

Study of Commitment Antecedents: The Dynamic Point of View

Chun-Hsi Vivian Chen
Setyabudi Indartono

ABSTRACT. This study adopted a dynamic perspective in investigating the effects of employees' perception of equity (PoE) and perception of organizational politics (POP) on their trust in organizations and the subsequent effect of such on their commitment. Data were collected from 216 employees from various industries. The positive effect of PoE and negative effect of POP on employees' trust were confirmed in this study. It is also found that employees' trust in organizations has a positive effect on their organizational commitment. This study also confirmed the mediation of employees' trust on the relationships between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment. Besides, the moderation of employees' trust on the relationships between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment was not confirmed. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

KEY WORDS: perception of organizational politics, perception of equity, trust, organizational commitment

Commitment is a common and important construct in behavioral studies. Researchers explore the antecedents of commitment to provide insights into employee's commitment. Numerous studies investigate essential factors that influence organizational commitment both at individual and organizational levels, such as individual characteristics, culture, and human resource policy in practice (Eaton, 2003;

Gifford et al., 2002; Lok and Crawford, 2001; Rashid et al., 2003). Personal characteristics, work experience, alternative investment, socialization experience, and organizational investment are summarized as antecedents of commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). However, it is difficult to generalize such findings in different contexts. Accordingly, researchers have spent considerable effort attempting to develop and test the models of commitment antecedent.

Meyer et al. (1993) distinguish the antecedents of commitment into three major categories, i.e., emotional attachment and belief, perceived economic value, and ethical reasons of obligation to organization. Thus, antecedents of commitment are explored based on these criteria. Nevertheless, researchers (e.g., Solinger et al., 2008) indicate that there is a need for further investigations on the consistencies of both empirical and theoretical approach of commitment antecedents. Indeed, few studies on organizational commitment have thoroughly explained its antecedents, and no consensus has been reached among scholars. Prior research on commitment antecedents assumes that the relationship between employees and their environment is static. In fact, researchers (e.g., Desarbo and Grewal, 2008; Schalk and Freese, 1997; White, 2008) propose a dynamic relationship between organizations and members. Employees' commitment to organizations may fluctuate as a consequence of their changing perception of psychological contract (Schalk and Freese, 1997). Accordingly, the failure to include the dynamic viewpoint into the analysis leads to a lack of the holistic perspective and thus constrains the applicability of the model.

Employees' organizational commitment is subject to the influence of individual characteristics and organizational context. The level of commitment may fluctuate because of employees' behavioral

Chun-Hsi Vivian Chen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Business Administration, National Central University, Taiwan. She received her Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Southern California. Her research interests include leadership, employment selection, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Setyabudi Indartono is a Doctor Candidate in Business Administration Department, National Central University Taiwan. He is also a lecturer of Management Department, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia. His major interest of research includes leadership and organizational behavior.

change and/or organizational changes. For example, at the individual level, scholars (Perish et al., 2008) argue that employees tend to adjust their needs and behaviors to respond to the short-term opportunities present at the workplace. Cicekli (2008) also proposes the opportunity for promotion and development as one of commitment antecedents. On the other hand, the organization-level variables might have effects on employees' organizational commitment. Desarbo and Grewal (2008) maintain that firms would adopt different types of strategies to respond to the uncertainties inherent in the environment and gain their competitive advantage. These adjustments and modifications at the organizational level would in turn affect employees' behaviors (Elias, 2009).

Scholars (e.g., Hochwarter et al., 2000; Valle and Perewe, 2000) maintain that unfair treatment perceived by employees and the escalation of political behaviors within organizations might discourage employees from putting greater efforts and thus be detrimental to the development of organizational commitment. In fact, employees' behavior at work is contingent on their assessment of the organizational realities perceived or experienced by them. They tend to adjust their behavior or input to maintain the balance of perceived equity. Besides, the adoption of political or manipulative behaviors is considered as a way to maximize opportunities and gain their advantages at work (Carlson and Kacmar, 1997). Accordingly, employees' perceptions of equity and organizational politics will affect the level of their trust in organizations, which is found as a crucial mediator or moderator for the relationship between organizational justice and work-related variables (Ertürk, 2007). Therefore, this study aims to fill the void of prior research by adopting a dynamic perspective to investigate the relationships between employees' perceived equity, perceived organizational politics, and organizational commitment. In addition, the mediation and moderation of trust on the relationships between the aforementioned variables are also explored.

