

Research Paper

## Impact of Organizational Support and Workplace Belongingness on Organizational Commitment among Layoff Survivors

Shreya Kar<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Anjali Majumdar<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the impact of Organizational Support (OS) and Workplace Belongingness (WB) have on the level of Organizational Commitment (OC) among layoff survivors in the context of the Indian IT sector. The study uses a mixed method approach, where the quantitative data (N= 203) were collected from employees through surveys, and the qualitative data (N= 7) was collected using in-depth interviews with the participants who witnessed layoffs in their current organization. Results suggest that OS and WB have a positive correlation with OC; these factors are significant predictors of OC. However, there is no difference in the level of commitment among employees who witnessed layoffs and those who didnt witness the same in person. Qualitative insights further emphasize the emotional toll of layoffs by highlighting the importance of communication, empathetic managerial support, and equitable workload distribution. The study's findings provide essential insights for developing HR policies that aim at enhancing employee resilience and help foster a supportive organizational culture in the face of layoffs.

**Keywords:** *Organizational support, Workplace belongingness, Organizational commitment, Layoff survivors, HR policies*

**D**ora Vanourek, senior managing consultant at IBM and a certified executive coach, took to LinkedIn to express that “Layoff survivors are like the wounded soldiers of one’s workforce” while suggesting that organizations have a crucial role in rebuilding their confidence and trust. Layoff survivors are employees who stay in the organization after a layoff season. Over the years, corporate employment in India has witnessed a layoff surge. Statistically, if we compare the number of employees laid off in the previous years, 2023 experienced 15% higher layoffs than 2022 (Pankaj, 2023). Now, what is “Layoff”? The term “layoff” refers to the situation in which companies terminate or dismiss employees, usually permanently, that can be due to reasons ranging from poor sales to organizational crises. David Noer, the author of “Healing The Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations,” shared with CBS News that people who survived layoffs suffered from a phenomenon called “layoff survivor guilt,” where they became more anxious, insecure, and started getting less productive (Cerullo, 2023). Similar to this report, there are many other resources that attract organizational

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, School of Psychological Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, School of Psychological Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

\*Corresponding Author

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psychologists to explore layoff survivors and understand the factors that affect them within the organizations. Behbahani (2023) discusses the adverse behavioral effects that are observed among the remaining employees. According to results from Culture Amp and Myer-Briggs Company, there is a negative correlation between layoff survivors, engagement, commitment, and other behavioral factors. Multiple studies do indicate the relationship between commitment and engagement, as well as support and belongingness. Still, there is a significant lack of research that explores employee behavior and commitment among layoff survivors.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers over the years have applied various theoretical frameworks and theories that support the relationship between organizational commitment and employee behavior (Brockner et al., 2004; Erikson & Roloff, 2016; Naumann et al., 1995; Naumann et al., 2016; Wong & Wong, 2017). Research explores the factors that influence the levels of commitment among layoff employees. These factors include reduced motivation, confidence, and an overall change of attitude toward their organization (Kim, 2003; Robbins, 1999). Based on these studies, this research focuses on the **Social Exchange Theory** by Blau (1964), Emerson (1964, 1972), and Homans (1961). The Social Exchange Theory suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in relationships where benefits are reciprocal. This research aims to understand how organizational support impacts organizational commitment among employees who remain in the organization after a layoff season. From an organizational perspective, employees engage in such relationships with the organization when they feel that it makes them feel belong and that the organization supports them. This perception impacts their obligation to demonstrate their commitment to the organization.

Blau added to the **Organizational Support Framework** by working further on the social exchange theory. The Organizational Support Framework by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Eisenberger & Rhoades (2002) focuses on the employee's perception of organizational support. Organizational support is defined as the belief that employees hold whether or not the organization cares about their well-being and if they will help them whenever needed. Research has shown that when employees perceive high levels of support from their organization during layoff periods, it helps the survivors deal with post-layoff stress and, thus, positively impacts their commitment (Crawford, 1997; Erikson & Roloff, 2016; Naumann et al., 1995; Wong & Wong, 2017).

The **Workplace Belongingness Theory** states the importance of feeling socially included, accepted, and valued within the workplace. As Raza et al. (2020) mention in their research on fostering belongingness among employees, this theory has been adapted from the Belongingness Theory by Baumeister & Leary (1995), which states that individuals develop meaningful relationships in the workplace by employing their cognitive processes that develop their sense of belongingness. This aligns with our research aim to identify whether the layoff survivors who feel more belong to a particular organization are more likely to be committed to its success, as has been described by other researchers like Guo & Giacobbe-Miller (2016), Lavelle et al. (2009), and Raza et al. (2020).

### *Problem Statement*

Among the few studies that have been conducted on layoff survivors, the existing ones focus on the impact of commitment levels on employee behaviors. There is a significant lack of

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research that tries to identify the factors that influence this organizational commitment, which eventually impacts employee behavior at the workplace. Thus, organizations lack clear indications on how to identify and mitigate these factors that influence organizational commitment.

### ***Research Aim***

This research explores the relationship between organizational factors like support and belongingness and the level of organizational commitment among employees who have witnessed layoffs in their organization but didn't get laid off themselves, i.e., the layoff survivors.

