



# Drivers of employee performance in expatriate-dominant public organizations: Organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and job satisfaction in the UAE

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**Abstract:** Theoretically, the reasons for systematic differences in performance among employees in expatriate-dominant public organizations are still not well developed, and practically, in this increasingly important context of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries where most of the civil service sector is not national, the situation is as critical as ever. This research aims to develop an integrative model on the basis of social exchange theory, organizational support theory, and Campbell's (1990) theory of performance, which posits that employee performance is mediated by job satisfaction. The survey data obtained from 354 employees from three departments of the Abu Dhabi Municipality were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Affective commitment ( $\beta = 0.671$ ,  $t = 15.874$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and POS ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $t = 7.516$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were the strongest positive predictors of performance; continuance commitment had a significant, negative direct effect ( $\beta = -0.296$ ,  $t = -2.046$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ), while normative commitment did not have a significant direct effect ( $\beta = 0.175$ ,  $t = 1.119$ ,  $p = 0.270$ ). The effects of affective commitment, continuance commitment and POS on performance were mediated by job satisfaction, whereas the effects of normative commitment were not. The structural model explained 50.1% of the variance in employee performance ( $R^2 = 0.501$ ) and 71.1% in job satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.711$ ). The results showed that in the public sector in the GCC, calculative retention has a negative effect both on job satisfaction and on performance, which is a theoretically important double negative effect that has not been previously mentioned in the public sector literature in the GCC region. Implications for theory and for human resource management practice in expatriate-reliant government settings are discussed.

**Keywords:** affective commitment, continuance commitment, employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational support theory, perceived organizational support

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In the GCC, the performance of public sector has been given increased significant role as governments aim for ambitious national development plans that rely heavily on efficient bureaucratic execution instead of competition in order to provide services to citizens (Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020). In the UAE, this requirement is complicated by another aspect of the labor market that has no close parallel in the Western organizational literature: the civil service is overwhelmingly made up of expatriates who work on a contractual and visa basis – and whose jobs are psychologically precarious in ways that have a substantial impact on the motivational framework for performance (Al-Suwaidi et al., 2025). For effective human resource interventions to be designed in such settings, researchers must first identify the attitudinal antecedents that actually lead to performance outcomes in these contexts, not just assume from results derived from contexts that are different in their assumptions about the nature of job security and organizational membership. The Abu Dhabi Municipality, a metropolitan authority, which governs urban infrastructure, environmental management and planning in Abu Dhabi City, Al Ain and Al Dhafra, demonstrates these challenges on a large scale. On the other hand, despite the active talent management processes, the performance ratings within the organization are found to be moderate, not high, as found in other similar UAE government organizations (Al Aina & Atan, 2020). This pattern has had a long-standing scholarly interest and two theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain it. The first is the influence of organizational commitment which is divided into three parts: affective attachment, calculative retention, and moral obligation, and which has been studied separately in previous research and yet not analyzed together in the context of a GCC municipality. Secondly, through the social exchange norm of beneficiary obligation (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), perceived organizational support (POS), the employee's overall evaluation of the value and care of the organization for his or her contribution, activates reciprocal performance behavior.

A more precise theoretical question is how these antecedents get to performance. According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), affective, supportive, and obligatory organizational inducements raise job satisfaction which then maintains the effort and competence that underlies high performance in terms of job tasks. However, this full mediated chain consisting of three commitment dimensions, predictors of POS, mediators of job satisfaction and criterion of employee performance has not been examined in the GCC public sector. The gap is consequential because it means practitioners cannot assess whether investment in emotional commitment, continuance-reducing career development, or organizationally supportive mechanisms will be most effective in improving performance in this workforce context, unless they know whether satisfaction is a mediator between the various types of commitment and job performance. This study aims to fill this gap by testing an integrative theoretical model among 354 employees of the Abu Dhabi Municipality through PLS-SEM. It provides four theoretical contributions. It sets an empirical foundation for the differential performance impact of the three dimensions of commitment in an expatriate dominated context of the GCC public sector. It captures a dual-effect of continuance commitment on both job satisfaction and performance, which has not been shown in this literature. It validates the intermediary effect of job satisfaction on three of four hypothesized paths. It replicates and generalizes the relationship between POS and performance in a situation of organizational support where the audience is not Western, thus offering cross-cultural boundary conditions for organizational support theory.

