

## Commitment Profiles, Job Satisfaction, and Behavioral Outcomes

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Past research adopting a configural approach to organisational commitment has yielded support for differentiated profiles (i.e. different combinations of different levels of commitment components) and for their relationship with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The present study aimed to: (a) investigate, in an Italian privatised organisation, the emergence of commitment profiles derived from the combination of affective (AC) and continuance (CC) organisational commitment, following Sinclair and colleagues' conceptualisation (2005); and (b) examine whether these profiles differed in absenteeism, as an objective outcome, job satisfaction, and job performance. Results from cluster analysis supported the presence of four groups (Allied, Free Agents, Trapped, and Complacent). The Allied and the Complacent profiles reported higher job satisfaction. Moreover, the Complacent profile displayed the highest job performance and the Allied showed the lowest level of absenteeism; both were significantly different from the Trapped profile. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

In the current global market requiring increasing competitiveness for organisations to survive and succeed, research and practice have pointed out the advantage of having a committed workforce that results in their organisations being more productive (Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin, 2009). Therefore, the issue of whether and how people are committed to their company is

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crucial for an organisation to understand employees' behavior and motivation, in order to make retention plans and investments in the future.

Commitment has been defined as a force that binds an individual to a target entity, and, as such, can be directed toward multiple constituencies within the workplace (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301). With regard to the organisation, the most investigated target, the literature provides different theoretical frameworks that conceptualise commitment as uni- (e.g. Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) or multi-dimensional (e.g. Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The multi-dimensional conceptualisation of organisational commitment of Meyer and Allen (1991) has gained the greatest popularity and empirical support (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). The main contribution of this model is that commitment can be experienced as a mindset, or a psychological state, that compels an individual toward a course of action (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004). The types of link with an organisation most extensively studied have been either an emotional attachment or an instrumental bond to it. The "desire to stay in the company" mindset brings about the affective attachment to it, and the "perceived cost of losing membership" is the mindset connoting the continuance component.

Therefore, building on Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, growing attention has been devoted to investigate the simultaneous presence of the multiple components. In particular, an innovative approach—centered on the "person" rather than on the "variable"—looks at how these motivational mindsets combine with one another, in order to portray the complexity of individual functioning and better understand the effects of the coexistence of these different motivational mindsets (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Adopting a configural approach, scholars have documented, although not unequivocally, different "profiles" of organisational commitment (i.e. different combinations of commitment dimensions) and their association with job-related attitudes and behaviors (Markovits, Davis, & van Dick, 2007; Sinclair, Tucker, Cullen, & Wright, 2005; Somers, 2009; Wasti, 2005). However, the configural approach has been empirically underexplored and, in addition, the studies have shown some inconsistencies among each other and with regard to the theoretical expectations (Markovits et al., 2007; Sinclair et al., 2005; Somers, 2009; Wasti, 2005). First, some studies (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Markovits et al., 2007) relied on the theoretical combinations of commitment components, whereas others (Somers, 2009, 2010; Wasti, 2005) have emphasised the importance of an empirically driven methodology to look at the emergence of profiles in order to ascertain that the theoretical groups do actually "exist" in a given population; advocates of the latter approach showed that not all the hypothesised combinations were empirically supported. Second, agreement regarding the empirical criteria to define these profiles is lacking. Following Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001)

propositions, scholars have considered “high” and “low” levels of commitment components, whereas “moderate” levels have been relatively overlooked. This decision risks being a serious omission, as employees are more likely to develop average rather than extreme levels of commitment (Sinclair et al., 2005). Following this assumption, Sinclair and colleagues (2005) suggested that the profiles emerging from the combination of three different levels of commitment should be examined, namely high, medium, and low. Third, the differences among commitment profiles in terms of behavioral outcomes did not emerge as homogeneous patterns of results across studies (Somers, 2009, 2010).

The purpose of the present study was to contribute to this line of research by: (a) investigating the empirical emergence of commitment profiles in a large Italian sample, which is drawn entirely from one organisation; (b) differentiating among high, moderate, and low levels of commitment components, in the framework of a previous taxonomy (Sinclair et al., 2005); (c) testing whether differences among the profiles explain variance in self-reported job satisfaction, job performance as rated by supervisor, and absenteeism drawn from organisational records.

