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Leadership Styles and Organisational Commitment in Malaysian Enterprises: A Descriptive Profile and Research Framework

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Abstract

This article examines how transformational and transactional leadership can be studied in relation to affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment in Malaysian enterprises. It combines a descriptive profile based on archived age-and-gender survey frequency summaries with a literature-grounded research framework. The descriptive analysis presents reported fieldwork quantities, age and gender composition, and questionnaire item allocation. The displayed category total of 270 is the denominator for within-characteristic demographic shares. The questionnaire account identifies seven constructs and 68 substantive items. The framework distinguishes developmental and inspirational leadership from contingent exchange, and separates emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving and felt obligation. It treats employee motivation as a distinct construct and individual power-distance orientation as an employee-level interpretation of authority. The contribution is a set of differentiated propositions and research questions for future assessment, accompanied by documentation of the retained descriptive material. The article does not report hypothesis tests or estimate leadership effects. Future studies should examine both leadership constructs together, distinguish motivational quality and types of obligation, and test mediation and moderation through explicitly specified designs. These distinctions provide a basis for investigating commitment without equating attachment with dependence or duty.

Keywords

Transformational Leadership; Transactional Leadership; Organisational Commitment; Motivation; Power Distance; Malaysia.

1. Introduction

Organisational commitment reflects emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving or obligation. Distinguishing affective, continuance and normative commitment provide a more informative outcome structure than an undifferentiated score: stronger commitment may accompany a better employee experience, greater departure sacrifices or responsibility to remain [1]. Transformational leadership emphasises purpose, development and collective effort; transactional leadership emphasises expectations, exchanges and performance contingencies. Both can coexist, raising the question of how each relates to these commitment bases. Judge and Piccolo identify useful relationships for transformational leadership and contingent reward, while showing that transactional behaviours have differing associations with employee outcomes [2].

Motivation concerns the reasons that energise and regulate effort; power distance concerns acceptance of unequal authority. Employees can value managerial direction while holding

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different expectations about recognition, participation and responsibility. These constructs therefore deserve separate treatment in a leadership–commitment framework. The article considers motivation as a possible explanatory process to be tested and individual power-distance orientation as a possible boundary condition, while distinguishing those roles from ordinary additional associations.

The survey dataset used for descriptive analysis targets Chinese-owned enterprises operating in Malaysia. This setting motivates attention to the relationship between managerial practices and employee interpretations of authority. Enterprise ownership, employee nationality and individual cultural orientation are distinct characteristics. Hofstede's contextual arguments and Kirkman et al.'s examination of individual power-distance orientation support investigating employees' own responses to authority rather than assigning preferences from country membership [3-5].

The central conceptual problem is how to connect an employee's interpretation of managerial conduct with a particular reason for maintaining organisational membership. A general expectation that effective leadership produces commitment leaves several explanations open. Recognition might make membership emotionally rewarding, protect benefits associated with staying, or create a sense of reciprocal responsibility. These pathways concern different commitment dimensions and could operate together. Following Meyer and Allen, the explanatory task is therefore to identify the basis of the employee's relationship with the organisation before asking which leadership practice relates to it. A framework organised around that task produces more discriminating questions than a comparison of favourable leadership labels. It also makes the expected meaning of an association explicit, providing a basis for selecting the relevant construct and outcome.

The article has two objectives: to present a descriptive analysis of the reported fieldwork quantities, demographic categories and questionnaire item allocation, and to develop a differentiated framework linking leadership practices with the three bases of organisational commitment. The descriptive component establishes the composition of the displayed category counts. The theoretical component identifies propositions and research questions for future investigation. Together, these objectives provide a structured basis for designing subsequent research in Malaysian enterprises.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Expectations

2.1. Distinct Bases of Organisational Commitment

Meyer and Allen conceptualise affective commitment as a desire to maintain membership, continuance commitment as perceived necessity and normative commitment as obligation. These dimensions can coexist: employees may value the organisation while recognising departure costs and regarding continued contribution as appropriate. Separate outcomes distinguish leadership associations that overall commitment scores could conceal. Affective commitment is relevant to supportive relationships and shared purpose, but commitment, identification and managerial satisfaction remain distinct. Van Knippenberg and Sleebos distinguish commitment from identification's self-definitional character; identification evidence can inform attachment arguments but cannot substitute for direct commitment measurement [6].

Continuance commitment refers to sacrifices from leaving, including accumulated investments and valued benefits [7]. Leadership may matter when managers make opportunities and rewards credible. However, departure costs need not imply enjoyment of membership or endorsement of organisational goals. Normative commitment concerns internalised expectations about conduct [8]. Meyer and Parfyonova distinguish moral responsibility from indebtedness. Leadership may accompany reciprocal responsibility without emotional

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attachment or exit-cost calculations, making these different meanings of obligation relevant to future measurement [9].

