

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND TYPE OF CONTRACT

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## ÖZET

### *İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi Uygulamalarının Duygusal Bağlılık ve İş Sözleşmesi Türü Arasındaki Aracı Değişken Rolü*

*Bu çalışma, insan kaynakları (İK) uygulamalarına ilişkin algının duygusal bağlılık üzerindeki etkisini tam zamanlı sürekli ve mevsimsel statüde çalışan işgörenler açısından incelemektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışmanın amacı İK uygulamalarının iş sözleşmesi türü ve duygusal bağlılık arasında aracı değişken olup olmadığını test etmektir. Bu doğrultuda Muğla Bölgesinde yer alan beş yıldızlı konaklama işletmeleri ana kütle olarak saptanmış ve 376 deneye ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmada elde edilen veriler; tekli ve çoklu regresyon analizleri, bağımsız iki örnek t testi ve aracı değişken testine tabi tutulmuştur. Araştırmada elde edilen bulgular; her iki işgören grubunun da İK uygulamalarını olumlu algulamalarının duygusal bağlılıklarını arttırdığını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, eğitim-geliştirme ve işe alma-yerleştirme uygulamalarının iş sözleşmesi türü ve duygusal bağlılık arasındaki ilişkide kısmi aracı etkiye sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmada elde edilen bulguların konaklama işletmelerinin İK Yönetimi uygulama ve politikalarının belirlenmesinde katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnsan kaynakları yönetimi uygulamaları, Duygusal bağlılık, Mevsimsel çalışma

## ABSTRACT

*Purpose- This study aims to reveal the effect of the perception of human resource management practices on the affective commitment of seasonal and permanent employees. The purpose of this study is also to test the hypothesis that relations between contract type and affective commitment are mediated at least in part by the perception of human resource management practices.*

*Design/methodology/approach – Empirical evidence is based on five star hotels in the Mugla region, Turkey and the study reached 376 participants. Descriptive statistics are provided. Bivariate correlations, multiple regression analysis, independent two-sample and mediation tests are conducted.*

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*Findings – Consistent with the literature, the results show that a positive perception of human resource management practices increases the affective commitment level of both groups. Moreover, training-development and recruitment-selection practices partially mediate the association between the type of contract and affective commitment.*

*Research limitations/implications – A limitation of this research is the use of cross sectional data and the result lack generalizability.*

*Practical implications – It is suggested that one of the main HRM practices is training and development activities for increasing affective commitment of seasonal and permanent employees.*

*Originality/value –This article analyses the relations between contract type and affective commitment are mediated at least in part by the perception of human resource management practices. This evidence may be useful to hotels in designing human resource management policies and practices.*

**Keywords:** Human resource management practices, Affective commitment, Seasonal employees

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## **Introduction**

Whereas seasonal employees are clearly important in terms of their size and utility in a wide range of industrial and agricultural sectors, empirical research about them and their organizational attitudes is very limited. Seasonal employees work for a finite and short duration for a particular employer (Lee and Moreo, 2007). They belong to the periphery labor force. They are mostly less educated and have lower firm specific skills, when compared with permanent counterparts and organizations provide them lower pay, moderate training-development opportunities and career mobility (Lautsch, 2002). In addition, organizations consider them as a cost and give no value to them. It is difficult for seasonal employees to accept the organizational goals and exert an effort on behalf of the organization for that short seasonal duration. Arising from those facts it could be assumed that they have a low level of organizational commitment (OC) compared to permanent counterparts.

The potential impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on commitment is confirmed in a limited number of studies (Meyer and Smith, 2001). The reviewed literature suggests that HRM practices have significant value in fostering desirable employee attitudes. Specifically those practices include: recruitment-selection, training-development, and performance management and compensation-salary practices. Without being tested empirically, it is assumed that if permanent and seasonal employees are exposed to equal levels of human resource management practices, the organizational commitment level of seasonal employees will be the same as that of permanent employees. Consequently, this study addresses the research gap in the literature by examining the relation of HRM practices to organizational commitment of permanent and seasonal employees.

The purpose of this paper is to reveal the relation of the perception of human resource management practices to the affective commitment of seasonal and permanent employees. The purpose of this study is also to test the hypothesis that relations between contract type and affective commitment are mediated at least in part by the perception of human resource management practices. The hospitality sector in which seasonal employees are a major component of the employees has been chosen to test this assumption.

