Interplay of personal characteristics antecedents and organisational antecedents in driving employee commitment

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Abstract: The paper investigates how personal characteristics antecedents and organisational antecedents integrate to determine employee commitment (EC) in the Electricity Company of Ghana. By so doing, we depart from the predominant approaches to the study of EC which focus on a single set of antecedents, and to establish the need for combining the two. A survey study, we used questionnaire to collect primary data from 120 directors, managers and employees of the company. Data were presented in tabular format using frequencies and percentages, and cross-analysed the two sets of antecedents to ascertain their extent of integration in driving EC. We found that integrating both sets of antecedents reveals the critical role of employees' personal characteristics in influencing the organisational antecedents to cause commitment, and a table is constructed to demonstrate this. We recommend application of both sets of antecedents, simultaneously, to better explain how and why employees are committed to organisations.

Keywords: employee commitment; Electricity Company of Ghana; ECG; organisational antecedents.

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1   Introduction

There have been streams of research on employee commitment (EC) and many authors have assigned varied reasons for this development. Kim and Rowley (2005) write that EC has been extensively and variably defined, measured and studied, and believe that this is due to its perceived attendant benefits that have made it of perennial and topical interest to academics, employees, businesses and policy makers. Meyer et al. (2004) attribute the increasing interest in EC to the evidence that a motivated and committed workforce provides benefits to the organisation. Meyer and Allen (1991) point out the feeling of being tied to the company goals and targets as the essential core of these benefits.

Steers (1977) defined employee (organisational) commitment as the relative strength of the individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organisation. This definition is re-affirmed by Kim and Rowley (2005) who defined EC as a construct which has three primary factors including willingness to exert high level of effort on behalf of the organisation; strong desire to stay or degree of belongingness or loyalty; and acceptance of major goals and values of the organisation. The definition corroborates that of Steer's (1977) definition which focuses on commitment to the organisation. Outcome of Oppong and Tetteh (2014) extends this definition when they found that employee has three levels of commitment to the organisation, to work groups and to employee's job.

The importance of EC is evidenced in streams of research that have produced diverse outcomes. For instance, outcomes from the studies of Mowday et al. (1982), Meyer and Allen (1984), Kim and Rowley (2005), Liu et al. (2014) and Oppong and Tetteh (2014) reveal that EC is closely related to job satisfaction; employee retention; improved performance; creation of company image; motivated employees; and social benefits.

Businesses (especially those aware of the benefits) are therefore making strenuous efforts to have their employees committed to reap these immense benefits or positive outcomes. This therefore calls for the identification of the direction of causality, which many researchers have concerned themselves with. These researchers have come out with many classes of the causes or antecedents of EC. For instance, Tayyab (2006) identified organisational factors and personal characteristics; Kim and Rowley (2005) came out with organisational antecedents and personal characteristics antecedents; while Abreu et al. (2013) extended the factors when they came out with organisational characteristics, personal characteristics; and work experience. However, the third component of Abreu et al. (2013), work experience, forms part of the personal characteristics antecedents of Tayyab (2006) and Kim and Rowley (2005), therefore confirming the two main classes of antecedents. Many researchers (including some graduate students) investigating antecedents of EC have focused on either the personal characteristics (e.g., Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) or organisational characteristics (e.g., Tayyab, 2006). The objectives of this article will be to move a step further:

1   to investigate how both sets of antecedents could be combined to assess EC in business organisations

2   to explore and communicate the weaknesses/benefits in assessing EC when applying only one of the sets of antecedents.

In this regard, the paper adopts a basic approach to the analysis for easy appreciation and application, especially by those who attempt approaching EC analysis based on a single set of antecedents. The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we present the context within which the study is conducted; followed by review of relevant literature. We continue with how the study was conducted by describing the methodology employed; and how data were collected, presented and analysed. We then present our data followed by our data discussion and our conclusion.

2   Research context: Ghana and EC

EC of the Ghanaian worker is generally viewed from two perspectives, which depends on whether the person works in a private sector or public sector. It is believed that implementation of, and adherence to regulations and procedures in the public sector are more relaxed than they are in the private sector. This is explained by two of what people refer to as 'Ghanaian mentalities'. Firstly, people believe that what belongs to the government belongs to 'us' (the community, nation) because we are 'government' and can therefore manage what is ours the way we want it. Secondly, because the government who is a primary owner is remote from the enterprise which makes supervision very relaxed. What probably best explains the phenomenon is that state enterprise is not-profit oriented and whether employees work hard or not the firm will not go bankrupt and employees will be paid since compensation is not usually contingent on firm's performance but rather on government subvention.

This probably contributes to the non-performance of the Ghanaian state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that called for their privatisation as one of the conditions of the world bank/international monetary fund (IMF) structural adjustment policy that Ghana embraced in April 1983. This affirmed by the divestiture implementation committee that

identified lack of expertise and commitment in the SOEs as major contributory factor for privatisation of the SOEs. This point to the fact that the lukewarm attitude of public sector employees towards work is deep-rooted as it has existed for many years and in almost all the SOEs. This gives weight to Ghanaian perception about the public sector employee.

However, utilities such as water, electricity, and most of other facilities such as hospitals; schools and universities; the postal services; are all in the hands of the government and therefore belonging to the public sector, not to talk about the various ministries and government agencies. This shows the huge number of employees and the important role the public sector employees play in the economy of Ghana. Therefore, any lukewarm attitude of employees towards work is more likely to affect the overall output and progress of the economy. In these contexts, the study assesses the level of EC in the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), a public sector organisation, and to seek new insight into the phenomenon in new light.