Employees may hold commitments towards several organisational constituencies, and combinations of commitment components can matter for behaviour [10, 11]. The present framework concerns commitment to the organisation, with affective, continuance and normative commitment treated as distinct dimensions. This distinction permits future research to examine both dimension-specific relationships and combinations of attachment, necessity and obligation.

A hypothetical comparison illustrates the value of examining combinations. One employee may enjoy membership and recognise substantial benefits from remaining, while another may experience the same departure costs with little emotional attachment. Their continuance scores could be similar even though their employment relationships differ. A third employee may feel responsible for completing collective obligations while remaining open to future mobility. These examples are conceptual possibilities, not classifications of the source participants. They suggest examining how attachment, necessity and responsibility coexist rather than interpreting each dimension as an employee type. Gellatly et al.'s attention to combined commitment components provides a basis for considering such configurations alongside separate dimension-specific questions.

2.2. Transformational Leadership and Commitment

Transformational leadership encompasses idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration [12]. By communicating purpose, encouraging reconsideration of established approaches and supporting development, these behaviours may make membership meaningful. The expectation is clearest for affective commitment. Avolio et al. examine transformational leadership and organisational commitment alongside psychological empowerment and structural distance [13]. Walumbwa et al. report leadership–commitment relationships in Kenyan and United States financial firms [14]. These studies motivate a proposition that favourable perceptions of transformational leadership accompany stronger emotional attachment.

Research in Chinese private firms examines career-development signals in relation to perceived promotion fairness, organisational support and employee loyalty [15]. These related constructs provide a rationale for examining employee interpretations, but do not directly measure normative commitment. A normative relationship is plausible when developmental attention and collective purpose signal investment in employees and encourage reciprocal responsibility. Meyer and Parfyonova's distinction between moral responsibility and indebtedness helps clarify why duty can have different meanings. Continuance commitment presents competing possibilities. Developmental opportunities and organisational relationships may increase valued benefits that would be forfeited by leaving, while enhanced employability may improve external alternatives. Consequently, the framework proposes a positive relationship for affective commitment, identifies normative responsibility as a question requiring differentiated measurement, and leaves the direction of the continuance relationship open.

The continuance question becomes more specific when developmental opportunities are distinguished by their portability. Training tied to an organisation's systems, internal relationships or progression arrangements could increase the value of remaining there. Broader skills or qualifications could also make alternative employment more accessible. These are competing theoretical routes through which developmental leadership might relate to departure calculations, drawing on Powell and Meyer's treatment of investments and commitment. The balance may depend on whether development creates benefits available mainly within the organisation or capabilities usable elsewhere. Accordingly, a future study

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should ask what employees believe they would lose by leaving and which alternative development makes possible, rather than assume that all learning produces the same continuance relationship.

Research among Chinese graduates examines perceptions of job security, management compliance and humanistic care in relation to organisational attractiveness and intentions to seek private-firm employment [16]. These recruitment outcomes are distinct from current employees' organisational commitment. Research on related outcomes reinforces attention to employee interpretation. Piccolo and Colquitt connect transformational leadership with job characteristics and motivational processes in explaining work behaviours [17]. Epitropaki and Martin examine leadership perceptions and organisational identification alongside individual differences [18]. These studies inform the broader reasoning, while organisational identification, job behaviour and organisational commitment remain separate outcomes.

The framework offers the following propositions and questions for future assessment. P1: Transformational leadership perceptions are positively associated with affective organisational commitment. RQ1: How do transformational leadership practices relate to continuance commitment when organisational investments and external employment alternatives are considered separately? RQ2: Do transformational leadership practices relate differently to normative commitment experienced as moral responsibility and as indebtedness? These propositions and questions are literature-derived and are not tested in the present article.

2.3. Transactional Leadership and Commitment

Transactional leadership structures exchanges through expectations, contingent rewards and corrective action, clarifying responsibilities and recognition. Kuhnert and Lewis explain the character of these exchanges [19]. Reliable fulfilment of expectations may signal predictable organisational arrangements. Continuance commitment may accompany valued rewards and membership opportunities, with accumulated investments raising departure costs. Affective commitment may accompany clear expectations and fair recognition; normative commitment may reflect reciprocity for fulfilled managerial commitments. These possibilities give transactional practices a place alongside developmental and inspirational leadership in the research framework.

The expected relationships depend on the behaviour considered. Fair recognition can have different implications from arbitrary or punitive monitoring. Judge and Piccolo distinguish contingent-reward associations from management-by-exception patterns. Future assessment should therefore separate contingent reward, active management by exception and passive management by exception, rather than assume that an overall transactional score represents a uniform leadership practice.

For contingent reward, the proposed affective relationship concerns the credibility and interpretation of the exchange as well as the reward itself. An employee could understand a clearly stated and fulfilled agreement as recognition of contribution. An ambiguous agreement or an unexplained change in criteria could raise different questions about predictability. This reasoning specifies the fair and predictable practices named in P2. It directs attention to communicated criteria, consistency of implementation and whether the promised recognition is attributed to the supervisor or organisation.