## Literature Review

***Organizational Commitment*** The organizational commitment concept is one of the most important concepts in the fields of management, organizational behavior and human resource management (Cohen, 2007). The concept of organizational commitment has gained increasing attention primarily because of its negative relationship with absenteeism and employee turnover and its positive relationship with performance. The definition of organizational commitment that is adopted in this study is that of Meyer and Allen. They have defined organizational commitment as a three-component model (affective, normative and continuance commitment) (Meyer and Allen, 1991). According to Meyer and Allen's organizational commitment theory, affective commitment reflects employees' emotional attachment to the organization, normative commitment reflects employees' feelings of moral obligation to remain with the organization and continuance commitment reflects employees' perceptions of the costs of leaving the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

Meyer and Allen suggest that employees with strong commitment are more valuable than those with weak commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Affective commitment has shown to have the strongest positive correlations with desirable work behavior. Thus, organizations want to increase employees' affective commitment rather than the other types of commitment (Meyer and Smith, 2000). This study therefore focuses especially on the affective commitment of employees

***Affective Commitment of Seasonal Versus Permanent Employees*** According to Atkinson's flexible firm model, the labor force is divided as core and periphery (Kalleberg, 2001). Organizations use a core of relatively permanent employees and use a number of temporary employees in the periphery (Zeytinoglu et. al., 2009). Temporary employees are a widespread phenomenon in the workforce. One of the typical examples of temporary work is seasonal work which is rarely studied

empirically. Seasonal work is defined as a “Non-permanent paid job that will end at a specified time or in the near future once seasonal peak has passed” (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003). By another definition, seasonal jobs provide temporary work which is expected to last only until the end of a season, which means the period for which services are in demand (Shawn de Raaf et. al., 2003).

Seasonal employees who are diverse in terms of educational level, culture, work experiences and who come from different regions or different countries have to work together for one part of the year for a particular organization (Lee and Moreo, 2007). Seasonal employees usually work from three months to six months according to demand fluctuations. They do not have enough time to be familiar with their organization, to internalize this organization’s values and goals or demonstrate a strong desire to stay in that organization. Thus, seasonal employees can be affectively less committed to their organization than permanent employees can be.

It is assumed that seasonal employees are affectively less committed to their organizations than permanent employees.

H1: Seasonal employees are affectively less committed to their organizations than permanent employees.

***Perception of Human Resource Management Practices and Affective Commitment*** Social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity may explain the relationships between organizational commitment and HRM practices. According to Blau (1964), if an individual does a favor, there is an expectation of some future return. Individuals and organizations enter into exchange relationships in which provisions of benefits between parties create obligations to reciprocate (Witt et. al., 2001). The employer offers benefits and opportunities to the employees. In return for these benefits and opportunities, employees may feel obligated to reciprocate and may become more committed to the organization (Tansky and Cohen, 2001). HRM practices are assumed to be influencing factors to increase OC, especially affective commitment, among employees (Meyer and Smith, 2000; Arthur, 1994). Based on the social exchange theory, employees’ perception of HRM practices reflect how much the organization cares about their welfare and recognizes their contribution (Guchait, 2007).

Employee’s affective commitment to the organization is related to the HRM practices of the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). The literature reviewed suggests that affective commitment is enhanced relating to recruitment-selection (McGunnigle and Jameson, 2000; Breugh,1983), training-development (Barlett,

2001; Tannenbaum et al., 1991), performance management (Fletcher, 2001) and compensation-salary practices (Iverson et.al., 2002; Buchko, 1993). Affective commitment is influenced not only by the way HRM practices are intended to operate as by team leaders or line managers but also by how they are perceived by employees (Kinnie et al., 2005). If employees perceive all HRM practices positively or fairly, their affective commitment to the organization will increase. All these HRM practices show them that their organizations value their employees as individuals, which leads to affective commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

***Human Resource Management Practices: A Mediation Approach*** Affective commitment has been closely related to behavioral outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover and performance (Mathieu and Zajaac, 1990). If affective commitment is very important for an organization, the use of seasonal employees and the impact of HRM practices on affective commitment could be very important to organizations and especially to the development of HRM practices for seasonal employees (Tansky et al., 1997). Thus, it is very valuable for academics and practitioners to point out how to increase the affective commitment level of seasonal employees.

This study was conducted in the hospitality sector which is one of the typical examples of seasonal work. Although seasonal employees in that sector represent the periphery labor force, they are more likely to have similar job definitions, skill levels, training requirements as permanent counterparts rather than supporting them (Lautsch, 2002). Thus, seasonal employees compare themselves with permanent counterparts and may feel that they are treated unequally by their organizations because of their employment status.

