

EXAMINATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Extant literature has reviewed internal strategies such as management communication as shaping employee commitment across organizations. This paper examines in the intricate relationship between management communication and different dimensions of employee commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The study underlines the contribution of effective communication to trust, loyalty, and emotional attachment, using the Social Exchange Theory, Leader-Member Exchange, and Organizational Support Theory. The results from the review of past studies show that open and transparent communication directly impacts commitment levels by inducing job satisfaction and improving organizational performance. On policy, the study proffers that firms, stakeholders, and policymakers should take up these challenges through appropriate open communication channels and supportive leadership practices. It is also apparent that organizations should be cognizant of the need for an integrated communications approach, taking into consideration technological development and employee diversity. Leaders should strive toward ensuring that employees appreciate being part of the organization through supportive communication.

Keywords: Management Communication, Affective, Continuance, Normative, Employee Commitment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With increasing complexity and interconnectedness in the current work place, management communication plays a very important role in shaping employee commitment. Management communication is quite central to the working of any organization and thus plays a critical role in shaping employee commitment. Sound, regular, and consistent management communication has indeed proved to support higher commitment levels in both dimensions: emotional attachment and loyalty, in the complex modern work settings so globally interconnected. Communication by management does not simply mean the flow of information inside but also creating such an organizational culture that aligns employees' objectives with those of the organization. The more researchers work, the more they realize that the quality of communication significantly influences important aspects of employees' behaviors, including the level of their organizational commitment ((Eng, Sun, Meng, and Neill, 2024; Soontornchaiya & Charoensukmongkol; 2024; Umumararungu & Bazubagira, 2024).

This study looks at the communication practices that align organizational goals with the needs of individual employees, thereby looking into the detailed theories explaining the complex

nature of the concept in question, namely, Social Exchange Theory, Leader-Member Exchange Theory, and Organizational Support Theory. Thus, this paper provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on management communication and employee commitment, highlighting key findings, theories, and gaps in the research. These tenets indicate that commitment would result as part of a process related to mutual loyalty and respect emanating from communication practices. With companies still learning to adjust to a technology-based work environment, virtual workspace included, communication is playing an increasingly important role in trying to maintain employee commitment. Organizations today operate within dynamically changing environments and contexts; this is mostly a factor of rapid changes in technologies and changing work environments (Yu, 2023; Lee, Thomas, Martin & Guillaume, 2019; Men, 2014; Probst, Jiang, and Graso, 2016).

It reviews related literature in management communication and its impact on employee commitment, hence exploring how different forms of communications impact the commitment types such as affective, continuance, and normative commitments. This paper also pinpoints lapses in the current research through conceptual and empirical perspectives and identifies moderating factors that influence this all-important relationship, such factors being organizational culture, leadership style, technological advancement, and employee characteristics. It further pinpoints the factors that act to moderate this process of shaping commitment through communication, such as leadership styles, organization culture, and characteristics of employees. Such an understanding is pivotal in promoting employee engagement and organizational performance in the contemporary workplace.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Management Communication

Management communication is widely regarded as the central skill in the global workplace of the 21st century, and a manager unable to speak, write, listen, and build interpersonal relationships effectively cannot hope to succeed. In more ways than one, the ability to speak, write, listen, and build interpersonal relationships effectively defines a manager. It involves more than a technical skill; language is power, and how one uses that language strategically will help them attain organizational objectives. The concept had been postulated by the management philosopher Peter Drucker in 1954, who underscored that managers must consider language as an essential tool, not merely of communication but of persuasion and leadership as well (Drucker, 1954). In fact, Drucker said that the “art which draws men’s hearts to the love of true knowledge” is at the very core of management; in other words, this simply means that communication is necessary to inspire others and influence them.

Afterwards, scholars such as Eccles and Nohria (1992), further broadened Drucker’s perspective to argue that language lies at the very heart of management. In the view of these authors, language is the medium through which organizational goals are enacted, a manager’s identity is shaped, and action is mobilized. Such for them is the relationship between these two concepts that they argue in their book that management cannot exist independent of communication as “without the right words, used in the right way, it is unlikely that the right actions will ever occur”. This argument tends to an intrinsic relation between the said concepts of communication and action within organizations; not only does communication involve information conveyance, but performance and strategy are executed through it.