Corrective practices require a parallel distinction. Monitoring that explains standards and enables improvement can be considered separately from correction experienced as arbitrary or delayed. Active and passive management by exception therefore involves different questions about timing, communication and employee interpretation, consistent with separating these behaviours in the leadership literature. The framework asks how those features relate to

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attachment, departure costs and obligation. This preserves a behavioural explanation instead of assigning one commitment meaning to every transactional practice.

P2: Fair and predictable contingent-reward practices are positively associated with affective organisational commitment. RQ3: How do contingent rewards and corrective practices relate to continuance and normative commitment, and do these relationships differ across transactional behaviours? Transformational and transactional practices should also be examined together to assess their distinct and combined relationships with commitment. These propositions concern future studies and do not establish that either leadership style is superior.

2.4. Motivation as a Distinct Construct and Possible Process

Motivation concerns activity regulation, whereas commitment concerns an employee's relationship with the organisation. Meyer et al. integrate these literatures while distinguishing commitment mindsets and goal regulation [20]. Gagné and Deci differentiate autonomous and controlled work motivation [21]. Employees' reasons for effort may therefore relate differently to emotional attachment, perceived necessity and obligation. Strong job motivation can coexist with weak organisational attachment; departure costs can sustain membership without enthusiasm for work. Neither construct substitutes for the other.

The object of motivation should be specified alongside its quality. Employees may willingly engage in a task because they find it interesting or personally valuable, while regarding organisational membership as a separate decision. Conversely, an employee may value belonging yet experience a particular assignment as externally imposed. Gagné and Deci's account of work motivation and Meyer et al.'s integrative framework give a basis for asking how the regulation of work connects with the mindset sustaining membership. This connection requires conceptual definition before any proposed motivational pathway is assessed.

A process account also needs a meaningful interval between managerial conduct, motivational response and commitment. For example, developmental feedback could be followed by reconsideration of a task's value, with organisational attachment considered subsequently. The example specifies a possible sequence, not an established effect. A rival sequence is also plausible: employees already attached to the organisation may interpret managerial feedback more favourably. Defining both possibilities helps RQ4 address change over time and employee interpretation, rather than treating the simultaneous presence of favourable perceptions as evidence of an intervening process.

Entering motivation alongside leadership in an additive model would describe a conditional association. A mediation claim requires a specified leadership-to-motivation-to-commitment pathway, an estimated indirect effect and appropriate uncertainty, together with defensible assumptions about temporal ordering and confounding. The proposed research agenda therefore distinguishes analysis of additional associations from investigation of an intervening motivational process.

Conceptual work proposes that the salience of needs varies with contextual conditions, providing a reason to consider organisational circumstances when examining motivation [22]. Organisational context may shape motivational responses. Buelens and Van den Broeck examine public–private organisational differences, illustrating the importance of defining the context of comparison [23]. RQ4: How do autonomous and controlled work motivation relate to the three commitment dimensions, and to what extent do these motivational forms explain a temporally ordered relationship between leadership practices and commitment?

2.5. Power Distance and Authority Interpretation

Power distance concerns acceptance of unequal authority and decision-making. Employees accepting hierarchy may interpret managerial direction differently from those expecting participation. Cultural context informs expectations, but nationality cannot establish individual

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orientation. Kirkman et al. demonstrate the relevance of individual power-distance orientation to reactions to transformational leadership. Hill et al. examine structural hierarchical distance and commitment to change [24]. These studies motivate distinguishing personal authority orientation, organisational hierarchy and the particular commitment outcome under investigation.

The interpretation of participation provides a concrete question for that inquiry. An invitation to question established procedures could be understood as developmental encouragement, as a transfer of responsibility, or as behaviour that requires clarification of authority. These are alternative interpretations to investigate rather than cultural descriptions of Malaysian employees. A future assessment could relate individual orientation to accounts of specific decision situations while documenting organisational rules. This would give RQ5 an identifiable behavioural context and permit the proposed boundary condition to be examined without equating enterprise ownership with employees' acceptance of hierarchy.

RQ5: Does individual power-distance orientation change the relationship between particular leadership practices and affective, continuance or normative commitment? Addressing this question requires leadership-by-power-distance interaction with an interpretable estimate and uncertainty. Individual orientation and organisational hierarchical practices should be measured separately, allowing subsequent research to assess employee and workplace contributions at their respective levels.

2.6. Integrating the Research Framework

The propositions and questions connect specific leadership practices with employees' interpretations and the meaning of organisational membership. Motivation describes reasons for undertaking work, whereas power-distance orientation concerns the interpretation of authority. A motivational pathway would concern how an experience develops into a commitment response; an authority interaction would concern the conditions under which a leadership relationship differs. These explanations require distinct constructions and appropriate levels of measurement. The framework therefore specifies the commitment dimension, the proposed employee interpretation and the relevant contextual condition before an analytical model is selected.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Source and Article Design

This article combines descriptive processing of archived cross-sectional employee survey summaries with a literature-grounded research framework. The archived survey summaries cover employees from enterprises operating in Malaysia, with a primary focus on Chinese-owned enterprises. Survey measures capture employee perceptions of leadership, organisational commitment, motivation and power distance. The present article draws on archived age-and-gender frequency tables and documented questionnaire instrument structure to report descriptive profiles. It builds prospective propositions and research questions from existing scholarly literature. No leadership-related hypotheses or theoretical mechanisms are empirically tested within this article.