## The Configural Approach to the Study of Organisational Commitment

Commitment components are not opposed to each other; rather employees can experience each of these psychological states to varying degrees (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In order to test how they combine with one another and their motivational mindsets, and to better understand individual job-related outcomes, a recent line of research has advocated a profile-based, or configural, approach (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

The configural approach is a person-centered approach that rests on a holistic perspective of individual functioning (Magnusson, 2003). It is rooted in the assumption that the individual as a “totality” gets its features and meaning from the interaction among the parts, and, therefore, cannot be reduced to the sum of its components. The term “individual” itself derives from the Latin root “*individuus*” that means “indivisible”.

The configural approach aims at identifying groups of individuals who share similarities on a multidimensional set of characteristics (Miller & Friesen, 1984), although the boundaries of these clusters are permeable, which distinguish them from rigid taxonomies (Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993); that is, each individual in the clusters may move from one to another, following specific developmental paths. Thus, drawing on this perspective, the configural approach underlines that the multidimensional set of commitment components produces different organisational outcomes compared to each variable per se. Over the last 30 years, the configural approach has gained

attention in psychological research (Magnusson, 2003), and more recently in I/O psychology, although the majority of these studies focused on the organisational-level of analysis rather than the individual level (A.D. Meyer et al., 1993).

Considering the theoretical combinations of high and low scores in the organisational commitment components, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) hypothesised differentiated profiles. Empirical research has lent support to the existence of different profiles in different countries (i.e. Greece, North America, and Turkey; Markovits et al., 2007; Sinclair et al., 2005; Somers, 2009; Wasti, 2005) and in different job positions (i.e. non-supervisory employees and middle-level supervisors; professionals from a petroleum and natural energy firm, nurses, and employed students), although not all the theoretical profiles emerged as predicted.

Following Sinclair and colleagues (2005), we suggest that employees who are at the very top or very bottom of the organisational commitment continuum are rare and that people are more likely to show a moderate level of commitment of either type. Accordingly, Sinclair et al. theorised nine profiles derived from the crossing of three levels (i.e. high, moderate, and low) in the affective (AC) and continuance (CC) components (i.e. Devoted, Involved, Attached, Invested, Allied, Complacent, Trapped, Free Agents, Uncommitted). The authors empirically identified four of the nine profiles, specifically the Devoted (high AC and high CC), the Allied (moderate AC and moderate CC), the Complacent (moderate AC and low CC), and the Free Agents (low AC and moderate CC).

In our contribution we focused on two of the three components of Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, namely AC and CC, in accordance with Sinclair and colleagues (2005) and for a number of reasons. First, since we intended to differentiate among three levels of commitment (high, moderate, and low) we decided to focus on two components in order to reduce the number of potential profiles (from  $3^3$  to  $3^2$ ). Moreover, CC and AC identify bonds to an organisation that are deeply different from each other, whereas the third component in Meyer and Allen's (1991) model (i.e. normative commitment; NC) has been found to partially overlap AC (Meyer et al., 2002). In addition, NC might be more relevant and distinguishable from AC in non-Western countries where an obligation mindset of being loyal to the organisation is likely developed due to the internalisation of collectivistic cultural values (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010; Wasti, 2005). Finally, previous research failed to find an NC-dominant profile, unless in conjunction with one of the other components (Somers, 2009; Wasti, 2005).

The first goal of our study was to investigate the emergence of organisational commitment profiles according to Sinclair et al.'s (2005) conceptualisation. We adopted an exploratory approach and did not formulate specific hypotheses concerning which profiles would be more likely to occur.

## Commitment Profiles and Job Satisfaction

Moving from the theoretical profiles hypothesised by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Markovits and colleagues (2007) found that the groups characterised by high AC, in conjunction with either high or low CC (i.e. the “highly committed” and the “pure affective” groups), showed the highest levels of job satisfaction, both in the private and in the public sectors, whereas the profiles characterised by low AC (i.e. the “uncommitted” and the “pure continuance” groups) displayed the lowest scores of job satisfaction. This is likely because the identification and the desire mindset underlying the affective component are associated with an individual’s greater appreciation of the job and the work context itself. In fact, when an individual is emotionally attached to an organisation and shares its values and goals, he/she will be more likely to report satisfaction, defined as an emotional and cognitive evaluation of different facets of the work (Brief, 1998). This can hold true irrespective of whether the individual has a strong, moderate, or weak cost-avoiding mindset (underlying CC). Building on this rationale and on previous findings (Markovits et al., 2007), we formulated the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Profiles characterised by high levels of AC (i.e. Devoted, Involved, and Attached) will show higher means of job satisfaction, followed in order by profiles with moderate (i.e. Allied, Invested, and Complacent) and then low scores of AC (i.e. Trapped, Free Agents, and Uncommitted).