With the help of HRM practices and strategies, employees can be treated as resources to be utilized. In other words, financial and moral support provided by the organizations in return for the efforts and commitment of the employees would be an instrument for acknowledging the employee's contributions. Seasonal employees' level of affective commitment can be a function of their previous and current experience of employment in the organization rather than a function of their employment status (Ainsworth and Purss, 2008).

Thus, it is assumed that perception of HRM practices will be positively related to the affective commitment of seasonal employees. In other words, if an organization applies HRM practices to all employees, its seasonal employees will perceive themselves as being treated like their permanent counterparts and can develop affective commitment to their organizations regardless of their employment status.

H2: Perception of a) recruitment and selection b) training and development c) performance management d) compensation and salary practices mediates the relationship between contract type and affective organizational commitment.

## Method

***Participants and Procedure*** The data was collected from seasonal and permanent employees who are working in five stars hotels of Mugla Region in Turkey. In order that Mugla Region is one of the most popular summer destinations in Turkey, the number of tourist is considerable in summer times. Thus, hotels employ increasingly seasonal workers. According to figures from Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, there are 42 five-star hotels in this region. A total of 870 surveys were distributed to seasonal and permanent employees. 237 seasonal and 112 permanent employees responded for a response rate of 40 % from 26 five-star hotels. Males comprised 72 % of the sample. The average age of participants was 29.52 years old (SD=7.24) ranging from 18 to 60 years and an organizational tenure of 4.83 years (SD=4.40) ranging from 1 to 23 years. 21.2% of the participants had a bachelors degree, 18, 9 % had college education, 41, 3% were high school graduates, and 18, 6% were primary school graduates.

## Measures

***Perceptions of HRM Practices*** A 26- item instrument was developed specially for this study to elicit employee perception towards a variety of HRM practices. On the basis of literature review the following scales were adopted with some adjustments “Employees’ Overall Perception of HRM Effectiveness” (Chang, 2005), “Relating Career Stages Attitudes towards HR Practices and Commitment” (Conway, 2004), “HRM Practice and Employee Attitudes: Different Measures-Different Results” (Edgar and Geare, 2005). Responses were made on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A description of the items in each scale is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Description of Scales Used to Measure Perception towards HRM Practices**

HRM Practices	Scale Definition	Number of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Recruitment-Selection	Recruitment and selection process are fair and planned.	4	0,846
Training-Development	Training opportunities are based on training needs of employees and provided organizational support	7	0,878
Performance Management	There is regular feedback on performance and guidance how performance can be improved	6	0,880
Compensation- Rewards	Compensation system is fair and adequately reflect contribution and ensure internal-external equity	6	0,757

**Affective Commitment** Affective commitment was measured using the 6-item scales developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith. (Meyer et. al., 1993) Responses were made on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Sample items of these scales are "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization". The Cronbach alpha for this scale in the present study was .923.

**Employment Type** One categorical dummy variable was created including seasonal work (1) and permanent employees (0) as the comparison group (Aiken and West, 1991).

## Results

**Validity Test of Perception of HRM Practices Scale** The HRM practices scale represented a crucial measure in the research. Initially all 26 items were entered factor analysis using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation. Exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the factor structure of the perception of HRM practices scales and select the items with high factor loadings. (KMO= 0.942) indicated that the correlation matrixes were suitable for factor analysis. Retaining all factors with (Andy filed s.640) eigenvalues should be greater than 1 and all loadings less than 0, 3 be suppressed. These assumptions resulted in the deletion of

questions 21, 22, 23 that factor loadings less than 0, 3. According to the results, four factors' eigenvalues were greater than one for the scale. The items clearly loaded on four separate factors (recruitment-selection, training- development, performance management, and compensation-salary) which explained 63,882 % of total variance.

Consequently, the exploratory factor analyses demonstrate that the scale performed as expected and yielded satisfactory results

***Test of Hypotheses*** The hypothesized relationships were tested using correlations, independent t tests, multiple regression analyses and mediation test. Prior to analyses, the data was checked for the outlier that differs from the main trend of the data. Based on these results, seven participants' data were removed from the study, due to the extreme scores – those scores that were more than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations from the norm. (Hair et al, 1998) Also, checks of the theoretical assumptions underlying regression analysis were undertaken, including normality, linearity, and homoskedasticity. These assumptions were met. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of study variables are presented in Table 2. First, the correlations revealed that perception of HRM practices (recruitment-selection, training-development, performance management, compensation- salary) were positively related to affective commitment.



