

Stay or Leave? The Perceived Organizational Support, Affective Commitment, and Desire to Remain Among Lebanese High Performing Employees

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Abstract

For many decades, researchers have studied perceptions of organizational support and employees' work outcomes. The Perceived Organizational Support (POS) supposes that in order to define the extent of organization's willingness to reward efforts, employees compose general beliefs with regards to the degree to which their organizations value their contributions and show interest for their wellbeing (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Two of the most regarded outcomes of POS are employees' affective commitment (AC) and desire to remain (DTR) with their organizations. This study used the data of 457 high performing employees among Lebanese companies in order to examine the effect of their perceptions of organizational support. Particularly, this research examined the role of POS in enhancing the affective commitment and desire to remain of high performing employees and it indicated the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between POS and DTR. The study resulted in high levels of perception of organizational support as well as of the affective commitment and that of desire to remain. Furthermore, the affective commitment mediated the relationship. Other constructive findings revealed the moderating role of the Job levels where it shows to strengthen the relationship of POS and DTR. The control variables, age, gender, performance rate, and educational level revealed strong correlations with the model variables.

Keywords: Perceived organizational support, organization commitment,

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1. Introduction

Employers commonly value employees' commitment and devotion; at the same time employees who are affectively committed to the organization show heightened performance and a higher intention to stay in their jobs (Lee, Carswell & Allen, 2000; Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013) . In return, employees are generally more concerned if their contributions to their organizations would pay off, eventually, their organizations will be committed to them. The employee value proposition (Ulrich, 1997) meets with the perception of organizational support of Eisenberger et al. (1986); they argue that the reciprocity norm of perceptions of organizational support supposes that in order to define the extent of organization's willingness to reward efforts, employees compose general beliefs with regards to the degree to which their organizations value their contributions and show interest for their wellbeing. Consequently, employees who are treated fairly are willing to give back with the same appreciation and more favorable attitude (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Perceived Organization Support (POS) constitutes assurance that support and aid will be available whenever needed for employees to work effectively and to better deal with job stressors.

When it comes to high performing employees, the concept of commitment becomes more critical as organizations identify talented employees and work to retain them. Two views of commitment have been addressed in the literature; one deals with the sense of commitment an employee has to the company and the other is the sense of the employee that the company is committed to him/her. The former is defined by organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the latter is the perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The employee performance and POS raise important questions in the Lebanese context because Lebanon presents a unique business culture and because worker performance is a critical issue in the economy. Therefore, does POS lead to organizational commitment? This paper will study the relationship between the stated concepts along with their relationship to employees' desire to remain.

2. Background and hypotheses development

2.1. Perceived Organizational Support - POS

The theory of organizational support is derived from the social exchange theory to explain the relationships of employees with their organization; Eisenberger et al. (1986, p. 501) defined this theory as “to meet socioemotional needs and to determine the organization’s readiness to reward increased work effort, employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (perceived organizational support-POS)” (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Eisenberger, Stinglhamer, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Consequently, employees develop a series of behaviors and agreements regarding the extent to which the organization would treat them positively or negatively in different situations. This encompasses both the care for their wellbeing and the appreciation for their contributions.

The Organizational Support Theory (OST) has acquired substantial interest in previous research due to the significance of the value of employees-employers’ relationship from the employees’ perspective, which enhances the strength of the correlation of POS and many attitudinal outcomes, mainly affective commitment (AC) and job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Rhoades and Eisenberger’s (2002) analysis of the literature indicated that POS is related as well to attitudinal results such as affective organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance.

Remarkable examples from practitioners in different firms can be found in significant companies around the globe; for instance, Johnson & Co. offers residence in hotels for its employees who live a minimum of 25 miles far from the workplace. Moreover, Google, provides a “Global Education Leave Program” through which employees can pursue their education, urges engineers to invest 20% of their time working on independent projects, and offers employees tasty meals, on-site doctors, and free access to swimming pool and spa facilities at no cost. Marriott that has been greatly committed to employee wellness with its Take Care

movement, which supports the emotional, financial and physical wellbeing of its employees. All these examples, although found in “The 100 Best Companies to Work For” emphasize the fact that demonstrations of organizational commitment to employees that were novel several years ago have become unexceptional (Great Place to Work Institute, 2007) .