3   Literature review

There have been varied theories on EC. One of the earliest definitions is given by Becker (1960) based on function of the rewards and costs associated with organisational members. Becker provided this theory based on his work on 'side-bets', which refers to the accumulated investment made by an individual into an organisation which will be lost if he or she decides to leave the organisation. Side-bets therefore attach employees to the organisation. These side bets, Becker believed, include tenure in the organisation, position status, age, organisation-specific skills, etc. which combine to offer accumulated investment to the employee who would not want to lose these benefits and are therefore encouraged to stay with the organisation. Other researchers (prominent being Cohen and Lowenberg, 1990) have added to the 'side-bets' proposed by Berker. Other added factors include education, mobility, organisation level, pay, marital status, gender, organisational level, and availability of alternative jobs.

Then emerged the theory of social psychological factors; this was proposed by Ritzer and Trice (1969) when they tested Becker's 'side-bets' and found no relationship between most of the side-bets factors and EC. The social psychological factors as affecting employee's level of commitment, the authors admitted, are not that structured but just a social-psychological phenomenon. Both Becker's (1960) and Ritzer and Trice's (1969) theories are believed to influence EC to some extent although the social-psychological factors are stronger than the side-bets (Shoemaker et al., 1977).

Another theory which dives much deeper into employee's commitment to an organisation than the other two is Etzioni's (1961) typology of commitment. Etzioni's typology is explained from the perspective of relationship – employee's involvement in an organisation and the power or authority that the organisation has over its members. Etzioni proposed that the authority that an organisation exercises over its members is deeply rooted in the form or nature of employee involvement in the organisation. The involvement or commitment of employees, based on organisational power, can take one of the following three distinctive forms: moral involvement; calculative involvement; and alienative involvement with authority.

Moral involvement is a high-intensity commitment to the organisation because employee will become very much attached to the organisation's activities since it is

believed that the organisation is pursuing goals that are seen as appropriate or because the organisation is meeting the needs of the society. Calculative involvement or commitment is a reciprocal relationship and represents a less intensive form of commitment. This involvement is rooted in the exchange relationship that is developed between the employee and the organisation. Thus, employees become committed to their organisations when they perceive that the benefits they receive from the organisation are equal to their contribution to the organisation. This equitable exchange approach means the more favourable or beneficial employees perceive the rewards to be, the more committed they will be to the organisation so as to continue receiving these rewards. This approach is similar to Adams' (1965) organisational inducement-contribution model, which seeks to explain how rewards are exchanged for inputs into organisational activities.

Alienative involvement, Etzioni's third form of involvement, is based on restrictive and/or exploitative relationship. With this involvement/commitment, the individual is attached to the organisation not because they wish to, but because they are restricted to that form of involvement. E.g., some people may have to be involved in activities of a certain organisation not because their goals are served or they find the exchange favourable but because they have no alternative jobs. In this case, they are restricted to their current organisation to survive. In another scenario, prison inmates could demonstrate their attachment by getting involved in the organisation but not by their volition. This involvement could be negative as it may result in counter contribution to the organisation.

Employee (or organisational) commitment has engaged many researchers and practitioners due to its perceived importance on employee performance and organisational success. For instance, evidence suggests that organisational commitment is closely related to such important behavioural outcomes as employee turnover and job satisfaction, i.e., committed employees are satisfied and attached to their organisations with far less intentions to exit. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) find that EC is positively related to job satisfaction, employee motivation and citizenship behaviour (Alimohammadi and Nayshabor, 2013). Oppong and Tetteh (2014) found it to be negatively related to voluntary turnover, absenteeism, counter production, and low levels of employee morale. They add that low commitment leads to creation of negative corporate image to outsiders thereby inhibiting the organisation's ability to attract high-quality employees.

These streams of research, among others, suggest how important EC is to organisations. To realise these outcomes organisations and researchers have engaged in finding out the causes or antecedents of EC. Causes of EC have been categorised into individual antecedents and organisational antecedents (Mottaz, 1989); personal characteristics antecedents and work content antecedents (Gaertner and Nollen, 1989); personal characteristics antecedents and organisational antecedents (Tayyab, 2006; Kim and Rowley, 2005; Oppong and Tetteh, 2014). All these classifications suggest two main categories of antecedents, though some are described slightly different by some authors. Abreu et al. (2013) however add another category of antecedents. From their research on effects of personal characteristics on organisational commitment in the Brazilian oil and gas industry, the authors identified antecedents as organisational characteristics; personal characteristics and work experience. They described work experience as service time (number of years one has been with an organisation). However, work experience, the third category of antecedents, has been interpreted differently by some authors (e.g., Kim

and Rowley, 2005) and included in the personal characteristics antecedents, thus strengthening the two-tier categorisation.

Review of literature on EC therefore reveals how much attention has been given to identifying antecedents or causes of the concept. This shows how important EC is and how there is the struggle to identify factors that influence commitment levels of employees. This is the concern for this article – consideration of antecedents that influence EC in the ECG. Our earlier work considered the three components of the subject – nature, antecedents and outcome and realised the need for further research. This is therefore further to our theoretical studies that came out with organisational antecedents and personal characteristics antecedent influencing levels of commitment but both doing so separately. With the potential of both influencing certain levels of commitment, this paper tries to assess, empirically, how the interplay of both sets of antecedents influence commitment. We consider further the two sets of antecedents in the subsequent sections.

3.1   Individual characteristics antecedents

Individual characteristics, also referred to as demographic variable have been identified variably by researchers to include age, gender, educational level, position tenure, organisation tenure, position classification, marital status, number of children, pay, mobility, perceived job alternatives. However, as this paper extends our earlier research by implementing the suggestion for further research, it is appropriate that we stick to our earlier elements including age, marital status, educational background, gender, position status and tenure, which are the widely described individual characteristics antecedents.