**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Study Variables**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-Gender	-	-	-					
2-Age	29,51	7,14	-0,147**	-				
3-Organizational Tenure	52,35	57,82	-0,085	0,553**	-			
4-Type of Contract	-	-	-0,143**	0,422**	-0,195**	-		
5-Recruitment-Selection	3,98	1,28	0,072	0,081	-0,031	-0,333*	-	
6-Training-Development	4,17	1,20	0,053	-0,026	0,027	-0,270*	0,503**	-
7-Performance Management	3,67	1,35	0,078	-0,037	-0,046	-0,022	0,572**	0,726**
8-Compensation-Salary	3,43	1,59	0,055	0,076	-0,028	-0,158	0,361**	0,513**
9-Affective Commitment	4,18	1,34	-0,011	0,076	0,136	-0,235**	0,477**	0,584**

Variable	7	8	9
1-Gender			
2-Age			
3-Organizational Tenure			
4-Type of Contract			
5-Recruitment-Selection			
6-Training-Development			
7-Performance Management	-		
8-Compensation-Salary	0,557	-	
9-Affective Commitment	0,556**	0,360**	-

N=349 \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, Gender; 0=Male, 1=Female, 0=Permanent, 1=Seasonal

The mean scores for affective commitment according to type of contract are presented in Table 3. The independent t test revealed significant differences with respect to affective commitment,  $F(1,347) = 1,768$ ,  $p < 0,05$ . An examination of mean scores shows that permanent employees have higher level of affective commitment when compared to seasonal employees. Therefore Hypotheses 1 was supported.

**Table 3: Affective Commitment and Type of Contract**

	Mean (SD)		F
	Permanent (n=112)	Seasonal (n=237)	
Affective Comm.	4,64	3,96	1,768**

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001,

Hypothesis 2 that indicates a mediation of perception of HRM practices on the relationship between contract type and affective organizational commitment was tested using Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step procedure. Separate hierarchical regression analyses were conducted for each HRM practices. Training-development, recruitment-selection practices demonstrate partial mediating effect between contract type and affective organizational commitment.

The first condition stated by Baron and Kenny (1986) is that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the mediator. It was found a significant negative relationship between contract type and perception of training-development practices ( $B = -.517, p < .01$ ). The second condition proposes that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the outcome variable. The results demonstrated that contract type was negatively related to affective organizational commitment ( $B = -.736, p < .01$ ). Finally, the third condition states that the mediator is a significant predictor of the outcome variable, while controlling for the independent variable. As seen in the Table 4, when it was regressed affective organizational commitment on both contract type and training-development practices simultaneously, the effect of contract type continued to be significant ( $B = -.697, p < .01$ ), accepting H2b.

**Table 4: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Mediation by Training- Development Practices Between Type of Contract and Affective Organizational Commitment**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Training- Development</i>	<i>Affective Org. Commitment</i>
<i>Step 1</i>		
<i>Control Variables</i>		
<i>Gender</i>	.135	.002
<i>Age</i>	-.009	.000
<i>Organizational Tenure</i>	.001	.003
$\Delta R^2$	.020**	.019
<i>Step 2</i>		
<i>Direct Effect</i>		
<i>Contract Type</i>	-.517**	-.736**
$\Delta R^2$	.050**	.053**
<i>Step 3</i>		
<i>Mediation Effect</i>		
<i>Contract Type</i>		-.697**
<i>Training-Development</i>		.648***
$\Delta R^2$		.333***

$N=349$  \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ,

As seen in Table 5, it was found a significant negative relationship between contract type and perception of recruitment-selection practices ( $B = -.288, p < .01$ ). The second condition proposes that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the outcome variable. The results demonstrated that contract type was negatively related to affective organizational commitment ( $B = -.736, p < .01$ ). Finally, the third condition states that the mediator is a significant predictor of the outcome variable, while controlling for the independent variable. When we regressed affective organizational commitment on both contract type and recruitment-selection practices simultaneously, the effect of contract type continued to be significant ( $B = -.592, p < .01$ ), accepting H2a.