In this study, POS was chosen as the independent variable due to previous diverse results provided by the literature ranging from positive to negative relationships between the perceived organizational support and behavioral outcomes in different types of jobs and industries. A number of studies have identified a negative correlation between the Perceived Organizational Support and turnover intention (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004). Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn and Hobfoll (2008) argued that when people feel that a threat of a loss may arise, they do their best to avoid engaging in further loss which can affect their well-being or their behavior. Thus, lower POS can lead to lower employee performance

On the other hand, employees understand that their supervisors’ evaluations of their performance are communicated to the upper level management that in turn will affect POS and related measures (Rhoades et al., 2001). Therefore, employees clearly consider that the organization has a general positive or negative consideration towards them that recognizes their contributions and has concern for their wellbeing. In contrast to Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn and Hobfoll (2008), Rhoades et al. (2001) and Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) argue that employees who perceive that their organization is willing to provide assistance whenever their work or life call for support, feel more recognized, respected, and appreciated and in return show more contribution, performance and commitment. Consequently, employees will develop a sense of responsibility to improve their performance and contribute to organization’s effectiveness (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) believed that POS entails an upward-down commitment, where employees consider the organizational support and struggle to achieve its objectives. According to organizational support theory, Eisenberger et al. (2001) argued that POS enhances Affective commitment (AC) partly by creating a commitment to care for the

organization's prosperity which urges employees to reciprocally care for the company's wellbeing as well.

The perspective that POS contributes to AC (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Eisenberger et al., 2001) is enhanced by the different findings of the positive relationship between POS and AC, although the direction of causality is not clear because most of the researches assessed the relationship simultaneously (Rhoades et al., 2001).

Both academicians and practitioners attempt to assess if POS is capable of conveying more positive employee results. For this reason, the primary purpose of this study is to provide a clarification of several hypotheses by testing the impact of POS on the employees' desire to remain (DTR) through the mediating role of the affective commitment. As the diverging outcomes noted in the preceding literature suggest the existence of moderating influences, the secondary purpose of this research is to study a moderator analysis, emphasizing the extent to which job levels affects these relations, in addition to testing the control effect of gender, age, and level of education.

Hence, the hypotheses taken into consideration in this study are presented below. Next, the paper will present the methods employed to interpret these questions and the results obtained. The paper concludes with discussion addressing the managerial implications for the findings, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Hypothesis 1a: The greater employees Perceived Organizational Support (POS) the greater their Affective Commitment (AC) and,

Hypothesis 1b: The greater employees Perceived Organizational Support (POS) the greater their Desire to Remain (DTR).

2.2. Affective commitment

Commitment is a "force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301). One of the main influences on employee's commitment includes the management style of the organization. Research concerning the development of organizational commitment has been widespread but

relatively haphazard (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1990) identified three distinct dimensions of organizational commitment: “affective”, “continuance,” and “normative”. Similarly, commitment is a psychological state that has implications on the decision to stay or leave the organization. Allen & Meyer argued that employees who have strong affective commitment stay in the organization because they “*want to*”, whereas those who exhibit strong continuance commitment remain because they “*need to*” and those who show strong normative commitment stay because they feel they “*ought to*” do so. Human resource practices are important drivers and influence discrete employee feeling of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Nevertheless, based on theory and gathered evidence, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) also recognized various bases for the development of each of the three forms of commitment. They stated that the *normative commitment* development is based on a function of cultural and organizational socialization and the receipt of benefits that trigger a demand to respond. In contrast, *continuance commitment* develops as the result of collected investments. While the bases of the development of *affective commitment* are personal contribution, identification with the pertinent target, and value correspondence. In summary, this research aims to study the *affective commitment* as a result of perceived organizational commitment and as mediator to improve employees’ desire to stay, due to its intrinsic will to commit to organization, in other words to willingly choose to commit themselves. Organizational commitment and job satisfaction theories and models are more developed in the Western contexts than in Middle Eastern settings or Lebanese contexts in particular. Researchers consider the employee commitment towards the organization a cornerstone in one’s effectiveness in a competitive environment (Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011). Meyer and Allen (1997) denoted that employees showing stronger levels of commitment to the organization ultimately show higher levels of work satisfaction yet lower levels of job stress and work-family conflicts. Moreover, there has been given insufficient evidence for how POS and AC would lead to the same behavioral outcomes; reduced employees’ turnover and employees’ turnover intentions were the strongest outcomes among all (Porter, Crampton & Smith, 1976; Chan & Christopher, 2008; Cho, Johanson, & Guchait, 2009).

Additionally, some scholars argue that POS correlates positively to wellbeing through associations with two commitment approaches, mainly Affective Commitment (AC) and secondly the Lack of Alternatives (LA); although beyond the scope of this study, POS may also correlate positively to Normative Commitment (NC) and the perceived “high sacrifice” associated with leaving (Panaccio, & Vandenberghe, 2009). Similarly, the relationship with other kinds of commitment differs. As positive work performance could affect positively the employees’ sense of obligation and POS, the Normative Commitment, the Continuance Commitment shows minimal yet consistent negative relationships with POS (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS should also increase AC by satisfying such socioemotional needs as affiliation and emotional support (Armeli, Eisenberger, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986); this can produce a higher sense of belonging and reduced feeling of being forced to stay with the organization due to the high cost of leaving (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Eventually, the result most related to POS was AC as well as being its key predictor (Rhoades et al., 2001; Su, Baird, & Blair, 2009). Hence the development of the second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2a: There will be a positive relationship between Affective Commitment (AC) and Desire to Remain (DTR).