Age. It is believed that age is positively related to commitment i.e., the older the employee, the less possibility that they will find desirable alternative jobs. Kim and Rowley (2005) explained this on the basis of the side-bets theory (Becker, 1960). Older employees would not want to lose the greater investments or a larger number of side-bets, which Mathieu and Zajac (1990) enumerated to include greater satisfaction with their jobs; better positions gained over the years; less years remained in the organisation with related benefits, among others.

Gender. Gender here is restricted to sexes of employees. Most studies on the relationship between gender and commitment levels have found that women employees demonstrate greater commitment than their male counterparts. Bar-Hayim and Berman (1992) found that as women usually occupy a lower status on the labour market, it is equally likely that women are more likely to have the incline to encounter limited job opportunities and could therefore decide to maintain the present job. Explained differently, Kim and Rowley (2005) believe that men are more committed than women. They explain that men tend to make more efforts to secure their current positions and to advance for greater responsibilities and rewards. Men receive greater monetary returns (than women) and are therefore attached to the organisation to enjoy these benefits (side-bets).

Educational background. Educational level is believed to be negatively related to commitment i.e., the higher one's educational qualification the more unlikely the person will stay with the organisation. Earlier studies such as Mowday et al. (1982) and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) produced this outcome and supported by Abreu et al. (2013). Some reasons for this inverse relationship include:

1   well-educated people have higher expectations that the organisation may not be able to satisfy

2   highly educated people are more committed to their profession than to organisation they work for

3   highly educated people have greater number of job options, making them less likely to stick to any one company (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

Tenure. Described as service time by Abreu et al. (2013), tenure is the length of time spent with an organisation. The longer the period, the higher the tenure; as tenure increases, employee's investments in the organisation and socialisation (to organisational members, and job environment) become more complete. Employees therefore become more attracted towards their current organisation. This is perceived by Kim and Rowley (2005) as higher psychological attachment which renders other alternative jobs less attractive. This means the higher the tenure the more likely employees are to express high levels of commitment to their organisations.

Marital status. Tayyab (2006) found positive relationship between marital status and commitment. This is because married employees are financially responsible and will therefore want to remain with the current organisation to earn income. This antecedent could be combined with salary (which is separated by some authors) and could even include number of children. This is explained that married employee with number of children need to be financially dependent and therefore be committed to their organisations to ensure that their salaries are sustained and increased to cope with family needs.

Position status. This is the role/position one holds in an organisation. The higher one's position in an organisation, the more committed the person. Termed as job level, Abreu et al. (2013) categorised this into managerial and operational. This could be junior staff/senior staff and managers/directors in the context of our research, as these describe position categories in Ghana. There could be mixed-relationship – both positive and negative depending on the intentions of the employee.

Employees with lower status are usually with low qualifications and are more likely to be attached as their educational qualification may not get them any alternative jobs. However, from side-bets perspective, these employees have not made much investment (Becker, 1960) that can encourage them to remain with the organisation. With regard to employees with high position status; they are likely to remain with their current organisations to enjoy the accumulated investments made. However, such employees do not face much restriction when they decide to leave as they have the requisite qualifications and skills to move to other jobs, therefore rendering them less committed.

3.2 *Organisational antecedents*

The antecedents discussed earlier relate to characteristics of employees, either as they came into the organisation with (e.g., age, gender) or as developed through working with the organisation (e.g., tenure, position status). Many authors including Abreu et al. (2013) have assessed commitment based solely on personal characteristics antecedents. The questions "how do we know the direction of causality?', "are characteristics the cause of commitment or …?" [Kim and Rowley, (2005), p.119] carry much weight regarding antecedents of commitment, and therefore reveal that personal characteristics alone

cannot or should not influence EC levels. The personal characteristics should be in relation to 'something' that relates to the organisation in order for the individual to be committed to the organisation.

This suggests that the individual should be committed to something applying those personal antecedents. This brings to the fore the question, 'committed to what' (Tayyab, 2006). The question seems to have been earlier answered by Kim and Rowley (2005) and Mishra (2005) when they identified two components of commitment as attitudinal and behavioural. These two components are explained that when employees are attitudinally committed to their organisations, they want to be there whereas if behaviourally committed, employees perceive they need to be there, considering alternative causes of action (Kim and Rowley, 2005). Mishra similarly explains that the two components reveal that employee has bond with the organisation through his/her actions, and through these actions sustain his/her involvement in the organisation. These submissions imply that commitment is more than personal characteristics which include social relationships and work behaviours with the organisation. These social relationships and work behaviours that drive EC, as identified in our earlier study include autonomy, clarity of purpose, congruency, employee empowerment, interesting work and feedback. The antecedents are defined at the presentation of results section and explained at the discussion of result section.

4   Methodology

This section describes how the research was conducted including the research design; data collection technique and procedure; and analysis of primary data.

4.1   The research design

Descriptive survey was adopted, which used quantitative data collection tool (questionnaire) to attempt to establish between the two sets of antecedents, and among the various elements of these sets of antecedents. According to Trochim (2000), the descriptive method is used to describe the basic features of the data of the study. He adds that the design provides simple summaries about the sample and the measures, which, together with simple graphics analysis, it forms the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. According to Thyer (2010), the outcome of descriptive research provides data about the sample and describes basic relationships intended to increase understanding the questions being asked (the research objectives). These attributes of descriptive survey therefore justify our use of the methodology as we intend to offer basic analysis that will be easily followed by researchers, especially graduates to:

1   appreciate the need to combine both sets of antecedents

2   grasp the analytical approach to understand how the two sets of antecedents are combined.

