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Research Article

Organizational Commitment as A Mediator of Employee Engagement and Retention Among Non-Teaching Staff: Evidence from Selected Universities in Cebu City

Madelline E. Rico*, Mark Anthony N. Polinar, Alexander Franco A. Delantar, Jinky R. Delantar

Center of Advanced Studies, Cebu Institute of Technology- University, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines

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**Corresponding author:*

E-mail:

madeliene.rico@cit.edu

ABSTRACT

Employee retention is a critical concern in universities, as frequent turnover is disruptive and increases operational costs. In Cebu City, non-teaching staff play a vital role in sustaining academic services, yet their retention often depends on how engaged and committed they feel toward their institutions. This study examined whether organizational commitment mediates the relationship between employee engagement and employee retention among non-teaching personnel in selected Cebu universities. Using a quantitative correlational design, survey data were gathered from 100 staff members and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Spearman's rho, and structural equation modeling. Results revealed high engagement, strong organizational commitment, and generally positive retention intentions. Mediation analysis confirmed that while engagement directly predicts retention, commitment strengthens this link by fostering loyalty and value alignment. These findings suggest that recognition, fair policies, and growth opportunities enhance both engagement and commitment, leading to a more stable workforce. The study highlights the importance of non-teaching staff in ensuring institutional continuity and offers insights for higher education administrators on reducing turnover risk.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Organizational Commitment, Mediating Analysis, Non-teaching Staff, Structural Equation Modeling, University*

Background

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in today's academic landscape, building societal capacity, fostering skills and

knowledge, and addressing socio-economic issues. This vital role will be achieved through the collaboration of the stakeholders of these institutions, including students. As the UNESCO

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Institute for Lifelong Learning (n.d.) indicates, HEIs are vital actors in developing individuals' lifelong learning, encouraging students from the basic education system, regardless of differences, to enter higher education to help them achieve their personal and professional dreams. However, HEIs are facing an increasing array of challenges that threaten their ability to maintain high levels of performance, boost employee morale, and deliver exceptional services. In fact, several studies have highlighted how complex governance, insufficient funding, organizational politics, and rigid regulations adversely affect academic excellence, organizational efficiency, and the institution's innovation (Ali, 2025; Bianchi & Caperchione, 2022; Damor & Patel, 2025). As a result, HEIs find themselves striving to cultivate a positive and productive environment for both staff and students while simultaneously upholding the standards of excellence that have come to define their missions. Recognizing this, universities worldwide are acknowledging the pivotal role of their human capital, not only academic staff but also the non-teaching employees who provide vital support in effectively navigating these growing pressures.

Academics have widely recognized both organizational commitment (OC) and employee engagement (EE) as significant indicators of employee retention (ER). For example, Gallup's (n.d.) global workplace studies in the United States consistently link employee engagement to retention, noting that disengaged employees are 37% more likely to quit. Employee engagement programs are now viewed as long-term strategies for institutional success in Europe and Australia, where similar findings have been reported.

Universities worldwide face budgetary constraints and governance issues that directly affect staff retention and morale, impacting both teaching and non-teaching personnel. Higher education institutions in the US are now largely dependent on tuition income, student loans, and private funding sources, as a result of decades of declining state support. In addition to placing pressure on institutional resources, this funding change has increased staff workloads, particularly for non-teaching staff who provide crucial administrative and student

support services. Research indicates that budget cuts often lead to job insecurity, excessive workload, and staff reductions, all of which increase employee stress and decrease job satisfaction (Ehrenberg, 2020; Jones, 2023). Additionally, university work environments in Europe have undergone significant changes due to the emergence of performance-based accountability systems. Even while these methods are intended to increase institutional efficiency, they often result in increased pressure to meet quantifiable goals, such as rankings, student throughput, and research accomplishments. Because faculty and research considerations tend to take precedence over operational and support activities that sustain universities, administrative and professional personnel often feel excluded from governance procedures. Due to this disparity, non-academic contributions are not given enough credit, and people feel increasingly excluded (Musselin, 2018; Välimaa, 2021).