3.2. Recruitment Account and Reporting Denominators

The source describes an initial online approach followed by hand distribution. A professor at the researcher's former Malaysian institution organised five student teams to visit businesses and approach employees in different positions. Questionnaire completion was primarily self-administered, with interviews also mentioned in the fieldwork account. The reported fieldwork counts are summarised in Table 2 in Section 4.1.

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The reporting denominators are defined separately for questionnaires, demographic category entries and questionnaire items. Chapter 4 presents the reported distribution and return quantities, demographic percentages based on displayed category totals, and item-allocation percentages based on the reported instrument inventory. These quantities describe their stated units and are not presented as complete-case counts for scale assessment or regression estimation.

The reported age and gender frequencies each sum to 270. This sum provides the within-characteristic denominator for the separate descriptive analyses in Tables 3 and 4. Reported category counts are transcribed, and percentages, cumulative quantities and count comparisons are calculated from those counts.

3.3. Reported Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire identifies 68 substantive items across seven constructs, excluding demographic questions, with response anchors of 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Transformational leadership contains 19 items and transactional leadership 13 items. These item counts describe the reported instrument structure. The theoretical distinction between developmental and inspirational behaviours and contingent exchange is developed in Section 2.

Affective, continuance and normative commitment each contain eight items. Their conceptual roles follow Meyer and Allen's distinction between emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving and obligation. Employee motivation and power distance each contain six items. Table 1 reports the seven-item counts and the role of each construct in the framework.

Table 1. Reported questionnaire item inventory

Construct	Reported items	Conceptual role
Transformational leadership	19	Leadership construct
Transactional leadership	13	Leadership construct
Employee motivation	6	Motivational construct
Power distance	6	Authority-related construct
Affective commitment	8	Commitment dimension
Continuance commitment	8	Commitment dimension
Normative commitment	8	Commitment dimension

3.4. Descriptive Processing and Framework Development

Reported category frequencies are transcribed without changing their counts. For each demographic characteristic, the displayed counts are summed, and each percentage is calculated as 100 multiplied by the category count divided by that characteristic's displayed total of 270. Cumulative age frequencies follow the source category order; cumulative percentages use the same denominator. The gender count ratio divides the reported male count by the reported female count. Questionnaire-domain shares divided into an aggregated item counts by the reported total of 68. Percentages are rounded to two decimal places, and count ratios to two decimals. This revision processes aggregate summaries only; it performs no respondent-level imputation, exclusion, record reconstruction, construct scoring, reliability estimation or regression estimation. Original data limitations and future empirical requirements are consolidated in Section 7.

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3.5. Scope of the Research Framework

The framework distinguishes the three commitment dimensions, separates leadership behaviours with potentially different implications, and specifies the roles that motivation and power-distance orientation could play in a future study. The cited literature explains the proposed relationships and competing mechanisms. This is a conceptual synthesis of the referenced work rather than a systematic review. Section 4 analyses the retained fieldwork, demographic and questionnaire-content summaries; Section 5 discusses the literature-grounded framework; Section 6 develops considerations for organisational assessment.

4. Descriptive Analysis of the Source Summaries

This section analyses three aspects of the archived survey summaries: the fieldwork account, the age and gender category distributions, and the allocation of questionnaire items across the research domains. The analysis retains the reported counts and derives proportions, cumulative shares and count ratios directly from them. Each calculation has an explicit denominator appropriate to the quantity described. The fieldwork account concerns questionnaires, the demographic summaries concern listed category entries, and the item inventory concerns questionnaire content. Keeping these units distinct makes the descriptive results interpretable.

4.1. Reported Fieldwork Accounting

The fieldwork narrative reports 300 questionnaires distributed and 270 returned. Table 2 presents these figures together with two arithmetic quantities derived from them. Dividing the reported return count by the distribution count gives a reported return proportion of 90.0%. Subtracting the reported returns from the reported distribution gives a difference of 30 questionnaires. The table labels this difference as a calculation from the narrative counts. It concerns the relation between the two reported fieldwork quantities and is kept separate from the demographic denominators used in the following subsections.

Table 2. Source-reported questionnaire distribution and return figures

Fieldwork measure	Figure	Basis
Questionnaires distributed	300	Source narrative
Questionnaires returned	270	Source narrative
Difference between reported distribution and returns	30	Calculated: 300 - 270
Reported return proportion	90.0%	Calculated: 270/300 × 100

Expressed on the distribution denominator, the nine narrative places reported returns alongside every ten distributed questionnaires. These quantities make the fieldwork account easier to compare internally by showing how counts and proportions fit together. The difference of 30 is neither added to nor subtracted from an analytical case count in this article. Its role is to display the arithmetic between the reported distribution and return figures, while the 90.0% is consistently described as a reported return proportion.