4.2   Collection of data

Questionnaires were sent electronically (by e-mail) to respondents. As we did not know the e-mail addresses of many employees as required to make up the number of respondents, questionnaires were e-mailed to focal people such as secretaries and supervisors, who internally distributed to employees on our behalf. As the researchers did not send out the questionnaires individually to respondents it was difficult to determine the return rate. Most of the questionnaires were completed online in the same Microsoft Word format as were sent out by authors but others were printed out, completed in ink and scanned. Both formats were however returned via e-mail. Data collection exercise (distribution, administration, and retrieval of questionnaires) expanded over a ten-week period and 121 completed questionnaires were returned. However, we discarded the questionnaire with the least answered questions to limit the number to 120 for ease of calculation of the percentages.

The target group included no specific group of employees of the company but included as many of the employees as possible due to the difficulty of sampling the population and also the authors' inability to have reached the sampled population due to the distance. However, some categories of employees satisfied given responses. For instance, regional departmental heads, managers and supervisors were good sources to identify the key issues involved in EC within the company. These groups of employees were selected on the basis of their supervision of, and records on the general workforce, placing them in a position to explain EC phenomenon. Efforts were therefore made to solicit data from these categories of employees, resulting in responses from six directors; 12 senior managers; and 12 middle managers. Our data source also included junior and senior staff, who were expected to provide data on their commitment levels, and what motivated them to be committed or otherwise.

4.3   Data presentation and analysis

Data results were presented in a mixture of tabular format of frequencies, percentages and bulleted lists. Analysis was done manually, categorising data and calculating frequencies and percentages before presenting them in tabular formats. We employed cross-analytical approach including within-text analysis and cross-text analysis. By this we mean analysing individually the dimensions of one set of antecedents and then comparing one set of antecedents with the other. By so doing, we attempted to identify how the organisational antecedents (main variables) influence commitment levels of employees while crosschecking these with the personal characteristics antecedents to ascertain how they complement or otherwise the organisational antecedents. To achieve this, we subjected the personal characteristics antecedents to secondary analysis (Tables 7 to 12) and used to evaluate the outcomes from analysis of the organisational antecedents. The dimension(s) of personal characteristics antecedents cross-checked with a given dimension of organisational antecedents was informed by how closely they related after manually going through the responses. The manual approach adopted rendered the analysis time consuming but had the potential of helping researchers, especially graduates preparing their theses, to appreciate the analysis.

5   Presentation of data results

In this section we present data obtained from our questionnaires. The first six tables reveal responses on personal characteristics antecedents, with the second six questions (7 to 12) presenting results of the organisational antecedents. Each of Tables 7 to 12 is presented into rows – row A provides responses to the organisational antecedents and Row B provides responses to related personal characteristics antecedent(s). We then present results of three questions (Tables 13 to 15) asked for respondents to freely provide on issues relating to their (dis)satisfaction with, and commitment to the company.

- Q1. Which of the following describes your age?

Table 1   Ages of respondents

Age group	No. of responses	Percentage
Below 21 years	6	5.0%
21–30 years	18	15.0%
31–40 years	42	35.0%
41–50 years	36	30.0%
51–60 years	18	15.0%
Above 60 years	0	0.0%
	120	100.0

- Q2. Are you married or unmarried?

Table 2   Marital status of respondents

Marital status	No. of responses	Percentage
Married	67	56.7
Unmarried	51	43.3
	118*	100.0

Note: *Number of respondents not up to 120 because not everyone responded to the question.

- Q3. What is your gender?

Table 3   Gender of respondents

Gender	Male	Female
Male	81	67.5
Female	39	32.5
	120	100.0

- Q4. Which of the following describes your educational qualifications?

Table 4 Educational qualifications of respondents

Qualification	No. of responses	Percentage
No formal qualification	0	0.0
GCE O' level/A' level	33	28.5
Diploma or equivalent	42	36.5
1st degree	33	28.5
Master's degree	6	6.5
Doctorate degree	0	0.0
Others	0	0.0
	114*	100.0

Note: *The number of responses to this question was 114 six respondents did not select any options.

- Q5. How long have you been in the employment of the ECG?

Table 5 Tenure of respondents

Year ranges	No. of responses	Percentages
5 years below	15	12.5
5–10 years	57	47.5
11–15 years	24	20.0
16–20 years	12	10.0
21–25 years	9	7.5
26–30 years	3	2.5
Above 30 years	0	0.0
	120	100.0

- Q6. Which of the following describes your position in the company?

Table 6 Position categories of respondents

Position categories	No. of responses	Percentage
Junior staff (JS)	39	32.5
Senior staff (SS)	51	42.5
Middle manager (MM)	12	10.0
Senior manager (SM)	12	10.0
Director (D)	6	5.0
	120	100.0

Explaining the structure in ECG, junior staff is the lowest ranked workers and senior staff is the next highest above junior staff. In Ghana, in most organisations where qualification is a major criterion for placement, most senior staff are degree or diploma holders with a number of years experience, or junior staff with good performance records plus a given number of years' experience (usually within the same organisation). However, in public sector organisations such as ECG, position category for entrants mostly depends on the

budgeted positions and who decides to apply. Middle managers, who are usually front line managers and supervisors, attain this status through long-service and a few by direct recruitment in which case qualification will be a major criterion. Senior managers are regional functional heads such as the human resources manager for central region who in most cases is a rise through the ranks as supported by some personal development programs. With regard to directors who are national functional heads such as director of human resources and director of engineering, or regional directors, appointments usually have some elements of political influence, though they usually come from within the company.