Hypothesis 2b: Affective Commitment (AC) will mediate the relationship between POS and Desire to Remain (DTR).

Hypothesis 3a: Job level (manager, salaried, professional...) moderates the relationships between POS and AC

Hypothesis 3b: Job level (manager, salaried, professional...) moderates the relationships between POS and DTR.

2.3. Desire to remain

The core dependent variable of this study is employees’ desire to remain with the company or what is used interchangeably the intention to stay. “The turnover intention was conceived to be the employees’ conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization” (Tett & Meyer, 1993, p. 262). Thus, desire to remain is a psychological variable worth more consideration in its own right. According to Mowday (1984)

committed employees to an organization have the propensity to strongly believe in the organization's goals and values and put forth significant effort on behalf of this organization. Studies found a positive relationship between organizational commitment and DTR (Becker, 1992). Along the same concept, when employees show high commitment to the organization, the commitment will encourage the employees to pursue the relationship with the organization, hence, will have a positive impact on their desire to remain with the organization.

Reduced turnover has pragmatic consequences when substantial costs are required to find, train and select new employees. Prior work has focused on the determinants of turnover, where organizational culture and organizational commitment were predictive of employees leaving their work (Huselid, 1995).

Turnover is often utilized to explain the unplanned loss of employees that employers would prefer to keep (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004). The most studied organizational phenomena, the movement of employees inwards and outwards the organization is commonly called *turnover*. Usually transfers and promotions are not categorized as turnover because they do not move employees outside the company membership boundaries. Turnover can be *voluntary* and *involuntary*. Resignations and quits are the typical label for voluntary leaves, whereas dismissals, firings, retirements, layoffs, and death are best described as the involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover is managers' concern who aim at reducing it and maintaining it at acceptable levels, nevertheless, small level of turnover is healthy for the organization that needs new blood and new ideas to regenerate and renew itself. Of course, companies do not target zero turnovers because it is not generally desirable. The tenured employees eventually get high salaries that the organization might not afford, and this is an unspoken factor of retirements and a main reason for companies to trade-off years of experience and skills for low salaries and bring new ideas onboard. The employer looks for retaining those incumbents whose abilities serve the organization's needs whilst at the same level the employee looks for staying due the fulfillment of his needs (Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2009).

The intention to leave and intention to stay may not be similar and cannot be considered to be the opposite of each other despite the fact that in most prior studies, the terms, desire to remain or intention to stay and intention to leave, have been used interchangeably (i.e., intention to stay is the converse of intention to leave). Predictors that affect intention to leave are not necessarily the same as those that affect the intention to stay; a predictor that reduces intention to leave might not have any effect on intention to stay. Nonetheless, both intent to leave and intent to stay have been studied to be the sole best drive of genuine turnover behavior (Cho et al., 2009). Porter et al. (1976) argued that employees intend to leave their organization when their commitment prior to actually leaving showed definite declined. The decision of the employee to stay or quit depends on his/her turnover intention and turnover behavior. The former includes attitudes, behavior and decisions and the decision to quit is based on an individual choice that is a psychological response (Kumudha & Bamini, 2013). If high caliber employees leave their companies, this will be extremely disruptive and costly which lead that turnover intention is more critical than turnover behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

In line with Eisenberger's proposition, employees with high levels of POS have higher job satisfaction and more commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), those employees don't usually show tardiness, absenteeism or resignation (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Many factors influence the retention including work-life balance, talent management practices, job enrichment, benefits and financial rewards, training and development opportunities and work environment (Pfeffer & O'Reilly III, 2000; Cappelli, 2000; Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013), which predicted that perceived organizational support would have a significant negative effect on turnover intention, that is a positive effect on desire to remain. Thus, high performing employees who have high affective commitment more likely intend to stay with the organization (Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013).

3. Method

3.1. Study context

Investments in perceived organizational support is conventional in Western organizations; however, in the Middle East and particularly in Lebanon, it is not yet researched. Lebanon represents an interesting economic and cultural context in which it is useful to study the relationships proposed in this paper. Dirani (2006) highlights that high caliber employees drained from Lebanon. The Lebanese culture is normally considered to be family oriented, cordial and prominence conscious, thus, compliance to authority and control are revealed in the Lebanese culture. Compared to western settings, managers are disposed to use more assertive and less adapted styles with their subordinates; to be firmer with guidelines; to have an authoritarian tone; and to depend on personal contacts and on their social situations and family motivations. Lebanon being labelled as “Switzerland of the Middle East” has many competitive advantages some of which are in services, banking and hospitality and the support of a liberal government for private industry (Nakhle, 2011). Distinct from the Arab societies Lebanon has been a distinctive yet prosperous and liberal country (Dirani, 2009). Lebanon is a moderately collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1980). The workforce in Lebanon is being characterized as overeducated for the local market’s needs. On the other hand, its exceptional pluralistic and distinguished social structure had a huge effect on determining the non-traditional and westernized characteristics of Lebanese persons. Despite this advanced educational system, research in Lebanon is dismal (Dirani, 2006). For all the above reasons, the emphasis of this paper is investigating the Lebanese high performing employees’ perception of their organizational support in this context and their relation to being more committed and desiring to remaining working in their companies.