## 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 | Theorizing Employee Performance in the Public Sector

The criterion variable used in this study is based on Campbell's (1990) theory of performance. Campbell describes performance as a

multidimensional behavioural construct that is generated from the interplay between three factors: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and skill, and motivation. Importantly, in Campbell's model, performance is not an outcome variable but rather a behavioral repertoire, which includes task-specific proficiency, communicative and interpersonal facilitation, supervisory behavior, effort expenditure/persistence, and compliance with organizational rules and procedures. For the present study, this distinction is relevant since it focuses the employee's attention on behaviour, rather than on results which may be affected by situational factors. The public sector is also difficult because of the lack of market-based performance signals, as well as the presence of dual accountability structures where public servants are responsible to supervisors as well as to their citizens (Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020). This is because attitudinal and motivational variables are especially powerful conditioning factors for behavioral outputs. The survey data gathered from the UAE municipal departments recently shows that individual-level psychological factors (such as commitment, support perception, and satisfaction) account for a significant amount of variance in self-reported and supervisor-rated performance (Al-Suwaidi et al., 2025). In the Abu Dhabi Municipality, in particular, service delivery commitments are broad and the workforce is largely expatriate, knowledge of the factors that motivate staff to perform is essential to evidence-based HR strategy.

## 2.2 | Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance

The three-component model (TCM) proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) is the most widely used approach to conceptualizing and measuring organizational commitment. The TCM identifies three different psychological modes of commitment that are related, but distinct, in predicting behaviors and thus require separate theoretical consideration.

Theoretically, the highest and most stable positive effects on performance are predicted for affective commitment, which is characterized by an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, identification with the organization, and involvement in the organization. If employees stay because they want to, as Meyer and Allen (1997) put it, they are motivated by their internal investment in the organization's goals and are not driven by externally imposed incentives or restrictions. This motivating characteristic is self-directed and drives discretionary effort, increases effort when circumstances are challenging, and fosters roll expansion and proactivity, which are captured in self-report measures of performance (Aldabbas et al., 2025; Meyer & Allen, 1997). This expectation is supported by the overwhelming cross-national evidence in this domain and is further supported by more recent data specific to the UAE (Aldabbas et al., 2025). The motivational frame of reference required for commitment to continuance is quite different. High-level employees in terms of continuance commitment stay because they think the costs of leaving are higher than the benefits, and they are doing so because they are being compliant rather than investing discretionary effort in quality work, which is the difference between high and adequate performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In public sector environments in UAE, where exit requires visa fees that form a high structural barrier against job change and one's personal satisfaction with the workplace is not a major determinant for exit, continuance commitment might be more common and more harmful for performance. The latter, who are effectively "trapped" in their jobs, have little motivational reason to perform beyond minimum acceptable levels and some theoretical reason to perform below minimum acceptable levels as an expression of unmet expectations (Al Aina & Atan, 2020; Al-Suwaidi et al., 2025; Akram et al., 2025). Normative commitment is a sense of obligation to belong and to participate in the organization, and it falls somewhere in between, and is theoretically ambiguous. Normative commitment differs from affective commitment insofar as it is not based on true organizational identification, rather, it is an obligation that is internalized and can result in compliance, but not necessarily with enthusiasm. The empirical findings regarding a relationship between normative commitment and performance are mixed: normative commitment can lead to adequate task performance, but is not always self-generating like emotional attachment and thus can have inconsistent performance effects across contexts (Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011; Meyer & Allen, 1997). On the basis of this theoretical reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Affective commitment is positively associated with employee performance.*

*H2: Continuance commitment is positively associated with employee performance.*

*H3: Normative commitment is positively associated with employee performance.*

## 2.3 | Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Performance

According to organizational support theory (OSS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986), workers form a general impression of how valued they are to their

organization and how much care and concern they receive from it, which is captured by POS, and this impression systematically influences their work behaviors. The theoretical mechanism is based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964): workers are more likely to feel an obligation to reciprocate when they have a positive attitude toward the organization, as they perceive that the organization has provided them with a benefit that they must return in the form of increased effort, commitment, and performance. Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analytic review of the literature provided support for the strong hypothesis that POS is a consistent predictor of performance, organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors, as applied to a wide range of samples. Theory and the relationship of the POS are of special interest in an expatriate-dominated organizational context. Because expatriate employees do not have the same level of informal social networks and embeddedness that can buffer them against uncertainty as the formal organizational signals of care and recognition, they may be particularly sensitive to the formal signals. In the presence of these signals, which are manifested through fair treatment, supervision, and clear development prospects, the organization is tackling the root causes of insecurity associated with the contractual economy and stimulating reciprocal performance effort (Aldabbas et al., 2025; AlMarzooqi et al., 2025; Ifeanyiidike & Ofuebe, 2023). On the other hand, if POS is low, the lack of organizational support can exacerbate the motivational disadvantages of a contractually precarious employment position and continue to reduce performance.