- Q7. Autonomy is described as the degree of freedom, independence and discretion employee is allowed in scheduling his/her work. Rate the level of autonomy you are allowed in the company (please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

Table 7   Responses to autonomy and related personal characteristics antecedent

Rating	5	4	3	2	1
No. of responses	9	39	63	9	0
Percentage	7.5	32.5	52.5	7.5	0.0
Position	4D, 5SM	2D, 7SM, 9MM, 20SS, 1JS	3MM, 28SS, 32JS	3SS, 6JS	

This question was asked to test how respondents value autonomy over the performance of their work and also test if they are actually allowed to have a say in the scheduling and performance of their jobs. As autonomy results in boredom, its presence is likely to demotivate employees and, as a result, reduce commitment to the company. Table 7 details how the question was answered, with related personal characteristics antecedent.

- Q8. Clarity of purpose provides clear identification of employee's intentions and allowing employee to be informed and to ask questions and share information about their work. Rate how the provision of clarity of purpose motivates you to be committed to the company? (please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

Table 8   Response to clarity of purpose and related personal characteristics antecedent

	Rating	5	4	3	2	1
A	No. of responses	63	36	15	6	0
	Percentage	52.5	30.0	12.5	5.0	0.0
	Position	39JS, 24SS	27SS 9MM	3MM 12SM	6SM	
B	Tenure	5(< 5), 34(5–10), 13(11–15), 11(16–20)	4(< 5), 20(5–10), 11(11–15), 1(16–20)	6(< 5), 9(21–25)	3(26–30), 3(5–10)	

Allowing employee the chance to share information about issues that they need clarification is seen to be helpful practice as it allows management to review and redesign employees' work for improved performance. The question was asked to solicit from respondents their views on this and to ascertain if there are practices in place that help to allow employees seek clarification about their work. It is believed that if employees are clear of any doubts about procedures and processes and these are well spelt out

employees will know what to do, how to do it, when to do it and the expected results. Clarifying such issues will not only benefit the employees as they will be able to do their jobs well, but will also help the company achieve its objectives. Responses to the question are as presented in Table 8, with the related personal characteristics antecedents.

- Q9. Congruency is described as the quality of agreement existing between employee's values and interest, and those of the company. Rate how this applies to you in the company. (Please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

This question seeks to test how employees' personal interests relate to those of the company. Though companies determine their vision and mission and employees are expected to work to achieve these, employees are motivated to increase performance if the company's interests relate in a way to those of the employees. This means the employee will not only be motivated to do his/her work but will be doing what he enjoys doing. The agreement should however be quality, thus, the interests should seek to satisfy both parties.

Table 9   Responses to congruency and related personal characteristics antecedents

	Rating	5	4	3	2	1
A	No. of responses	24	66	12	6	12
	Percentage	20.0	55.0	10.0	5.0	10.0
	Gender (F/M)	14/10	41/25	6/6	0/6	4/8
B	Age	13(51–60)	2(51–60)	2(51–60)	1(51–60)	4(31–40)
		8(41–50)	21(41–50)	4(41–50)	3(41–50)	4(21–30)
		2(31–40)	31(31–40)	3(31–40)	3(31–40)	4(<21)
		1(21–30)	12(21–30)	1(21–30)		
				3(<21)		

The question was asked to find out if such agreement exists and how important it is to motivate employees to stay with the company. Responses to this question are as in Table 9, section A. Gender and age were found to be the personal characteristic antecedents that closely related to the responses and the details are presented in section B of the table.

- Q10. Empowerment gives employees authority to make decisions about their work. Rate your level of empowerment in the company (please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

This question ascertains how much authority is transferred to employees over decision making, especially that which concerns their work and also how they want to see this happen. When employees are empowered to make decisions about their work, they feel being part of the company. This could encourage employees to be committed to the company rather than leaving to another company where they could not be sure of how they will be empowered. Summary of responses to the question is as presented in Table 10 (section A). The results are presented alongside the position categories (section B), which were found to be closely related to empowerment.

Table 10   Responses to empowerment and related personal characteristic antecedent

	Rating	5	4	3	2	1
	No. of responses	6	18	90	3	3
A	Percentage	5.0%	15.0%	75.0%	2.5%	2.5%
B	Position	4DM 2SM	2D, 10SM, 6MM	6MM, 51SS, 33FS	3JS	3JS

- Q11. Interesting work engages employee's attention, makes work challenging and rewarding while allowing them use of variety of skills and knowledge. Rate how interesting you find your work. (Please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

Challenging and rewarding jobs make employees always want to work not only because it is rewarding but also because they feel challenged to perform due to the interesting nature of the job and always urged to work. Once work becomes challenging people would like to put in extra effort, acquire extra skills and knowledge for achievement and recognition by employers. The question is designed to test how respondents find their work interesting, which has been revealed as a strong antecedent of EC. Breakdown of the responses are as in Table 11 (section A). The responses are presented alongside four personal characteristic antecedents – gender, marital status, age, and position status.

Table 11   Responses to interesting work and related personal characteristics antecedents

	Rating	5	4	3	2	1
A	No. of responses	18	27	9	36	30
	Percentage	15.0%	22.5%	7.5%	30.0%	25.0%
B	Gender (F/M)	8/10	13/14	2/7	9/27	7/23
	Marital status (M/UM)	9/9	16/11	5/4	20/16	19/11
	Age	2(21–30)	2(21–30)	3(31–40)	4(< 21)	2(< 21)
		4(31–40)	6(31–40)	2(41–50)	6(21–30)	8(21–30)
		4(41–50)	13(41–50)	4(51–60)	16(31–40)	13(31–40)
		8(51–60)	4(51–60)		10(41–51)	7(41–50)
	Position	3D, 3SM, 2MM, 9SS	3D, 7SM, 6MM, 11SS, 2JS	11JS, 5SS, 3SM, 2MM	14JS, 6SS	12JS, 15SS, 1MM

- Q12. Feedback is described as the degree to which employees receive information that reveals how well they are performing on the job. Rate the level of feedback you receive on the job (please tick, 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest).