### ***Rationale***

India has experienced dynamic shifts in its employment pattern during several economic downturns and industrial transformations, where a significant population has experienced layoffs across different sectors. To understand the struggles of layoff survivors, it is also essential to understand the various factors affecting them. Research on “Impact of organizational support and workplace belongingness on organizational commitment of layoff survivors” highlights the several psycho-social factors that characterize the Indian workplace. Understanding the impact of organizational support and workplace belongingness on the organizational commitment of layoff survivors is essential from the perspective of developing a resilient and engaged workforce. India belongs to a collectivistic culture that particularly emphasizes social relationships, connections, and belongingness. Thus, workplace belongingness and support become key influencers of organizational commitment and overall professional satisfaction.

Apart from this, in the Indian corporate setting, the need for developed organizational support has increased. Analyzing these support systems and their impact on influencing organizational commitment would provide deeper insights into HR practices and organizational policies. Further knowledge about the current scenario would be beneficial in creating resilient, supportive, and thriving workplaces in the country. This research attempts to show the psycho-social factors that affect the employees who experience layoffs, particularly in a country where belongingness is crucial. Thus, understanding the layoff survivors' struggles can build a resilient and engaged workforce and provide valuable insights for better HR policies and practices to manage layoffs and their aftermath. Organizations can use these inputs to develop better support systems, enhance their communication during downsizing, and help boost the morale and creativity of the remaining workforce to promote a positive and supportive work environment eventually. Thus, the research aims to assist organizations to minimize the adverse effects of layoffs and build a more resilient and positive workplace.

### ***Objective***

The study has the following objectives:

- To establish the relationship between organizational support and organizational commitment among layoff survivors.
- To establish the relationship between workplace belongingness and organizational commitment.
- To identify if both organizational support and workplace belongingness can predict organizational commitment.

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- To identify the difference in the level of organizational commitment among employees who have witnessed layoffs, i.e., the layoff survivors, and those who have never witnessed layoffs.
- To understand the underlying factors that impact organizational support and workplace belongingness among layoff survivors.
- To get the perspectives of layoff survivors about the factors that influence organizational commitment.
- To understand the emotional aspects associated with the variables among layoff survivors.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

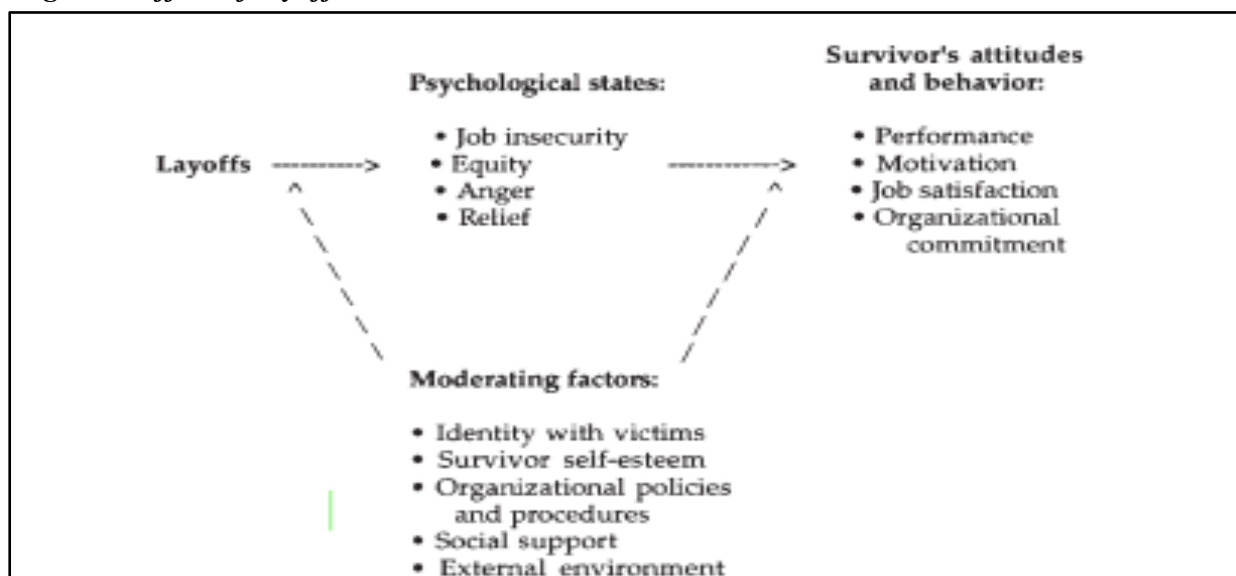
Layoffs have been a common workplace circumstance in recent years. In the post-restructuring environment, the employees who remain in the organization go through very challenging circumstances. They experience a very emotional and difficult situation when they witness their colleagues depart, which ranges from the increased workload and job insecurity to decreased morale and job satisfaction (Guo & Giacobbe-Miller, 2012). While they are already coping with the loss of their colleagues in the workplace, they also need to maintain their performance to prevent themselves from being on the list for downsizing. The only solution to these effects among the post-layoff workforce is to develop resilience and adaptability by providing optimal support and making them feel like they belong. Providing optimal support and making employees feel they belong would contribute to their commitment towards the organization and increase their productivity and overall organizational performance. This literature review explores the relationship between organizational support, workplace belongingness, and organizational commitment in the case of layoff survivors.