## Commitment Profiles and Behavioral Outcomes

Based on Meyer and Herscovitch’s (2001) work, one can assume that employees who are committed to their organisation because they *want to be* (i.e. responding to a desire mindset) likely interpret their roles in broader terms and engage in a wide range of behaviors that are beneficial to the organisation and to organisational goals’ attainment. As compared to “focal” behaviors, such a behavioral pattern is commonly referred to as “discretionary” behavior. Focal behaviors, instead, are implicitly included in the definition of one’s commitment or bond to a specific target and/or course of action, namely turnover in the case of organisational commitment. On the contrary, employees who are committed to the organisation only to *avoid personal costs* would not engage in behaviors other than their membership maintenance (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Consistently, meta-analyses have attested to a positive correlation between AC and job performance (i.e.  $\rho = .19$  with supervisory ratings of job performance, and  $\rho = .13$  with objective indices; Riketta, 2002) and a detrimental effect of CC on job performance (i.e.  $\rho = -.07$ ; Meyer et al., 2002). With regard to the combinations of commitment components, the literature hypothesised that the joint effect of high scores of all forms of commitment

would be less effective than the AC-dominant profile (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). However, the only study that has explored job performance in relation to commitment profiles (Sinclair et al., 2005) reported no differences among profiles with higher AC than CC (in their case the Complacent group) and those with comparable scores of AC and CC (i.e. Devoted and Allied). The only significant difference was among the Free Agents, with the lowest job performance, and all the other profiles.

Similarly, a negative relationship between affective commitment and absence from work has been found, regardless of whether the criterion was measured objectively (i.e. organisational records; Burton, Lee, & Holtom, 2002) or subjectively (i.e. self-report; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Sagie, 1998). With regard to continuance commitment, mixed results are reported in the literature. CC has been identified as a weaker predictor of absenteeism (Burton et al., 2002) than AC, or it even displayed a positive relationship with absences (Meyer et al., 2002). Somers (2009) looked at the differences among commitment profiles with regard to absenteeism, and, unexpectedly, found no significant differences among the highly committed, which were hypothesised to show the lowest level of absenteeism, the uncommitted, and the pure continuance profiles. In addition, it is important to note that the pure affective profile did not emerge in the sample examined in that study. These findings were explained in the light of the self-report measure used for absenteeism and the specificity of the sample; nevertheless, a subsequent study (Somers, 2010) that gathered objective data on absenteeism, failed to find any significant difference among groups. Given the inconsistency of these preliminary results with the theoretical expectations, we aimed to contribute to the investigation of job performance and absenteeism in relation to commitment profiles.

As far as organisational behaviors are concerned, it is important to recall the interrelatedness between commitment and other proximal motivational constructs, such as specific in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997). As some scholars have pointed out (Meyer et al., 2004), there is a clear convergence among these three theoretical concepts and theories: affective commitment is associated with intrinsic motivation stemming from a promotion focus, and continuance commitment with an external regulation responding to a prevention focus. In the framework of a person-centered approach the above-mentioned constructs would help qualify the two different mindsets underlying organisational AC and CC and put forward hypotheses regarding the different behavioral consequences they would bring about. On the one hand, there are employees with a strong identification with their company who find real enjoyment in their activities (i.e. intrinsic motivation) and are driven by the willingness to attain their ideal at work (i.e. promotion focus); therefore they would likely achieve better performance and not withdraw from work.

