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Affective and Cognitive Trust in Supervisors: Impact on Faculty Commitment in Saudi Universities

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. Trust within organizations is a central determinant of employee commitment and institutional effectiveness, especially in higher education facing rapid change. While previous research has established links between trust in supervisors and organizational commitment (OC), there is a significant gap concerning the distinct effects of affective and cognitive trust on OC among faculty within the Saudi Arabian higher education context. This study was designed to address this empirical and contextual gap by examining how affective and cognitive trust in supervisors independently and jointly predict faculty organizational commitment in three major Riyadh universities. **Methodology** A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 131 faculty members, utilizing validated scales for trust (McAllister, 1995) and OC (Mowday et al., 1979). **Results** Using correlation and multiple regression analysis, the findings reveal that both trust dimensions have strong, positive associations with OC, with overall trust accounting for 84.8% of the variance in commitment. Furthermore, moderation analysis indicated that affective trust buffers the negative effects of role ambiguity, while cognitive trust mitigates the impact of role conflict on OC. These results provide novel empirical evidence for the importance of differentiating types of trust in supervisor-faculty relationships in Saudi higher education—a previously underexplored setting. **Implications for research and practice.** Implications are discussed for leadership practice and HR policy, emphasizing trust-building as a key strategy for faculty retention and institutional performance.

Introduction

In today's ultracompetitive, rapidly changing organizational landscape, it is widely understood that employees play a crucial role in influencing several performance-related

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outcomes. Considerable research has been dedicated to identifying what novel measures can improve employee behavior and performance. Psychological and personal dynamics are imbued in coworker interactions, which are also shaped by the organizational environment.

The relationship between trust and organizational commitment (OC) is a key domain of organizational behavior research. This mutually reinforcing relationship between trust and OC benefits both employees and the organization. Notably, improved performance and a lower turnover rate are among the key outcomes. Employees who identify more with their organization are much less likely to leave. Managers are increasingly realizing the need to provide more than standard wellness programs and benefits to retain key employees (Nabiyeva, 2023). The concept of trust is multifaceted and has implications for efficiency, integrity, and independence within the workplace. Some studies have shown that in a high-trust and transparent work environment, employees' viewpoints are sought out and respected in decision-making processes (e.g., (Baquero, 2023)). Where individual employees feel valued within their organization, they are likely to be more committed. Likewise, OC has three dimensions: affective commitment, the feeling of emotional attachment to the workplace; continuance attachment, which focuses on what would be sacrificed by leaving; and normative commitment, reflecting a sense of obligation to stay with the organization. Employees who perceive their work as a sort of personal investment will engage on both a personal and professional level.

Despite a growing body of literature on organizational commitment, there remains a critical gap concerning the differentiated impacts of affective and cognitive trust in supervisors on faculty commitment within Saudi higher education, especially post-pandemic. Prior studies in Saudi universities (BinBakr & Ahmed, 2015, 2018) have only examined demographic predictors of commitment such as faculty rank and gender, but paid limited attention to trust in supervisors. These studies have also largely overlooked the differentiated effects of affective and cognitive trust; and only very few studies have analyzed how trust moderates role conflict or ambiguity—two factors strongly shaping faculty experiences. This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by measuring levels of affective and cognitive trust among Saudi faculty; by testing their relationships with OC; and by assessing their moderating roles in relation to role conflict and ambiguity.

This study thus aims to uniquely investigate the differentiated effects of affective and cognitive trust in supervisors, thereby addressing an overlooked interpersonal dimension. This study addresses this gap by examining these trust dimensions and their predictive power for organizational commitment among faculty in multiple universities in Riyadh. This is the first ever study to examine the relationship between trust and OC in Saudi higher education institutions. The findings aim to measure the relationship between trust and OC and the possible impact of trust on OC, through various models and identify leadership practices that enhance faculty retention and organizational effectiveness. The study integrated these models to evaluate OC within a multidimensional framework, and emphasize the moderating role of trust in supervisors, which has received limited empirical attention in the Saudi higher education context. The study would also provide new insights into leadership practices and retention strategies in Saudi higher education institutions.