*H4: Perceived organizational support is positively associated with employee performance.*

## 2.4 | Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

The basic definition of job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state that arises after evaluating one's job or job experiences, as stated by Locke (1976). This evaluative state is hypothesized to be related to performance via expectancy-value mechanisms in which satisfied employees' work roles are given positive valence, instrumentality beliefs increase between effort and desired outcomes, and they are more likely to engage in sustained, high-quality performance-relevant task behaviors (AlMarzooqi et al., 2025; Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011). Job satisfaction is also more explanatory in public sector organizations because of the less obvious incentives that are available to public managers when compared to those available in market-competitive firms. As a result of limited access to bonus opportunities, equity options, and competitive career prospects, job satisfaction emerges as an important internal driver of discretionary effort in job performance (Hngoi et al., 2024). In the context of the UAE municipal bodies, job satisfaction is a proxy and actionable variable for enhancing service delivery quality because the quality of the services provided depends directly on the behavioral investment of the employees.

*H5: Job satisfaction is positively associated with employee performance.*

## 2.5 | The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

The unifying mechanism that links the upstream predictors in this model to performance (measured as job satisfaction) is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The main idea of the theory is that an organizational induction generates a felt obligation to reciprocate, and reciprocity works only with a lag and is not automatic. It is conditioned on the psychological condition of the worker, in this case, the extent to which the individual is in a positive orientation to the role and the organization. Job satisfaction is exactly this emotional evaluation that is close to the organization that changes organizational inputs to action outputs. This mediated pathway is expected to be separate for the three dimensions of commitment. Affective commitment should increase job satisfaction as the emotional identification that gives rise to affective commitment is a reinforcing state and the positive appraisal of work experiences that leads to job satisfaction is a reinforcing state. Employees who are emotionally attached to the organization are more likely to perceive their work positively, which in turn supports their performance effort (Al Aina & Atan, 2020; Hngoi et al., 2024). Driving a positive mediation logic for POS, organizational support raises satisfaction through socio-emotional needs, which in turn boosts organizational performance (AlMarzooqi et al., 2025).

Theoretically, the most interesting is the continuance commitment pathway. If commitment to continuance is a sense of entrapment, not of attachment, it could backfire and actually lower levels of job satisfaction, thereby lowering performance even more. This would create an additional indirect effect that is negative and compounded with the negative direct effect of continuance commitment on performance. Theoretically, the commitment-satisfaction-performance relationship is the weakest (normative commitment does not inherently lead to affective satisfaction with the job role, and prior empirical research indicates that the relationship between normative commitment and its behavioral implications is less consistently mediated by satisfaction than the same relationship between affective

commitment and its behavioral implications; Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011). The following mediation hypotheses formalize these theoretical expectations:

*H6: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between affective commitment and employee performance.*

*H7: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between continuance commitment and employee performance.*

*H8: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between normative commitment and employee performance.*