4.2. Age Composition and Cumulative Distribution

The age summary contains three listed categories: 20-30, with 172 entries; 31-40, with 75; and 41-50, with 23. Their shown total is 270. Table 3 reports the source frequencies, percentages calculated on that total, and cumulative percentages following the order of the age categories. The corresponding within-characteristic shares are 63.70%, 27.78% and 8.52%. The

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cumulative column begins with 63.70%, reaches 91.48% after the second category, and reaches 100.00% after the third.

Table 3. Reported age-category frequencies and cumulative shares

Source age category	Reported frequency	Share (%)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative share (%)
20-30	172	63.70	172	63.70
31-40	75	27.78	247	91.48
41-50	23	8.52	270	100.00
Total displayed counts	270	100.00	-	-

The largest concentration is in the first listed age category. Its 172 entries exceed the combined 98 entries in the other two categories, so the profile is concentrated towards the lower part of the reported age range. The first two categories together contain 247 entries, which account for the cumulative 91.48%; the remaining 23 entries account for the last 8.52%. These cumulative figures provide a compact description of where the listed counts accumulate. They express the ordering of the age categories and do not describe change over time.

The grouped profile gives the research setting a concrete demographic description without converting age into an explanation of leadership or commitment. Age categories identify the composition of the displayed summary; the meanings of organisational attachment, departure costs and obligation remain the distinct concepts developed in Section 2. The contribution of Table 3 is therefore a transparent account of the relative size and ordering of the listed age groups. Any subsequent comparison of those groups would constitute a separate research question requiring its own design and evidence.

4.3. Gender Composition and Count Ratio

The gender summary lists 196 male entries and 74 female entries, again giving a displayed total of 270. Table 4 presents the counts and their within-characteristic shares of 72.59% and 27.41%. It also describes the male-to-female count ratio, calculated as 196 divided by 74, or approximately 2.65 to 1. The ratio is an alternative expression of the same two source counts. It adds a direct comparison of category size without introducing a new variable or a separate estimation sample.

Table 4. Reported gender-category frequencies and shares

Source gender category	Reported frequency	Share (%)
Male	196	72.59
Female	74	27.41
Total displayed counts	270	100.00

The male category contains 122 more entries than the female category. The percentage and ratio representations show the same composition in different ways: percentages allocate the displayed total between categories, while the ratio compares one category directly with the other. The gender entries therefore have an unequal distribution in the retained summary. This describes the source-tabulated profile rather than a workforce benchmark. The table's interpretation concerns the relative numbers listed in its two categories, with both figures tied to the same within-characteristic total.

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Age and gender are reported as separate distributions. Their presentation alongside one another gives two views of demographic composition without assigning either characteristic to a particular leadership perception or commitment response. The analysis makes no claim about how age categories are distributed within the male or female entries. Likewise, the count ratio describes category representation and does not rank employee experiences. Keeping the descriptive comparison at this level preserves the distinction between a profile of reported participation and the substantive leadership questions that a subsequent study could assess.

4.4. Questionnaire Coverage Across Research Domains

The item inventory in Table 1 can also be summarised by research domain. Transformational and transactional leadership contain 19 and 13 items respectively, giving 32 leadership items. Affective, continuance and normative commitment each contain eight items, giving 24 commitment items. Employee motivation and power distance contain six items each. Table 5 groups these seven constructs into four domains and calculates each domain's share of the 68 substantive items. The resulting shares are 47.06% for leadership, 35.29% for organisational commitment, and 8.82% each for employee motivation and power distance. These independently rounded domain shares total 99.99%.

Table 5. Allocation of reported substantive questionnaire items

Questionnaire domain	Constructs	Reported items	Share of 68 items (%)
Leadership	2	32	47.06
Organisational commitment	3	24	35.29
Employee motivation	1	6	8.82
Power distance	1	6	8.82
Total	7	68	99.99

Note: Individual percentages are rounded to two decimal places; thus, their sum is 99.99% rather than 100%.

Leadership and commitment together account for 56 of the 68 items, or 82.35% of the substantive questionnaire content. The remaining 12 items, or 17.65%, cover motivation and power distance. This allocation documents the instrument's numerical emphasis on the central leadership and commitment domains while also identifying the two additional constructs considered in the framework. The percentages refer to items, not employees, endorsement levels or amounts of explained variation. More items in a domain describe a larger allocation of questionnaire content rather than a stronger relationship with an outcome.

Within the commitment domain, the equal allocation of eight items to each dimension preserves the distinction among affective attachment, continuance considerations and normative obligation in the questionnaire structure. Within leadership, the separate 19-item and 13-item sets identify the two reported constructs. Motivation and power distance remain separate domains despite their identical item counts, reflecting their different conceptual roles. This domain view complements the seven-construct inventory: Table 1 shows the individual sets, while Table 5 summarises how their content is distributed across the broader research framework.