Literature Review

Trust in Organizational Context

Trust is a central construct in organizational behavior, influencing cooperation, performance, and employee well-being. It reduces the need for strict monitoring, enhances communication, and fosters innovation (Zak, 2017). In low-trust environments, by contrast, performance declines and conflicts intensify (Al Rfoa et al., 2023). Trust is thus considered a strategic asset that directly shapes employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. McAllister (1995) distinguishes between cognitive trust—grounded in rational judgments of competence, consistency, and reliability—and affective trust, which emerges from emotional bonds, mutual respect, and goodwill. Both forms of trust can coexist and complement one another, strengthening employee commitment.

Recent empirical research further highlights these distinctions, linking cognitive and affective trust to organizational commitment (OC) across different contexts. For instance, Fischer et al. (2020) showed the importance of distinguishing trust types, and conducted a meta-analysis showing the inter-relationship between affective trust and cognitive trust. The study focused on multi-country (meta-analysis) and pleaded that affective trust is stronger predictor of organizational commitment than cognitive trust. Silva et al. (2024), in a study based on Portuguese higher education institutions, emphasized that trust plays a pivotal role in promoting knowledge sharing and citizenship behaviors. Additionally, studies showed that high levels of supervisor trust are associated with improved job satisfaction (Tosun & Özkan, 2023), greater organizational citizenship behavior (Nabiyeva, 2023), and reduced turnover intentions (Balkan et al., 2014). Trust also contributes to higher engagement and productivity (Bastug et al., 2016). Conversely, lack of trust imposes hidden costs through stress, absenteeism, and disengagement.

Notably, Saudi-based studies (Al Mutair et al., 2023; Aljarameez et al., 2023; Alomran et al., 2024) demonstrate that trust is a critical factor in higher education, thereby justifying the current study's focus on faculty–supervisor trust. Aljarameez et al. (2023), for instance, in a study based on nurses, found that empowerment and affective climate mediated the link between trust in hospital administrators and organizational commitment, and boosted the nurses' cognitive and affective spirits. Likewise, Al Mutair et al. (2023) confirmed that workplace empowerment enhanced OC through trust in Saudi HE scenario, as the study highlighted trust as mechanism for OC and showed paradoxical leadership promoting behaviors. Alomran et al. (2024), too, found organizational trust positively influencing OC in Saudi universities, moderated by national identity. The study extended OC research to Saudi HE and focused on supervisors' and leaders' trust in employees. In Saudi higher education climate, these outcomes are particularly relevant. Faculty retention is a pressing concern in Saudi universities, where competition for skilled academics has intensified under Vision 2030 reforms (Alomran et al., 2024). Understanding how trust affects commitment is therefore crucial for institutional sustainability.

Organizational Commitment models

Organizational Commitment refers to the psychological attachment of employees to their organization (Mowday et al., 1979). The three-component model (Meyer & Allen, 1991) distinguishes affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance

commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation to remain committed). Committed employees exert discretionary effort, remain with the organization longer, and contribute positively to institutional performance (Lakshman et al., 2021).

Major theoretical models of organizational commitment include theoretical models and contribution of experts like: Mowday et al. (1979), who highlighted atitudinal commitment, acceptance of goals, and willingness to exert effort and desire to remaincommitted. With the use of Foundational OCQ scale, the study showed how to measure these dimensions in various contexts; Mowday et al. (1979) and (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997) expostulated a most cited model known as Three-Component Model, encompassing Affective, Continuance, and Normative, and which recognizes multidimensionality, however, criticized for conceptual overlapping across dimensions; O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) devised a Psychological Attachment model which includes components like Compliance, Identification, and Internalization, which highlights mechanisms of attachment, focusing less on cultural/contextual factors; finally, Cohen (2007) forwarded a Continuance Subdimensions model, though with less empirical validation, but focuses on Instrumental vs. Affective continuance, and known for refining continuance dimension against all odds.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