Table 12   Responses to feedback and related personal characteristic antecedent

	Rating	5	4	3	2	1
	No. of responses	33	27	6	30	24
A	Percentages	27.5%	22.5%	5.0%	25.0%	20.0%
B	Position	1JS, 10SS, 7SM	15JS, 20SS, 8MM, 4SM, 2D	6JS, 7SS, 2MM, 1SM	10JS, 9SS, 2MM, 2D	7JS, 5SS, 2D

The aim of this question is to find out how managers and supervisors let employees review their progress, drawbacks and expected improvements in the form of reporting back to them. Positive feedback does not only let employees be aware of the required areas of improvement and the results achieved but also signals to them that they are being monitored. Above (section A of Table 12) is the summary of responses to the question, alongside the position categories (section B).

- Q13. Can you mention any factors that keep you in ECG?

This question was to let respondents come out with any important factor(s) that heightens their commitment to the company. This was to get from respondents any specific factors that might not have been mentioned in earlier questions or that might have been mentioned earlier but could not be highlighted because they were to be selected together with other factors. Varied responses were given but could be summed in Table 13. The second column shows ratios of males to females that provided the responses.

Table 13   Favourable factors of commitment

Factor	*Percentage (male to female)*
Government sub-vented organisation will never go bankrupt and lead to loss of jobs.	45/55
Arrangements to undertake developmental programs/courses at universities and polytechnics though company sponsorship is sometimes not difficult to secure.	60/40
Possibility of transfers if one wants to relocate to a different part of the country without losing his/her job due to branches throughout the country.	40/60
Prestige attached to working with ECG as compared to most public sector organisations in the country.	52/48
Flexible work arrangements to enable employees attend to personal commitments.	20/80

- Q14. Is there anything that makes you consider leaving ECG?

This question relates to employees' decision to quit the company, which has been identified as one of the major outcomes of lack of EC. Guthrie (2000) has revealed that when employees continue to be unhappy with their job and their concerns are not addressed by management, turnover is the likely result. Responses received include the following.

Table 14   Unfavourable factors of commitment

Problems with my manager.
Career opportunities elsewhere especially in the private sector such as oil and gold mining companies.
Desire to be with family in a different city or town but management refuses to approve transfers.
Not offering the job that employees are trained for.
Managers/supervisors' lack of concern/relationship with subordinates.
Refusing to place employees in or promoting them to the position they deserve.
Fear of intimidation or victimisation if not with the ruling government, and political influence in top positions.

- Q15. Overall, how do you rate your commitment to the company.

This question required respondents to rate themselves in the light of all the questions answered and any other factors known to them. Respondents rated themselves on a five-point scale, the results of which are presented in Table 15.

Table 15   Respondents' overall commitment levels

Rating	5	4	3	2	1
No. of respondents	15	21	54	27	3
Percentage	12.5%	17.5%	45.0%	22.5%	5.0%

6   Discussion of results

The data gathered and analysed revealed interesting results most of which collaborated themes emerged from the literature review. The six organisational antecedents of EC (autonomy; clarity of purpose; congruency; empowerment; interesting work; and feedback) that emerged from our literature review produced the following outcomes. These are cross-analysed with the personal characteristics antecedents to ascertain how they influence the organisational antecedents to drive EC.

With regard to autonomy, respondents were asked to rate the level of autonomy they are allowed in their work. More than a half (52.0%) of respondents gave themselves 3 rating on a five-point scale meaning most employees are not made to have freedom and discretion over the scheduling and performance of their work. A total of 40.0% gave 5 and 4 ratings indicating that a sizeable number were offered autonomy over their work though only 7.5% gave the highest rating of 5. The result was a good account, considering that only a total of 25.0% of respondents were directors, senior managers and middle managers (Table 6) who were expected to have levels of autonomy over their jobs because they were not usually subjected to strict supervision and controls. The 25% therefore means that other junior workers are also accorded some autonomy. The cross-analysis reveals that the higher the position the higher the level of autonomy as all the directors and senior managers fall under 5 and 4 ratings; all the junior staff (except 1); and 31 of senior staff, together forming about 58.5% of total respondents fall under 2 and 3 ratings. However, 20 out of the 51 senior staff (about 40%) gave 4 rating while 3 out of the 12 middle managers (25%) gave 3 rating, suggesting that some lower level employees had autonomy while some senior members did not.

Respondents were also asked to rate how clarity of purpose motivate them to be committed to ECG, 52.5% of respondents gave it 5 rating with 30.0% giving it 4 rating. This signifies how they consider clarity of purpose as important antecedent of EC. There were only 17.5% who gave it 3 and below rating, highlighting the fact that employees cherish seeking clarification about their work. This organisational antecedent is cross-analysed with two personal characteristic antecedents – position categories and tenure. The data revels that all directors and senior managers fall under 3 and 2 ratings, indicating that they understand their work and need no clarifications on the scheduling and performance of their work. The higher the position the less clarification needed. This corroborates the responses provided by junior and senior staff, the two lowest position categories (Table 6). Forming 75.0% of respondents, all junior and senior staff provided 5

and 4 ratings, signifying the need for clarity in their work schedules. However, 9 out of the 12 middle managers gave 4 rating, indicating that most middle managers need their work to be clarified, probably by senior managers and directors. The data is an indication that junior workers require to be guided in doing their work by way of supervision and providing clear sense of direction than senor members of staff.