Modern studies confirm the quintessential role of communication in management. For instance, Tourish (2005) state that inadequate communication by management is one of the leading reasons for workplace dissatisfaction, disengagement, and high turnover ratios. In contrast, effective communication has been found to relate positively to employee commitment and better decision-making, through stronger organizational performance (Men, 2014). Additionally, research by Clampitt, DeKoch, and Cashman (2000) underlines the fact that through communication, transparency and, consequently, trust build up-a very fundamental constituent for achieving alignment between management and employees. In essence, management communication is not just about the transmission of information; it acts as a strategic tool in aligning goals, inspiring teams, and seeing to it that actions are suitably affected. This view, therefore, corroborates the assertion made by Eccles and Nohria (1992) when they speculated that “words do matter” in pursuit of the strategic course and in ensuring performance. Without significant and meaningful communication, managers might feel that it is considerably impossible for them to execute plans meant for envisioned performance and to inspire staff toward the results expected. Accordingly, management communication is the process of information, instruction, expectation, and feedback provided by leaders and managers to subordinates. It occurs in formal and informal channels, including conferences and meetings, emails and reports, face-to-face interactions, and other virtual communications. Effective management communication should contain clarity, transparency, timeliness of information, and a feedback loop that is open. Effective communication plays several roles in organizations, including coordination, decision-making, and relationship-building. It helps to align the goals of the organization with that of the employee and facilitates teamwork by fostering collaboration among teams.

2.2 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is a multidimensional concept, and it plays a prime role in the success of an organization. It denotes the psychological attachment and loyalty the employees have towards an organization, a factor which influences the willingness to contribute towards its goals. While employee commitment is just one facet of overall workplace commitments, wherein organizations also make commitments to employees, customers, unions, shareholders, and other stakeholders, it nevertheless remains the focus of most research and theory (Meyer and Allen, 1991). This focus on employee commitment had its genesis in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the United States, with the main emphasis initially being on organizational commitment. With time, research started covering the various dimensions of commitments such as commitment towards teams, supervisors, customers, unions and even change initiatives (Cohen, 2003). The theoretical base of employee commitment came with the work of Meyer and Allen (1991) who developed the three-component model of commitment. This model delineates commitment into affective commitment, which is the emotional attachment; continuance commitment, which is perceived costs of leaving; and normative commitment, or a sense of obligation to remain. It is affective commitment, especially, that has been found to be more important in terms of yielding positive outcomes like job satisfaction, low turnover, and high performance (Solinger, Van Olffen, and Roe, 2008). Employees who feel high affective commitment remain with their organization because they want to; those who feel high continuance or normative commitment may remain because they need to or ought to (Meyer, 2016).

Research on employee commitment has expanded in the 1980s and beyond to include global contexts and additional targets of commitment. Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2002) realized that commitment is not only to organizations but also to workgroups, supervisors, and goals, adding complexity to modern workplaces. Research published outside North America did not appear until the 1990s and early 2000s, and there was an early indication that commitment might differ sharply across cultures and parts of the world (Markovits et al., 2010; Meyer, 2016). For example, there are countries of collectivist cultures that stress harmony and group loyalty, which provide greater normative commitment to organizations as compared to countries where individualist cultures prevail with an emphasis on personal achievements. In these cultures, self-interest is usually prioritized over organizational interests (Wasti, 2003).

In the new millennium, studies have continued to evolve especially considering the dynamic and at times uncertain nature of workplaces these days. Organizational justice and leadership are very timely topics of investigation that continue to shape employee commitment. Neves and Eisenberger (2014) found that enough supervisory treatment increases the affective commitment since an employee feels valued as well as supported. Men (2014) more pointed out that transformational leadership in which a leader inspires as well as intellectually stimulates employees increases the organizational commitment on a very high scale emotionally as well as acquires loyalty among the members of the organization. Another emergent trend in the research on employee commitment is the impacts of workplace flexibility/work-life balance initiatives on such commitment (Meyer, 2016). For example, as organizations increasingly permit employees to work at home or exercise flexible work schedules, a heightened sense of attachment may be enhanced by the employee's ability to better balance the pulls from personal and professional demands (Grover and Crooker, 1995). This increased flexibility enhances affective commitment by fostering satisfaction and well-being, which in turn further lessens turnover intentions.