This research identifies several theoretical antecedents of OC, viz., leadership style, justice perceptions, role clarity, and workload (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In these studies, trust has emerged as both a direct antecedent and a mediator. Ben Sedrine et al. (2020) took a step forward and demonstrated that distributed leadership enhanced OC through affective climate and trust, while Silva et al. (2024) confirmed that trust in supervisors strengthens promotive voice and commitment. Building upon the multidimensional conceptualization of both trust and OC, this study situates its investigation within a theoretical framework emphasizing the role of vertical interpersonal trust—employee-supervisor trust— and influencing faculty commitment.

This study is also based on the theoretical premise that trust in leadership, particularly distinguishes cognitive and affective facets, and serves as a key antecedent to organizational commitment (Islam et al., 2020). The need for effective trust-building is underscored in institutional settings like universities, where high relational trust supports knowledge sharing, collaboration, and job satisfaction (Khawaja, 2020; Silva et al., 2024). Extensive theoretical research across cultures and industries have confirmed strong links between trust and organizational commitment. For example, Nambudiri (2012) found significantly positive correlations between propensity to trust and OC in India; similarly, Curado and Vieira (2019)documented trust as a predictor of OC in Portuguese SMEs. U.S.-based studies show congruent findings; Fischer et al. (2020) conducted meta-analysis and revealed affective trust as a stronger predictor than cognitive trust of organizational commitment. In this context, therefore, the current study was also motivated to frame a few hypotheses:

H1: *Higher affective trust in supervisors is associated with greater organizational commitment among faculty.*
H2: *Higher cognitive trust in supervisors predicts greater organizational commitment.*
H3: *Both cognitive and affective trust are significant determinants of organizational commitment.*

Given the challenges facing Saudi higher education, including retention struggles, it is hoped that examining these hypotheses shall offer dynamic insights into possible interventions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive, cross-sectional, and correlational design to investigate the relationship between trust in supervisors and organizational commitment (OC) among faculty members in Saudi universities. The research specifically focused on measuring the effects of both affective and cognitive trust dimensions on the level of organizational commitment.

Participants and Sampling

The research targeted faculty members employed at three universities in Riyadh as of January 2025. The universities included two public institutions (Saudi Electronic University and Prince Norah University) and one private institution (Prince Sultan University). According to official statistics, the total population was 3,171 faculty members (2,649 in public universities and 522 in the private university). A random sampling method was employed. The required sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) equation, which recommended a minimum of 341 participants to achieve a 95% confidence level and a ±5% margin of error. The final sample comprised 520 faculty members, who were invited to participate through survey questionnaires distributed via institutional email and WhatsApp groups. A total of 131 valid and complete responses were received, resulting in a response rate of approximately 25.19%. The relatively small sample size, compared to the recommended number, represents a limitation that may affect the generalizability and statistical power of the findings.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of two validated scales: (1) Interpersonal trust scale (McAllister, 1995): This scale included 11 items divided into six items for cognitive trust and five items for affective trust, allowing the measurement of rational assessments and emotional bonds between faculty and supervisors. (2) Organizational commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday et al., 1979): This widely-used instrument included 15 items measuring key aspects of organizational commitment such as affective attachment, effort, and desire to remain with the organization. All items regarding trust and OC were rated on a five-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The questionnaire also captured demographic variables such as gender, job role, type of role, university type, years of service, and nationality.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was administered electronically using Google Forms and distributed through official communication channels. An introductory statement clarified the study objectives, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, and assured respondents of

anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained before any participant could proceed to the main questionnaire. The study adhered to institutional ethical standards, including approval from relevant review boards at the participating universities. All information provided by participants was kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize demographic data and questionnaire responses. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of each measurement scale. Relationships among the main study variables were evaluated using Pearson correlation coefficients. To assess the predictive power of both affective and cognitive trust dimensions on organizational commitment, linear regression analyses were performed.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the sample