#### ***Background on Layoff Survivors***

Many organizations over the years have done a relatively great job in helping layoff victims deal with downsizing by supporting them to stand back on their feet again, from assisting them with service restructuring to providing psychological counseling, along with extended benefits programs, severance packages, and a detailed communication plan. However, very little has been done for those who stayed in the organization and are ultimately responsible for organizational growth. Researches on layoff survivors indicate the negative effects on layoff survivors, which include job insecurity, perceived injustice, depression, anxiety, stress from an increased workload, fear of change, reduced loyalty and commitment, lack of motivation to work, willingness to go beyond their minimum responsibilities, feelings of being left out, and a loss of confidence in the judgment of upper management (Blau et al., 2023; Robbins, 1999; Saleh, 2015).

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*Figure 1 Effect of layoffs on survivors*



*Note.* Cited from Brockner (1988) in Robbins (1999)

Other researchers have also supported with evidence that layoffs have a negative impact on the mental health of survivors. The psycho-social impact of downsizing has affected the work attitudes of survivors (Grunberg et al., 2000; Kim, 2014; Nauman et al., 1998), while research by Reinardy (2013) indicates how increased work hours with fewer resources have reduced morale, organizational trust, and job satisfaction among layoff survivors leading to job burnout, reduced work quality, and employee turnover. Cotter & Fouad (2012) used mediating factors like job demands, i.e., job insecurity and work overload, and resources available at job like social support, optimism, resilience, career adaptability, and career self-efficacy to establish a relationship between work engagement and burnout of layoff survivors. This research demonstrated that while job demands affected burnout, factors like support, optimism, and career adaptability influenced engagement at the workplace for layoff survivors. Further, evidence was also found on how perceived manager support affected the negative relations of psychological contract breach with employee performance and organizational commitment (Bohle et al., 2016).

### ***Relationship between Organizational Support, Workplace Belongingness, and Organizational Commitment***

Over the years, researchers have tried to establish how organizational support has affected organizational commitment in the post-layoff work environment. In the context of a Chinese foreign-invested enterprise (FIE), researchers Wong & Wong (2017) have explored how factors like organizational support, organizational commitment, and other factors determine the turnover intentions among layoff survivors. The research results indicated that perceived organisational support's impact on turnover intentions becomes a mediating factor and does not influence organizational commitment. In other words, perceived organizational support directly affects organizational commitment rather than directly influencing turnover intention.

Another study divided the population into two groups: in the first group, few people were laid off, and in the second group, all survived the layoff. Results from the first group indicated that when employees perceived higher control over the situation and perceived

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support, the level of organizational commitment was positively impacted. However, the second group, which survived the layoff, experienced negative results on their well-being, directly associated with their job performance. Hence, in the post-layoff environment, employee's perceived control over the situation impacted their level of organizational commitment (Brockner et al., 2014). It has also been investigated that the level of organizational commitment among layoff survivors is affected by perceived organisational support (POS) and by perceived supervisor support (PSS) (Erikson & Roloff, 2016). Results reveal that POS is a mediating factor between PSS and organizational commitment in a post-layoff workplace, in which the relationship between PSS and organizational commitment strengthens with the decrease in organisational support. Thus, the increased supervisory support enhances motivation and resilience among employees whose morale and job satisfaction are reduced due to the lack of organizational support. Additionally, research by Ekowati & Mirza (2008) has established that perceived organizational support directly impacts all the components of organizational commitment.

Meanwhile, workplace belongingness refers to the degree of involvement employees feel within the organization. There is a significant lack of literature on the effect of workplace belongingness on organizational commitment on layoff survivors. However, some researchers have tried to explore the factors that influence workplace belongingness among employees. These factors include organizational justice, appreciative leadership, job crafting, and organizational citizenship behavior, with affective commitment as a mediating variable (Ali & Jaaffar, 2020; Cockshaw et al., 2012; Lavelle et al., 2008; Raza et al., 2020). Hence, the employees with high levels of emotional or affective commitment towards the organization were found to have greater job satisfaction and could cope with the negativities of downsizing. They also had lower perceived job insecurity and lower feelings of being alienated from their job, i.e., lower feelings of not belonging to the organization (Armstrong-Stassen, 2004).

Overall, these kinds of literature suggest that there is a positive correlation between organizational support, workplace belongingness, and organizational commitment. However, the existing literature fails to address certain aspects of the current study.

### **LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING LITERATURE**

Most studies that have been conducted on the keywords "layoff survivors," "organizational support," and "organizational commitment" indicate any one of the variables used in this research with greater emphasis on various mediating factors like organizational justice, employee turnover intentions, and perceived control. There has been very little research on the impact of organizational support and workplace belongingness on organizational commitment among layoff survivors.

Significant research has indicated the relationship between POS and organizational commitment; however, none shows the situation for layoff survivors. Even though there has been plenty of research on layoffs, ranging from the effect of layoffs to providing support to layoff victims, significantly less research has been done on those who stayed back in the organization. Most of these studies have focused on the effects of organizational commitment on changes in employee behavior post-layoffs. However, none of them covers the reasons why the organizational commitment is affected among layoff survivors.

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Hence, this research studies layoff survivors, i.e., those who survived layoffs. Further, existing researchers have used limited variables to measure the impact on layoff survivors. There is also a lack of research that has combined organizational support and workplace belongingness to organizational commitment, particularly for layoff survivors. Additionally, none of the existing research has explored the underlying factors influencing organizational support and workplace belongingness from the employees' perspective. Lastly, in the last five years, only four studies and over the previous ten years, only nine studies have been conducted on the keywords “layoff survivors”, “workplace belongingness”, “organizational support”, and “organizational commitment.” Further, very few studies have been conducted on the Indian population.