By comparison, the higher education workforce in Australia and New Zealand is becoming more casualized, with a sizable proportion of academic and non-academic staff working under fixed-term or part-time contracts. Institutions benefit from the flexibility this offers, but employees are left with limited opportunities for advancement, restricted access to professional growth, and unpredictable career paths. According to Bentley et al. (2020) and Coates and Goedegebuure (2012), these factors have been linked to poorer staff morale, weaker organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions among university personnel.

Even in Africa, universities there continue to face political and structural obstacles that exacerbate staff discontent, as persistent underfunding results in low pay, limited resources, and unfavorable working conditions. Further undermining employee motivation and organizational loyalty are problems with unfair promotions and political meddling in university governance. Disengagement and, frequently, attrition are caused by employees feeling underappreciated and ignored in decision-making. In addition to affecting people's personal well-being, these circumstances jeopardize the stability of institutions and the general

caliber of higher education systems in the area (Ogbogu, 2017; Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2020).

When combined, these regional viewpoints reveal that although the particular difficulties differ — ranging from resource and governance concerns in Africa to casualization in Australia and New Zealand, accountability pressures in Europe, and funding cuts in the United States — the fundamental issue remains the same: the sustainability of human capital in universities. Institutional success depends on both teaching and non-teaching staff, yet systemic issues still jeopardize their engagement, organizational commitment, and long-term retention.

These worldwide issues are reflected in Southeast Asian higher education institutions. Significant reforms in university governance and human resource management have been implemented in nations including the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Research from ASEAN (Wilkins et al., 2017) indicates that studies in Malaysia and other ASEAN contexts reveal that staff at international branch campuses often exhibit lower motivation and commitment than those at home campuses, highlighting the need for contextualized human resource strategies to boost engagement and performance in diverse and hybrid environments.

In the Philippines, both public and private educational institutions are experiencing issues such as administrative burnout, rising recruitment costs, and high turnover rates among non-teaching staff. While local studies (e.g., Inarda, 2022; Manaig et al., 2024) have begun to identify factors such as job satisfaction, quality of life, knowledge development, and affective commitment as significant predictors of work engagement, there is still much to explore in this area. Few studies have looked at the relationship between employee engagement and institutional loyalty among non-teaching staff. This group is frequently seen as "invisible" but essential to university operations. Although non-teaching staff in elementary public schools in the Philippines experience considerable stress due to excessive task demands, time constraints, and unclear roles, they continue to demonstrate loyalty and commitment, thereby increasing employee retention (Baes et al.,

2025). There are notable correlations among time pressure, work hours, role ambiguity, and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Additionally, a study by Durog and Resurreccion (2024) at Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) found that when employees, such as non-teaching staff, feel supported and identify with their organization, they are more likely to develop affective commitment, which in turn strengthens their engagement and retention. Furthermore, Gimeno et al. (2025) concluded that when both teaching and non-teaching staff feel emotionally connected and committed to their organization, their engagement translates more effectively into a desire to stay, reducing turnover intentions and enhancing retention.

Despite these insights, research on the mediating role of organizational commitment in the Philippine higher education context remains limited. Most existing studies are cross-sectional and focused on faculty members rather than support staff. This creates a gap in understanding how engagement translates into long-term retention among non-teaching employees. Addressing this gap is essential, especially for Cebu universities that heavily rely on administrative staff to support both academic and student services.

This study contributes by analyzing how organizational commitment influences the engagement-retention link among non-teaching staff. By situating findings within the Philippine higher education context, it aims to provide practical implications for university leaders seeking to strengthen workforce stability and reduce turnover.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, correlational research design with mediation analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This approach was selected because it allows for examining both direct and indirect effects among the study's main variables—employee engagement, organizational commitment, and retention. Using SEM, the researchers tested the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between engagement and retention among non-teaching staff.

The investigation was conducted in selected public and private universities in Cebu City, Philippines. The focus was on non-teaching personnel, such as administrative staff, registrars, finance office employees, librarians, and other support workers who provide essential services in the academic community. A total of 100 respondents were included in the study. Participants were chosen using **simple random sampling**, ensuring that every qualified staff member had an equal chance of being selected. Inclusion criteria required respondents to (1) be a full-time non-teaching employee of a Cebu-based university, (2) have at least two years of cumulative work experience in a non-teaching role, and (3) have rendered at least six months of continuous service in line with the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) standard for regular employment under Article 281 of the Philippine Labor Code. Respondents also needed to consent to participate in the survey voluntarily. Those who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the sample.