On the other hand, there are employees who are motivated by external demands, such as the company's expectations, and are willing to exert effort in order only to satisfy security needs (i.e. prevention focus); in this case, employees would likely attain lower levels of performance and exhibit more absences from work than employees intrinsically motivated. In fact, seeking to fulfill a duty (i.e. the work expectations) drives employees with high CC, but this is a less effective form of motivation—being externally rather than internally controlled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, as postulated also by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), profiles where AC is *higher* than CC (e.g. high AC vs. medium CC, but also medium AC vs. low CC) would perform better and be less often absent; nonetheless, profiles with *higher* CC than AC would perform better and withdraw less than the uncommitted profile. This is because extrinsic motivation is less powerful compared to intrinsic motivation, but it still is an effective drive (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Finally, we argue that individuals with comparable scores in AC and CC (i.e. both high or both medium) would situate themselves in-between the groups with higher AC and those with higher CC. Thus, they would show “intermediate” levels of performance and absences because they are compelled not only by intrinsic but also by extrinsic (i.e. less autonomous and more controlled) motivation. Building on these arguments, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 2:* Profiles where AC is *higher* than CC (i.e. Attached, Involved, and Complacent) will perform better than all the other groups, followed in order by profiles characterised by moderate to high levels *in both* AC and CC (i.e. Allied and Devoted), then by profiles with *higher* CC than AC (i.e. Invested, Free Agents, and Trapped), and finally by the Uncommitted profile.

*Hypothesis 3:* Profiles where AC is *higher* than CC (i.e. Attached, Involved, and Complacent) will show fewer days of absence from work than all the other groups, followed in order by profiles characterised by moderate to high levels *in both* AC and CC (i.e. Allied and Devoted), then by profiles with *higher* CC than AC (i.e. Invested, Free Agents, and Trapped), and finally by the Uncommitted profile.

## METHOD

### Participants

White-collar workers ( $N = 1,712$ ) from the main Italian mail delivery company, that has been recently privatised, were contacted to participate in this study. Of these, 1,171 agreed to participate and returned the questionnaires (68% response rate). Fifty-one per cent were completed by males. The age of participants ranged from 26 to 64 years ( $M = 42.3$ ,  $SD = 9.1$ ). The mean organisational tenure was 12.7 years ( $SD = 11.1$ ).

## Procedure

Employees were administered a paper and pencil questionnaire in collective meetings organised during work time, in which they were made aware of the general purposes of the research. Participation in the meetings and in the study was voluntary.

Each participant was assigned a code by the HR department that was associated to the questionnaire that was administered. This was done in order to enable the organisation to provide the performance ratings and the absence records associated with each respondent, in accordance with the privacy laws. In fact, the questionnaires were collected by researchers who did not know the correspondence between participants' names and codes, therefore assuring the confidentiality of the responses.

## Measures

The measures included: (a) the questionnaire; (b) supervisory ratings of workers' performance; and (c) an objective measure (i.e. personnel records) of absenteeism.

*Self-Report Measures.* The questionnaire comprised 14 items that were part of a greater survey, to measure organisational commitment and job satisfaction. For each statement respondents rated their agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Organisational commitment:** Ten items were adapted from the Italian version (Pierro, Lombardo, Fabbri, & Di Spirito, 1995) of Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale, with regard to the affective (five items) and continuance (five items) sub-scales. Sample items include: "The organisation where I work has great meaning for me"; "I have few alternatives to consider leaving this organisation". The coefficient alpha reliability was .86 and .81 for AC and CC, respectively.

**Job satisfaction:** Four items adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) measured job satisfaction with regard to different facets, namely supervisor, colleagues, opportunities for professional growth, and the overall job. A sample item is "I am satisfied with my job". The coefficient alpha reliability was .81.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the dimensionality of the 14 self-reported items. We specified a three-factor model based on the assumption that affective commitment, continuance commitment, and job satisfaction are three distinct, yet correlated, constructs. The confirmatory model relating the latent variables to the respective indicators satisfied multiple goodness of fit tests,  $\chi^2(74) = 730.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .917, RMSEA =

.069 (CI 90% .064, .073), SRMR = .076, as all indices fell within cut-off ranges (Brown & Cudeck, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1998) with the exception of the significant chi-square, likely due to the large sample size (Bollen & Long, 1993). The factor loadings were all higher than .40 and significantly different from zero, providing support for the convergent validity of the scales (Brown, 2006).

*Supervisory Ratings of Workers' Performance.* Supervisors rated employees by means of the company's performance appraisal tool. This instrument comprised five behavioral domains, namely "Customer focus" (e.g. "Anticipates clients' needs"); "Communication" (e.g. "Adjusts his/her communication style to different people"); "Network management" (e.g. "Builds up constructive relationships in order to achieve common results"), "Problem solving" (e.g. "Identifies problems correctly and finds appropriate solutions"), and "Change management" (e.g. "Explores new opportunities that contribute the ongoing change process") that were measured with five items on a 10-point answering scale. An exploratory factor analysis of these competencies revealed the existence of a single performance factor. Therefore, the five competencies were averaged for a composite performance score. The coefficient alpha reliability for the single dimension was .94.