The nature of dynamic behaviors

Researchers (Desarbo and Grewal, 2008; Schalk and Freese, 1997; White, 2008) propose the dynamic

viewpoint to analyze organizations and employees because they tend to adjust their strategies and behaviors at anytime to maximize their best interests. At the organization level, firms try to apply unique strategic postures so as to reach a better position in the market structure (Cool and Schendel, 1987). They change, expand, and blend their strategies from more than one pure strategic group to gain the competitive advantage (Desarbo and Grewal, 2008). For example, firms at the beginning stage may apply the defensive strategy and then opt for the offensive strategy as they move to the next stage (Land, 2004). Following Hunt's (1972) theory of firm strategies, Porter (1980) develops the concept and applies it to his overall system of strategic analysis. Hodgkinson (1997) analyzes the intra-industry variations in the competition and performance of firms. A firm switching its strategy may cause business environment pressure or the demand of firm accelerations because such change of policies could be rather dynamic.

At the individual level, the way employees change their behavior is contingent on the short-term opportunities exposed in the environment (Perish et al., 2008). Employees would look for fair treatment by comparing the compensation offered by their organization and its competitors (Milcovich and Newman, 1999; Rhoades et al., 2001). Being directed by their needs, they would respond to external offering defensively, reactively, or protectively to avoid actions, blaming, or changes (Ashforth and Lee, 1990). Thus, employees' behavior might change accordingly when they feel unfairly treated (Hochwarter et al., 2000; Valle and Perewe, 2000).

Commitment within the dynamic situation

Behavioral adjustment at the individual and organizational levels may occur in a continuing cycle. Porras and Robertson (1992) indicate that behavioral dynamics at the individual level is essential to organizational changes. Employees' maintaining their membership in organizations would help them display behavior helpful for sustainable organizational changes (Antoni, 2004). Accordingly, organizations

would make continuous adjustments and modifications that in turn affect employees (Elias, 2009).

Schalk and Freese (1997) argue that employees' commitment may fluctuate as a consequence of their changing perception of psychological contract, and thus the new deal of acceptance has to be created. This new balance of new deal is created as a reflection of input and output ratio from the efforts they put into work and the rewards they received for their contribution. Hence, behavioral change of organizations and employees may fluctuate within a certain band of acceptance and tolerance limit. The change of managerial practices in organizations may bring about the change of employees' attitudes and behavior. O'Driscoll et al. (2006) indicate that employees would dedicate themselves to the organization as long as it is within their band of tolerance and acceptance. Elias (2009) also maintains that the change of employees' attitudes toward the workplace might affect the level of their commitment. For example, some employees would welcome the alteration at work, such as the adoption of new technology, for the opportunities of broadening their professional horizon and fulfilling their growth need; on the other hand, others might dread the change because it may require extra efforts and run counter to their external motives for employment. Therefore, employees' commitment will be contingent on the band of their tolerance and acceptance.

Prediction of commitment antecedents

The measure of limitation is still unobservable in spite of the fact that the tolerance and acceptance band of commitment has been proposed by Schalk and Freese (1997). The limitation of organizational dynamics perceived by employees is thus needed to be quantified. Employees tend to assess the opportunities and dynamics of their internal work policies with self-serving and manipulative behaviors to make the best out of it (Carlson and Kacmar, 1997). Therefore, the level of their commitment to organizations might be contingent on the result of their assessment.

Employees' perception of fairness has a great effect on their work-related attitudes and behaviors. The way they perform in organizations can be

viewed as their feedback for the way they have been treated. Treatments from the organization (Rhoades et al., 2001) would be regarded as fair when they are in accordance with employees' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes (Debra and Gina, 2008). When perceiving the inequity or unfair compensation for their hard work, employees might lower the level of their commitment to the organization (Felps et al., 2009; Greenberg, 1990; Milcovich et al., 1999). That is, the perception of equity (PoE) influences employees' commitment to the organization. Hence, the inconsistency in the way organizations treat their employees would have an effect on employees' tolerance and acceptance band, which further affects their commitment. In other words, their PoE connotes the dynamic individual actions on the part of employees.