The final sample comprised 131 faculty members, with 58.78% (n=77) males and 41.22% (n=54) females. Most respondents were Saudi nationals (78.63%), and the majority were involved in teaching and research roles (56.49%). Senior lecturers and lecturers made up the largest academic positions, and a significant proportion (59.54%) reported eight or more years of service. The demographic characteristics of the sample can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Statistics

Demographic	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Male	77	58.78
	Female	54	41.22
Job role	Assistant lecturer	8	6.11
	Lecturer	38	29.01
	Senior lecturer	48	36.64
	Associate professor	9	6.87
	Professor	28	21.37
Type of role	Teaching and research	74	56.49
	Administrative	12	9.16
	Teaching and administrative	45	34.35
University type	Total	131	90.84
	Private	12	9.16
Years of service	0–3	29	22.14
	4–7	24	18.32
	≥8	78	59.54
Nationality	Saudi	103	78.63
	Non-Saudi	28	21.37

Table 2 presents how Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Sample Size measurement was applied on the study population but the study could not reach the recommended minimum

sample of 341 participants to achieve a 95% confidence level and a ±5% margin. Though the relatively small sample size could prove a limitation and may affect the generalizability of the findings, it has succeeded in understanding the relationship between the variables.

Table to the Study Data

Table 2

Application of Krejcie and Morgan's Sample Size Table to the Study Data

Item	Value
Total population size (universities)	2,649 (public) + 522 (private) = 3,171
Required sample size	341 (with population of approx. 3,000–3,500)
Surveys distributed	520
Completed surveys received	131
Response rate	(131/ 520) × 100 = 25.19%
Comparison with required sample	Actual sample size (131) is below the recommended sample size (341)
Sampling method	Random sampling via email
Assumed confidence level	95% (based on Morgan & Krejcie (1970)

Trust Levels by Demographic Variables

This section presents the means of affective trust (AT), cognitive trust (CT), and overall trust across demographic groups. Table 3 shows that male faculty reported higher affective trust (AT mean = 2.61) compared to female faculty (AT mean = 2.47), while female faculty exhibited higher cognitive trust (CT mean = 2.63) than males (CT mean = 2.44). Additionally, overall trust was slightly higher among females (overall trust mean = 2.56) than males (overall trust mean = 2.50)

Table 3

Trust Levels by Gender

Gender	*N*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
Male	77	2.61	2.44	2.50
Female	54	2.47	2.63	2.56

Table 4 demonstrates that senior lecturers had the highest scores for both affective trust (AT mean = 2.74) and cognitive trust (CT mean = 2.66), closely followed by assistant lecturers. In contrast, administrative staff reported the lowest mean values on all trust measures, particularly affective trust (AT mean = 2.07), indicating reduced emotional trust in non-academic or managerial roles

Table 4

Trust Levels by Academic Position

Role	*n*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
Assistant lecturer	8	2.77	2.69	2.73
Lecturer	38	2.39	2.57	2.49
Senior lecturer	48	2.74	2.66	2.70
Administration	9	2.07	2.15	2.11
Professor	28	2.54	2.19	2.41

Table 5 highlights that faculty engaged in both teaching and research roles reported the highest levels of affective trust (AT mean = 2.70) and overall trust (overall trust mean = 2.64), whereas those in administrative positions reported the lowest overall trust (overall trust mean = 2.26).

Table 5

Trust Levels by Role Type

Role Type	*N*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
Teaching & research	74	2.70	2.59	2.64
Administration	12	2.20	2.31	2.26
Teaching & administration	45	2.52	2.53	2.53

Table 6 indicates that faculty members who worked in both public and private universities demonstrated the highest overall trust (overall trust mean = 2.60), followed by those in private universities (overall trust mean = 2.58) and those in public universities (overall trust mean = 2.49). The differences among these groups were fairly small, suggesting similar trust dynamics across institutional types.