Forbes report claims the increase in layoff rates in the IT industry by 715% (Saul, 2023). These limitations led to the finalization of the topic “Impact of Organizational Support and Workplace Belongingness on Organizational Commitment of Layoff Survivors,” with a particular emphasis on IT employees of the Indian private workforce. In this, organizational support and workplace belongingness are the independent variables, and organizational commitment is the dependent variable.

### ***Research Questions***

Thus, based on the existing literature, the questions that this research aims to explore include,

- a) Do factors like perceived organizational support impact the level of organizational commitment among layoff survivors?
- b) Is there a relationship between workplace belongingness and organizational commitment among employees who have survived layoffs?
- c) Do the independent variables, i.e., organizational support and workplace belongingness, predict the impact on the organizational commitment of layoff survivors?
- d) Is there a difference in the level of organizational commitment among employees who have witnessed layoffs and among those who have never witnessed a layoff?
- e) What factors determine organizational support and workplace belongingness, specifically among layoff survivors?

### ***Hypothesis***

Based on literature gaps, the hypotheses developed for quantitative research are as follows:

- **H1:** Organizational support has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment among layoff survivors
- **H2:** Workplace belongingness has a significant positive effect on the organizational commitment among layoff survivors
- **H3:** Organizational support and workplace belongingness predict organizational commitment among layoff survivors.
- **H4:** The level of organizational commitment among employees who witnessed layoffs differs significantly from employees who have never witnessed a layoff.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

Both deductive and inductive research approaches were adopted to conduct this research. A mixed-method research design was used by conducting both surveys and interviews to

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understand the relationship among the variables: organizational support, workplace belongingness, and organizational commitment.

For phase I of the research, a quantitative research design was used to reach the target sample. We used a survey method to collect data. Following phase I, phase II of data collection involved a qualitative research design where we conducted interviews to understand the relationship between the variables better.

### ***Sample***

Considering the Indian statistical reports on layoffs in recent years, employees in the IT sector were chosen as the target population. Considering India's massive IT population, a sample size of 203 employees was selected for the research study. The research was conducted in two phases, Phase I, which involved quantitative data collection. 203 participants were selected using three sampling methods - convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling. The data was collected from two groups: those who witnessed layoffs in their current organization and others who never witnessed layoffs.

The inclusion criteria for the quantitative study are:

- Employed in the IT sector
- Has completed one year of employment in the same company

The exclusion criteria for the quantitative study are:

- Has been laid off (in the previous workplace)
- Is planning a voluntary departure from the current organization
- Holds a managerial position in the organisation

For Phase II, which involved a qualitative interview, participants were selected through convenience sampling among the 124 participants who witnessed layoffs in their organization and participated in the quantitative survey. 7 participants were interviewed before the data reached saturation.

### ***Operational Definitions***

- **Organizational Support:** Organizational support is the degree to which employees perceive that the organization values their contributions and is ready to invest in their well-being and provide them with the resources and opportunities they might need to be effective in their roles (Eisenberger et al., 1986).
- **Workplace Belongingness:** Workplace Belongingness is how employees feel valued, respected, accepted, and integrated within the work environment while fostering a sense of connection and psychological safety. This feeling makes employees feel respected and valued through positive connections and assists them in bringing out their best at the workplace (Jena & Pradhan, 2018).
- **Organizational Commitment:** Organizational commitment is described as an employee's multifaceted psychological attachment to their organization. This definition includes three main components of organizational commitment - affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. This indicates employees' degree of engagement and dedication towards their organization (Mowday et al., 1979).

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### *Tools Used*

To assess the independent variables, i.e., organizational support and workplace belongingness, the Perceived Organizational Support Scale (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and the Workplace Belongingness Scale (Jena & Pradhan, 2018) are used. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979) assessed the dependent variable, i.e., organizational commitment.

- ***Perceived Organizational Support Scale:*** Perceived Organizational Support Scale is used to measure organizational support. This scale was developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) to describe the extent to which employees believe that the organization values the employees' welfare and is willing to reward them for more significant efforts. The questionnaire includes 19 items, of which eight items measure the employees' perception of the degree to which the organization values their contributions, and nine items are about the actions the organization might take that would affect the employees' well-being. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire ranges from 0.74 to 0.95, and the scale has shown a positive correlation with overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and other related questionnaires. Perceived organizational commitment has also been negatively correlated with perceived organizational politics, turnover intentions, role stress, and other similar constructs. Through factor analysis, Wayne et al. (1997) and Eisenberger et al. (1997) show that organizational support is empirically distinct from developmental experiences, leader-member exchange, affective commitment, turnover intentions, and overall job satisfaction. This scale is scored on a seven-point Likert scale, with seven reverse-scored items. On the Likert scale, a score of one indicates strongly disagree, and that of seven indicates strongly agree.
- ***Workplace Belongingness Scale:*** The Workplace Belongingness Scale was developed by Jena & Pradhan (2018) to measure the level of belongingness in the workplace. This scale describes the extent to which employees feel they belong and that their opinions are respected and valued. The questionnaire includes 12 items that measure the level of belongingness among employees. The Cronbach's alpha value for testing the reliability of the workplace belongingness scale was equal to 0.86. Split-half reliability was also conducted to measure the reliability of the test, where the reliability coefficient was equal to 0.85. Furthermore, the item-to-item correlation was above the threshold of 0.30. Both convergent and discriminant validity were conducted to confirm the validity scores of the questionnaire. All 12 items on the scale are positively worded and scored on a five-point Likert scale. On the Likert scale, a score of one indicates strongly disagree, and a score of 5 indicates strongly agree.
- ***Organizational Commitment Questionnaire:*** The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire is a 15-item scale developed by Mowday et al. (1979). The questionnaire assesses employee commitment toward their organization by assessing three factors: the will to exert effort, the desire to maintain their membership, and the degree to which they accept the organizational values. The questionnaire establishes satisfactory test-retest reliability scores and an internal consistency coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ). Furthermore, good predictive, discriminant, and convergent validity is also established. This 15-item scale has six reverse-scored items, scored on a seven-point Likert scale, where one indicates strongly disagree and seven indicates strongly agree. To get the final score of an individual's organizational commitment, scores of all items have to be summed and then divided by 15, i.e., get the mean score of the