*Personnel Records.* Absenteeism was operationalised as the total time lost, namely the sum of days of absence from work. It did not include absences due to holidays, maternity leave, military service, and participation in training courses or other company activities. The corresponding data were drawn from personnel records and referred to an overall period of 12 months (6 before and 6 after the administration of the questionnaires). The number of days of absence had a non-normal distribution, with high positive skewness and kurtosis (3.92 and 20.30, respectively). Because of the non-normality, a logarithmic transformation was conducted to reduce skewness and kurtosis to an acceptable level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). After the transformation, the variable approximated a normal distribution, with skewness and kurtosis lower than 1 in absolute value (coefficients were 0.49 and -0.71, respectively).

## RESULTS

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics, the reliability estimates of the scales, and the correlations among variables. Affective commitment was highly and positively correlated with job satisfaction, while it was unrelated to job performance and absenteeism. Continuance commitment was moderately and negatively correlated with job satisfaction and job performance,

TABLE 1  
Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affective Commitment (AC)	4.99	1.08	(.86)				
2. Continuance Commitment (CC)	3.84	1.22	-.05	(.81)			
3. Job Satisfaction	5.07	.96	.63**	-.17**	(.81)		
4. Job Performance	7.56	1.42	.02	-.24**	.13**	(.94)	
5. Absenteeism <sup>a</sup>	6.28	11.65	-.04	.12**	-.08**	-.13**	-

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  ( $N = 1171$ ). Values in parentheses on the diagonal show alpha reliability coefficients. <sup>a</sup> Correlations between absenteeism and the other variables were calculated before logarithmic transformation.

and positively correlated with absenteeism. The two commitment components were not related to each other. All the scales showed acceptable levels of reliability.

The two commitment scales' scores were standardised and submitted to a cluster analysis to determine whether distinct profiles could be identified. As anticipated, we did not formulate specific hypotheses but adopted an exploratory methodology. More specifically, we used a two-step approach, where a hierarchical cluster analysis is followed by a non-hierarchical method (see Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984; Barbaranelli, 2002; Huberty, DiStefano, & Kamphaus, 1997). As argued by Henry, Tolan, and Gorman-Smith (2005), this approach capitalises on the strengths of both hierarchical and non-hierarchical methods (see also Stefurak & Calhoun, 2007). First, a Ward's clustering algorithm (Borgen & Barnett, 1987) was performed to determine the appropriate number of clusters. Given the large sample size, we used a cross-validation procedure to determine the replicability of different cluster solutions (from 2 to 5 partitions). To this end, we randomly divided the sample into two subgroups. Then, the two- to five-cluster solutions were generated in each subsample. For each solution, we calculated the squared Euclidean distance of each case in subsample 2 from the cluster centroids from subsample 1. Finally, we assigned each case in subsample 2 to the closest cluster centroid. To evaluate the degree of replicability of each solution across subsamples, we used the Cohen's kappa statistic. The highest coefficient was found for the four-cluster solution ( $\kappa = .72$ ), which was revealed to be the most replicable. Once we selected the most appropriate number of partitions, the initial cluster centroids of the four-cluster solution on the whole sample was used as a starting point for a non-hierarchical K-means procedure, which allows for movement of cases between clusters. Figure 1 shows the commitment profiles that resulted from the four-cluster solution.

As can be seen, one group is characterised by moderate (i.e.  $-1 < Z < 1$ ) scores on both commitment dimensions ( $n = 429$ ) and is labeled the "Allied".