Table 6

Trust Levels by University Type

University Type	*N*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
Public	111	2.52	2.46	2.49
Private	12	2.52	2.63	2.58
Public & Private	8	2.65	2.56	2.60

Table 7 reveals that faculty with at least eleven years of experience had the highest affective trust (AT mean = 2.62), while the highest cognitive trust was found among individuals with up to five years of experience (CT mean = 2.58). Overall trust was lowest among faculty with 6–10 years of service, indicating a possible U-shaped relationship between career stage and trust Table 8 shows that non-Saudi employees reported much higher affective trust (AT mean = 2.80) compared to Saudi respondents (AT mean = 2.49), while cognitive trust levels were relatively similar regardless of nationality.

Table 7

Trust Levels by Service Length

Service Length	*N*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
≤ 5 years	29	2.55	2.58	2.57
6–10 years	24	2.34	2.47	2.41
≥ 11 years	78	2.62	2.48	2.54

Table 8 shows that non-Saudi employees reported much higher affective trust (AT mean = 2.80) compared to Saudi respondents (AT mean = 2.49), while cognitive trust levels were relatively similar regardless of nationality.

Table 8

Trust Levels by Nationality

Nationality	*N*	AT Mean	CT Mean	Overall Trust Mean
Saudi	103	2.49	2.51	2.50
Non-Saudi	28	2.80	2.45	2.60

In summary, these findings suggest that demographic variables may influence the levels of both types of trust for faculty members. Accordingly, all of these factors should be considered when developing strategies for building trust and, by extension, OC in higher education institutions.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 9 presents the means, standard deviations, and observed value ranges for all major study variables. Role conflict emerged with the highest mean (M = 36.98, SD = 8.92), followed by organizational commitment (M = 36.36, SD = 8.84), and role ambiguity (M = 33.83, SD = 8.52). This suggests that faculty, on average, perceive moderate to high levels of both commitment and conflicting demands in their roles. The range of scores for these variables (e.g., RC: 0–60) indicates a wide variety of participant experiences and perceptions, supporting the appropriateness of using further inferential statistical testing.

Affective trust (M = 12.58, SD = 4.41) and cognitive trust (M = 14.76, SD = 5.06) were measured using the McAllister (1995) trust scale, while overall trust (M = 27.34, SD = 7.45) reflects the combined perception of trust in the organizational context. These mean values indicate that the sample reported moderately strong feelings of both affective and cognitive trust toward their supervisors, suggesting a healthy, trust-oriented work environment.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Mean	SD	Min–Max
Role ambiguity (RA)	33.826	8.523	0–56
Role conflict (RC)	36.982	8.924	0–60
Organizational commitment (OC)	36.360	8.837	0–52
Organizational commitment & responsibility (OCR)	13.186	3.539	0–20
Affective trust (AT)	12.576	4.409	0–20
Cognitive trust (CT)	14.763	5.060	0–24
Overall trust (OT)	27.34	7.45	0–44

Descriptive statistics indicate that role conflict exhibited the highest mean (M = 36.98), suggesting it is a salient feature in the sampled faculty experience, while affective and cognitive trust means reflect moderate to high perceived trust within the sample.

Reliability of Measures

Table 10 provides the Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (Rho C), and average variance extracted (AVE) for each scale. All constructs demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.83$), with particularly strong internal consistency for overall trust ($\alpha = 0.91$) and organizational commitment ($\alpha = 0.88$). This indicates that the scales used in this study are robust and yield consistent, dependable measurements. Composite reliability and AVE values also exceeded standard thresholds (Rho C > 0.89, AVE > 0.50), further confirming the high convergent validity of the measurement model. This suggests that the evaluated constructs are well-defined and measured by their component items with high accuracy.