3.2. Sample and data collection

The research initially conducted a convenient sample of more than twenty reputable Lebanese companies. After meeting with the Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) and presenting the study, 11 elite private Lebanese organizations applying High Performance Human

Resource System were cooperative and agreed to be part of this research. A web-administrative questionnaire was developed out of reliable pretested surveys and was distributed through the Human Resource department to reach a sample of high caliber employees. A subset of organizations required printed versions of questionnaire. Data from these organizations was entered manually on SPSS 23. The sample was determined accordingly and included all employees who have had a performance rating good and above. Out of 700 subjects given by the HR departments of the companies, 457 returned complete questionnaires with a 65.3% response rate.

4. Measures

Perceived organizational support: consistent with prior work, POS was measured using the eight highest loading items from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). A sample item was “My organization really cares about my well-being” with Cronbach’s alpha $\alpha(\text{POS})=0.90$. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, p. 699) stated that “because the original scale is unidimensional and has high internal reliability, the use of shorter versions does not appear problematic.”

Affective Commitment: Allen and Meyer argued that employees with strong affective commitment stay in the organization because they *want* to. Hence, the scale of Affective commitment was based on that developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) which has been used extensively in prior research and enjoy strong psychometric properties. It is used here in the affirmative form where the reverse coded questions (asked negatively) are asked affirmatively based on the recommendations of Swain, Weathers and Niedrich (2008) to using reverse coding. The AC was measured using eight questions of Allen and Meyer (1990) with a five point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). A sample item is: “I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own” with Cronbach’s alpha $\alpha(\text{AC})= 0.883$. Commitment encompasses many issues like consistency of visible behavior and loyalty, along with ideology or mindset, thus commitment has influence of how employees

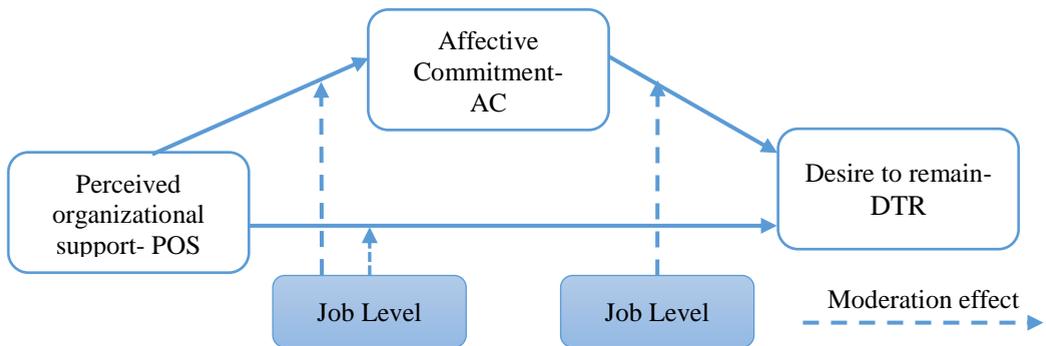
view obligations and emotions in work situations and eventually has impact on employees' behavior (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003).

Desire To Remain: It is not uncommon to measure intentions to stay and turnover with single-item scales (Lounsbury & Hóopes, 1986; Schneider & Bowen, 1985) . The intention to stay is measured using the sole item “I intend to stay working for this company for next 3 years” with a five point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This measure of the sole item is referred to Ng and Butts (Ng & Butts, 2009). Finally, the choice of a mono-item scale must be commented. Debates in literature favor multi-item scales due to their better psychometric qualities (Churchill, 1979). Nonetheless, researchers in the field of turnover intention have shown that mono-item scales present sufficient psychometric properties (Ng & Butts, 2009; Cho et al. 2009).

Control variables Previous studies have acknowledged age, gender, occupation and industry to relate to organizational commitment and desire to remain (Huang, Lin, & Chuang, 2006; Pare´ & Tremblay, 2007). A recent meta-analysis by Riggle, Edmonson, and Hansen (2009) assured the attitudinal significant findings with more studies and they stated that “organizational support theory’s view that POS strengthens commitment and spurs performance via the norm of reciprocity should be given another look as our study clearly suggests that the type of job may increase or decrease support influences” (Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009, p. 1029).