Taken together, Tables 2-5 provide a descriptive account of fieldwork quantities, demographic composition and questionnaire coverage. The principal reference totals serve different purposes: 300 for the reported return proportion, 270 for the displayed age or gender shares,

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and 68 for item allocation. The section's analytical contribution is to make those relationships explicit and reproducible from the source counts. The interpretation of leadership, motivation, authority and commitment in Section 5 develops the literature-grounded framework; it does not treat these count-based descriptions as tests of P1, P2 or RQ1-RQ5.

5. Discussion of the Research Framework

5.1. Leadership and the Distinct Bases of Commitment

The theoretical contribution is to separate the meaning of membership from the conditions that make departure costly or morally difficult. Meyer and Allen's three-component framework provides the basis for this distinction. Purpose, development and supportive relationships may make organisational membership valuable, while accumulated investments and employment alternatives concern continuance commitment. Moral responsibility and indebtedness offer different interpretations of normative commitment. An overall commitment score can combine these different experiences. Future leadership research should therefore examine each dimension and the combinations in which they occur.

The literature provides a stronger basis for a positive transformational–affective proposition than for a uniform positive relationship across all commitment dimensions. Avolio et al. and Walumbwa et al. motivate attention to leadership and organisational attachment. Continuance commitment, however, can reflect both investments in the current organisation and the availability of alternatives. Developmental leadership may affect these considerations through competing routes. Measuring investments and alternatives separately would make the resulting relationship easier to interpret. Normative commitment likewise requires distinguishing willing responsibility from an experienced need to repay support.

Transactional leadership also requires behavioural specificity. Judge and Piccolo distinguish contingent reward from management by exception. Predictable recognition can inform perceptions of fair exchange, whereas monitoring and correction may carry different meanings. Both transformational and transactional practices can occur in the same workplace. Future studies should examine their relationships together, use comparable measurement, and test explicitly whether any combination provides information beyond the separate practices.

Joint assessment requires a common referent. Ratings of one immediate supervisor should not be compared directly with ratings of senior management without identifying that difference. Behavioural descriptions can clarify what a reported combination means. A manager might explain the purpose of a demanding assignment, provide individual coaching and specify the reward attached to its completion. This example combines developmental attention with an explicit exchange, but their co-occurrence alone does not establish complementarity. Future research could distinguish whether the practices are independently associated with attachment, whether their combination changes the relationship, or whether both ratings mainly reflect a shared favourable impression of the supervisor. Comparable reporting periods and clearly differentiated items would help interpret these alternatives. The resulting assessment would concern identifiable practices and their joint meaning, rather than a ranking based on broad style labels. It would also distinguish promised recognition from employees' experience of whether the promise was fulfilled.

5.2. Motivation as a Construct and Possible Process

Motivation and commitment answer different questions: why employees expend effort, and why they sustain an organisational relationship. Meyer et al. connect these constructs while preserving their distinct meanings. Gagné and Deci's distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation can help explain why effort may coexist with either willing membership or experienced pressure. A future study that differentiates motivational forms and normative

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meanings would be better able to examine these possibilities than one that combines all motivation into a single score.

Motivational quality becomes particularly important when observable effort appears similar. Two employees may complete the same task on time while acting for different reasons: one regards the work as worthwhile, while the other anticipates criticism or loss of recognition. A question about effort alone would combine these experiences. Measurement should therefore ask about reasons for engaging in the work as well as its intensity, with the activity and reporting period specified. The organisational target also matters. Enjoying a professional task can support continued effort even when attachment to the current employer is weak; conversely, organisational attachment can persist during an uninteresting assignment. Separating task regulation from the organisational relationship makes the proposed pathway more precise. A leadership practice might change the meaning of an assignment, the employee's experience of organisational treatment, or both. Distinct measures would allow these explanations to be assessed instead of attributing every improvement in reported enthusiasm to stronger commitment.

The framework distinguishes two research tasks. The first estimates the association between a motivational form and a commitment dimension after a specified set of leadership and job conditions is considered. The second investigates whether leadership precedes changes in motivation that, in turn, precede changes in commitment. The second task requires a defined indirect pathway and a design that addresses ordering and alternative explanations. Movement in a leadership coefficient after adding motivation is insufficient to establish that pathway. This distinction should guide the research design before model estimation.

A useful next step is to measure leadership practices, motivational quality and commitment at separate planned occasions, while documenting relevant changes in job conditions. This would allow the proposed motivational sequence to be examined alongside plausible alternative explanations. The theoretical framework identifies the relationship to assess; the design must supply evidence about its ordering and interpretation.

5.3. Power Distance and Authority Interpretation

Individual power-distance orientation concerns employees' acceptance of authority, while workplace hierarchy concerns organisational arrangements. Kirkman et al. provide a basis for considering variation in individual responses to transformational leadership. Hofstede's contextual arguments also direct attention to how organisational practices are interpreted. A future Malaysian-enterprise study should measure employee orientations directly and document organisational decision practices rather than infer them from ownership or nationality.