Table 10

Reliability Analysis of Measurement Model Test for Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (Rho C)	Average Variance Extracted
Role ambiguity (RA)	0.86	0.91	0.57
Role conflict (RC)	0.87	0.92	0.59
Organizational commitment (OC)	0.88	0.93	0.61
Organizational commitment & responsibility (OCR)	0.83	0.90	0.56
Affective Trust (AT)	0.858	0.898	0.637
Cognitive Trust (CT)	0.856	0.891	0.585
Overall trust (OT)	0.91	0.895	0.546

These very high reliability values provide strong support for the internal consistency and validity of the instruments employed in the study.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess relationships among affective trust, cognitive trust, overall trust, and organizational commitment (OC). The results (noted in-text and in Table 10) revealed that affective trust was strongly and positively correlated with OC ($r = 0.861$, $p < 0.001$), while cognitive trust showed an even slightly stronger correlation ($r = 0.866$, $p < 0.001$), and overall trust demonstrated the highest correlation with OC ($r = 0.921$, $p < 0.001$). These significant correlations suggest that both affective and cognitive trust are important contributors to faculty members' organizational commitment, with overall trust exerting the strongest influence. The results underscore the importance of fostering both emotional and rational trust in supervisors to promote faculty commitment.

This pattern of results robustly supports Hypotheses 1 and 2 and highlights the central role of both trust dimensions. The especially strong association for overall trust suggests a synergistic effect when both elements of trust are present in the leadership relationship.

Discriminant Validity

Before conducting regression analysis, it was necessary to test the variables' discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was examined via the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The findings indicate that each construct measures a conceptually distinct domain, with AVEs higher than inter-construct correlations, meeting recommended psychometric standards. Figure 1 shows the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, all of which were below 0.85, indicating that the constructs measure different concepts.

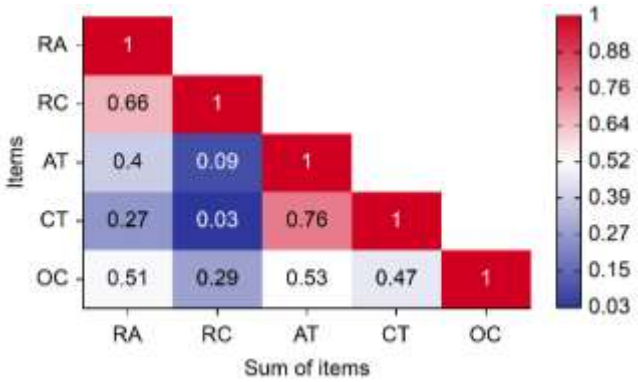

Figure 1: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Matrix

Note: RA- Role ambiguity; RC- Role conflict; AT- Affective Trust; CT- Cognitive Trust; OC- Organizational commitment.

This strongly supports the argument that affective and cognitive trust, as well as OC and related variables, are empirically separable and can be reliably used in further multi-variable analyses.

Table 11 presents the Fornell-Larcker correlation matrix, in which each construct's AVE is higher than its correlations, with all other constructs also confirming the measurement model's discriminant validity and high psychometric quality. These results confirm clear discriminant validity between all constructs, verifying that the study models independent aspects of faculty attitudes and perceptions.

Table 11

Fornell-Larcker Criterion Matrix

	RA	RC	AT	CT	OC
RA	0.422	0.661	0.402	0.266	0.505
RC	0.661	0.383	0.089	0.033	0.291
AT	0.402	0.089	0.798	0.764	0.527
CT	0.266	0.033	0.764	0.765	0.468
OC	0.505	0.291	0.527	0.468	0.421

Note: RA- Role ambiguity; RC- Role conflict; AT- Affective Trust; CT- Cognitive Trust; OC- Organizational commitment.

Regression and Moderation Analysis for Hypothesis Testing

Regression analyses were performed to assess how well affective trust, cognitive trust, and overall trust predict organizational commitment. Table 12 summarizes the models: affective trust alone explained 74.2% of variance in OC (R^2 = 0.742); cognitive trust explained 75.1% (R^2 = 0.751); and overall trust explained a substantial 84.8% (R^2 = 0.848), all with significant F values ($p < 0.001$). These remarkably high R^2 values indicate that trust in its various forms is a potent determinant of organizational commitment among faculty. This finding directly supports Hypothesis 3, reinforcing the theoretical view that trust in supervisors drives organizational commitment.