The *five* control variables were coded as follows: *Age*:1-19 – 25; 2-26- 35 years; 3-36 – 45 years and 4-more than 46 years, *Gender*:1-male; 2-female; *Occupation*:1-Executive Managers; 2: Manager; 3: Professional, and 4: Salaried; *Education level*: 1-Bachelor; 2-Masters; 3-Professional Degree (CPA, CFA, PHRM...) and 4-Doctorate (PhD, DBA, EdD...) and *Job performance rate* (1- Outstanding, 2-Excellent, 3-Good, 4-Average).

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the impact of POS on AC and Desire to remain and the mediation role of Affective commitment



5. Data analysis and results

Prior to testing our hypotheses, the researcher conducted a series of Principal Component Analyses (PCA), which is a procedure to identify and reduce the size of a dataset to a smaller number of underlying dimensions each of which is relying on a number of the original variables whilst avoiding multicollinearity (Janssens, Wijnen, De Pelsmacker, & Van Kenhove, 2008); two factors have been analyzed the POS and AC. The Meyer-Olkin KMO Test designed to “measure of how suited data is for factor analysis. The test measures sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and KMO returns values between 0 and 1. A *rule of thumb* for interpreting the statistic is that KMO values between 0.8 and 1 indicate the sampling is adequate” (Janssens et al. (2008), p. 255) . This study revealed $KMO_{(POS)}=0.857$, meritorious, and $KMO_{(AC)}=0.912$, marvelous. In addition, “Bartlett’s test of sphericity” that attempts to determine if the variables are uncorrelated and this was satisfied in both significant ($p, 0.000 < 0.05$), which makes” the factor analysis meaningful. The Principal Component Analysis resulted in both variables POS and AC each as one component-factor. A number of criteria were used to determine the number of factors, first, the “Kaiser criterion” that retains

only factors of eigenvalues greater than one, second, the “scree plot” that helps retaining those factors that correspond to the “elbow” in the curve (Janssens et al., 2008). Both criteria were satisfied and resulted in the unidimensional factors of POS and that of AC. A summated scale thus may be calculated as the mean of the qualifying variables but not before conducting the reliability analysis, the calculation of “Cronbach’s Alpha” of these variables.

Cronbach’s Alpha “aims to measure the internal consistency reliability of a scale. Hence, it shows if a set of items can be considered to measure a single latent variable; its value ranges between 0 and 1. The closer the coefficient is to 1 the more the consistent the scale is; the opposite is true” (Janssens et al. (2008), p. 274). Thus, Cronbach’s Alpha resulted respectively $\alpha(\text{POS})=0.835$ & $\alpha(\text{AC})= 0.883$. As of Nunally (1978) a score greater than 0.700 is sufficient in an exploratory context; the score here shows very good results.

The means, standard deviations and inter-correlations among the study variables are reported in Table 1. The mean value for affective commitment was 1.98 (on a five-point scale knowing that 1 refers to strongly agree), suggesting that the sample of high performers employees showed high levels of affective commitment. This sample also reported strong desire to remain resulting in a mean of 1.69. The correlations also showed significance and positive correlation between affective commitment and desire to remain ($r = 0.605^{**}$). POS was strongly correlated with affective commitment as well as to desire to remain (POS: $r = 0.779^{**}$ & 0.506^{**} respectively).

Table 1: Means, Standard deviation, Cronbach's alfa (α), Correlations for the study variables

| | Mean | Standard Deviation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--------------|-------|-----------------------|---------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|---|
| 1- POS | 2.02 | .571 | 1(0.83) | | | | | | | |
| 2- AC | 1.98 | .718 | .779** | 1(0.88) | | | | | | |
| 3- DTR | 1.69 | .840 | .506** | .605** | 1 | | | | | |
| 4- Age | 32.88 | 7.558 | -.098* | -.116* | -.087 | 1 | | | | |
| 5- Edu level | | | .071 | .073 | -.024 | -.056 | 1 | | | |
| 6- Gender | | | -.001 | -.050 | .077 | .002 | .012 | 1 | | |
| 7- Job level | | | .182** | .264** | .174** | .008 | -.349** | .189** | 1 | |
| 8- Perf rate | | | .146** | .131** | .026 | -.072 | -.196** | .018 | .154** | 1 |

Note. N = 457. Scales reliabilities Cronbach's alfa (α) are on the diagonal between parentheses. POS, perceived organizational support. AC, Affective commitment. DTR, Desire to remain. *Correlations significant at $p < .05$. ** Correlations significant at $p < .01$

Regression analysis is used to test the hypotheses of this study. Table 2 reports the results of the regression analysis on both Affective Commitment and Desire To Remain. First, we included the control variables age, education level, gender, job level and Job performance rate.