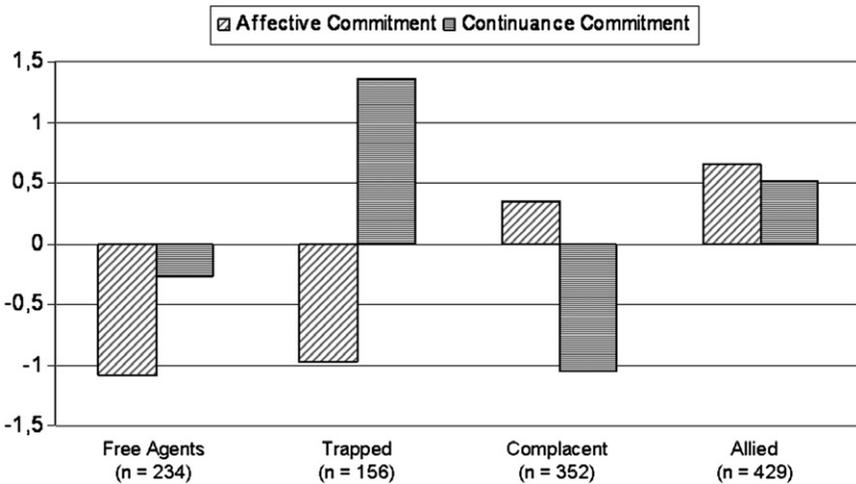


FIGURE 1. Commitment profiles in the four-cluster solution (Z-scores) on the whole sample ( $n = 1,171$ ).

A second group comprised individuals with low levels (i.e.  $Z < -1$ ) of AC and moderate levels of CC ( $n = 234$ ) and therefore can be labeled “Free Agents”. Moreover, two other profiles emerged. One of these profiles ( $n = 352$ ) was the inverse of the latter, characterised by moderate levels of AC and low levels of CC and matches with the “Complacent” profile. The other profile consisted of individuals who displayed low levels of AC and high (i.e.  $Z > 1$ ) levels of CC ( $n = 156$ ). This group corresponds to the “Trapped” profile hypothesised by Sinclair and colleagues (2005) in their theoretical combinations.

Further, we examined whether profile groups differed among each other also with regard to demographic variables. No gender differences emerged among groups,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.71$ ,  $p = .13$ , whereas significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) were found for age,  $F(3, 150) = 64.24$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ , and organisational tenure,  $F(3, 150) = 81.63$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ , which are strongly correlated,  $r = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ . Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed that the Complacent and the Free Agents were the youngest (mean ages were 38.68 and 39.06 years, respectively) and the lowest-tenured (mean tenures were 7.45 years and 8.99). These groups were not significantly different from one another with respect to age and tenure. Instead, the Complacent and the Free Agents profiles had significantly lower mean ages and tenures than the Allied and the Trapped. The Allied group had a mean age of 46.65 years with a mean tenure of 17.11. The Trapped group had a mean age of 46.00 years with a mean tenure of 17.86. These groups were not significantly different from each other. It appears that organisational commitment, and specifically the continuance component, shows an increasing trend

in relation to age and permanence in the organisation, consistent with the literature (especially in non-North American samples; Meyer et al., 2002).

In order to test our Hypotheses 1 to 3, a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. Specifically, we aimed to test the differences in attitudinal and behavioral outcomes among commitment profiles ruling out the potential effects of organisational tenure. Results indicate that the four profiles differed significantly in the dependent variables ( $F(9, 2856) = 33.69, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$ ). We assessed the hypothesised differences with univariate ANCOVAs. Table 2 presents the  $F$ -values, the means, and standard deviations for each outcome variable by commitment profile, adjusted for organisational tenure. As hypothesised, all three criteria significantly differed across the profile groups ( $p$ -values were all  $< .05$ ). The percentage of variance explained ( $\eta^2$ ) by the univariate tests was .28 for job satisfaction, .01 for job performance, and .01 for absenteeism.

Post-hoc comparisons using Bonferroni test were performed to identify the between-group differences. Results revealed that the Allied and the Compliant groups showed significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than the Free Agents and the Trapped profiles, supporting our first hypothesis. Although in our sample we could not identify any profile with high scores of AC, the trend was consistent with our expectations. Moreover, the Compliant group showed significantly higher job performance than the Trapped profile, whereas the Allied and the Free Agents did not show any significant differences. This finding, which is consistent with our second hypothesis, re-states that the intrinsic motivation underlying AC is powerful in driving an employee to take on positive behaviors toward the organisation. Finally, contradicting our third hypothesis, we found that the Trapped profile showed the highest mean of absences from work, and was significantly different from the Allied group that showed the lowest mean of absences.

## DISCUSSION

A configural approach to the study of organisational commitment has gained momentum over recent years because it allows a greater comprehension of an employee's relationship with an organisation by taking into account the combination of the different commitment components (i.e. "profiles").