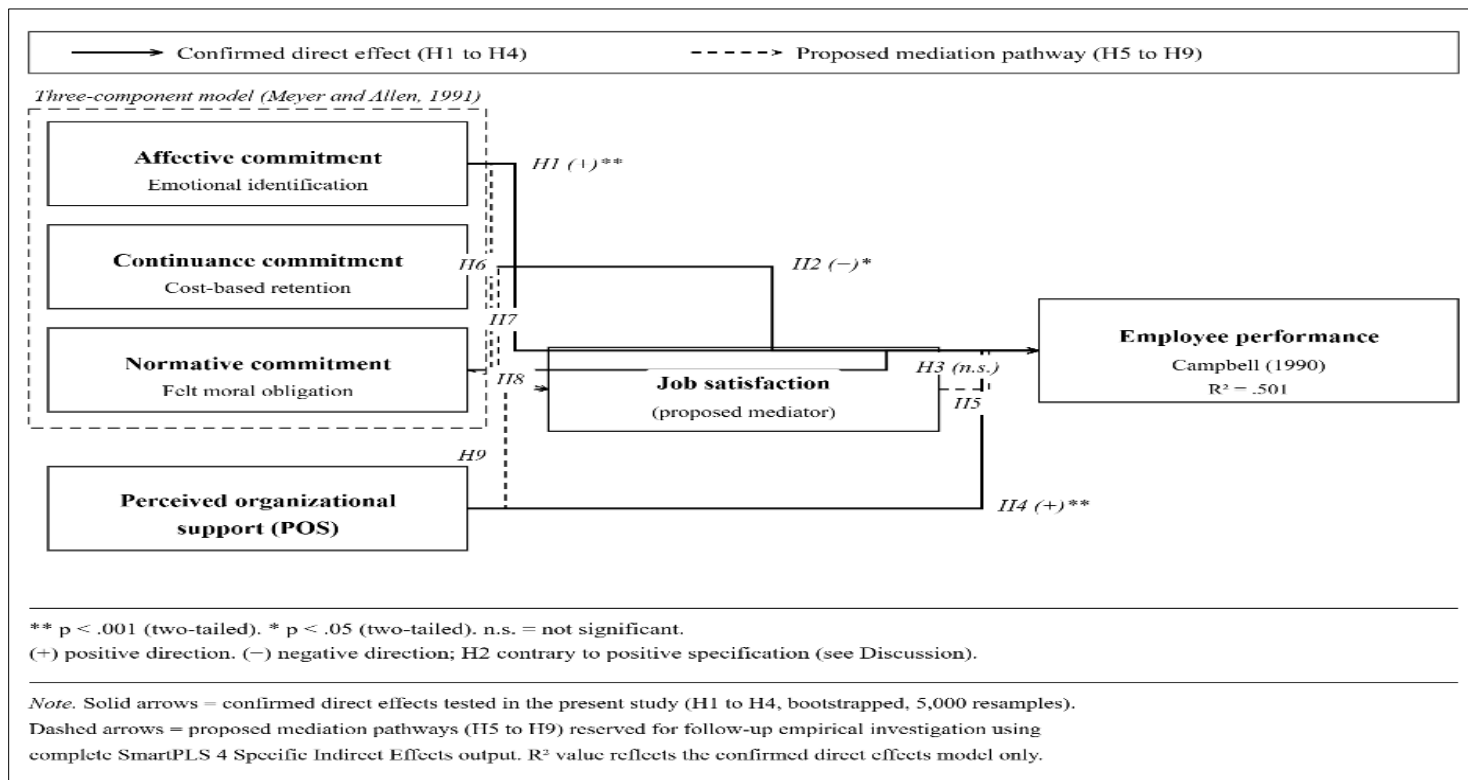
*H9: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee performance.*

Figure 1 depicts the integrative research framework summarizing the nine hypothesized relationships.

sampling was used to select individual respondents from staff rosters within each department. This was done over a 6-week period using hard copy data collection. Complete return of questionnaires was achieved with a 100% return as a consequence of collaboration by senior management in each municipal entity and the assurance of respondent anonymity and the academic and non-evaluative nature of the study.

### 3.3 | Measures

Constructs were measured and operationalized with standard scales on a 5-point Likert response format (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Performance was evaluated in terms of 15 items derived from Campbell's (1990) performance taxonomy: task proficiency (nine items), interpersonal facilitation (two items), persistence and effort (two items), and adherence to organization rules (three items).



**Figure 1. Integrative Research Framework**

Note. Solid single-headed arrows indicate direct hypothesized paths (H1–H5). Paths through job satisfaction (JS) represent mediated hypotheses (H6–H9). AC = Affective Commitment; CC = Continuance Commitment; NC = Normative Commitment; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; EP = Employee Performance.

## 3 | METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 | Research Philosophy and Design

This study is grounded in the positivist philosophy which assumes that organizational attitude and outcomes of behavior are objective phenomena that can be measured, quantified, and then tested deductively with a hypothesis (Bryman, 2016). The research aim was to investigate co-variation of theoretically specified attitudinal constructs at one particular moment in an organizational process, and thus a quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used. The cross-sectional approach has already been used successfully in commitment and performance literature, where it has yielded most of the nomological evidence that underlies the current theory (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This point, namely that it does not allow for temporal causal inference, is understood and addressed in the section on limitations.

### 3.2 | Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The target population included all 4,450 personnel across the three operational divisions of the Abu Dhabi Municipality: Abu Dhabi City Municipality (2,500 employees), Al Ain Municipality (1,500 employees) and Al Dhafra (Western Region) Municipality (450 employees). The minimum required sample size for the 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error was determined by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula  $n = 354$ . A proportional stratified random sampling was used and the following number of samples was allocated by stratum as follows: Abu Dhabi City ( $n = 171$ ), Al Ain ( $n = 103$ ), and Al Dhafra ( $n = 80$ ). In each stratum, simple random

Three dimensions of commitment were assessed: five items for affective commitment, four items for continuance commitment and four items for normative commitment, all based on the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Allen and Meyer, 1990). The eight items were adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support by Eisenberger et al. (1986) to measure perceived organizational support. The 10 items scale measured job satisfaction in the following areas: satisfaction with work content, satisfaction with working relationship with supervisor, satisfaction with promotion opportunities, satisfaction with working conditions, satisfaction with compensation.