Among the control variables, the respondents age range has been distributed as follow: 19 – 25 years constitutes 19%; 26- 35 years 51.6%; 36 – 45 years 24.1% and more than 46 years 5.3%). The education level varied among Bachelor 46.8%; Masters 44%; Professional Degree (CPA, CFA, PHRM...) 4.8% and Doctorate 4.4%. Males counted 44.9% and female 55.1%. Out of the total number of respondents Executive Managers represented 5%, Managers 26.9%, Professionals 40.9%, and Salaried 27.1%. The overall rating received from their last performance appraisal was Outstanding 17.7 %, Excellent 60.8%, Good 21.4%.

Males and females had the same high level of POS ($M=2.02$) but revealed difference in the levels of both AC and DTR ($M_{(AC)}=2.19, 2.07$; $M_{DTR}=1.62, 1.75$) respectively. Regarding *Educational levels*, high POS manifested more by low level of education than higher levels ($M_{High-school}= 1.46$; $M_{Bachelor}=1.99$; $M_{Masters}=2.06$; $M_{Professional degree}=1.70$;

$M_{\text{Doctorate}}= 2.32$), similarly high levels of AC ($M=1.42, 2.05, 2.24, 1.81, 2.23$, respectively) whereas they had all high desire to remain with their organizations the mean of the different levels of education revealed $m= 1.67; 1.74; 1.64; 1.45; 1.90$, respectively). Those of high *Job performance rate*, “outstanding” and “excellent” showed better POS than those of job performance rate “good” ($M, 1.95, 1.98$ and 2.20 respectively); represented similar levels with respect to AC ($M, 2.15, 2.03, 2.37$); as well as for the desire to remain ($1.81, 1.60, 1.86$). According to the difference in the age groups, all four age groups from younger to older show high level of POS ($M=2.17, 2.00, 1.96, 1.92$, respectively), same for AC ($M= 2.26, 2.13, 2.03, 2.02$), as well as for the desire to remain ($M=1.78, 1.72, 1.60, 1.50$). Regarding the *Job levels - POS* ($M_{\text{Executive-Manager}}= 1.79, M_{\text{Manager}}=1.98, M_{\text{Professional}}=1.94, M_{\text{salaried}}=2.22$) where Executive managers showed better POS than other posts; with respect to AC ($M_{\text{Executive-Manager}}= 1.61, M_{\text{Manager}}=2.09, M_{\text{Professional}}=2.07, M_{\text{salaried}}=2.35$); as for posts - desire to remain ($M_{\text{Executive-Manager}}= 1.13, M_{\text{Manager}}=1.77, M_{\text{Professional}}=1.49, M_{\text{salaried}}=2.02$). The differences in means were revealed in three control variables the *Gender, Educational levels* and *Job levels*.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) are found to have significant and positive effect on both AC (POS: $b, 0.922$; $p, 0.000$) and Desire To Remain (POS: $b, 0.745$; $p, 0.000$). Both Hypotheses 1a and 1b stated that the greater employees perceived the organizational support (POS) the greater will be their affective commitment and their desire to remain, eventually both supported. Similarly, Hypothesis 2a stated that there will be a positive relationship between affective commitment and desire to remain and it was supported as well ($b, 0.778$; $p, 0.000$; $R^2, 0.381$).

Table 2: Regressions, ANOVA, R² of the variables of this study

| Variables | Affective Commitment | Desire to Remain |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Age | 0.94 | 0.280 |
| Education level | 0.01 | 0.362 |
| Gender | 0.02 | 0.099 |
| Job level | 0.00*** | 0.00*** |
| Performance rate | 0.00*** | 0.01* |
| Perceived organizational Support | 0.000*** | 0.000*** |
| R ² | 0.623 | 0.256 |
| R ² adjusted | 0.622 | 0.255 |
| F | 752.491** | 156.884** |
| DF | 1 | 1 |

* $p < 0.05$ level; ** $p < 0.01$ level; *** $p < 0.001$ level

Pertaining to mediation effect of AC on the relationship between POS and Desire To Remain (DTR), consequently, to evaluate whether mediation was significant, the “PROCESS” test was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure outlined by Hayes (2013) with 95% confidence interval (95% CI). PROCESS tests the relationships of two variables and the change when the mediator exists (Table 3). Mediating variable should be related to dependent variable after effects of independent variable are controlled for in the model (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