A self-designed questionnaire was explicitly created to address the research objectives. The instrument underwent validation by a panel of three experts—namely, the head of human resources, the head of accounting, and the research adviser. The tool was further subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency and suitability for the study. For what it is worth—and although unconventional—a randomized validation interview was conducted with 30% of the respondents.

Respondents were given ample time to complete the survey forms, and retrieval was

conducted immediately after completion to ensure completeness. The responses were encoded, tabulated, and subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical treatment. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were used to interpret the levels of employee engagement, organizational commitment, and retention. Since the data were not normally distributed, Spearman's rho correlation was employed to assess the relationship between employee engagement and retention. To determine whether organizational commitment mediates this relationship, SEM was conducted, providing both direct and indirect path analyses.

The research strictly adhered to ethical standards in social science research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality was ensured by keeping participants' identities anonymous in the survey forms and in the reporting of results. The study posed minimal risk to participants, as the survey questions required them only to reflect on their work experiences and perceptions. Potential discomforts such as fatigue or disinterest during survey completion were acknowledged, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Once completed, the study will be made available to respondents and their institutions as a resource to improve staff engagement, loyalty, and retention strategies.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion of the study's aims are presented in this section.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Employee Engagement, Organizational Commitment, and Employee Retention among Non-Teaching Staff

Construct	Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
	I feel excited and motivated every time I come to work at this university.	4.34	0.725	Agree
	I take pride in being a part of this university and the work we do together.	4.67	0.492	Strongly Agree

Construct	Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
Employee Engagement	I feel emotionally connected to the work I do here; it means more to me than just a job.	4.34	0.725	Agree
	I am always willing to give extra effort to help my department and the university succeed.	4.55	0.519	Strongly Agree
	My work at the university inspires me and fills me with a sense of fulfillment.	4.35	0.741	Agree
	What I do here is meaningful and aligned with my personal values.	4.39	0.663	Agree
	I feel deeply involved in my tasks and responsibilities at this university.	4.48	0.657	Agree
	Working here energizes me and gives me a strong sense of purpose.	4.32	0.747	Agree
Overall Employee Engagement		4.47	0.626	Agree
Organizational Commitment	I genuinely feel a part of this university community.	4.35	0.713	Agree
	I am loyal to this university for the foreseeable future.	4.43	0.726	Agree
	If I were to leave the university now, I would feel a sense of personal loss.	4.02	0.836	Agree
	I plan to build my long-term career within this university.	4.29	0.726	Agree
	I feel emotionally invested in the university's mission and success.	4.30	0.701	Agree
	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this university.	4.64	0.593	Strongly Agree
	I can imagine spending most of my professional life at this university.	4.40	0.649	Agree
	I align with this institution's goals and values.	4.40	0.679	Agree
Overall Organizational Commitment		4.44	0.623	Agree
Employee Retention	I plan to continue working at this university for the next several years.	4.50	0.626	Strongly Agree
	I recommend this university as a great place to work.	4.45	0.670	Agree
	I often look for job opportunities elsewhere.	3.06	1.248	Neutral
	The compensation, benefits, and support I receive make me want to continue working here.	4.01	0.768	Agree

Construct	Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
	I feel strongly about the job security and stability in my role at this university.	4.19	0.674	Agree
	I feel valued by the university, and that motivates me to stay.	4.12	0.711	Agree
	There are long-term career growth opportunities for me at this university.	4.14	0.679	Agree
	I am generally satisfied with the professional development and support available here.	4.25	0.713	Agree
Overall Employee Retention		4.17	0.567	Agree