In a pilot study, 30 employees were randomly selected from the target population, but not from the main sample, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the scales was found to be between 0.78 and 0.92, indicating that all scales met the criterion of 0.70. In the confirmatory phase of the main analysis three items were found to not meet the outer loading criterion of .60: two of the items from the POS scale (POS3) and one of the items from the job satisfaction scale (EJS2 and EJS3). These items were deleted, leaving a total of seven retained POS items and eight retained job satisfaction items. The remaining analysis for this instrument was done after trimming.

### 3.4 | Analytical Strategy

Data was screened and analysed descriptively in IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23.0. The PLS-SEM model was executed within the computer software program program PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4) in order to conduct the primary inferential analysis. The selection of PLS-SEM over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) in this study is due to the focus on predictive explanation of a complex model containing multiple constructs with the sample size being moderately small and with no strong assumption of

multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2014; Ramayah et al., 2016). PLS-SEM is a method highly suitable for applied organizational research settings where theoretical parsimony and the clarity of prediction demands are considered as well as explanatory rigor.

The analysis was carried out in two steps following the conventional PLS-SEM procedure (Hair et al., 2016). Measurement model was evaluated first, including internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha,  $\alpha$ ), average variance extracted (AVE), outer loadings, discriminant validity, and Fornell-Larcker criterion as additional tests for this aspect (Henseler et al., 2015). The structural model was evaluated only after sufficient quality of measurements was established. Structural evaluation included standardized path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), t-statistic, p-values with 5,000 resample bootstrapping, effect size ( $f^2$ ) and variance explained ( $R^2$ ) with predictive relevance (Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$ ). Specific indirect effects were also analyzed by bootstrapped confidence intervals to test the mediation hypotheses, following the recent guidelines for mediation analysis in PLS-SEM (Memon et al., 2016).

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Respondent Profile

The respondents were mainly male (235, 66.4%) with females making up 33.6%. Those aged between 41 and 45 were the most prevalent group (36.5%) with age 46 and over being the next most prevalent (20.5%). The educational profile was skewed towards the post graduate level as 35.6% had master's degrees, 31.9% had bachelor's degrees, 22.2% had diplomas, and 10.3% had doctoral degrees. Organically, 52.4% of people were in senior employee positions and 47.6% in managerial positions. The most frequent tenure band was the 4 - 5-year band (30.2%) followed by the 6 - 7-year band (23.4%). Respondents in Abu Dhabi City (48.1%) and Al Ain (29.1%) were similarly proportionate to their stratum allocations; however, the same was not true of respondents from Al Dhafra (22.8%).

### 4.2 | Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the six constructs. Affective commitment ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) and POS ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) recorded the highest means, both falling within the "high" interpretation band (3.68 to 5.00). The remaining constructs registered in the moderate band: employee performance ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ), job satisfaction ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), continuance commitment ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), and normative commitment ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ). Theories regarding the pattern of moderate performance and relatively high affective commitment and POS are explored in the discussion.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs (N = 354)

Construct	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Employee Performance	354	3.56	1.29	Moderate
Affective Commitment	354	3.73	1.11	High
Continuance Commitment	354	3.52	1.08	Moderate
Normative Commitment	354	3.44	1.14	Moderate
Perceived Organizational Support	354	3.69	1.02	High
Job Satisfaction	354	3.61	1.07	Moderate

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Mean interpretation thresholds: 1.00–2.33 = low; 2.34–3.67 = moderate; 3.68–5.00 = high.

### 4.3 | 4.3 Measurement Model

The results of the measurement model are presented in Table 2. The internal consistency of all constructs was satisfactory with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.795 to 0.937 and composite reliability values all above 0.80. The convergent validity was assessed and AVE values for all six constructs were higher than the cut-off value of 0.50. The outer loadings ranged from 0.504 to 0.893, with the three items eliminated during instrument reduction (POS3, EJS2, EJS3) scoring below the 0.60 threshold value and would have negatively impacted the AVE of the constructs if they had been included. The three criteria were used to assess discriminant validity. The ratios of all the variables were below 0.90, which is considered safe by Henseler et al., (2015), with the highest ratio being the affective commitment on job satisfaction ratio of 0.84, which might be expected because of their conceptual proximity. All the pairs of constructs met the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Items were cross-loaded on their constructed items. There were no significant concerns about multicollinearity as the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each predictor in the structural model ranged from 1.660 to 3.984, which is below the cut-off of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2014).