If the unstandardized beta weights of the independent variable are still significant in the last step, that shows the mediation role, then partial mediation is present. “Perfect mediation holds if the independent variable has no effect when the mediator is controlled” (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1177). Our analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between POS and DTR ($p, 0.001$) as well as a significant relationship between POS and AC ($p, 0.001$). The effects of the mediator (affective commitment) on the dependent variable (desire to remain), controlling for the independent variable (perceived organizational commitment), are also significant ($p, 0.001$). Finally, when we controlled for the mediator (affective commitment), we found no relationship between POS and desire to remain ($p > 0.001$; $p, 0.3966$), this indicates that affective

commitment fully mediated the relationship. Fundamentally, it is to test if it is possible (with 95% confidence) that the indirect effect would be ZERO (eventually it results no mediation). In our case the indirect effect is 95% likely to range from LL95CI=0.0899 to UL95CI=0.5064 - the estimated effect is 0.4165 (lying in between these two values) and the results are based on estimates from 5000 bootstrapping samples were utilized in the current study (Hayes, 2013). If, like the study in hand, zero doesn't appear between the Lower level "LL" and the upper level "UL", the indirect effect is significant, therefore AC fully mediates the relationship of POS and DTR. Table 3 reports the mediation analyses. This finding is consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendation that perfect mediation occurs if the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable becomes non-significant after controlling for the mediator. Therefore, Hypothesis 2b is fully supported as Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177) indicated "Perfect mediation holds if the independent variable has no effect when the mediator is controlled."

Table 3: Mediation effect of Affective commitment in the relationship of Perceived organizational support and Desire to remain

| | Coefficient | S.E. | T | Sig(Two) |
|--|-------------|-------|--------|----------|
| POS predicts DTR-path 'c' | 0.745 | 0.059 | 12.525 | 0.000 |
| POS predicts AC- path 'a' | 0.9218 | .0336 | 27.431 | 0.000 |
| DTR/AC and POS- path b | 0.7268 | .0757 | 9.5951 | 0.000 |
| DTR/POS and AC direct effect- path 'c' | 0.0750 | .0884 | 0.8485 | 0.3966 |

| | Effect | S.E | LL95CI | UL95CI | F | Sig(Two) |
|--|--------|-------|--------|--------|----------|----------|
| | 0.6700 | .0899 | .0899 | .5064 | 140.1744 | 0.0000 |

As for Hypothesis 3, it was designed to assess if Job level (executive managers, manager, salaried, professional...) moderate the relationships between POS, affective commitment and desire to remain. In general terms, Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1174) stated that "moderator is a variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between

an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable". We found that Job level strengthened the relationship between POS and AC where the coefficient of interaction c is significant (c , 0.074 (POS*Job-level) with a positive change of R^2 by 0.0027); POS and DTR (c , 0.1416 POS*Job-level) with a positive change of R^2 by 0.0061; AC and DTR (c , 0.11AC*Job-level); with a positive change of R^2 by 0.0063. The moderation was consistent with previous research of Riggles et al. (2009). Thus, Hypothesis 3a, and Hypothesis 3b were fully supported.

6. Discussion

Considering the purpose of this research that is to investigate the relationships among Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and affective commitment with the Desire To Remain within Lebanese high performing employees, the POS was found to be positively related to measures of affective commitment. Hence, the greater the employees perceived their organization support the greater they show their affective commitment (b , 0.922) and as much as POS increases as much as the DTR increases (b , 0.745). A positive and direct relationship was shown in the effect of AC on DTR such as the greater the affective commitment the greater the desire to remain is (b , 0.778). Moreover, it also examined the mediating effect of AC on the relationships between POS and DTR; the direct relationship between POS and DTR disappeared as soon as the affective commitment is introduced through the relation. Our findings, in addition to the previous three positive relationships, are that high performers Lebanese employees' general perception of being valued and cared for their wellbeing by their organization are significantly positive and also operate via the mediation path of a commitment mindset specifically the affective commitment. Particularly POS promotes affective commitment which in turn increases the desire to remain with the organization.

Although this research provides the first empirical investigation in social exchange in the Lebanese context, among high achievers, its findings are consistent with other research of social exchange theory pertaining that employees, in different contexts, interpret positive treatment from their organizations as indicative of the personified organization's commitment toward them and in return reciprocate with

better performance and more commitment that could impact the firms' performance. Another Middle Eastern study was found in the UAE about POS of expatriates (Syed, 2012) where it was observed that POS has a critical role in the pride of employees' work and a key factor to remain working in the host country. On this basis, organizational support theory OST provides an overall approach to the function of the reciprocity pattern in employee–employer relationships. Some researchers considered that favorable work experience lead to organizational commitment and reduced turnover, employees should believe that such experiences are outcomes of effectiveness of the management policies and functions (Mowday, 1984; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Dirani, 2009; Janet & Chan, 2008). Eisenberger et al. (1986) indicated that the POS and AC were mediated by the employees' felt of obligation to help the organization achieve its goals and to care about their organizations well-being. Kurtessis et al. (2017) ensures that “POS is an important link between various types of favorable treatment by the organization and employees' positive orientation toward the organization, psychological well-being, and performance on behalf of the organization”. Indeed, Affective organizational commitment has been observed as an essential determinant of employees' readiness to follow organizational goals and desire to remain with the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2017). AC's mediation of the POS-DTR relationship is congruent with the perspective of the Conservation of Resource Theory that indicates that emotionally attached employees towards their organization due to high POS expect to get in return valuable resources in order to help them adapt with the requirements of their job; they will spell out their organization as a perfect place to work while their high affective commitment may be coupled with feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem which are contemplated to be among the most vital existing resources to individuals (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). This falls also consistent with the resource-based view RBV, our results propose that high performers employees will show affective commitment and intention to remain on the basis of resources offered by organizations (Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001).