3.0 THEORETICAL LINKS OF MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

The three most relevant theories linking management commitment and employee commitment in this study are social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, and organization support theory. The social exchange theory postulates that relationships between individuals or organizations are based on a system of reciprocal rewards that come in the form of positive actions given over time. For management communication, the theory postulates that employees who receive effective, transparent, and supportive communication from management will likely give back to this good treatment with increased commitment to the organization (Blau, 2017). In building trust and support, managers through frequent, honest, and clear communication affect the emotional investments of their workers in the organization (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Recently, it has been possible to give even greater weight to positive communication as an antecedent of employee commitment. For example, Kim and Beehr (2018) have observed that perceived communicatively supportive management is seen to raise the level of affective commitment among employees. Communication practices that demonstrate respect, appreciation, and understanding create a feeling of value among employees, and this may likely be reciprocated by showing loyalty and dedication to organizational objectives.

Concerning the leader-member exchange theory, it is based on the quality of the relationships between the leaders and their subordinates. A high-quality leader-member exchange relationship would therefore entail mutual levels of trust, respect, and open communication, which in turn promote stronger emotional ties between the leaders and employees (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The theory postulates that employees who have high-quality communications with their leader are likely to feel a sense of loyalty and commitment towards the organization. Leader-member exchange theory takes effective communication as one of the core aspects, since it allows leaders to share expectations, give feedback, and involve employees in decision-making processes. This sort of communication strengthens feelings of inclusion and belongingness among employees, which heightens the level of commitment. More recent studies have continued to support the association; specifically, it has been found that high leader-member exchange relationships are associated with increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Probst, Jiang, and Graso (2016) found that open and transparent communications coming from managers and employees in high leader-member exchange relationships resulted in greater employee engagement and organizational commitment.

According to organization support theory, the more employees perceive that management values their contribution and is concerned for their well-being, the more committed they will become. Communication has a great deal of relevance regarding this development of perceived organizational support. For example, when managers communicate frequently, giving constructive responses to show empathy, an employee is likely to get the feeling that the organization has concern for them, hence committing themselves more (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Supportive communication practices, such as acknowledging performances of employees and taking their concerns seriously, are likely to create a positive work environment where employees feel valued and secure. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) cited that perceived organizational support is often conveyed through managerial behavior, which positively influences affective commitment. More recent studies have demonstrated that when employees perceived supportive communication from their leaders, they experienced greater job satisfaction, which in turn had a positive influence on their organizational commitment (Baran et al., 2012).

4.0 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

4.1 Management Communication and Affective Commitment

Past studies have proved that clear, consistent, and frequent communication from management builds in employees a feeling of belongingness or emotional attachment, or affective commitment. For example, it has been found that employees who perceive their immediate supervisors as approachable and open score high on emotional investment in their job, resulting in higher commitment levels. The relation of communication with commitment is supported by the results of Boon, Safa, and Arumugam's (2006) study conducted on the effects of total quality management practices on affective commitment in Malaysian semiconductor organizations. The outcome of their study revealed that organizational communication, trust, and teamwork create positive impacts on affective commitment and that communication is the most relevant variable to it. Brunetto, Farr-Wharton and Shacklock (2011) also explored the effect of supervisor-subordinate communication on role ambiguity, autonomy of nurses and their affective commitment. Their survey of 900 Australian nurses demonstrated that

communication breakdowns with immediate supervisors resulted in limited autonomy and commitment while open communication helped alleviate any role ambiguity and increased their attachment to hospitals.