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same. Separate scoring norms are given for males and females, which provide the percentile scores for organizational commitment.

### *Procedure*

For Phase 1 of this research, initially, a Google form was circulated online to the participants, and a consent form was attached. However, due to a low response rate, offline data collection was initiated, wherein we collected responses from our target population directly. Further, based on the availability and consent of participants who mentioned that they witnessed layoffs during Phase 1 of the research, Phase II of the research was conducted online. The interviews were all audio-recorded, and proper consent was taken before the interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was analyzed using Jamovi, an open-access software for analyzing quantitative data. Apart from descriptive statistics, correlation analysis (Spearman's rho), multiple linear regression analysis, and Mann-Whitney U test were conducted based on the normality of scores. Correlation analysis assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between each independent variable (Organizational Support and Workplace Belongingness) and the dependent variable (Organizational Commitment) to support H1 and H2. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis will be used to investigate H3, as it analyzes how much variance in organizational commitment scores can be predicted by organizational support and workplace belongingness. The significance of results in regression analysis will be indicated if both variables contribute significantly in predicting commitment (leading to accepting H3) or if only one or neither does (supporting the null hypothesis). To test H4, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted due to the absence of normality in the scores.

To explore the research question, "What factors determine organizational support and workplace belongingness, specifically among layoff survivors?" we assessed the qualitative data using thematic analysis based on the interview results. This included data familiarisation, coding, developing themes, refining themes, defining themes, and writing the thematic analysis report. In this process, recurring themes and patterns in the experiences of layoff survivors were identified to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the variables. For example, most participants reported interpersonal communication as essential for workplace belongingness.

## **RESULTS**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

*Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for total scores of organisational commitment (OC), organisational support (POS), and workplace belongingness (WB) (N=203)*

	N	Mean (M)	Median	SD	Shapiro Wilk (W)
OC	148	69.5	69.0	10.90	0.982*
POS	148	85.2	85.0	13.89	0.989
WB	148	43.6	44.0	6.12	0.986

*Note.* \* indicates Shapiro Wilk W value is significant at  $p > 0.05$

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Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the total scores obtained in the three variables. Normality is tested for all three variables, with OC (M= 69.5, sd= 10.90) having a Shapiro Wilk W value of 0.982, POS (M= 85.2, sd= 13.89) having a Shapiro Wilk W value of 0.989, and WB (M= 43.6, sd= 6.12) having a Shapiro Wilk W value of 0.986. According to the assumptions of normality, a p-value more than 0.05 indicates that the scores of OC are normally distributed. However, the p-values for POS and WB are less than 0.05, which means their scores are not normally distributed and do not meet the assumptions of normality.

- **H1: Organizational support has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment among layoff survivors**
- **H2: Workplace belongingness has a significant positive effect on the organizational commitment among layoff survivors**

**Table 2 Correlation between the variables Organisational Commitment (OC), Organisational Support (POS), and Workplace Belongingness (WB) (N= 203; df= 201)**

	OC	POS	WB
OC Spearman's rho (correlation coefficient)	1.000	0.455**	0.409**
POS Spearman's rho (correlation coefficient)	0.455**	1.000	0.563**
WB Spearman's rho (correlation coefficient)	0.409**	0.563**	1.000

*Note.* \*\*Correlation is significant at p< 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 2 indicates the correlation between the three variables. Due to the presence of two variables that are not normally distributed, non-parametric statistics were used. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the correlation between organizational commitment and perceived organizational support, as well as between organizational commitment and workplace belongingness. There was a significant positive correlation between OC and POS,  $r(201) = .455$ , at  $p < .001$ . Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation between OC and WB,  $r(201) = .409$ , at  $p < .001$ . This indicates that the **H1 and H2 are both accepted**, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

**H3: Organizational support and workplace belongingness predict organizational commitment among layoff survivors.**

**Table 3 Multiple regression analysis: predicting the relation between IVs (POS and WB) and DV (OC), N=203**

	df	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	Standard Error	T value
Model 1 (Intercept)	202		4.9127	5.63***
POS		.292	0.0591	4.94***
WB		.389	0.1342	2.90**

*Note.* \*\*Sig. at p<0.01, \*\*\*Sig. at p<0.001

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Table 3 demonstrates multiple linear regression to predict the dependent variable (OC) based on the independent variables (POS and WB). The adjusted r-square (df= 202) value is 0.278, with F (40) and  $p < 0.01$ . This indicates that the model used is significant, and the model can explain 27.8% of the dependent variable (OC). POS (df= 202, beta= .292) has a t value of 4.94, which indicates a significant unique contribution to the model at  $p < 0.001$ . Similarly, WB (df= 202, beta= .389) has a t-value of 2.90, which indicates a significant unique contribution towards the model used to predict the relationship between the variables, at  $p < 0.01$ . This indicates that the **hypothesis H3 is accepted**, and the null hypothesis is rejected. **Note to the editor:** The correlation matrix for the regression model has been attached in the appendix section.