**Table 5: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Mediation by Recruitment-Selection Practices Between Type of Contract and Affective Organizational Commitment**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Recruitment-Selection</i>	<i>Affective Org. Commitment</i>
<i>Step 1</i>		
<i>Control Variables</i>		
<i>Gender</i>	.242	.002
<i>Age</i>	.028	.000
<i>Organizational Tenure</i>	-.002	.003
$\Delta R^2$	.022	.019
<i>Step 2</i>		
<i>Direct Effect</i>		
<i>Contract Type</i>	-.288**	-.736**
$\Delta R^2$	.045**	.053**
<i>Step 3</i>		
<i>Mediation Effect</i>		
<i>Contract Type</i>		-.592**
<i>Recruitment-Selection</i>		.499***
$\Delta R^2$		.218***

$N = 349$  \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ,

## Discussion

This study aims to compare affective commitment of seasonal and permanent employees. In line with the idea of Atkinson's flexible firm, periphery labor that means seasonal employees in this research is considered as earn less, get fewer additional benefits, and receive less training on the job compared to core labor (De Witte and Naswall, 2003). They have also higher levels of turnover intension,

absenteeism, and counterproductive behaviors. It's therefore hypothesized that seasonal employees have lower levels affective commitment than permanent employees. It was found that seasonal employees are less committed affectively to their organizations in this study. This result can be explained by short duration of their employment contract. They do not have enough time to be familiar with their organization, to internalize this organization's values and goals or demonstrate a strong desire to stay in that organization.

This study investigated the effects of HRM functions on affective commitment of seasonal and permanent employees. Training-development practices were found to be the best predictors of affective commitment for permanent and seasonal employees. Employees who receive training perceive that the organization values them as individuals and this leads to strong affective commitment. (Meyer and Allen, 1997)

.Permanent and seasonal employees' perceptions of performance management and compensation-rewards practices in their organizations have no statistically significant relationship with affective commitment. These findings of this study were inconsistent with those of previous research (e.g., Iverson et. al., 1992; Maxwell and Steele, 2003; Taylor, 1995; Natham et al., 1991). This result between performance management, compensation-rewards practices and affective commitment can be due to the organizations where data were gathered. Those organizations are seasonally opened; most of the employees are seasonal and leave their organizations after the season is over. Those circumstances make the performance management system informal. It seems reasonable that the performance management system does not make any contributions to affective commitment. Participants in this research are mostly blue collar employees and they work in the same region which leads to no difference in the compensation-reward systems of the organizations. Thus, it can be said that the compensation-reward system does not have any relation to affective commitment.

Seasonal employees' perception of recruitment-selection practices in their organizations was also found to contribute to the prediction of affective commitment. Recruitment and selection process is the most important HRM practices for achieving affective commitment (Mc gunnigle and Jameson, 2000). The use of realistic job previews, pre-entry factors and post entry factors have significant impacts on the affective commitment in the first six months after job entry (Iles et al., 1990). Seasonal employees are recruited especially from 3 months to six months. Thus, their affective commitment is affected by how hard the

organization works to make their recruitment and selection process congruent with reality through the kinds of information it provides.

According to the type of contract, the level of affective commitment of permanent and seasonal employees has differences. This is because of the fact that seasonal employees are not provided a range of benefits (e.g. health insurance, medical pensions) or good working conditions (e.g. job safety, training opportunities). They are hired for a specific period of time. When the season is over, their contracts end. These could result in lower emotional attachment to the organization. (Gallagher and Parks, 2001) Thus, the type of contract has a link to affective commitment.

Finally, this study examined the mediating effect of human resource practices on the relation between type of contract and affective organizational commitment. Training-development and recruitment-selection practices partially mediate the effect of the type of contract on affective commitment. Training development practices show that organizations give value to their employees and care for them regardless of their contract type. Organizations that are to fair with applicants during recruitment and selection procedures might be considered as more trustworthy and supportive which is crucial for affective commitment.

Among the limitations of this research are that all variables were examined using self report measures. This raises the possibility that relationships found among the variables investigated reflect shared response bias. Second, it cannot draw any conclusions about the direction of causality. Third, employees in five star hotels were studied and the result may not be generalized for other segments of the hospitality sector. Fourth, this study was completed in Mugla, Turkey; the results may be carefully interpreted and applied to other international hospitality sectors. Future research could benefit from using moderating effects such as perceived organizational, supervisor support etc.

**Conclusion** An important contribution of this study is that the affective commitments of seasonal employees that are rarely studied are affected by perception of HRM practices. Training-development and recruitment-selection practices have the potential to affect the level of affective commitment of seasonal employees. This kind of research can be helpful in HR policy formulation for the hospitality sector to identify the best HRM practices which are contributive towards increasing the level of seasonal employees' affective commitment.

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