Tenure is however not a strong predictor of clarity of purpose. The table shows that the six that rated clarity of purpose on scale 2 were directors, three of whom have served five to ten years and the other two between 26 and 30 years. We speculate that some of the directors had been appointed, probably with some political influence as respondents indicated in Table 14, while others might have gone through the ranks. Likewise, some senior managers have been with the company for up to five years while others have been with the company for between 21 and 25 years as indicated by those who rated clarity of purpose on scale 3. We observe that clarity of purpose is strongly required by those in lower positions than those in higher positions. However, it is not the case when it comes to tenue, though many of the employees who need charity of purpose are those with lower number of years' service.

For the purpose of ascertaining how congruency impacts on EC, respondents were asked to rate how their interests meet the interests of the company. Only 10.0% chose 1 (lowest rating), with 75.0% choosing 5 and 4 ratings. This means that almost all employees chose to work with the ECG not by accident but because their interests could be satisfied by joining the company. These factors that reveal how employees' interests are met such as the prestige attached to working with ECG; flexible arrangements that enable employees attend to personal commitments; sustainable company because of being a company dependent on government subvention and also because of personal development programs. While these were general interests, the flexible arrangement interest was mostly cited by female respondents (80%), indicating the importance of good work-life balance. This implies that females are more concerned about work-life balance, interest which they find in the company.

As revealed in our cross-analysis (Table 9), those whose personal interests agree with those of the company are dominated by females. For example, 14 out of the 24 and 41 out of the 66 who rated congruency on scales 5 and 4 respectively were females. On the other end of the scale, just a third of those with the lowest rating were females. Also based on literature that older people might have made enough side-bets (Becker, 1960) to encourage them to stay, we assessed age in relation to congruency and our data supported this view since most of the older employees skewed towards 5 and 4 ratings. Fifteen out of the 18 (77.7%) aged 51–60 and 29 out of the 36 (80.5%) of those aged 41–50 rated congruency 5 and 4, indicating how age is positively related to congruency and how the values and interests of older employees agree with the values and interests of the company.

Again, respondents were asked to rate the level of authority they are allowed to make decisions about their work. Only 5.0% rated as highest (5) their level of empowerment with 75.0% of this category of employees being directors and senior managers, who have authority over what they do. This outcome corroborates the results from the question on autonomy where only 7.5% of respondents rating as highest (scale 5) and a whopping 52.0% rating as 'somehow' (scale 3). These findings reveal that majority of employees of the company are allowed little authority and freedom over the scheduling and performance of their work. Our cross-analysis reveals that the higher the position the more empowered one is, as all those who gave the 5 rating were directors and senior

managers. Even with directors and senior managers, it appears that directors are empowered more than senior managers as four out of the six directors and only two out of the 12 senior managers offered the 5 rating. The results inform us that not all directors and senior managers have authority to make full decisions about their work. With 5% respondents being directors and 10% being senior managers (adding up to 15%) as revealed in Table 6, only 5% rating 'empowerment' on scale 5 gives credence to this.

Additionally, respondents were asked to rate how interesting they find their work. The data revel that a total of 55% gave 1 and 2 ratings, indicating that most of the employees do not find their work interesting. On the other hand, a total of 45 respondents representing 37.5% find their work interesting as they gave 4 and 5 ratings. Most of the employees who did not find their work interesting could be linked to Table 5, where 80% of respondents have been with the company for up to 15 years and only 20% from 16 to 30 years. This could reveal turnover situation in the company. This supports the observation by Guthrie (2000) that employees who find their work less interesting become unhappy and when management fail to address the concerns, turnover is the likely result. This probably could be explained from Table 14 which gives a summary of factors that could let employees leave the company. These are problems management need to pay attention to. These concerns include lack of career opportunities; refusal to transfer employees to join families; refusal to place employees in or promote them to positions they deserve; etc.

Considering the strength of this organisational antecedent, we cross-analyse with gender, marital status, age, and position status. With regard to gender, it is found that males find their work less interesting than females as 50 out of the 66 respondents who found their work less interesting (ratings 1 and 2) were males. Since more males find work less interesting than females and interesting work is antecedent of commitment, it stands to reason that more females are committed to the organisation than men. This could be explained from the point of view of flexibility that the company offers to females (Table 14) that enables them attend to personal commitments, a factor stated by 80% females as against 20% males. We speculate that the work allows females to care for their children, perform house chores and manage the home which most males are not concerned about. This outcome corroborates the findings of Bar-Hayim and Berman (1992) that females are more committed than their male counterparts.

Marital status reveals less significant relationship with interesting work in terms of difference between married and unmarried employees. Out of the total of 45 who found their work interesting (ratings 4 and 5), 20 and 25 were married and unmarried respectively. With a total of 66 respondents giving 1 and 2 ratings, more married employees seemed to find their work less interesting than their unmarried counterparts. Therefore, though marital status is less significant in terms of how it influences interesting work as organisational antecedent, married employees find work a bit less interesting than unmarried employees.