**H4: The level of organizational commitment among employees who witnessed layoffs differs significantly from employees who have never witnessed a layoff.**

**Table 4 Mann-Whitney U test on the differences in OC level among those who did and didn't witness layoffs. (N1= 124; N2= 79)**

Variable	Statistics
OC	Mann-Whitney U Test 4529

Note. Ho:  $\omega(N1) \neq \omega(N2)$

Table 4 compares the means of two groups, N1 (n= 124) being the group that witnessed employees getting laid off, while N2 (n=79) being the one that didn't witness. The Mann Whitney U (df= 202) value is 4529, with a p-value of 0.366, which is not significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The statistics indicate that there is no significant mean difference in the distribution of OC across the two groups of layoff witnesses, thus **rejecting hypothesis H4**.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Interviews were conducted to analyze the perspectives of layoff survivors on the variables of organizational support, organizational commitment, and workplace belongingness, especially during periods of layoffs. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify underlying emotional responses that could possibly influence the variables. 4 global themes were identified from the research objectives, based on which sub-themes and codes were prepared. The identified themes and responses are demonstrated in Table 5.

**Table 5 Thematic analysis of the interviews**

Themes	Sub Themes	Codes	Excerpts
Organisational Support	Support	Emotional Support during the Layoffs	<p>“support was there, as in they were taken through with a conversation.”</p> <p>“just little bit consolation.”</p> <p>“ it felt like once the layoffs were announced, there was like a lack of concern for how these people were like handling the situation, I feel that was not quite taken care of”</p>

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Themes	Sub Themes	Codes	Excerpts
		Professional Support during the Layoffs	<p>“actually provided professional support for landing their next job.”</p> <p>“reason behind that was just mechanical reason of getting efficiency up. So that's why it's not really a pleasant experience for the person who got laid off”</p> <p>“ I believe that while the organization tried to be quite mindful about how they are announcing this news, what sort of reasons are they giving, what kind of support they provided, I think it was the bare minimum.”</p>
		Effect on Workload after layoffs	<p>“But it kind of feels like more of the same, like not significant changes in any way.”</p> <p>“Definitely, that work, that laid-off employee's assignments or any program suppose given by the management, that was distributed among us. So, automatically, the workload became high.”</p> <p>“Generally, they increase the working hour.”</p>
	Workplace Transparency	Communication level during the layoff process	<p>“After one day or two days, okay, we came to know that people already laid off or suppose terminated like that. Alright.”</p> <p>“communication was not transparent”</p> <p>“weren't given clear answers to begin with, so our meetings were very vague. Any questions that were asked, we weren't able to give them concrete answers. So the meeting really was not very productive.”</p>
		Changes in Job Security	<p>“without any notice or without any intimation or threatening or warning, okay, they have laid off my colleagues”</p> <p>“ I would say that despite being in this company for six years, every time a</p>

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Themes	Sub Themes	Codes	Excerpts
Workplace Belongingness	•	Impact of Managerial Support	layoff notice comes to my email, I am scared to check that because what if it's me”
			“clear and concise conversation between me and my manager”
			“there was a sympathy from both me and my manager for the person, we clearly understood that this was not exactly a right fit”
		Changes in Team Dynamics	“We have certain loyalty to our employers, but that does not necessarily gets reflected by the employer's perspective”
			“management is very much professional”
			“But it kind of feels like more of the same, like not significant changes in any way.”
Organisational Commitment	Factors	Positive factors that influence OC	“some discussions around what exactly happened, what could have been done differently, and that did come up quite a few times, especially as the, like you know, the date of termination came closer and closer”
			“And if you go out for a meal and drink and have a good time, it doesn't have to be exactly at work. So, that fosters a sense of belongingness”
			“I continue in this organization, my future is very clear.”
			“people, those have already laid off. I think they were having something, some problem. Problem, something behavioral problem I have seen. Sometimes I have seen they are very much casual or very much lazy people. Okay. They wouldn't fulfill their, whatever the management has given that assignment. They're very casual in this regard. I have seen. If you are sincere, if you are very much committed to your organization, I

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<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Excerpts</b>
		Negative factors that influence OC	<p>think nothing to worry about your organization at all.”</p> <p>“very ephemeral.”</p> <p>“could be doing a great job for quite some time, but then if you slip up or your efficiency slips up, then it won't actually take a long time for the perception of yours to change”</p> <p>“you might just be a number, you're part of the statistic, not exactly a person that they would even know.”</p> <p>“It's hard to be committed to a company when you feel like even your role isn't really important. Your job, your job security, your bill is not secure. So, the way they handled this made us feel pretty bad about it.”</p>
		Level of Commitment	<p>“I'm not dispensable for the company. We have certain loyalty to our employers, but that does not necessarily gets reflected by the employer's perspective”</p> <p>“commitment was already, I would say, less than average”</p> <p>“whatever the instructions will be given by the management, definitely I will follow”</p> <p>“My commitment for my work has not changes... I am still working the same. But can't say the same for my company.”</p>
Emotional Response		Emotions during Layoffs	<p>“once at a time, suppose if I am giving the proper gesture over there or I am doing my whatever the assignment given by the management. Okay. Okay. If I fulfill all these things, then no need to care about that layoff matter at all.”</p> <p>“all of a sudden, suppose we heard</p>

