

Those who feel they have to stick with an employer become more emotionally exhausted, study reveals

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Love it or leave it — if only it were that simple. According to new research from Concordia University, the Université de Montréal and HEC Montréal, staying in an organization out of a sense of obligation or for lack of alternatives can lead to emotional exhaustion, a chronic state of physical and mental depletion resulting from continuous stress and excessive job demands.

Published in the journal *Human Relations*, the study found that people who stay in their organizations because they feel an obligation towards their [employer](#) are more likely to experience burnout. The same applies when employees stay because they don't perceive employment alternatives outside their organization.

"Our study examined whether some forms of commitment to an organization could have detrimental effects, such as [emotional exhaustion](#) and, eventually, turnover," says co-author Alexandra Panaccio, an assistant professor in the Department of Management at Concordia's John Molson School of Business.

"When employees stay with their organization because they feel that they have no other options, explains Panaccio, "they are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. This feeling, in turn, may lead them to leave the organization. The implication is that employers should try to minimize this 'lack of alternatives' type of commitment among

employees by developing their competencies, thus increasing their feeling of mobility and, paradoxically, contributing to them wanting to stay with the organization."

The researchers also found that people with high self-esteem are most affected by a perceived lack of employment alternatives — possibly because that perception is inconsistent with their self-view as important and competent people.

Panaccio and her colleagues surveyed 260 workers from various industries, including information technology, health services, engineering and architecture. Participants were, on average, 34 years old; 33 per cent held managerial positions, while 50 per cent worked in the public sector.

The research team measured various types of organizational commitments, such as whether employees identified with a company's goals and values and whether they felt an obligation to stay.

"It may be that, in the absence of an emotional bond with the organization, commitment based on obligation is experienced as a kind of indebtedness — a loss of autonomy that is emotionally draining over time," says Panaccio.

More information: hum.sagepub.com/content/early/.../26711424229.abstract

Provided by Concordia University

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