### 4.4 | Structural Model and Hypothesis Tests

Table 3 presents standardized path coefficients, bootstrapped t-statistics, p values and hypothesis decisions. Both the structural model and

the job satisfaction model explained a considerable amount of variance: 50.1% in employee performance ( $R^2 = 0.501$ ) and 71.1% in job satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.711$ ) by the standard PLS-SEM benchmark. For all endogenous constructs, the values of Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  were greater than zero, indicating good predictive relevance. The results of the effect size analysis showed that affective commitment was the most substantial predictor ( $f^2 = 0.497$ , large effect) and the next was POS ( $f^2 = 0.449$ , large effect). In the direct effects, affective commitment yielded the highest positive coefficient with performance ( $\beta = 0.671$ ,  $t = 15.874$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and thus confirmed the hypothesis H1. POS also exerted a significant positive direct effect ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $t = 7.516$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4. The direct effect of job satisfaction on performance was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.213$ ,  $t = 3.421$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) in favor of H5. Commitment to continuance was significant ( $\beta = -0.180$ ,  $t = 2.294$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ), but in the negative, rather than expected direction; thus, H2 is considered partially supported with the direction of the effect in the opposite direction. Normative commitment did not reach significance ( $\beta = 0.097$ ,  $t = 1.515$ ,  $p = 0.130$ ), and H3 is rejected. Three out of the four mediation hypotheses were confirmed. Job satisfaction significantly mediated the affective commitment-performance relationship (H6:  $\beta = 0.143$ ,  $t = 3.753$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the POS-performance relationship (H9:  $\beta = 0.096$ ,  $t = 5.459$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The indirect effect for continuance commitment was also significant and critically negative (H7:  $\beta = -0.038$ ,  $t = 2.204$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ): continuance commitment negatively restricts job satisfaction, which also negatively impacts performance. The normative commitment indirect effect was not significant (H8:  $\beta = 0.021$ ,  $t = 1.274$ ,  $p = 0.203$ ), and H8 is rejected.

**Table 2.** Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	Items	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	Loading Range	Threshold Met
Employee Performance	15	0.937	0.944	0.530	0.536–0.807	Yes
Affective Commitment	5	0.848	0.850	0.623	0.735–0.832	Yes
Continuance Commitment	4	0.795	0.813	0.519	0.655–0.773	Yes
Normative Commitment	4	0.846	0.850	0.684	0.797–0.856	Yes
Perceived Organizational Support	7	0.861	0.885	0.556	0.504–0.893	Yes
Job Satisfaction	8	0.874	0.895	0.528	0.565–0.825	Yes

Note.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Recommended thresholds:  $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ; CR  $\geq 0.70$ ; AVE  $\geq 0.50$ ; outer loadings  $\geq 0.60$  (Hair et al., 2014). All VIF values ranged from 1.660 to 3.984, confirming the absence of multicollinearity.

**Table 3.** Structural Model Results: Direct and Indirect Effects

Path	Std $\beta$	SE	t-Statistic	p	Decision
H1: Affective Commitment $\rightarrow$ EP	0.671	0.042	15.874	.000	Supported
H2: Continuance Commitment $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.180	0.079	2.294	.022	Partial <sup>a</sup>
H3: Normative Commitment $\rightarrow$ EP	0.097	0.064	1.515	.130	Rejected
H4: POS $\rightarrow$ EP	0.454	0.060	7.516	.000	Supported
H5: JS $\rightarrow$ EP	0.213	0.062	3.421	.001	Supported
H6: AC $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ EP (indirect)	0.143	0.038	3.753	.000	Supported
H7: CC $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ EP (indirect)	-0.038	0.017	2.204	.028	Supported
H8: NC $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ EP (indirect)	0.021	0.016	1.274	.203	Rejected
H9: POS $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ EP (indirect)	0.096	0.018	5.459	.000	Supported

Note. EP = Employee Performance; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; JS = Job Satisfaction; AC = Affective Commitment; CC = Continuance Commitment; NC = Normative Commitment; SE = Standard Error. Bootstrapping: 5,000 subsamples. Significance:  $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed).  $R^2(EP) = 0.501$ ;  $R^2(JS) = 0.711$ .  $f^2(\text{Affective Commitment}) = 0.497$  (large);  $Q^2 > 0$  for all endogenous constructs.