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Themes	Sub Themes	Codes	Excerpts
			that two employees already laid off day before yesterday. Then what happened? Okay. Then everybody is thinking about that one.”
		Level of emotional wellbeing perceived	<p>“team goes off and just have a couple of days to themselves and relax and all. And even there are programmes where they would sponsor a quarterly night out. And if you go out for a meal and drink and have a good time, it doesn't have to be exactly at work”</p> <p>“all of a sudden, suppose we heard that two employees already laid off day before yesterday. Then what happened? Okay. Then everybody is thinking about that one”</p> <p>“That point of time, little bit we disturbed.”</p>

### DISCUSSIONS

#### *Quantitative Analysis*

The findings from this study offer significant insights into the dynamics of organizational commitment, particularly in the context of perceived organizational support (POS) and workplace belongingness (WB). The results highlight both the complexity and the importance of these factors in shaping employees' commitment to their organization, especially in challenging times such as during layoffs.

The descriptive statistics reveal the presence of the normality assumption for only organizational commitment (OC) but not for perceived organizational support (POS) and workplace belongingness (WB). One of the primary reasons for this non-normal distribution might be the small sample size and that most of the data was collected from employees of IT hubs located in Bangalore and Pune. Thus, to understand the different nuances of POS and WB completely, these complexities might require further investigation.

The significant positive correlations between OC and both POS and WB emphasize the critical role that perceived support and belongingness play in developing and maintaining organizational commitment. Employees who perceive higher support from their organization and feel a stronger sense of belonging are more likely to be committed to their organization. This relationship highlights the importance of organizations investing in strategies and developing policies that enhance support and create an inclusive environment where employees feel valued and connected. For example, regular communication, recognition programs, and inclusive policies could elevate employees' perceptions in uncertain situations (Bruce, 2024).

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The multiple regression analysis further highlights the impact of POS and WB on OCQ. Both factors significantly predict organizational commitment, with WB having a slightly stronger influence than POS. This finding suggests that while a perception of organizational support is crucial, having a sense of belonging plays a more pivotal role in determining employees' commitment levels. Organizations should consider this when designing interventions aimed at improving commitment. Providing clear career development opportunities, offering emotional and professional support, and ensuring that employees feel supported during difficult times can significantly enhance organizational commitment.

The Mann-Whitney U test reveals that employees who witnessed layoffs have levels of organizational commitment that do not significantly differ from those who did not witness such events. This finding fails to align with existing literature that suggests layoffs can have a detrimental impact on the morale and trust of remaining employees. The experience of witnessing colleagues being laid off may lead to increased feelings of insecurity along with a reduced sense of loyalty toward the organization when compared to employees who have never witnessed layoffs. The results suggest that both groups have similar levels of organizational commitment. Organizations should prioritize transparent communication and reassuring remaining employees. They should offer support services such as counseling, career planning, and opportunities for open dialogue can help rebuild trust and commitment among the workforce.

Overall the quantitative aspect of the research highlights that employees who feel positive about their organizations' support and feel like they belong within the organization are more likely to be committed in stressful situations, like that of a layoff. An employee's belief that the organization and its members will stand next to them and provide the necessary support in times of needs keeps them committed to the organizational processes. However, the quantitative statistics highlight the broader concepts of belongingness and support. To understand the subjective influences of support and workplace belonging on organizational commitment, the research delves into qualitative responses which connect these variables with each other.

### ***Qualitative research***

The thematic analysis identifies several themes and sub-themes related to organizational support, workplace belongingness, organizational commitment, and emotional responses during layoffs. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are followed, wherein the themes were identified based on research objectives. However, the codes and sub-themes are identified based on interview responses and indications from research papers (Haque & Aston, 2016; Jha et al., 2022, 2024; Krishnan & Mary, 2012; Srivastava & Pathak, 2016; Wadhera & Bano, 2020).

Organizational support is categorized into the effects of workload and emotional and professional support. Emotional support during layoffs is perceived as minimal, with participants mentioning "just a little bit of consolation" and "occurring mostly through communications." Professional support, on the other hand, varied, with some employees acknowledging the assistance provided by organizations in finding new jobs. In contrast, others felt that professional support was inadequate or "mechanical" and that it was only aimed at maintaining efficiency rather than genuine care. Interviews with employees also identified that they experience increased workloads as tasks from laid-off colleagues were redistributed. This led to increased working hours and much higher expectations. However,

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some employees felt that because the layoff resulted from a continuous process, the decision didn't significantly impact the workload.

Further, under workplace transparency, communication levels during the layoff process and changes in job security were mostly focused on. Communication is often seen as lacking transparency, wherein employees learned about layoffs much after they had been done. However, some also mentioned that in start-ups, this communication was more open and had been a continuous process. However, the ambiguity in communication led to concerns about job security, with employees expressing uncertainty about their future roles.

The impact of Managerial Support revealed mixed experiences. Some of them expressed feeling supported through clear and sympathetic communication and also expressed their respect for their senior, while others noted a disconnect between their loyalty to the organization. Changes in team dynamics revealed how layoffs didn't specifically affect the team dynamics.