Trajkova, Andonov, and Mihajloski (2014) did further research on the effect of different flows of organizational communication on affective commitment. The authors mentioned that among all, the lateral-diagonal communication among employees indicated a positive significant impact on affective commitments. They would be able to share values and fight work challenges through informal collaboration without feeling the fear of hierarchical pressure, hence developing stronger emotional bonds with their organizations. Expanding on this, Agus and Selvaraj (2020), investigated the impact of quality of work life on commitment and intention to stay among nurses in Malaysian private hospitals. The results identified that work context, organizational support, and communication are drivers for employee commitment, hence the retention rates within the organization. This therefore agrees that the individuals who are satisfied with their working environment and communication tend to be committed to the organization.

In educational contexts, Yao, You, and Zhu (2020) researched how principal-teacher communication influences psychological empowerment, affective commitment, and job performance for teachers. Their results showed that effective school leader communication positively predicts teachers' emotional attachment to their schools and increasing their overall performance. They also found that the commitment of affective mediated the relationship between managerial communication and teacher performance, again in institutions of learning. The research of Lee and Kim (2022) focused on the effects of leadership styles that CEOs applied to internal communication and employee commitment. The present study showed that a relationship-oriented leadership style evoked symmetrical communication, which substantially encouraged employees' affective commitment. Meanwhile, leaders with a task-oriented leadership style did not affect either of the two factors-communication and commitment-which proved once more the importance of relational aspects in managerial communication. These reviewed studies confirmed that management communication is very important in the development and continuance of affective commitment, which in turn has an impact on employee retention, job satisfaction, and organizational performance.

4.2 Management Communication and Continuance Commitment

Although less commonly emphasized in the literature, management communication impact continuance commitment, too, by enabling employees to assess more effectively their costs and benefits of staying in or leaving the organization. As an example, open communication about one's possibilities for career development may make a person's need to stay with the organization grow. A study conducted by Engin and Akgöz (2013) on the internal communication satisfaction and organizational commitment among executives and employees of Garanti Bank in Turkey indicated that "communication satisfaction positively influences both affective and normative commitments." However, their findings showed that no significant relationship existed between communication satisfaction and continuance commitment. As such, whereas the impact of communication satisfaction on the general organizational commitment is quite strong, its influence on continuance commitment seems partial.

In turn, the work of Enyia and Orokor (2016) has surveyed formal and informal communication in the context of both affective and continuance commitment to the Nigerian Oil companies like Shell and Nigerian Agip Oil Company. Thus, the research has found that from the survey of 271 participants there exist statistical relationships both between formal communication and Affective, as well as continuance commitments. Moreover, the results indicated a similar positive relation of informal communication with such kinds of commitment in showing how communication works to enhance an employee's effective and cognitive attachment towards their organization. Valaei and Rezaei (2016) investigated the relationship between employee satisfaction and organizational commitment in Malaysian ICT SMEs. The results showed that both fringe benefits and promotion opportunities positively impacted all kinds of organizational commitment. Surprisingly, this study showed that there is no significant relationship between supervision and affective commitment while underlining positive impacts of operating procedures on organizational commitment (especially in affective and normative commitment), implying that employees appreciate clear job structures.

Marchalina and Ahmad (2017) conducted a study on the influence of internal communication on the commitment to change of employees within large companies in Malaysia. Analyzing responses from 550 employees, they establish that there is a strong positive correlation between internal communication and commitment to organizational change on the part of employees, further highlighting how clear and effective communication may foster alignment during times of transition. Weidmann and Konishi (2017) studied human resource practices' influence on normative, affective, and continuance commitment in the public sector. Indeed, the study had shown that employee commitment was informed by job content and interpersonal relationship developed at work, instead of directly by compensations or performance management processes. Affective commitment proved to be the strongest form of commitment resulting mainly from the quality of work relationships and communication with the management, which means that communication is key to emotional attachment to the organization.

In this regard, Umukoro and Egwakhe (2019) further investigated the job characteristics and their influence on the continuance commitment among the non-academic staff of private universities in Nigeria. In this respect, their results suggested that dimensions like task identity, task significance, and feedback were found to affect positively the continuance commitment. This means that employees whose job roles are considered meaningful in nature and who are always appraised tend to be willing to stay in the institution. An analysis of the linkage between organizational commitment and job performance by Kuhal et al. (2020) presents results from Malaysia. In this respect, from the study it was observed that all three components of organizational commitment bear a significant influence on the affective, continuance, and normative facets of job performance. Thus, an indication is made that employee commitment in an organization plays an important role. All these studies together confirm that while communications relate more strongly to affective and normative commitment, it also has indirect influences on continuance commitment, especially through job design, feedback, and clear career paths.