Prior research explores the concept of equity with the assumption of a static workplace. However, employees and organizations as organisms can be very volatile. Exploring the concept of equity from the dynamic perspective will provide more insights and enrich our understandings of the realities in organizations. PoE refers to the relative ratio of employee's input/outcome being equal to those of their coworkers. The relative ratio is described as a range value of effort and feedback employees compare with their coworkers. For example, an employee may accept an equal reward even though their coworkers put less/more effort in the same work. Or an employee would work as hard as the others although his/her coworkers are given with more/less reward. The less/more effort contributed and greater/less reward received by employees is relative. That is, the degree of relativity is connoted in both PoE and employees' acceptance band and tolerance limit, suggesting a range of ratio's value whereas one accepts and tolerates those treats (Schalk and Freese, 1997).

Perceptions of organizational politics and commitment

Although scholars (Ferris et al., 2002) maintain that employees' perception of organizational politics (POP) has a negative effect on their commitment to organizations, empirical studies on this relationship are mostly equivocal. Some studies indicate that there

is a negative relationship between employees' POP and commitment (Maslyn and Fedor, 1998; Nye and Witt, 1993; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2003; Witt, 1998). Others suggest a positive relationship (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Khumar and Ghadially, 1989). Still others propose that they are not related at all (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Randall et al., 1999). Researchers (Miller et al., 2008) indicate that the different moderators adopted in prior research might cause the inconsistency of the findings of POP–commitment relationship. According to them, the mean age and the expatriate/local nature of the samples would affect the relationship between POP and organizational commitment. Other causes for the variation of the POP–commitment relationship are purely statistical, such as the distributional shape of the two variables, unreliability of variables, and the range restriction. Accordingly, POP studies to date have largely failed to tease out such dimensional distinctions focusing instead on organizational commitment as an aggregated whole (Miller et al., 2008).

Various investigations of POP–commitment relationship might be explained by organizational situations (Valle and Perewe, 2000), different perceptions and complexities of political behaviors (Miller et al., 2008), and the multi-dimensions of commitment model (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Miller et al., 2008; Randall et al., 1999; Solinger et al., 2008). Employees tend to keep their eyes on organizational dynamics to seek and protect their best interests. As noted earlier, these changes are sometimes evaluated as self-serving and manipulative behaviors (Carlson and Kacmar, 1997). Hence, employees will respond to these changes based on their perception of the advantages and opportunities associated with the increase or decrease of their commitment to the organization. Besides, different perceptions and interests between different levels of staffing (Miller et al., 2008) and organizational situations (Valle and Perewe, 2000) might influence the POP.

In addition, the multi-dimensional construct of commitment, i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990) has a contrasting influence on the POP–commitment relationship. Affective commitment is defined as employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization. An affectively committed employee would strongly identify with

organizational goals and desire to remain a member in the organization. He/she commits to the organization because he/she "wants to." Continuance commitment refers to that an employee commits to the organization because he/she perceives high costs of losing organizational membership, including economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with colleagues) that would be incurred. He/she maintains the membership because he/she "has to." Normative commitment refers to that an employee commits to and remains with an organization because of the feelings of obligation. These feelings may be derived from many sources. For example, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels morally obligated to put forth efforts on the job and stay with the organization to repay the debt. It may also reflect an internalized norm that is developed before the person joins the organization through family or other socialization processes. With the feeling that he/she should be loyal to the organization, the employee maintains the membership because he/she "ought to."

Based on the dynamic point of view, this study argues that the organizational situation represents the complexity of POP. This dynamic perspective is thus close to high intensity of self service and manipulative behaviors. Self-serving behaviors are closely related to individualistic behavior that accentuates achievement of their own/group interest without regards of others, which would lead to the deterioration of work cohesiveness. Manipulative behaviors are associated with the violation of organizational rules and filtering of information in the process of communication, which might cause a rift in the interpersonal relationship at work. One might expect this high intensity of political behaviors at work will alienate relationships among employees and change their band of tolerance or acceptance of commitment. Thus, employees' response to the environment depends on the way they perceive organizational changes. When one perceives the change as an opportunity, he/she would expand his/her tolerance or acceptance band, whereas those who perceive the change as extra efforts demanded by organizations, they will strain their commitment level as well as the acceptance band. Based on the preceding discussion, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Employees' perception of organizational politics is negatively related to their organizational commitment.

