any researchers looking to

perform this study should be aware of these limitations and take great caution in making conclusions.

Conclusion

The research for this proposed study will be crucial to provide better insight on organizational commitment and turnover intentions among employees who have survived layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. While previous researchers have studied the connections between organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 2006; Ramalho et al, 2018; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999) and the changes that occur with these constructs among survivors of layoffs (Maertz et al., 2010; Van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2010; Jamal et al, 2018), these studies have not been replicated during an economic hardship, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, throughout the United States. The data collected from this study will give organizations a better idea of the upcoming changes their workforce may take on within the next couple years.

Some may think that employees who were not among the 2.3 million people laid off from their organization this year would be thankful for keeping their job and do their best to stay with the company, however this may not be the case. The results of this study will shed light on the truth and give employers a better idea of how much their remaining workers are committed, or not

committed to their organization. Are the survivors of layoffs thinking of leaving the organization now that they have seen many of their coworkers terminated from the company? Will the fact that the global pandemic has strongly affected the job market make a difference to the resulting commitment levels of the remaining workforce? This study seeks to answer these questions to gauge how employees are actually feeling after witnessing layoffs within their organization.

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Appendix A

| Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Item # | Survey Item | Component of Commitment |
| 1 | I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with my organization | Affective |
| 2 | I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it | Affective |
| 3 | I feel like ‘part of a family’ at my organization | Affective |
| 4 | My organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me | Affective |

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| | | |
|----|--|-------------|
| 5 | I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization | Affective |
| 6 | I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up | Continuance |
| 7 | It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to | Continuance |
| 8 | Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire | Continuance |
| 9 | I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving my organization | Continuance |
| 10 | One of the few serious consequences of leaving my organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives | Continuance |
| 11 | I think people these days move from company to company too often | Normative |
| 12 | I believe that a person must always be loyal to their organization | Normative |
| 13 | Jumping from organization to organization seems unethical to me | Normative |
| 14 | If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave my organization | Normative |
| 15 | I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization | Normative |

(Allen & Meyer, 1990)

Appendix B

| Turnover Intention Scale Items | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Item # | Survey Item | Adapted from: |
| 1 | I Intend to search for new job opportunities | (Dwivedi, 2015) |

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| | | |
|---|--|------------------------|
| 2 | I occasionally think about leaving my organization | (Dwivedi, 2015) |
| 3 | I have considered leaving my current job | (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008) |
| 4 | It is very likely that I will leave my job if I get another suitable offer | (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008) |

Appendix C

Organizational Commitment by Job Level

