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ARTICLE

Young apprentices: are they committed and adjusted to organizational roles?

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to compare levels of affective commitment and organizational consent among Brazilian young apprentices. Data was collected from 2,543 apprentices using validated scales of commitment and organizational consent. The study involved confirmatory factor analyses, results interpretation, and correlation tests. The results align with other evidence of the unidimensional structure of the constructs, confirming the affective basis of commitment and obedience in organizational consent. The overall mean of affective commitment was lower than that of organizational consent. These results indicate both a high affective bond and strong role adjustment and obedience. Given the socioeconomic reality of the apprentices and possible explanatory variables, an agenda for future studies is suggested.

Keywords: Commitment. Organizational consent. Organizational bonds.

Jovens aprendizes: trabalhadores efetivamente comprometidos e/ou ajustados aos papéis organizacionais?

Resumo

O objetivo neste estudo foi analisar comparativamente os níveis de comprometimento afetivo e consentimento organizacional de jovens aprendizes brasileiros. Realizou-se um estudo com 2.543 jovens aprendizes, coletando-se dados com escalas validadas de comprometimento afetivo e consentimento organizacional. Na análise de dados, primeiro foram feitas análises fatoriais confirmatórias; na sequência, interpretação dos resultados; por fim, testes de correlação. Os resultados coadunam-se com outras evidências da estrutura unidimensional dos construtos, ratificando a base afetiva do comprometimento afetivo e a obediência no consentimento organizacional. A média geral de comprometimento afetivo foi inferior à de consentimento organizacional. Tais resultados informam tanto um vínculo afetivo elevado, quanto fortes ajustes a papéis e obediência. Dada a realidade socioeconômica dos aprendizes e possíveis variáveis explicativas, sugere-se uma agenda para estudos futuros.

Palavras-chave: Comprometimento. Consentimento organizacional. Vínculos organizacionais.

Jóvenes aprendices: ¿trabajadores comprometidos y/o ajustados efectivamente a los roles organizacionales?

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar comparativamente los niveles de compromiso afectivo y consentimiento organizacional de jóvenes aprendices brasileños. Se llevó a cabo un estudio con 2.543 jóvenes aprendices, recopilando datos mediante escalas validadas de compromiso afectivo y consentimiento organizacional. En el análisis de datos, primero se realizaron análisis factoriales confirmatorios; a continuación, la interpretación de los resultados; y finalmente, pruebas de correlación. Los resultados concuerdan con otras evidencias de la estructura unidimensional de los constructos, ratificando la base afectiva del compromiso afectivo y la obediencia en el consentimiento organizacional. La media general de compromiso afectivo fue inferior a la de consentimiento organizacional. Estos resultados indican tanto un vínculo afectivo elevado como ajustes sólidos a roles y obediencia. Dada la realidad socioeconómica de los aprendices y las posibles variables explicativas, se sugiere una agenda para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: Compromiso. Consentimiento organizacional. Vínculos organizacionales.

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INTRODUCTION

Commitment stands as one of the most extensively debated topics within organizational behavior literature (Pereira & Lopes, 2019). Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, delineating affective, instrumental, and normative dimensions, has wielded significant influence over scholarly exploration in this domain for an extended period (Rodrigues et al., 2022). Nonetheless, recent inquiries (Costa et al., 2022; Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020) acknowledge that the instrumental and normative facets do not precisely align with organizational commitment but rather correspond to distinct ties, denoted as entrenchment (Rodrigues & Bastos, 2015) and consent (Silva & Bastos, 2010, 2015).

Commitment entails forging an active and affective attachment, or an alignment between an individual's values and those of the organization, such that their conduct transcends assigned attributions and role expectations (Peixoto et al., 2015). This concept diverges from that of consent, as consent pertains to obedience. Consequently, a passive tie may engender reflexive responses, which are suboptimal for organizations (Silva & Bastos, 2015). In practical terms, these affiliations coexist across varying levels (e.g., Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

Hence, this study aims to scrutinize commitment and consent, assessing whether employees foster an active tie with higher echelons or tend to conform to prescribed organizational roles. This investigation focuses on these matters, as extant literature emphasizes specific causative factors (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019), such as consequences and antecedents (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020) and relational propositions (Costa et al., 2022), while discussions concerning commitment as an active form of attachment and consent as a passive form have remained relatively underexplored.