PoE and commitment

Being influenced by their demographic variables (Tansky et al., 1997) and cultural perspectives (Kotabe et al., 1992; Mintu-Wimsatt, 2005; Shelley, 2001), PoE has an effect on employees' organizational commitment (Lemons and Jones, 2001; N'Goala, 2007). This partly explains why the findings of the PoE–commitment relationship vary among prior studies (Kotabe et al., 1992; Lemons and Jones, 2001; Mintu-Wimsatt, 2005; N'Goala, 2007; Shelley, 2001; Tansky et al., 1997). For instance, employees' age, tenure, and work status would moderate the PoE–commitment relationship.

Employees' organizational commitment may change as a function of their perception of fairness. When uncertainty requires a new deal of tolerance and acceptance, this band would be viewed as an expanded equity as well as the value of relative ratio of reward and efforts of one to the others. Employees will ask for the fairness of treatment within the dynamic circumstances by sharing the opportunities and getting compensated for extra efforts, which in turn affects the level of their commitment. Thus, the deal to be treated fairly is in line with the process of creating a new balance from different patterns in the dynamic circumstances. Based on the aforementioned arguments, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Employees' perception of equity is positively related to their organizational commitment.

Mediation of trust on the relationship between POP, PoE, and commitment

Previous findings on POP, PoE, and commitment relationship are inconsistent and leave bags of questions. It is argued that employees' trust in organizations clarifies the nature of the relationship between the POP, PoE, and commitment (MacKinnon, 2008). Trust is believed to be central to social

relationships occurring at lateral and hierarchical levels in the organization. Furthermore, Ladebo (2006) indicates that trust is particularly needed in situations full of uncertainty. For example, Ganesan (1994) argued that employees' trust in organizations could reduce the risk of opportunistic behavior and develop a long-term orientation at work. It is believed that the higher the correlation level of trust in organization with the greater employee loyalty, the better the customer service, and the greater the efficiency. On the contrary, a lack of trust might circumscribe organizational well-being (Ammeter et al., 2004) and a climate of distrust promotes secrecy among employees in the organization (Ladebo, 2006).

According to Ganesan (1994), the benefit of employees' trust in organization will strengthen mutual reciprocity between employees and organizations. Trustees are prone to reciprocate to those whom they trust. Hence, trust will be needed to diminish the negative effects caused by self-serving and opportunistic behaviors. Trust helps bring about empathy and build effective communication among employees. The cooperative atmosphere built by trust in turn fosters employees' commitment to organizations. Scholars (Hopkins and Weathington, 2006; N'Goala, 2007; Powell et al., 2006) indicate that trust has a direct and positive effect on employees' affective and normative commitment. Drawing from these findings, the third hypothesis of this study is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The level of employees' trust in organizations is positively related to their organizational commitment.

Employees who have great trust in organizations and are treated fairly would be more willing to commit themselves to organizations by investing more efforts than their fellow counterpart (Dan and Marinova, 2005). By contrast, those who are unfairly treated may lose their motivation for hard work and this might induce their distrust on organizations (Colquitt et al., 2006). Managers or leaders need to stress the importance of promoting the level of trust in organizations because it will neutralize and reduce the negative effects resulted from low morale and unpleasant working atmospheres at the workplace (Ganesan, 1994). Employees' trust in organizations

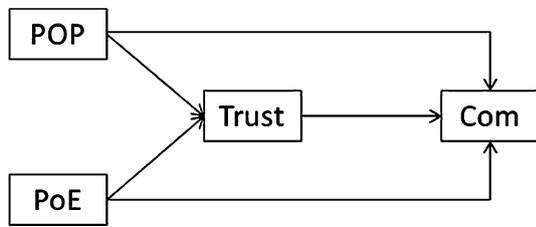


Figure 1. Mediation of trust in the relationship between POP, PoE, and commitment.

strengthens their inclination for work that in turn promotes greater efforts on the part of employees. A positive expectation of fair treatment is likely to enhance the level of trust, which would motivate employees and elevate their commitment. Based on the arguments, the fourth and fifth hypotheses of this study are proposed as follows (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 4: Employees' trust mediates the relationship between their perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 5: Employees' trust mediates the relationship between their perception of equity and organizational commitment.