Both positive and negative factors influenced organizational commitment. Positive influences included clear communication from management and a belief in job security for committed employees. Negative factors included a perception of being treated as just a statistic and the ephemeral nature of job security, where a single mistake could alter how the organization perceived employees.

Emotional Response during layoffs was characterized by concern for job security and a general sense of anxiety. The level of emotional well-being perceived by employees varied, with some finding solace in team activities while others were disturbed by the suddenness of layoffs.

Overall, this section summarizes the extent to which employees are affected by the lack of support and humane touch that organizations fail to provide while letting employees go. During layoff seasons when the entire organization is in an uncertain state, having a manager who understands the situation and is empathetic towards the employees, as well as a genuine gesture from the organization that they support the employees, are some basic desires that the interviewees quoted multiple times. Genuine and in-depth communication addressing the concerns of the current workforce, along with policies that could enhance and improve interpersonal relationships that are affected, is something that organizations fail to address post-layoff seasons. Mostly, the lack of communication influences the job security of employees, where their concerns remain unaddressed, leading to a decrease in the perception of organizational communication. Almost every participant stated that they still felt loyal to their job role and that they liked the kind of work they did. Whether they are data analysts or HR personnel, they reported high commitment towards their job. However, due to the above-stated reason and other related factors, they tend to look for opportunities outside their organization that would make them feel respected.

### ***Practical Implications***

The findings of this research have significant implications for organizational settings, particularly in how companies can improve their policies to support layoff survivors and enhance overall organizational commitment. Organizations must recognize the critical role of perceived organizational support (POS) and workplace belongingness (WB) in shaping employees' commitment. The positive correlations between these factors and organizational

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commitment highlight the need for companies to invest in strategies that not only provide emotional and professional support but also foster a strong sense of belonging. This can be achieved through transparent communication, personalized career development opportunities, and recognition programs that help employees feel valued, even during difficult times such as layoffs (Shahid & Azhar, 2013).

Interviews with employees who stayed in the organization mentioned how layoffs often create uncertainty and anxiety among remaining employees, and the research emphasizes the importance of transparent communication to mitigate these effects. Organizations should ensure that layoff processes are handled openly and with care to keep the employees informed about decisions and their implications. This transparency will help alleviate fears of job insecurity and rebuild trust. Additionally, providing emotional support, such as counseling or mental health resources, and professional support, such as career planning and mentorship, will reassure layoff survivors and help them re-engage with the organization (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013). Managers play a key role in this process, and fostering strong, empathetic managerial support can significantly impact employees' commitment and their perception of organizational care. Research by Erikson & Roloff (2016) indicates that employees perceive higher levels of organizational support when they perceive higher levels of supervisor support.

Furthermore, addressing increased workloads due to layoffs is essential. Redistributing tasks from laid-off employees without considering the impact on remaining employees can lead to burnout and decreased morale, as has been reported by many interviewers. Organizations must be mindful of this by offering workload management solutions and ensuring that employees are not overwhelmed. By collectively using these insights, companies can not only enhance the commitment of their remaining workforce but also create a more resilient, supportive environment that strengthens loyalty and mitigates the negative effects of layoffs.

### ***Limitations***

However, these research has certain limitations. Firstly, the sample size of this study is very small and has been limited mostly to specific locations in the country. The non-normal distribution of the variables points to the potential need for further research to explore the factors contributing to this irregularity. Thus, the results still lack generalisability. Secondly, other studies mention several other factors, such as leadership styles, interpersonal relationships, and other factors that influence organizational support, as well as belongingness. Thus, future research needs to consider various other factors and domains to explore the essential factors that eventually lead to the lower organizational commitment level of employees who survived layoffs.

### **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this research has explored the vital role of perceived organizational support (POS) and workplace belongingness (WB), and how they impact organizational commitment (OC) among employees who have survived layoffs. The quantitative results have revealed significant positive correlations between POS, WB, and organizational commitment, which emphasize the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment that eventually maintains a higher level of commitment among employees. Organizations that prioritize transparent communication, offer both emotional and professional support, and create a sense of belonging are better equipped to maintain high levels of employee commitment, even during challenging times.

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Qualitative insights further highlight the complexities of organizational dynamics during layoffs, especially the mixed experiences regarding emotional support, managerial engagement, and communication. While some employees felt supported and valued, others experienced increased workloads, reduced job security, and feelings of being treated as mere statistics. These experiences negatively impacted their emotional well-being and commitment to the organization, which led them to develop unspoken hostility towards the organization and look for opportunities beyond their organizations.

To mitigate the adverse effects of layoffs, organizations must adopt a holistic approach that includes transparent communication, empathetic managerial support, and clear career development pathways. By doing so, they can rebuild trust and loyalty among layoff survivors, ensuring that the workforce remains engaged, motivated, and committed to the organization's success. Collectively, these insights offer valuable guidance for organizations to develop policies and interventions that not only enhance commitment but also foster a resilient and supportive workplace culture during periods of organizational change.

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The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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**APPENDIX**

*Table 6 Correlations matrix between Percieved Organizational Support (POS), Workplace Belongingness (WB), and Organizational Commitment (OC) (N= 203; df= 201)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>OC</b>
POS	85.2	13.89	-		
WB	43.6	6.12	0.563***	-	
OC	69.5	10.90	0.455***	0.409***	-

Note. \*\*\*p < 0.001, one tailed