The study's participants comprise young apprentices under the purview of the "Brazilian Apprenticeship Law," as regulated by Decree No. 11,061/2022. An examination of studies encompassing this demographic (Costa & Paiva, 2021) indicates a research void concerning i) the interplay between the thematic elements and the surveyed demographic, ii) the comparative discourse on the levels of such attachments, and iii) novel evidence of discriminant validity among these constructs, accounting for the surveyed cohort. These facets precipitate the following research inquiry: do young apprentices genuinely exhibit commitment and/or conform to their roles within the organizational hierarchy?

Addressing this inquiry holds the potential to propel theoretical and conceptual advancements, given the proposal's novelty and its bridging of observed lacunae in prior investigations (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Rocha et al., 2019), while also intersecting with the domain of young workers (Costa & Paiva, 2021). Consequently, this study seeks to contribute to the evolution of theorization regarding commitment and consent ties, considering behaviors conducive to organizational objectives (Silva & Bastos, 2015) by juxtaposing and deliberating findings indicative of more proactive or passive employee conduct. The article has been structured into sections, encompassing this introduction, the theoretical framework, methods, results and discussion, and concluding remarks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Organizational commitment: a foundation for comparative analysis of organizational ties

Despite the lack of unanimous consensus on the definition of organizational commitment (Moscon & Bastos, 2018; Pinho et al., 2021), Mowday et al. (1979) emerge as pioneers in exploring this form of attachment from a unidimensional perspective in historical terms. Subsequently, diverse psychological underpinnings were integrated into this phenomenon, gaining prominence (Rodrigues et al., 2019), with the three-dimensional model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) taking center stage, prevailing in contemporary studies (Balsan et al., 2021).

The theoretical framework underpinning the research presented in this paper adheres to the perspective that conceptualizes organizational commitment as unidimensional and primarily affective (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015). This choice is substantiated by criticisms directed towards the multidimensional outlook stemming from Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, encompassing affective, instrumental, and normative foundations. Despite its widespread acceptance and application, this model has yielded findings that sow confusion regarding the conceptual delineation of its foundations, alongside a proliferation of commitment's conceptual scope, leading to conceptual and empirical inaccuracies (Moscon & Bastos, 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2019).

The unidimensional proposition posits commitment to be grounded solely in an affective foundation, revisiting the classical notion of unidimensionality proposed by Mowday et al. (1979), supported by empirical evidence, thereby propelling the discourse surrounding the construct forward (Rodrigues et al., 2019). Various research suggestions (as seen in Balsan et al., 2021) have scrutinized commitment based on affective grounds distinctively from commitment rooted in normative and instrumental bases. Adopting a unidimensional stance, these constructs are denoted as consent and entrenchment, respectively.

The unidimensional model has garnered recent attention from Brazilian researchers who advocate that, conceptually, organizational commitment should adhere strictly to the affective foundation, considering the proactive attitudes of workers (Balsan et al., 2019; Moscon & Bastos, 2018). This viewpoint has garnered acceptance from a segment of the scientific community, as evidenced by studies conducted by Balsan et al. (2021), Bastos and Aguiar (2015), Mansour et al. (2022), and Rodrigues and Álvares (2020), among others, which delve into the causes influencing commitment and its antecedents (Kaveski & Beuren, 2022).

Conceiving commitment as an active bond entails a positive emotional response from the worker towards the organization, its objectives, and values (Meyer & Allen 1991). Consequently, the worker fosters identification and affection for the organization, characterized by loyalty and a willingness to contribute to its endeavors (Jesus & Rowe, 2015), surpassing a state of passive allegiance (Balsan et al., 2019). This foundation encompasses three key attributes: "[...] "(A) a robust belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) a drive to exert significant effort for the organization's benefit; (c) a strong inclination to remain part of the organization" (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226).