Moderation of trust in the relationship between POP, PoE, and commitment

Trust in organizations would induce employees' positive work-related behaviors by preventing opportunistic behaviors and developing a long-term work orientation (Ganesan, 1994). It is found that trust is correlated to employees' organizational commitment (Hopkins and Weathington, 2006; N'Goala, 2007; Powell et al., 2006). Miller et al. (2008) suggest that employees' trust in organizations has a significant effect on the relationship between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment. The interplay of trust between employees' perception and their psychological condition would cause the variation of organizational commitment among employees. Such interaction affects the quality of the relationship between their perceptions and organizational commitment. That is, a greater effect on organizational commitment would be expected when employees' PoE and manipulative behaviors interact with their trust in organizations. By contrast,

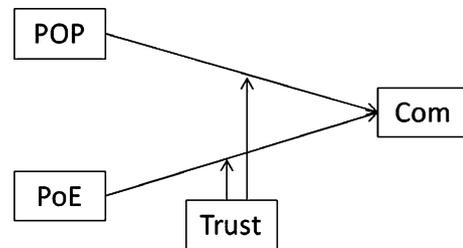


Figure 2. Moderation of trust in the relationship between POP, PoE, and commitment.

a less significant effect on employees' organizational commitment would be reinforced by distrust. Thus, the interaction of trust on POP and PoE strengthens their effects on organizational commitment. The moderation of employees' trust in the relationship between these variables is also verified by Goris et al. (2003). Drawing from these findings, the sixth and seventh hypotheses of this study are proposed as follows (Figure 2):

Hypothesis 6: Employees' trust in organizations moderates the POP–commitment relationship.

Hypothesis 7: Employees' trust in organizations moderates the PoE–commitment relationship.

Methods

Samples

Convenient sampling was conducted by this study to collect data from employees in various industries, such as hospital, school, and banking. Five hundreds copies of questionnaire were distributed and questionnaires with excessive missing data were disqualified from consideration. After the deletion of invalid responses, 261 copies were adopted for a further analysis, yielding a response rate of 52%. The majority of respondents were male (58%) and married (57%). Average age and the length of work experience for respondents were approximately 32.9 years old and 7.75 years, respectively. Nearly 60% of the respondents held an undergraduate degree, 20% held a master's degree, and 5% held a doctoral degree. 37% of the respondents took on managerial positions.

Measures

POP

Twenty-six items ($\alpha = 0.89$) were adopted from the questionnaire developed by Kacmar and Baron (1999). A sample item: "People in this organization attempt to build them up by tearing others down." A 5-point rating scale was used to evaluate respondents' POP. A higher score indicated that the employees perceived a greater degree of manipulative behaviors at the workplace.

PoE

Six items ($\alpha = 0.89$) were adopted from the questionnaire developed by Janssen (2001). A sample item: "The rewards I receive are not proportional to my investments." A 5-point rating scale was used to evaluate respondents' PoE. A higher score indicated that employees perceived greater equity at work.

Trust in organizations

Six items ($\alpha = 0.84$) were adopted from the questionnaire developed by Farh et al. (1990). A sample item: "I have a divided sense of loyalty toward my manager." A 5-point rating scale was used to evaluate the level of respondents' trust in organizations. A higher score indicated a higher level of trust to organization on the part of employees.

Organizational commitment

Twelve items ($\alpha = 0.89$) were adopted from the questionnaires developed by Meyer et al. (1993). A sample item: "I feel a strong sense of belonging to

company." A 5-point rating scale was used to evaluate the level of respondents' commitment to organizations. A higher score indicated a higher level of organizational commitment on the part of employees.

Analysis

This study was conducted involving confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Data with listwise deleting of missing values was used for the LISREL analysis, resulting in a final sample size of 216. Overall measurement of model fit was assessed with four indices: the χ^2 statistics; the comparative fit index (CFI, Bentler, 1990); the goodness-of-fit index (GFI, Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1988); and root mean square error of approximation (RSMEA, Vandenberg and Lance, 2000). Hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the mediating and moderating effect proposed in this study.