The substantive question is whether the same leadership practice has a different relationship with commitment across authority orientations. This question requires an interaction test, and its interpretation should distinguish affective attachment from perceived departure costs and obligation. Employees' orientation and workplace hierarchy may vary at different levels. Designs that identify workplaces and supervisors can examine those levels while comparing relevant leadership practices within a clearly defined organisational context.

Authority interpretation requires distinguishing preference from exposure. An employee may accept clear supervisory responsibility while also expecting explanations and opportunities to question a decision. Another may comply with instructions because a formal procedure leaves little discretion. Observed compliance therefore does not by itself identify an individual's acceptance of unequal authority. A future assessment could pair questions about preferred decision arrangements with descriptions of the arrangements actually experienced. Questions about who approves work, how disagreements are raised and whether decisions are explained would document organisational practices without converting them into cultural identities.

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Responses from employees sharing a supervisor could then be examined alongside variation between supervisors or workplaces. This approach would clarify whether a relationship reflects personal orientation, a common decision environment or their combination. It also permits consideration of authority exercised consistently with participation, rather than assuming that hierarchy and opportunities for employee input occupy opposite ends of one scale.

5.4. Contribution and Future Assessment

The retained descriptive material documents an age and gender category profile. The conceptual synthesis supplies differentiated propositions and research questions, linking them to the measurement and design needed for future assessment. Its contribution is an organised research framework. A subsequent study can assess the proposed distinctions by defining its target population, measuring the constructs consistently and estimating prespecified relationships on an identified respondent sample.

6. Practical Implications

The literature suggests that managers can begin organisational assessment by distinguishing employees who value membership, perceive substantial departure costs, or feel an obligation to remain. These experiences call for different questions about development, recognition, employment alternatives and responsibility. Observable practices include communication of purpose, developmental attention, clear expectations and fulfilment of agreed rewards. These considerations can guide feedback and diagnostic conversations; their effectiveness should be evaluated in the organisation where they are used.

A practical diagnostic exercise could begin with a specific management episode, such as assigning a project, explaining promotion criteria or reviewing performance. Employees could describe what was communicated, what subsequently happened and how they interpreted the experience. Managers' accounts and relevant organisational records could provide additional perspectives on the same episode. The purpose would be to distinguish the intended practice from its delivery and meaning. For example, a development promise may involve a stated opportunity, access to the required resources and an eventual allocation decision; each stage can generate a different interpretation. Recording those stages would make discussion more concrete than asking whether leadership is generally effective. Feedback could then connect identified practices with the relevant commitment question: valued membership, benefits that would be lost on departure, or responsibility towards the organisation. These questions should remain distinct so that a single favourable response does not conceal a different experience of dependence or obligation.

Employee accounts of decision criteria, voice and obligations can help distinguish willing contribution from pressure or indebtedness. Such assessments should use employees' reported experiences together with observed work conditions and behaviour. Comparisons over time, relevant outcome measures and an appropriate evaluation design are needed before attributing changes in commitment or retention to a management practice. The practical value of the framework lies in clarifying what to assess and which meanings to distinguish.

Organisational evaluation should specify the practice being changed before selecting its outcome measures. A programme to improve the clarity and fulfilment of contingent rewards could document the criteria communicated, employees' understanding of those criteria and the rewards actually delivered. A programme of developmental conversations could record their occurrence, the opportunities discussed and whether agreed actions followed. These implementation records would establish what employees encountered. Assessment could then examine changes in the relevant perceptions and commitment dimensions over planned

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occasions. Where feasible, a phased introduction with an appropriate comparison group would help distinguish changes associated with the programme from changes affecting the organisation more broadly. Recruitment, restructuring, workload and reward-policy changes should be recorded over the same period. Defining the intervention in this way connects an observable management action to a specified organisational experience, making the explanation of any subsequent change more precise and the programme easier to adjust.

Outcome selection should reflect the purpose of organisational assessment. Remaining with an employer, expressing emotional attachment and contributing effectively are separate outcomes. An evaluation concerned with retention could record voluntary departures and their timing, while a development programme could examine access to opportunities and employees' experience of learning. Commitment measures would help interpret these outcomes rather than replace them. Changes in continuance commitment deserve particular attention when greater departure costs accompany unchanged attachment: this pattern would prompt examination of the benefits and constraints sustaining membership. Changes in normative commitment could likewise be followed by questions about whether responsibility is experienced as endorsement or indebtedness. Repeated assessment should use comparable definitions and reporting periods, with enough information to understand who remains in each comparison. The resulting evidence could guide the next management decision by showing which practice was delivered, which employee experience changed and whether the relevant organisational outcome moved with it.