4.3 Management Communication and Normative Commitment

Organizational members may then feel a sense of obligation, or moral responsibility, towards the organization that valued their contributions. This level of commitment is usually stronger

when there are both formal recognition-awards and praise-and informal acknowledgement-verbal praise-of employees' contributions. Ross and Ali (2017) researched the commitment factors among ICT workers solely based on normative commitment variables' influence that had been freed from the influence of affective commitment variables. A result of which they established that ICT professionals valuing flexibility in working arrangements, committed to vocation had higher levels of normative commitment hence direct influencers of behavior at work. This would indicate that normative commitment in such employees may well arise independently of emotional attachment towards the organization. Similarly, in another context, McCormick and Donohue (2019) investigated the predictors of both the affective and normative commitment among volunteers in one Australian non-profit. Findings showed that normative commitment is positively predicted by socialization experiences within the organization, as well as the alignment between personal values and the organization's mission. In turn, affective commitment depended on role clarity, the personal importance of the organization, perceived organizational support, and the satisfaction of esteem-related needs. This pattern showed that the types of commitments are distinct but complementary in nature.

Bothma (2020) investigates how the various types of commitment-specifically affective and normative commitment-affect helping behavior within virtual groups. Commercial and non-commercial virtual settings gave evidence of affective commitment positively affecting helping behavior. However, normative commitment was a significant determinant of helping behaviors only within non-commercial settings. Most importantly, what the study brought to light was that informational support and satisfaction were antecedents of the two types of commitment in the online environment and underlined the role that normative commitment enjoys in contexts where the presence of financial motivations is minimal. Hadi and Tentama (2020) conducted research to validate the dimensions of organizational commitment and found that normative commitment was the most dominant aspect in shaping overall organizational commitment. Using the method of structural equation modeling, they proved that normative commitment was a stronger indicator of commitment than the continuance commitment it had, since the influence was weaker. The finding underlines the importance of moral obligation and sense of duty in the solidification of employee commitment. Intrinsic motivation, time availability, and socialization were identified as the main predictors of the behaviour in the knowledge-sharing behavior study conducted by Mohd Rasdi and Tangaraja (2022) in Malaysian Public Service. They also found that it was affective commitment, rather than normative or continuance commitment, that acted as an important intermediate between knowledge-sharing. The findings therefore suggest that normative commitment does ensure loyalty, but it is the affective commitment that ensures proactive behavior such as knowledge-sharing within organizations. These studies together reflect the fact that normative commitment has a very fuzzy relationship with other various types of workplace behaviors; recognition-based and value-aligned socialization is a prerequisite for developing this type of commitment in an industry or work environment.

5.0 MODERATING FACTORS AND GAPS IN EXISTING STUDIES

Management communication and employee commitment have a very delicate relationship that are moderated by several factors. Perhaps one of the most relevant moderators is organizational culture. Organizational culture defines a set of norms, values, and behaviors within a work-related context that may help or hinder effective communication. In a culture that allows

openness and transparency, communication is usually effective; hence, employee commitment increases. On the other hand, organizational cultures that are hierarchical or closed suppress communication, which in turn weakens the linkage of communication and commitment. For example, the studies conducted by Denison and Mishra (1995) show that those companies that possess participative cultures exhibit high levels of employee commitment because of the unproblematic flow of communication across various levels of organization. Another important determinant is the leadership style: A participative or transformational type of leadership promotes more communication and employee commitment. Indeed, transformational leaders inspire employees and motivate them to a point where open communication does take place, thus leading directly to increased levels of affective and normative commitment. Bass and Avolio (1994) On the other hand, if leadership is exercised by means of transactional or autocratic styles, two-way communications may be weakened and thereby reduce the positive effects of management communication on employee commitment (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