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 indicate that non-teaching staff at the university generally report high levels of employee engagement, organizational commitment, and employee retention. Employee engagement had an overall mean of 4.47 ($SD = 0.63$), indicating agreement with statements about emotional connection, pride, and motivation in their roles. The highest-rated item was "I take pride in being a part of this university and the work we do together" ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.49$), followed by "I am always willing to give extra effort to help my department and the university succeed" ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.52$). These results suggest that employees are not only committed to their roles but also take pride in their contributions to the institution. Organizational commitment was also highly rated, with an overall mean of 4.44 ($SD = 0.62$). Respondents expressed substantial emotional investment and loyalty, especially evident in the statement "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this university" ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 0.59$). Other items, such as intentions to remain with the university and alignment with institutional values, also scored above 4.0, indicating a consistent pattern of positive organizational attachment. Employee retention received a slightly lower overall mean of 4.17 ($SD = 0.57$), though still within the "Agree" interpretation range. The highest-rated item was "I plan to remain working at this university for the next several years" ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.63$). However, the item "I frequently think about looking for job opportunities elsewhere" received a neutral response ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.25$), suggesting that while retention intentions are

generally strong, some employees may be considering external opportunities. The findings reflect a non-teaching staff population that is engaged, committed, and primarily intent on remaining at the university. The data highlight substantial emotional and professional investment, with minor indications of potential turnover risk warranting further exploration.

The following studies corroborate the results on employee engagement presented above. Organizational pride is the most crucial motivator of employee engagement, serving as a foundation for employees' optimistic attitude toward their work and the institution (Haapakoski et al., 2024; Jia et al., 2019). Additionally, Organizational pride frequently arbitrates the effects of positive organizational practices (such as corporate social responsibility or virtuous leadership) on engagement, meaning that when employees feel proud of their organization, they are more likely to be engaged and perform positive work behaviors (Ali et al., 2023; Masterson, 2016; Sturm et al., 2022). Moreover, when employees strongly identify with the institution, they are more likely to remain devoted to their roles and offer long-term service (Haapakoski et al., 2024). Overall, the high engagement levels suggest that employees feel positively about their roles; however, management must continue to reinforce this sentiment through recognition, inclusive policies, and opportunities for growth to maintain and enhance engagement across the workforce (Kiman, 2024; Rasheed et al., 2021; Sakthivel, 2025).

The following studies support the findings on employees' commitment. Pride in institutional affiliation serves as a central driver of organizational commitment, reinforcing employees' loyalty and long-term attachment (Pereira et al., 2021). The strong alignment with organizational values also suggests that employees are not only committed to their university's mission but are motivated to contribute to its advancement (Gelle-Jimenez & Jimenez, 2024). This underscores the importance of cultivating a work environment that continuously reinforces institutional pride through recognition programs, shared governance, transparent communication, and opportunities for personal growth (Abd-El-Salam, 2021; Omar, 2021). Moreover, since retention is closely tied to commitment, universities should sustain loyalty by addressing potential demotivators that could erode employees' organizational commitment, thereby threatening retention (Gelle-Jimenez & Jimenez, 2024; Amalia & Musnadi, 2020; Javed et al., 2020).

The following studies support the findings on employee retention. Educational institutions that promote value alignment and present a compelling employee value proposition tend to retain dedicated, enthusiastic employees (Swanepoel & Saurombe, 2022). A connection with the organization's values and vision is associated with increased employee loyalty, reflected in greater intention to remain and lower responsiveness to other job opportunities (Aboobaker et al., 2020; Ka & Aboobaker, 2021). Furthermore, factors such as recognition, opportunities for career development, job benefits, compensation, and a supportive, positive work environment lead to increased engagement, which, in turn, improves employee retention (Desai & Jadav, 2025; Shirisha & Lavanya, 2025). Moreover, having a strong sense of job security and opportunities for personal development positively impacts employees' overall performance and satisfaction, thereby increasing employee retention (Milovanska-Farrington, 2023; Wang et al., 2021).

Table 2. Spearman's rho: Correlation between Employee Engagement and Employee Retention among Non-Teaching Staff

Variables	ρ (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Employee Engagement (EE) ↔ Employee Retention (ER)	0.51	< .001	Significant

A Spearman's rho correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between employee engagement and employee retention. Results showed a moderate, statistically significant positive correlation ($\rho = 0.51$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher engagement is associated with stronger intentions to remain at the university. Multiple studies confirm that employee engagement has a strong positive correlation with job satisfaction and a significant negative correlation with turnover intentions, indicating that as engagement increases, the likelihood of turnover decreases (Reissova et al., 2021).