Table 12

Linear Equation Model Summary and Parameter Estimates

Dependent variable: OC							
Independent variable	**Model summary**					**Parameter estimates**	
	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
ABT	0.742	370.161	1	129	0.000	0.567	0.739
CBT	0.751	388.040	1	129	0.000	0.508	0.779
Overall trust	0.848	718.689	1	129	0.000	0.276	0.862

Model fit indices are shown in Table 13: CMIN/df = 2.319 (acceptable: 1–5), TLI = 0.922, CFI = 0.933 (both well above the 0.90 threshold for good fit), and RMSEA = 0.078 (below the 0.08 upper limit). These values indicate an excellent fit between the proposed models and the observed data, providing further confidence in the results and their generalizability.

Table 13

Fit Indices for Model of Organizational Trust and Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Model fit indices	Acceptable range	Value
CMIN/df	1.0 to 5.0	2.319
TLI	≥0.90	.922
CFI	≥0.90	.933
RMSEA	0.05 to 0.08	.078

Table 14 details the direct and moderating effects identified in regression models. Role ambiguity significantly and positively influenced OC ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 6.67$, $p < 0.001$), as did affective trust ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 5.92$, $p < 0.001$). Notably, affective trust also buffered the negative effect of role ambiguity on OC (moderation $\beta = 0.147$, $t = 3.13$, $p = 0.002$), and cognitive trust moderated the link between role conflict and OC (moderation $\beta = -0.325$, $t = 3.42$, $p = 0.001$). These results show that, not only does trust directly impact commitment, but it also reduces the negative effects of workplace stressors on OC, further highlighting trust's protective and facilitative role within academic institutions.

Table 14

Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Original Sample (*O*)	Sample Mean (*M*)	SD	T Statistic (*O*/SD)	*P*
RA → OC	0.54	0.532	0.081	6.667	<0.001
RC → OC	0.18	0.151	0.161	1.118	0.263
AT → OC	0.432	0.434	0.073	5.918	<0.001
RA × AT → OC	0.147	0.145	0.047	3.127	0.002
RC × CT → OC	−0.325	−0.328	0.095	3.421	0.001
OCR × CT → OC	0.198	0.195	0.061	3.246	0.001

Note: RA- Role ambiguity; RC- Role conflict; AT- Affective Trust; CT- Cognitive Trust; OC-Organizational commitment; OCR- Organizational commitment & responsibility.

The inferential results in Table 14 confirm both the direct effects and key interacting (protective) roles of affective and cognitive trust in shaping organizational commitment among faculty.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationships between trust in immediate supervisors (both affective and cognitive) and organizational commitment (OC) among faculty members at three universities in Riyadh. Descriptive results showed that levels of affective trust (M=2.55), cognitive trust (M=2.50), and overall trust (M=2.52) were all moderately high and closely aligned, indicating a general atmosphere of substantial trust within these academic environments. This suggests that, overall, faculty members perceive both emotional bonds and rational confidence in their leaders, contributing to a climate supportive of engagement and collaboration. Moreover, trust and OC were found to be relatively uniform across most demographic groups, with only minor exceptions in smaller subgroups, such as administrative staff (lowest on trust) and non-Saudi faculty (higher affective trust). These patterns highlight the inclusiveness of trust across gender, position, and tenure, indicating that leadership strategies aiming to boost trust are likely to be effective across the workforce. The observed minor differences in trust based on nationality, position, and years of service suggest future research should further explore the unique experiences of these subgroups through qualitative or longitudinal designs.

Critically, statistical tests found no significant gender differences in OC, corroborating recent Saudi studies and reflecting a possible move toward more standardized, gender-neutral academic work cultures where commitment is not shaped primarily by gendered expectations or roles. This suggests organizational commitment may now be more about institutional processes, leadership, and culture than about demographic factors.