Results

The reliability and correlations of the variables are present in Table I. Pertaining to the measurement model, CFA result yielded support for the 4-factor model, indicating the distinctiveness of the four constructs in this study. The chi-square value was significantly lower and had a better fit for 4-factor model ($\chi^2 = 1153.32$, $df = 428$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.95,

TABLE I
Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	–	–							
2. Age	32.9	8.07	–0.135*						
3. Tenure	7.75	6.35	–0.160*	0.713**					
4. POP	4.60	0.739	0.029	–0.158*	–0.077	[0.89]			
5. PoE	2.97	0.885	0.055	0.067	–0.026	–0.585**	[0.89]		
6. Commitment	3.30	0.626	–0.135*	0.239**	0.228**	–0.290**	0.247**	[0.89]	
7. Trust	3.49	0.643	–0.098	0.114	0.058	–0.490**	0.339**	0.482**	[0.84]

N = 216 figures in parentheses are α reliability.
** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

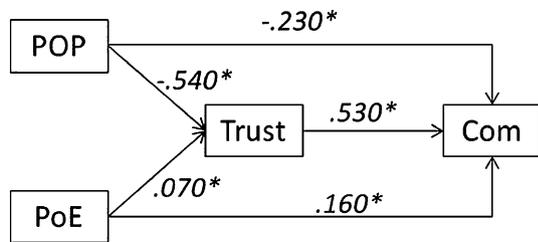


Figure 3. Estimate path coefficient of the hypothesized model * $p < 0.05$.

GFI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.08) than the 1-factor model ($\chi^2 = 4196.5$, $df = 434$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.83, GFI = 0.59, RMSEA = 0.18).

Figure 3 presents the path coefficient estimates for the hypothesized model. The result showed that employees' POP has a significant negative effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.230$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1. The result also showed that employees' PoE has a significant negative effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$), yielding support for H2. It was found that trust has a significant negative effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting H3.

To test the mediating role of employees' trust, the following three conditions need to be met to support the mediating role that Baron and Kenny (1986) recommended: (a) a significant relation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, (b) a significant relation between independent variable and the mediating variable, (c) a significant relation between mediating variable and the dependent variable. If the three conditions are met, then the full or partial mediation effect can be confirmed under the condition that the significant effect of independent variable on the dependent variable becomes insignificant or less significant when the mediating variable is added to the model. Following Baron and Kenny's suggestion, the conditions of mediating variable were assessed to test the hypothesized model. First, correlation coefficients indicated that perceptions of organizational politics and PoE was significantly correlated to organizational commitment. Second, perceptions of organizational politics and PoE were significantly correlated to employees' trust in organizations in the predicted direction. The third condition was also satisfied as the results showed that employees' trust in

organizations was correlated to organizational commitment (Table I).

To further evaluate the mediating effect proposed in the study, a comparison was made between the fit of the partially mediated model and the fully mediated model. Paths from POP and PoE to the outcome variable of commitment were added to the partially mediated model. It is found that the partially mediated model ($\chi^2 = 858.14$, $df = 272$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.79, RMSEA = 0.08) had a better fit than fully mediated model (hypothesized) ($\chi^2 = 1151.71$, $df = 430$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.08). In addition, the chi-square was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 293.57$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the partially mediated model had a better fit. Path coefficient analysis confirmed that trust partially mediates the relationships between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment, thus yielding partially support for H4 and H5.

To test the moderating effect of trust, the interaction items of POP \times trust and PoE \times trust were added into model 3 and 5, respectively. In model 3, the interplay of trust was found non-significant in the relationship between employees' POP and organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.371$, F change = 3.534, $p > 0.05$). In model 5, the interplay of trust was also found non-significant in the relationship between employees' PoE and organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.009$, F change = 0.001, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H6 and H7 were not supported (see Table II).

Discussion

This study extends the research on organizational commitment by adopting the dynamic perspective to investigate employees' POP and PoE as the antecedents of commitment. It is found that POP and PoE have significant effects on employees' organizational commitment. In line with the arguments by scholars (MacKinnon, 2008; Muller et al., 2005), employees' trust in organizations mediates the relationships between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment. The findings of the present study on employee's organizational commitment within the dynamic context are consistent with those of previous studies (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Hopkins and Weathington, 2006; Lemons and Jones, 2001; Maslyn and Fedor, 1998; Miller et al., 2008;