In the present contribution, four empirical profiles emerged from the combination of three levels (i.e. high, moderate, and low) of AC and CC, supporting the extant empirical research (Sinclair et al., 2005), and strengthening it by relying on a large sample and a heterogeneity of job positions. We were able to replicate three out of the four profiles identified in previous research, and those profiles contained moderate scores in one or both dimensions, further corroborating the reasoning that moderate levels of commitment are more frequent than high or low ones and, therefore, are

TABLE 2  
 Summary of Univariate Analysis of Covariance for Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, and Absenteeism

	<i>Free Agents (1)</i>	<i>Trapped (2)</i>	<i>Complacent (3)</i>	<i>Allied (4)</i>
Job satisfaction <i>F</i> (3, 952) = 124.06, <i>p</i> < .001, $\eta^2 = .28$	4.31 <sup>a</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.91)	4.27 <sup>a</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.96)	5.40 <sup>b</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.68)	5.38 <sup>b</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.81)
Job performance <i>F</i> (3, 952) = 3.53, <i>p</i> < .05, $\eta^2 = .01$	7.51 <sup>ab</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 1.24)	7.25 <sup>a</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 1.53)	7.72 <sup>b</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 1.29)	7.57 <sup>ab</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 1.48)
Absenteeism <i>F</i> (3, 952) = 3.78, <i>p</i> < .01, $\eta^2 = .01$	0.59 <sup>ab</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.48)	0.66 <sup>a</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.55)	0.53 <sup>ab</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.48)	0.50 <sup>b</sup> ( <i>SD</i> = 0.53)

*Note:* Values in the cells are means. Means with different superscripts are significantly different at *p* .05 level (Bonferroni post-hoc test).

worth taking into account. As in Sinclair et al.'s study, the Allied, the Complacent, and the Free Agents emerged. The main difference regarded the fourth profile since, instead of the Devoted group, we identified a group with high CC and low AC that resembles the profile labeled "Trapped" by Sinclair and colleagues. Its emergence may be due to our specific sample, made up of older and longer-tenured employees in a privatised organisation, who originally joined with the prospect of a secure job position. This may explain why they stay in the organisation despite the cognitive dissonance between high CC and low AC (Sinclair et al., 2005). This finding suggests that some profiles are more generalisable and others may be tied more to the specificity of the sample and the organisational context where the studies are conducted. In fact, the clusters obtained with different populations support their stability and therefore increase the external validity of the results (Ketchen & Shook, 1996).

Overall, different relationships emerged between commitment profiles and job satisfaction, job performance, and absenteeism. The finding that not only high but also moderate AC predicts job satisfaction extends previous literature (Markovits et al., 2007) and can be explained through the intrinsic motivational mindset underlying affective commitment, which compels employees to evaluate more favorably the job and its characteristics. The relative strength of AC with regard to CC appeared critical for job performance in our analyses. It is worth noting that the job performance assessed by the company by means of its performance appraisal system shares some similarities with the traditional conceptualisation of extra-role behavior (or organisational citizenship behavior; OCB) in the psychological literature (Podsakoff, Blume, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2009). In particular, items such as "anticipates clients' needs" or "explores new opportunities that contribute to the ongoing change process" suggest behaviors that entail going above and beyond one's own role. This may contribute to understanding why the Complacent profile showed the highest levels of performance. In fact, autonomous and self-determined (i.e. intrinsic) motivation is recognised as a powerful driver of extra-role behaviors, which are voluntary and require substantial effort (Gagné & Deci, 2005). In this light, our results are in line with the theoretical expectations concerning the relationship between organisational commitment components and OCB (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), and the so-called "Compensatory effect" in the traditional variable-centered approach (Gellatly, Meyer, & Luchak, 2006). Instead, comparable scores of AC and CC, indicating the simultaneous presence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, are more likely to make a difference with regard to absenteeism. In this case, in fact, it seems that external and internal drives act toward the same coherent direction that is keeping down the number of days lost from work. Therefore, it is plausible that when people are driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic regulation (i.e. the Allied group) the effects of the respective motivational mindsets tend to increase. Indeed,

absenteeism may be considered as similar to, or an antecedent of, turnover (Morrow, McElroy, Lacznia, & Fenton, 1999) and, as such, it is a focal behavior compared to job performance.