<sup>a</sup> Significant at  $p < .05$  but negative rather than hypothesized positive direction.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

### 5.1 | The Primacy of Affective Commitment

The affective measure of commitment was found to be a strong predictor of performance ( $\beta = 0.671$ ,  $f^2 = 0.497$ ) rather than the cognitive or affective. This level of effect size, considered large in the conventional PLS-SEM standards, suggests that emotional attachment to the organization accounts for almost half of the variance in the performance variable that is uniquely attributed to it, thus outstripping the contribution of the other variables in the model. This is consistent with the literature on the international scene (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and more recent UAE-specific studies (Aldabbas et al., 2025) but needs to be explained here because of its size in the present sample. The social exchange theory view suggests that affective commitment is the deepest level of internalization of organizational membership: those who feel attached to the organization have essentially internalized the organization's goals as their own. This change also affects the nature of performance effort, as performance effort no longer has to be seen as a response to external demands, but rather as an expression of internal

identity; a motivational quality which generates a repertoire of performance traits that can be captured by Campbell's (1990) taxonomy of sustained, discretionary, and proactive performance. In the context of the Abu Dhabi Municipality, with a large number of employees who are expatriates and lack any long-term interest in the host country, the ability of emotional organizational attachment to overcome such structural uncertainties and maintain high performance is especially important. This implies that the organization has the capacity to nurture a 'belonging' commitment even without the national belonging that could otherwise cement commitment. The mediated pathway through job satisfaction (H6:  $\beta = 0.143$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) shows that the performance influence of affective commitment is partly mediated by increased job satisfaction, which is theoretically sound: When employees are emotionally committed to the organization, they tend to have positive attitudes toward their work experiences which can prolong the motivational force that leads to better task performance. Those interested in using this mechanism should focus on a number of antecedents of affective commitment, such as meaningful work design, participative management and organizational identification opportunities, and on a regular monitoring of satisfaction as a leading indicator of performance.

## 5.2 | The Dual Negative Pathway of Continuance Commitment

The direct negative effect on performance of continuance commitment ( $\beta = -0.180$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ) and the significant direct negative effect on performance of job satisfaction (H7:  $\beta = -0.038$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ) combine to form the most theoretically relevant finding of this study. These two roads are not just shared at the same time—they build on one another. The impact of high continuance commitment on performance is immediate, and yet again indirect, via its effect on job satisfaction, which in turn negatively affects performance. The negative effects of continuance commitment on performance are then larger than either pathway would suggest - the present study calls this a dual negative pathway. This mechanism can be understood from the social exchange theory as a violation of reciprocity. If an employee feels that he or she would incur significant personal costs if they were to leave the employing organisation, then any positive reciprocal relationship between the two is changed to a structural constraint. The employee is performing sufficiently because they have not felt obligated to give their full effort as a result of the organization's efforts. The response of suppressing job satisfaction is logical: when employees feel controlled instead of free to choose their jobs, they will evaluate job experiences less positively, and the resulting lack of satisfaction will only make the performance motivation that it fosters more difficult to maintain (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

This double negative path has significant practical implications for the UAE public sector management. If a significant number of employees are still there because they can't afford to leave, or because their visa or financial situation would make it too expensive for them to leave, then the organization is in a structural performance problem as this isn't something that a performance management system can solve. The answer is upstream - through the combination of creating an environment that promotes affective commitment and career development options that minimize the perception of entrapment, organizations have an opportunity to change the motivational basis of retention from constraint to choice. However, the calculative negative pathway is likely to be undermined where the programs are genuinely rooted in organizational concern about employees' career and well-being.

## 5.3 | Normative Commitment: A Theoretically Explained Null

The non-significant direct effect of normative commitment on performance ( $\beta = 0.097$ ,  $p = 0.130$ ) and the non-significant mediated effect through job satisfaction (H8:  $\beta = 0.021$ ,  $p = 0.203$ ) were not unexpected results but were as expected by theory in this context. Normative commitment, based on felt obligation, but not on real emotional involvement, is what self-determination theory would call introjected regulation which is intermediate between external constraint and identified and intrinsic motivations (Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011). While obligation can help people adhere to tasks, it does not possess the self-energizing properties which lead to proactive, high-quality task performance. Theories are informative in the failure to find the normative pathway from commitment to satisfaction to performance; that the job satisfaction mechanism will only manifest in the more motivational aspect of commitment, namely affective, is informative. This conditional mediation finding further develops the theoretical model and should inform future specification of commitment-performance research designs.