Another crucial factor that influences moderation is technological development. As the level of organizations' dependence on digital tools for communication increases, the way messages are conveyed and received also changes. Virtual communication platforms such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing have made communication easier but also pose some challenges: one might lose personal contact and misinterpret the message (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). Their impact on securing commitment largely depends on the extent to which they are integrated into an organizational system of communication. Studies such as Johnson et al. (2018) indicated that technology could add to the effectiveness of communication and, therefore, to employee commitment, at least in remotely distributed workforces. Other employee characteristics, such as personality traits, generational differences, and career stages are likely to further moderate the communications-commitment link. For instance, employees high in openness to experience should be more open to communication, therefore engaging with management communication, which enhances commitment levels (McCrae and Costa, 1997). Also, generational differences have become important, where younger employees seem to want to communicate more frequently and in a less formal manner, compared to the older generations (Twenge et al., 2010). In this context, employees at different stages in their careers may hold varying priorities in their communications with an organization; for instance, younger employees will value feedback and opportunities for career development, while the late-career person may be looking for greater stability from their organization and, probably above all, recognition.

Despite an encouraging amount of research studying the link between management communication and organizational commitment, there are a few gaps in the literature. First, one gap that emerges is a lack of the many studies which have tried to investigate the causal effect of communication on commitment. Much of the literature has focused on studies reporting correlational data, which can indicate an association but do not establish causality. While studies such as Boon et al. (2006) and McCormick and Donohue (2019) are therefore informative, neither demonstrates whether improved communication causes greater commitment or whether more committed employees naturally communicate better with management. Future longitudinal research should focus on studies which can help establish a directionality of these relationships.

The other critical gap becomes apparent regarding the underdevelopment of the cultural context in the studies on communication-commitment; almost all works have been conducted either in a Western or developed-country setting, which might not capture properly the nuances in the way communications go about-styles and expectations by employees in various cultural environments, especially in Asia and Africa. For instance, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory asserts that high-power distance and low-power distance cultures are sharply contrasting with each other in their communication styles, which may give another dimension on how management communication is linked with commitment. In this respect, additional research is needed to explore how these relationships function in non-Western contexts.

Finally, the influence of remote work on the communication-commitment relationship remains under-researched. Indeed, with increasingly flexible and remote modes of working-the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in such changes-traditional models of face-to-face communication have altered. Although studies like that of Agus and Selvaraj (2020), have begun to determine how digital communication influences employee commitment, further research is still needed on how the remote work environment shapes the nature of managerial communication and employee commitment. Specifically, the future will have to explore in greater detail whether a lack of physical presence and virtual communication through technologies impact various forms of commitments: affective, normative, and continuance.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study explores the role of management communication in developing employees' commitment, especially affective and normative commitment. This is emphasized to the extent that clear and sustained communication arousal brings about emotional attachment, eliminates uncertainty, and directs employees' goals toward the accomplishment of organizational objectives. However, how cultural variance and working conditions affect the relation between management communication and employees' commitment remains a gap. The review of the related literature has shown that there is a high level of association between management communication and employee commitment. Good management communication enhances employee affective attachment or feelings, loyalty, and obligation towards the organization. However, not much is understood about how these associations are developed in different cultures and settings. As organizations grow with continuous adaptation to technological advancement and globalization of the workforce, understanding how management communication plays a very important role in eliciting employee commitment.

In this context, the paper suggests that firms, stakeholders, and policy makers should take up these challenges through appropriate open communication channels and supportive leadership practices. It concludes that future research on non-Western contexts, such as in sub-Saharan African countries, and on the changing dynamics regarding working remotely would add to the already existing level of understanding concerning the impact of communication on commitment. It is also apparent that organizations should be cognizant of the need for an integrated communications approach, taking into consideration technological development and employee diversity. Leaders should strive toward ensuring that employees appreciate being part of the organization through supportive communication. Focusing on clear, empathetic, and frequent communication will allow management to elicit greater levels of commitment-which in turn should bring better job satisfaction and overall performance for the organization.

Governments and policy makers have a role to play in encouraging a framework within organizations that allows open communications for sustainable development and growth in the business sector. This review of the literature opens up new avenues, especially in research related to communication and commitment, in newer forms of jobs and teams, or even remote work.

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