## Limitations and Future Perspectives

The present study shows some limitations that open new directions for future research. First, the commitment profiles that emerged in this sample differed significantly with regard to employees' age and tenure, probably due to the specific organisational context (i.e. a privatised organisation); it may limit the generalisability of these profiles to different settings. Researchers should aim to replicate similar findings in different organisational contexts, as well as in different cultural settings. However, it is worth noting that our sample size is remarkable and that, splitting the overall sample, the four profiles emerged in both our subsamples.

Second, we collected cross-sectional data of both components of organisational commitment and, overall, the literature adopting a configural approach to the study of commitment lacks a longitudinal perspective on clusters' development (Sinclair et al., 2005; Somers, 2009; Wasti, 2005). This would be useful in answering the above-mentioned issues concerning the specificity or replicability of clusters across samples, contexts, and time.

Another limitation related to the cross-sectional nature of our data is that the absence data refer to a period of 6 months before and 6 months after the survey administration. This limits the possibility of inferring causality regarding the relationship between commitment profiles and absenteeism. However, literature on absenteeism indicates that it is a relatively stable behavior and that work attitudes are able to predict absenteeism over different time frames, from 3 to 60 months (Steel, Rentsch, & Van Scotter, 2007). On this basis we believe that the association between organisational commitment profiles and absences is reliable, although it is not formally possible to affirm a causal direction.

In addition, we focused on organisational commitment. However, it may combine with other constructs specifically related to the job (e.g. occupational commitment, work engagement), or with commitment to different targets since current work conditions (such as temporary jobs, multiple jobs, or tele-work) often loosen the feeling of membership within the organisational context. Indeed, recent studies have explored the combination of commitment to different targets, considering either a single (Morin, Morizot, Boudrias, & Madore, 2011) or multiple components (Tsoumbris & Xenikou, 2010). Therefore, further research is required to highlight the complex combination of these characteristics to understand organisational behaviors.

Finally, cluster analysis is regarded as a descriptive method aimed at finding different categories in order to reduce complex data; as such it would

be more suitable to generate hypotheses. Therefore, we were able to conduct only an exploratory analysis to identify the clusters expected following Sinclair et al.'s (2005) taxonomy. However, recent advances in mixture modeling, such as Latent Profile Analysis (LPA; Magidson, & Vermunt, 2004), enable scholars to directly compare different cluster solutions by means of statistical coefficients, and are currently recommended as fruitful analytical strategies for the study of commitment (Vandenberg & Stanley, 2009).

## Practical Implications

The results we discussed above give practical suggestions for management and HR practices and point to the necessity of taking into consideration the combination of AC and CC, as they bring about consequences different from what we would expect looking at the linear relationships between each single component and organisational behaviors. The correlations of AC with job performance and absenteeism are not significant; looking only at these correlations, we would have erroneously concluded that, in this context and inconsistently with the literature, the affective component does not play a role in shaping an individual's organisational behavior. On the contrary, we observe that some differences among profiles do exist, and that the profiles with moderate AC are associated with higher job performance and lower absenteeism. Moreover, CC, which negatively correlated with job performance and positively with absences, is not unequivocally detrimental to the organisation if accompanied and attenuated by the desire mindset of AC. The Allied group, thus, may be endorsed in order to promote job satisfaction and to prevent absences from work, as well as potentially other withdrawal behaviors or turnover. In addition, this group of employees would also reach medium levels of job performance.

An effective way to promote both forms of organisational commitment is the implementation of HR practices: managers should balance between those targeted at "maintenance" and those known as "high performance" HR practices that address the continuance and the affective components, respectively (Gong et al., 2009). Examples of the first category of practices are employment security and reduction of status distinctions. Meanwhile, to avoid security representing the only inducement in the exchange between the company and an employee, such that it conveys a feeling of "being locked in", high performance HR practices (including selective hiring, extensive training, performance appraisal, participative decision-making) should complement it, as they can potentially satisfy individual primary needs, such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

An additional practical implication for managers is to recognise that the above-cited practices (i.e. HR practices) and organisational commitment constitute the basic elements of the psychological contract (Rousseau &

Tijoriwala, 1998). HR practices are seen by employees as concrete promises; as such, managers are called to keep these promises in order to avoid the deleterious effect on organisational commitment that would derive from breaching the psychological contract (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007).

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