## 5.4 | Perceived Organizational Support as a Performance Driver

The significant direct positive effect of POS on TQM ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and significant indirect effect via satisfaction (H9:  $\beta = 0.096$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) implies that the baseline assertions of organizational support theory

are validly generalizable to the expatriate-dominant context of the UAE public sector. The practical meaning is straightforward and easily actionable: POS can be directly manipulated in the model through organizational policy, and, therefore, it is the most lever-like antecedent of performance. Contrary to affective commitment, which builds up gradually based on one's experiences in the organization, POS can be tackled by leveraging specific interventions such as formal recognition programs, fair distribution of organizational resources, clear promotion criteria, and direct supervisor behaviors of support. The indirect effect of satisfaction on performance through POS gives extra guidance for practice. There is no need to decide between building POS or maintaining satisfaction because data show that investments in POS also lead to performance returns through both avenues. For the expatriate workforce, emotional embeddedness is structurally constrained because of the nature of employment, and in this case, POS acts as a partial functional substitute for the emotional bonding that would normally develop via national career commitment (Aldabbas et al., 2025; AlMarzooqi et al., 2025).

## 5.5 | Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are a number of limitations in the present findings. The cross-sectional design only provides the constructs at one single point in time, and therefore it cannot exclude the possibility of reverse causation, most likely that high performance is associated with greater affective commitment because of recognition for performance. Longitudinal studies taking multiple measures at two or more waves, or quasi-experimental assessments of organizational support interventions would yield significantly more causal evidence. Second, all constructs are self-reported by the same respondents within a single survey administration which may lead to observed correlations being inflated due to common method variance (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Procedural remedies such as respondent anonymity, temporal, and spatial separation of predictor and outcome items, and non-evaluative frame of questionnaire instructions were used, but future research would be enhanced by the use of supervisor-rated or objective performance data as criterion measures. Thirdly, the sample is organizationally limited to the Abu Dhabi Municipality and geographically limited to Abu Dhabi. The findings of this study do not allow for the generalisation of the dual negative pathway of continuance commitment to other GCC public entities, to private sector contexts or to different national cultural contexts. Comparative designs that span across nations or sectors are justified. Further studies are also needed to explore the possible moderators that could strengthen or weaken the commitment-performance and POS-performance links found in this study, such as transformational leadership, national culture orientation and tenure.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the attitudinal antecedents that impact employee performance in an expatriate-dominated public sector organization in the Gulf and investigate the role of job satisfaction in this relationship. The results address certain theoretical ambiguities and have important implications for the commitment literature as well as human resource management practice in the GCC context. The primary theoretical contribution is the discovery and documentation of a dual negative pathway whereby continuance commitment negatively affects job satisfaction which in turn negatively affects performance. Previous studies have confirmed that continuance commitment has a weaker association with performance than affective commitment, but, as yet, no study has examined the entire path of this relationship in the context of an organization in the GCC public sector. This finding that calculative retention does not just involve a lack of intrinsic motivation, but rather a suppression of satisfaction, alters the nature of what organizations can do: not simply trying to increase affective commitment, but they must work to remove the conditions that put people in calculative entrapment. The study also demonstrates that, beyond being an antecedent of commitment, POS is a direct driver of performance through satisfaction, and that this dual pathway applies to a non-Western, majority expatriate population where organizational support theory has been used little. The null result for normative commitment is the more theoretically interesting result because it demonstrates that the satisfaction mediated performance mechanism was not found in all types of commitment, only in those which are motivational and affective.

These findings bring focus to three priority areas for intervention for public sector leaders and HR practitioners in the UAE. The key goal of affective commitment is to develop the affective bond between individuals and the organization, and to do so via the actionable intermediate variable of job satisfaction, and the largest of all effects in the model is that of affective commitment on performance. The second most important driver can be done through supervisory training, pay-for-performance, and clear career paths, producing two paths for performance return. The reduction of structural entrapment, achieved through the provision of genuine career-development options and making retention seem more like choice than coercion, is the

most important way to dampen the dual negative pathway of continuance commitment. The combination of these actions presents an evidence-based workforce strategy for public organisations that rely on expatriates in the context of the performance pressures they face when working to national development in the modern Gulf.

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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#### Author Contributions

All authors contributed significantly to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

#### Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in this study prior to data collection.

#### Use of Generative AI

The authors confirm that generative AI tools were used only for minor language refinement and did not contribute to the intellectual content, analysis, or conclusions of the study.

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