When non-teaching staff experience engagement through skills development, recognition, and involvement in decision-making, they are more likely to remain with their institutions (Mugizi et al., 2022). Furthermore, when workers feel appreciated and involved, they develop a sense of belonging and are encouraged to remain with the organization for an extended period (Vas & Mohan, 2022). A supportive workplace environment and positive interactions with colleagues promote employee involvement and increase employee retention (Shirina et al., 2024; Tyagi, 2021).

Table 3. Structural Equation Modeling Results: Model Fit Indices and Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment between Employee Engagement and Retention among Non-Teaching Staff

Fit Index / Path	Value	Interpretation
Model Fit Indices		
χ^2 , $df = 249$	444, $p < .001$	Significant
RMSEA	0.088	Good fit

Fit Index / Path	Value	Interpretation
SRMR	0.064	Good fit
CFI	0.899	Acceptable
TLI	0.888	Acceptable
Mediation Paths		
Commitment ← Engagement	$\beta = 0.805, p < .001$	Significant
Retention ← Commitment	$\beta = 0.407, p = .005$	Significant
Retention ← Engagement	$\beta = 0.421, p = .004$	Significant

The model demonstrates an acceptable overall fit, with CFI (0.899) reaching acceptable levels and SRMR (0.064) within the ideal range. Although the RMSEA (0.088) slightly exceeds the conventional cutoff of 0.08, the model remains an acceptable approximation of the observed data structure. The mediation analysis reveals that employee engagement has a significant predictive relationship with organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.805$), which in turn substantially predicts employee retention ($\beta = 0.407$). Additionally, employee engagement has a direct, significant effect on retention ($\beta = 0.421$). This supports a partial mediation model in which engagement influences retention both directly and indirectly through commitment.

Employee engagement has been found to significantly influence organizational commitment among non-academic staff in universities, as observed in Sri Lanka, where higher engagement is associated with more substantial commitment (Piyasena & Kottawatta, 2018). Similarly, in Malaysian universities, increased commitment and engagement were found to be correlated with higher job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of nurturing these elements to improve employee retention and organizational success (Kasim et al., 2025). In Nigeria, when non-teaching staff are recognized for their efforts and accomplishments, they experience greater value and respect, which, in turn, enhances job satisfaction and retention (Uwannah & Fadairo, 2023). These findings are supported by evidence from Indonesia, where work engagement and job satisfaction have been shown to positively and significantly influence organizational commitment, both individually and simultaneously, thereby strengthening employee retention (Harini et al., 2024). Engaged employees are also more likely to de-

velop a strong sense of belonging and alignment with institutional values (Otoo & Rather, 2024). However, the absence of organizational support and fairness can undermine this relationship. In Kenya, for instance, although policies such as training, promotion, and resource allocation existed, they were inconsistently and unfairly implemented, resulting in disengagement among non-teaching staff who felt excluded, undervalued, and unfairly treated (Omega & Mbithi, 2018). Likewise, inadequate promotion opportunities, insufficient resources, and the absence of employee voice in decision-making weakened commitment and retention (Sulistiyawati & Sufriadi, 2020). Taken together, these studies highlight that while engagement and job satisfaction can foster organizational commitment, the absence of organizational support and fairness significantly undermines this process, ultimately impacting employee retention.

Figure 1 illustrates the structural equation model (SEM) used to test the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between employee engagement and employee retention among non-teaching staff. The model demonstrates that employee engagement significantly influences both organizational commitment and employee retention among non-teaching staff, with organizational commitment acting as a partial mediator. The standardized path from engagement to commitment is strong ($\beta = 0.86$), indicating that engaged employees are more emotionally connected to the institution. In turn, commitment has a positive impact on retention ($\beta = 0.28$), suggesting that committed staff are more likely to remain. Despite the mediating effect, engagement also directly influences retention ($\beta = 0.31$), confirming partial mediation. The model supports the hypothesis that increasing engagement fosters

stronger organizational ties, which, in turn, enhances retention outcomes.