TABLE II
Moderation of trust on POP–commitment and PoE–commitment

Independent variable	Commitment				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Control variable					
Gender	−0.135*	−0.131*	−0.102	−0.147*	−0.094
Age	0.139	0.094	0.090	0.091	0.074
Tenure	0.107	0.119	0.120	0.143	0.140
POP		−0.248**	0.347		
Trust			0.736**		0.410*
POP × trust			−0.371		
PoE				0.260**	0.126
PoE × trust					−0.009
R ²	0.080	0.140	0.289	0.147	0.289
F	6.469**	9.026**	14.885**	9.530**	14.878**
ΔR ²		0.054	0.149	0.061	0.142
F change		15.439	21.516	17.296	21.503

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

N'Goala, 2007; Nye and Witt, 1993; Powell et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 1999; Tansky et al., 1997; Vigoda-gadot et al., 2003). It is confirmed that employees' POP has a negative effect on their organizational commitment. On the other hand, employees' PoE has a positive effect on their organizational commitment (Lemons and Jones, 2001; N'Goala, 2007; Robert et al., 1999; Tansky et al., 1997).

The fair treatment experienced in organizations would lead to a great level of perceived equity on the part of employees, which will assure them of organizations' impartiality in policy implementation and human resource management. In addition, employees would have a greater level of trust as they perceive a less degree of political or manipulating behaviors in organizations. Accordingly, they will be more willing to put extra efforts into work by expanding their band of acceptance and tolerance limit. Employees' trust in organizations is thus generated and induces the escalation of organizational commitment (Ertürk, 2007; Greer and Stephens, 2001; Moon, 2001; Staw, 1992; Zardkoohi, 2004).

This study confirms that employees' trust does not moderate the relationship between POP, PoE, and organizational commitment, which is inconsistent with the findings of prior research. In fact, the effects of POP and PoE on organizational commitment

diminish as trust is included in the model. Employees' trust is found to replace the effects of POP and PoE and has a direct, positive effect on organizational commitment. A possible explanation may reside in the fact that trust is a positive expectation that another will not act opportunistically (Boon and Holmes, 1991; McAllister, 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). It is incrementally developed from the learning of ongoing interaction between parties. The knowledge and familiarity about the other party will lead to the confidence of forming a positive expectation. Thus, trust derived from employees' prior exchange experiences will greatly affect their willingness to commit themselves regardless of their PoE or organizational politics.

Practical implications

This study's findings offer some useful tips on enhancing employees' commitment for organizations. Organizations do not exist in a vacuum or static environment. Organizational settings consist of ever-changing events and individuals with different inclinations to perceive and interpret. Individuals will respond to the stimulus present at the context. Accordingly, managers need to be attentive to the managerial practices that might cause different

perceptions and interpretations on the part of employees. Employees' perceived equity is essential to the implementation of organizational policies and the assurance of organizational effectiveness. Hence, organizations should provide communication channels for employees to discuss or obtain information regarding relevant issues in human resource management, such as performance appraisal, resource distribution, rewards, and advancement. The openness in information sharing will induce greater employees' confidence and trust in organizations. In addition, managers should try their best to cultivate a culture that discourages political behaviors. The transparency in resource distribution, clarity of authority and responsibility, and employees' participation of decision making will prevent the occurrence of opportunistic and political behaviors. As a result, employees' trust in organizations will be induced and accumulated continuously. Employees' commitment will thus flourish and prevail in organizations.

Limitations and future research

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations. The cross-sectional design precluded the interpretation of the direction of causality among variables. Longitudinal research could help researchers in the future to better understand the psychological underlying process and thus gain more insights regarding the cultivation and evolution of trust and organizational commitment. In addition, the problem of common method variance may be present in this article since the data were collected from self-report questionnaires. In spite of the fact that the dynamic perspective in this study broadens the horizon of exploring organizational commitment, the inclusion of relational, contextual, and cultural variables, such as members' interdependence, organizational life cycle, and culture, might provide more insights into the development of employees' commitment and trust in organizations.

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Chun-Hsi Vivian Chen and Setyabudi Indartono
Business Administration Department,
National Central University Taiwan,
No. 300, Jungda Rd, Jhongli City, Taoyuan,
32001 Taiwan, ROC
E-mail: cvchen@mgt.ncu.edu.tw

Setyabudi Indartono
Management Department,
Yogyakarta State University,
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: 964401605@cc.ncu.edu.tw;
setyabudi_indartono@uny.ac.id

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