Thus, affective commitment prompts workers to forge a robust connection, fostering an enthusiastic rapport with their work and proactive engagement with the organization (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015). From a conceptual standpoint, the literature suggests that individuals with strong affective commitment remain within organizations fueled by intrinsic motivation (Allen & Meyer, 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is the facet most closely linked to the desire for organizational binding (Bastos & Menezes, 2010), in contrast to various other motives for organizational retention.

By conceptualizing commitment as a unidimensional construct, the normative facet of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model is now examined as a form of tie termed consent (Silva & Bastos, 2010). The significance of this differentiation lies in emphasizing that affective commitment underscores the emotional dimension of the bond formed between parties (Balsan et al., 2021; Maia & Bastos, 2019). Accordingly, affective commitment directs individuals towards action, aligned with consent, transcending passive loyalty to adhere to the organization's regulations (Rodrigues & Alvares, 2020; Silva & Bastos, 2010).

Organizational consent: passivity and adherence to prescribed roles

Given the empirical inconsistencies and conceptual challenges associated with commitment (Ko et al., 1997; Solinger et al., 2008) within Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, Silva and Bastos (2010) proposed a theoretical dissection of what constitutes the normative foundation of this attachment. This culminated in the delineation of a tie termed consent, positing that workers comply with directives automatically within an environment prioritizing adherence to orders and norms, devoid of worker autonomy or innovative inclinations (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

Organizational consent can thus be construed as an affiliation where one observes "[...] the inclination of workers to adhere to the company's demands, personified by their superiors. Consequently, adherence to directives and norms is presumed to stem from power and authority relations" (Silva & Bastos, 2015, p. 93). Indeed, this construct's definition resonates with studies by Burawoy (1979), wherein the author identifies mechanisms utilized by factory representatives to elicit behaviors linked to worker compliance in managing situations of dominance.

Within the realm of productivity, managers may discern between committed and compliant workers, underscoring the notion that bonds rooted in consent should not be conflated with the concept of organizational commitment (Silva & Bastos, 2010). Consequently, the authors scrutinized prior research, particularly within social psychology, noting "[...] an ambiguous conceptual territory demarcating the concepts of commitment and consent or obedience" (Silva & Bastos, 2010, p. 7), which entails theoretical incongruities concerning notions such as 'passive commitment' and the concept of 'loyalty' articulated by Bar-Hayim and Berman (1992) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986).

This lack of precision has prompted further studies, leading to the identification of a two-dimensional model consisting of the dimensions' blind obedience' and 'intimate acceptance' as more suitable for characterizing the construct. Blind obedience entails immediate compliance with orders, devoid of reflection on the requested actions, whereas intimate acceptance involves the genuine belief that the organization is adopting the best practices (Silva & Bastos, 2010). Consequently, the unidimensional measurement model has come to be regarded as the most appropriate, primarily due to the dimension of blind obedience (Silva & Bastos, 2015).

It is worth noting that individuals with higher levels of consent are not necessarily unproductive, as they often focus their efforts on achieving personal goals rather than aligning with the organization's overarching objectives. However, organizational and managerial support can help these individuals achieve satisfactory work performance. This implies that while consent may not directly correlate with higher levels of effectiveness, it can be a necessary and desirable aspect in specific contexts (Rodrigues & Álvares, 2020). Additionally, being committed does not necessarily negate the presence of consent; rather, these two bonds can coexist (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

Young apprentices and their ties with organizations

Exploring the integration of young individuals into organizational settings presents a myriad of analytical challenges (Guimarães, 2020), notably including the hurdles this demographic faces in securing formal and equitable employment contracts (Carrijo et al., 2019). According to findings from studies conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2017), these individuals are three times more likely to experience unemployment compared to adults, coupled with elevated rates of precarious and informal employment (ILO, 2017; Souza et al., 2019).