Regression and correlation analyses confirmed that trust—both affective and cognitive—is a powerful determinant of OC. ($r=0.861$ and $r=0.866$; both $p<0.001$), while overall trust explained nearly 85% of the variance in OC in regression models. These findings confirm H1 and H2, as both affective and cognitive trust were significantly associated with organizational commitment. In addition, H3 was supported through regression and moderation tests, showing that trust not only predicts commitment but also buffers the negative effects of role ambiguity and role conflict. This indicates that enhancing trust in leadership may be among the most effective strategies to increase faculty commitment, with practical implications for management and HR policy. The exceptional strength of these relationships suggests that trust-building should be viewed as a strategic priority within academic institutions.

Diving deeper, moderation analyses revealed that affective trust buffers the negative effect of role ambiguity (uncertainty about job duties) on OC, while cognitive trust moderates the impact of role conflict (competing job demands), both with statistically significant interaction terms. In practical terms, this means that high levels of trust can reduce the harmful effects of stressful or confusing work environments, highlighting trust's role as a resilience and engagement factor for faculty. These interactions also point to the value of creating supportive, transparent leadership structures to help faculty manage the challenges of academic life.

These findings collectively confirm and extend earlier research: not only are both forms of trust essential for OC, but their effects are substantial and operate alongside and interactively with other workplace factors. This builds on the literature by demonstrating the unique context of Saudi higher education, where institutional trust-building can counteract turnover trends and support ongoing faculty development.

Conclusion and Implications

This study provides novel, empirical evidence that both affective and cognitive trust in immediate supervisors are strong predictors of organizational commitment among Saudi higher education faculty members. This advances the literature by showing that, even when controlling for potential confounders, trust in leaders not only predicts commitment but serves a protective role against workplace stressors—confirming trust as a "keystone variable" for organizational health. From a practical perspective, these findings have substantial implications for academic human resources and leadership strategy. to address issues of faculty retention and institutional performance, universities should implement evidence-based interventions that foster both emotional and rational trust across all supervisory relationships. examples include: Transparent, supportive onboarding and mentoring programs that build trust from the outset; continuous professional development for academic leaders in both technical and relational leadership skills; and regular measurement of faculty perceptions (e.g., via engagement surveys) to monitor and respond to trust dynamics.

HR policies that ensure role clarity, workload balance, and demonstrate institutional care for well-being and professional growth universities should also integrate trust metrics into leader assessment systems and make interpersonal trust a core tenet of faculty engagement and retention initiatives. these measures not only improve organizational commitment but may reduce turnover intention, promote job satisfaction, and enhance performance and citizenship behaviors. Cultivating both affective and cognitive trust is vital for sustainable faculty commitment and institutional success in Saudi higher education. By prioritizing trust-building efforts, Saudi universities can enhance engagement, resilience, and retention among their academic staff, thereby laying the groundwork for enduring organizational excellence.

Some limitations should be noted. Foremost is the sample size: despite a robust analytic design, the sample (n=131) is lower than the recommended number for the underlying population, potentially constraining statistical power and generalizability. In addition, as only three universities in one city were sampled, results may not reflect experiences in other Saudi regions or institutional types. There is also the possibility of social desirability bias in self-reports, as well as researcher bias stemming from insider status; however, measures were taken to ensure anonymity and objectivity throughout the process. To further advance this field, future research should consider longitudinal and multi-institutional designs, as well as qualitative exploration of trust-building dynamics within varying academic cultures. Moreover, more extensive, multi-institutional studies across different Saudi regions will be essential to corroborate generalizability. Longitudinal studies could clarify the directionality and causal mechanisms linking trust and organizational commitment, while mixed-methods designs would provide richer insight into how trust is nurtured and sustained in unique academic contexts. Further research

might also explore the interplay between trust, organizational culture, leadership style, and emerging challenges in post-pandemic higher education.

Overall, this research contributes significant empirical evidence emphasizing the centrality of trust in organizational dynamics within Saudi higher education, and offers a valuable reference point for policymakers and academic leaders globally who seek to enhance faculty retention and institutional performance.

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