Various studies have increasingly highlighted the roles of fairness, mentorship, and ethical leadership in shaping engagement, commitment, and retention among non-teaching staff in universities. At Kyambogo University, despite improvements in working conditions and benefits, many employees still considered leaving due to perceived salary and work condition inequalities (Namusoke et al., 2024). Findings from the same study emphasized that organizational justice and employee mentor-

ship were crucial in reducing turnover intentions by fostering fairness, career development, and social support, which in turn enhanced employees' commitment, strengthened their sense of belonging, and boosted engagement, making them more motivated to remain loyal to the institution (Namusoke et al., 2024). Also, other studies indicated that leaders who act with transparency, respect, and fairness make employees feel valued, which not only increases engagement but also reinforces long-term commitment and loyalty (Zanabazar et al., 2025; Moore & Hanson, 2022).

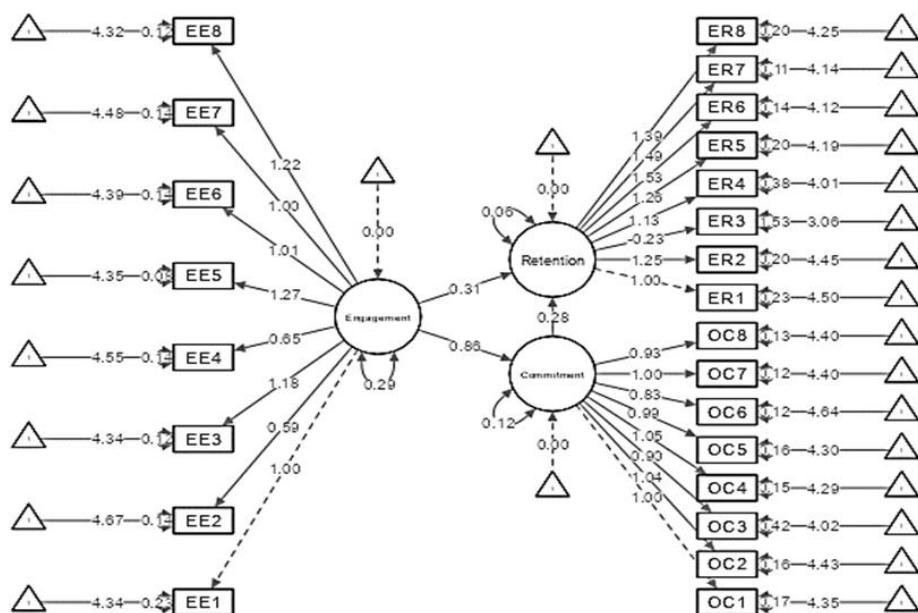


Figure 1. Structural Equation Model Illustrating the Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment between Employee Engagement and Employee Retention among Non-Teaching Staff

Conclusion

This study shows that non-teaching staff at Cebu City universities report high levels of engagement and organizational commitment, which, in turn, support their intention to stay. Mediation analysis confirmed that commitment partly explains why engagement leads to retention, underscoring that loyalty and alignment with institutional values are critical in workforce stability.

For university administrators, the results highlight the need to strengthen both engagement and commitment. Recognition programs,

transparent policies, fair promotion opportunities, and professional growth initiatives can sustain motivation and deepen loyalty. By addressing these areas, institutions can reduce turnover costs and preserve the continuity of support services essential to academic operations. However, the study has limitations. The sample was limited to 100 non-teaching staff in Cebu City and used a cross-sectional design, which captures attitudes at a single point in time. Results may not fully reflect experiences in other regions or account for changes over time.

Future research should consider a larger, more diverse sample, compare public and private universities, and adopt a longitudinal approach to track how engagement and commitment evolve. Exploring additional mediators, such as organizational justice or job satisfaction, would also provide richer insights into retention dynamics. Future research may also examine the effects of monetary compensation and other economic benefits on intrinsic motivation, as well as the effect of cannibalism on turnover among non-teaching staff. Nonetheless, overall, this research contributes to the understanding that commitment acts as a vital bridge between engagement and retention, offering practical strategies for Cebu universities to maintain a motivated and loyal non-teaching workforce.

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