7. Limitations and Directions for Research

The main limitation concerns the provenance and consistency of the source data. The fieldwork narrative reports 300 distributed questionnaires and 270 returns, whereas the demographic output states 270 valid records plus three missing records, giving 273 records. The present materials do not establish whether the additional entries represent incomplete returns, duplicate records, a separate file or another processing decision. Consequently, the actual number of unique eligible respondents and the survey response rate cannot be verified. The 270 used in Tables 3 and 4 is only the sum of displayed category counts within each characteristic. It is not certified as the valid sample size for measurement or inferential analysis. No respondent-level missing-data handling procedure can be established from the summary output. The revised article performs no imputation and does not assume that subtracting three from 270 would produce a justified analytical sample.

The original inferential summaries contain incompatible coefficient and test-statistic signs, divergent fit statistics for nominally identical baseline models, and inconsistent probability and test-statistic entries. The respondent dataset, coding file and complete original statistical output have not been supplied for this revision. It is therefore not possible to identify the correct intercept, reconstruct model-specific sample sizes, harmonise fit values or verify significance. All regression estimates, model-fit tables, hypothesis assessments and arithmetic contrasts derived from those estimates have been removed from the article. The internal-consistency estimates have also been removed because their estimation cases and scoring rules cannot be checked. The retained demographic counts remain source-reported summaries rather than respondent-level validated observations. A subsequent empirical article requires a reconciled dataset and documented analysis rather than selection among the inconsistent printed values.

Measurement documentation also restricts interpretation of the original questionnaire. Complete item wording, instrument versions, language adaptation, reverse coding, aggregation and treatment of incomplete scales are not documented in the materials available for this revision. The reported agreement anchors place stronger agreement at the lower end, making

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score interpretation dependent on item content and coding. The construction counts in Table 1 and domain shares in Table 5 describe questionnaire structure and do not demonstrate reliability, validity or cultural equivalence. The distinction between the education labels master's and MS/M-Phil is unexplained. Future measurement work should define the categories and constructs, document scoring, and evaluate dimensional structure and construct separation. Transactional behaviours, autonomous and controlled motivation, and moral responsibility and indebtedness should be assessed separately where the theory requires those distinctions. Department frequencies and percentages also conflict in the source, and the available material does not establish which representation is correct. Both department and education distributions have therefore been removed from the retained profile.

The recruitment account provides neither a population sampling frame nor selection probabilities. Collection dates, geographical coverage, employer numbers, detailed organisational ownership composition and workplace-specific participation are also absent. The fieldwork account mentions Chinese and indigenous enterprises and different sectors without a reconciled employer list or ownership definition. Consent procedures and ethics approval cannot be verified from the supplied documentation. These omissions prevent representative-population interpretation and enterprise-ownership or sector comparison. The cross-sectional, employee-reported design also leaves temporal ordering and shared-method influences unresolved. Future studies should define their target population and ownership criteria, document recruitment and ethics procedures, report participation and exclusion flow, and use employer and supervisor identifiers to assess clustering.

Future empirical work should record the number of eligible cases at every processing stage, specify item- and scale-level missing-data rules before estimation, and report analysis-specific sample sizes. Nested models should use a documented common sample where fit comparisons are intended, or explicitly explain changes in cases and specifications. Consistency checks should verify coefficient signs against t statistics, model fit against the reported degrees of freedom, and reproducibility from saved analysis code. Both leadership constructs can be included in a common, prespecified model with theory-guided contextual variables. A mediation study requires a specified indirect pathway and a defensible temporal design; a moderation study requires an interaction estimate. Repeated measurements and independently observed outcomes would help connect leadership and commitment with employee behaviour while addressing alternative explanations. These steps would permit a subsequent study to evaluate the propositions developed here.

A subsequent sampling protocol should define organisational ownership, location, sector and employee eligibility separately. Recruitment records should distinguish invitations, refusals, incomplete returns and eligible responses. Confidential identifiers should connect survey occasions and identify employers and supervisors while keeping contact details separate from the analytical file. Participation arrangements should allow employees to respond independently of their supervisor. Sampling plans should account for the number and distribution of workplaces as well as employees, so that shared organisational conditions can be represented in the analysis.

Measurement preparation should document each item's source, wording, language, anchors, planned reverse coding and interpretation. Independent review and cognitive interviews could examine how employees understand adapted questions. Scoring and missing-item rules should be specified before estimation. Measurement assessment should examine whether the intended construction remains distinct, report reliability for the actual cases used, and establish comparable interpretation before contrasting languages, sectors or occasions. The two leadership constructs planned contextual variables and commitment dimensions should have prespecified analytical roles. Indirect pathways require an appropriate temporal design; moderation requires explicit interaction and uncertainty.

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8. Conclusion

This article combines a descriptive analysis of source-reported fieldwork quantities, demographic categories and questionnaire item allocation with a literature-grounded framework for investigating leadership and organisational commitment in Malaysian enterprises. Its central contribution is to distinguish affective attachment, perceived departure costs and felt obligation, while specifying separate roles for leadership practices, motivational quality and individual power-distance orientation. The propositions and research questions remain for future empirical assessment. A documented respondent sample, clear measurement and appropriate design would allow subsequent research to test the framework and evaluate its practical relevance.

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