In Lebanon, where the cultural context emphasizes the family oriented businesses where managers usually tend to use more assertive

and less adapted styles with their subordinates, it is significant to come up with these positive effects among high performers and to enhance the research in this field. In particular, the researcher shed light on how inside organizations the results showed a positive moderation effect associated with job levels. Among the four job levels studied Executive managers were highly perceiving their organizations' support, they opt to be more committed and superiorly intending to remain working longer with their companies. This outcome suggests that organizations partly rely on the type of role the employees perform to value the benefits of such approaches. The fact that organizational commitment was related to POS and increases with the job position adds incremental value to our employees' perspective on commitment. This also underlines the importance of social exchanges in the prediction of employees' well-being and reduced intention to leave. This consistent also with Mowday (1984) that suggest that AC is malleable with the advancement of personal career. The work experience that influence the POS and AC may have a major effect of unexpected personal effectiveness. These findings will add value to the literature, the significant approach of a developing country yet has well educated people, Lebanon, the prominence of taking care of employees' wellbeing and retain them not to transfer to competitor or drain from the home country.

7. Limitations and future recommendations

There are several limitations to this study that pave the way for useful future research. The sample includes only high performers employees in the 11 well-known companies and this may weaken the generalizability of the research findings. In addition, this could be extended to all nature of companies in private and in public sector as well where a comparative study could arise. An additional limitation is that it studied the perceptions of organizational support from only the perspective of employees. Add to these limitations that this research did not take into consideration any economic factor including stability effect, the impact of compensation on their POS and the firm performance that would be part of future research in the Lebanese context.

Future research is urged to investigate about particular programs and what organizations are providing for their employees in terms of

programs and benefits that lead them to feel that they are taking care of their well-being. It is recommended to expand the firms and employees number to be generic and the firm performance in order to assess the effectiveness of this relationship. This study has been devoted to assess the consequences of POS while it useful to amplify its antecedents as well. All managerial levels could work on better influencing POS via appropriate programs as mentioned in the beginnings of this paper for instance, and others such as providing needed resources, high human resource practices, rewards, recognitions. Indeed, they should ensure that employees benefit from child-care programs, transportation facilities, parents support for work life balance, all of which foster the belief of employees that their organizations are supportive and care for their personal needs. Occasionally a congratulatory letter, certificates of accomplishment, appreciation letters or even verbal praise can have a positive impact.

8. Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study offer a number of relevant implications for studying and establishing perceived organizational support, which proved its importance in the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of high performing employees.

After empirically studying 457 employees who showed good to outstanding performance in elite Lebanese companies, it is worth saying that the study contributes to a better understanding of the operation of organizational commitment to its employees who reciprocate good treatment and good care of their wellbeing. Despite it hasn't been academically researched yet, the study in the Lebanese cultural context presented an added value to findings of the impact of perceived organizational support in which affective commitment represented an important work-related variable. Eventually, organizations as well as managers are consistently working with levers by which they increase positive human resource outcomes such as commitment, engagement and attachment.

Eventually, HR managers are asked to validate the value of HR practices on outcomes such as turnover intentions and deviant behaviors.

Hence, if these practices pay off and they believe they are supported, they will likely report lower turnover intentions and demonstrate higher levels of commitment. Based on our findings HR managers should take initiatives to ensure that there is a supportive environment in order to maintain positive employees' behavior, eventually take advantage of positive POS. HR practices ensuring recognition of employee contributions likely promote POS (Allen et al., 2003).

Indeed, the findings denote a managerial need to design differently the support programs based on job type as the perception of support and the level of affective commitment vary with the level of jobs; it appears inappropriate to design programs as "one size fits all".

Based on the finding of this study we can conclude that there are two main implications for businesses practices that make them useful for managerial implications. First, managers should ensure a positive organizational environment and climate where employees could express their opinion of the company and perceive that their organizations appreciate their contribution and take care of their personal interests. Second, HR managers are well advised to regard and retain high performers employees whose skills and competencies help potentially in building the company's competitiveness and sustainability and carefully plan for their career, so that to increase positive outcomes with experience and job type.

In summary, this article advances theoretical understanding of the linkages between Perceived organization support and both affective commitment and desire to remain. Furthermore, the mediation role of affective commitment is particularly important in explaining the impact of Perceived organization support on desire to remain, yet the job level measures of POS, AC and DTR.

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