We also find that age has less significance when it comes to work being interesting to employees or not. As shown on the table, almost all the age brackets are represented across all the five points on the rating scale, showing that age does not necessarily relate to interesting work. Position categories produced significant relationship with interesting work. All directors found their work interesting (5 and 4 ratings), but not all senior managers and middle managers found their work interesting, likewise some senior staff (41.2%) and junior staff (66.6%). We speculate that to find ones work interesting does not necessarily depend on how high one's position is. Relating this to Tables 13 and 14

detailing favourable and unfavourable factors that help attach employees to the company, favourable factors such as prestige attached to working with the company; opportunities of transfer to other parts of the country; and flexible work arrangements could apply to all position categories. On the other hand, unfavourable factors such as career opportunities elsewhere with better remunerations; problems with managers; inability to secure transfer to join families; lack of managers' concern/relationship with subordinates; refusing to promote employees to positions they deserve, mostly apply to those who report to others and require approvals. This could explain why all directors (with little reporting responsibilities) found their work interesting whilst some senior managers and middle managers with some aspects of their work requiring control and approval did not find their work interesting.

On the level of feedback respondents receive on their jobs, rating was spread almost over the five-point scale, indicating various levels of feedback to various employees. However, more employees (55%) received quality feedback (ratings 5 and 4) with 45% (with ratings 3, 2, and 1), indicating that more employees were informed about their progress and how to proceed with their work schedules. We cross-analysed this organisational antecedent with position status and found that junior and senior staff who were expected to indicate receiving quality feedback were rather divided. Out of the 51% senior staff 30 rated themselves 5 and 4, indicating that they received expected feedback while 21 indicated otherwise. Surprisingly, junior staff who were expected to receive feedback on their progress, work standards, and drawbacks rather did not receive the expected feedback as 23 out to the 39 (59%) gave low ratings, while 11 out of the 12 (91.6%) senior managers received feedback. This refutes the popular view that junior workers need and receive more feedback than senior workers. We speculate that the level of feedback received probably depended on the manager/supervisor, department or section, suggesting why respondents indicated problems with their managers and supervisors' lack of concern/relationship with subordinates as factors that could discourage them from being attached to the company (Table 4). This means junior workers wanted their managers to be closer to them, and be sensitive to their personal and organisational problems.

Table 16 sums up how the organisational antecedents influence EC and the roles of the various categories of employees (based on their personal characteristics) in determining the levels of commitment.

Table 16 Interplay of the two sets of antecedents

Organisational antecedents	*Influence on commitment*	*Role of personal characteristics antecedents*
Autonomy	Employees want to have control over performance of their job duties. The more autonomy granted the more committed employees become	Junior workers require more autonomy as they become more committed when they have freedom and discretion over scheduling of their work which are normally open to senior employees.
Clarity of purpose	Allowing employees of the company to clarify their work process and providing them with required information relating to their job increase their commitment	Junior employees require more clarity than senior employees, as junior employees require to be guided in doing their work by way of supervision and providing clear sense of discretion than required by senior members of staff.

Table 16   Interplay of the two sets of antecedents (continued)

Organisational antecedents	Influence on commitment	Role of personal characteristics antecedents
Congruency	Most of employees have their personal interests and values related to those of the company. Congruency, therefore increasing their commitment to the company.	Personal interests include sustainable employment, prestige attached to working for the company, and flexible working arrangements. Congruency increases the commitment levels of females who prefer good work-life balance than men. Older employees are more committed as they are believed to have side-bets (investments) that they would not want to leave behind.
Empowerment	The more employees are empowered, the more committed they become. However, more employees are not allowed to make decisions about their work. This is probably explained borrowing the concerns of respondents on political influence in the appointments and management of the company.	The higher the position status, the higher the level of empowerment. However, most employees are not empowered except a few at the top. Even at the top, not all directors are fully empowered. Personal antecedents as one's position in the company influence commitment. All junior and senior staffs are not empowered, with a half of middle managers described as 'somehow' empowered.
Interesting work	Most employees do not find their work interesting. The less interesting employees find their work the less committed they become.	Females find their work more interesting than males, probably due to the flexibility the company offers females. The higher the position status the more interesting work becomes and more committed the employee. This is because most unfavourable factors in the company do not apply to those in senior positions.
Feedback	Most employees did not receive the required feedback on their jobs. It is however established that the more information provided on the progress of one's job and how to proceed, the more one becomes committed to the company.	Although lower level employees received feedback, many top level employees also received feedback. Feedback spread across all position categories (except directors), indicating that providing feedback depended on one's manager, department or section.

7   Conclusions and recommendation

The two sets of antecedents and their interdependence in driving EC in the ECG have been explored. It is concluded that while organisational antecedents are management's expectations from employees as to what to do to be committed, personal characteristics antecedents are the employees' explanation of how to do it to be committed. For instance, the company expects that the employees' interests and values agree with those of the company to be motivated to stay with the company. However, how do males and females demonstrate same levels of commitment when females require more flexibility (than males), which the company provides? Evaluating congruency as antecedent of

commitment, therefore, gender of employees will help understand what category of staff is more committed and to appreciate why the difference in the levels of commitment.

Our research has taken a step further from the popular approach of investigating antecedents of EC from only the organisational point of view or the personal characteristics perspective. Combining both sets of antecedents and revealing how the two interrelate thus extends the existing literature on EC. This has the potential to redefine the thinking of academics and managers in Ghana and beyond about how the sets of factors complement each other to unearth the underlying reasons for employees' attachment to the company, which had been given little attention.

In a way of recommendation, management of ECG, particularly (and managements of other business organisations, generally) should therefore not depend solely on the organisational antecedents to determine and/or evaluate commitment of their employees as this will mean ignoring essential variables (that management has less control over) to complete the commitment process. Likewise, focusing only on the personal characteristics of employees means determining how the employee will be committed without identifying any organisational need for the commitment. There should therefore be interplay of the two sets of antecedents not only for appreciation of the required levels of EC, but also to understand the differences in commitment levels among categories of employees.

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