Recognizing the economic and social barriers impeding young people's entry into the workforce, public policies have been devised and enacted to aid them, particularly the most socially vulnerable, in overcoming the obstacles to entering the formal labor market (Caruso & Posthuma, 2020). Noteworthy among these policies is the advancement facilitated by Law No. 10,097/2000 (the Apprenticeship Law), regulated by Decree No. 11,061 (2022), mandating the employment of a percentage ranging from 5 to 15% of young individuals relative to the total workforce within organizations, for legal compliance purposes.

This public policy has reached an expanding number of young individuals (Costa & Paiva, 2021). This study examines young apprentices as employees engaged by organizations in adherence to this law facilitated through vocational training institutions. In certain instances, these young individuals are selected based on the financial circumstances and social vulnerability of their family unit. For many of these individuals, entering the labor market via the "Apprenticeship Law" is perceived as an avenue for learning and personal as well as economic and financial advancement (Graebin et al., 2019).

Furthermore, besides serving as a financial support mechanism for economically disadvantaged families (Franco et al., 2017), work is deemed a moral obligation for young people towards their families and society (Oleto et al., 2020), assuming a pivotal role in their lives, particularly given their lack of formal experience in the labor market (Costa et al., 2023). Consequently, given its significance, it is imperative to delve into the topic of employment for young individuals, considering the bonds they cultivate with the organizations in which they engage in productive endeavors (Rocha et al., 2019).

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METHODS

This research is characterized as descriptive with a quantitative approach (Vergara, 2009). A questionnaire was utilized as the data collection technique for this study (Vergara, 2009). The target population consisted of young apprentices placed in organizations by a mediating vocational training institution, which has a research partnership with the authors of this paper. The questionnaire was distributed to 2,779 apprentices, with 2,453 completing it after accounting for data losses stemming from non-participation and respondents under the age of 18. Participants were selected based on accessibility and availability criteria (Vergara, 2009).

Regarding ethical considerations, the research was submitted to the Ethics Committee of a public university, filed under the Certificate of Submission for Ethical Appraisal (CAAE) No. 55089422.1.0000.5149, and received approval under Opinion No. 5311124. The study adhered to all ethical guidelines established by Resolution No. 510 of the National Health Council (CNS) for research involving human subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CNS, 2016).

Data collection occurred in March 2023. The young apprentices were invited to participate in the survey via e-mail, which contained a link to the questionnaire created using Google Forms. The vocational training institution assisted in this process. The questionnaire included an Informed Consent Form (ICF), the Organizational Commitment Measure validated by Bastos and Aguiar (2015), and the Organizational Consent Scale validated by Silva and Bastos (2015), along with sociodemographic and professional questions.

For data analysis, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify the internal consistency of the instruments used (Matos & Rodrigues, 2019). We also performed descriptive analysis, calculating means and standard deviations and interpreting the scores according to the guidelines provided by the authors of the scales. Additionally, correlation tests were conducted. The analysis procedures were executed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 2,543 young apprentices from across the country participated in the survey: 73.3% from the Southeast, 15.2% from the South, 5.9% from the Central West, 4.6% from the Northeast, and 0.9% from the North. Among these participants, 67.6% (n = 1720) were female and 32.3% (n = 823) male. The predominant age group was 18 to 21 years old (93.8%, n = 3449). Most participants were single (96.3%, n = 3449) and had completed high school (70.6%, n = 1796). The majority self-identified as white (47.8%, n = 1216). Regarding formal work experience, 35.7% (n = 908) had worked for more than six months but less than one year, while 49.7% (n = 1263) had worked for less than six months in their current organization.

Confirmatory factor analysis of the “organizational commitment measure”

The first scale subjected to CFA was the “Organizational Commitment Measure” (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to assess the proportion of variance in the variables that might be attributed to underlying factors. The KMO index ranges from 0 to 1, with values below 0.5 considered unacceptable and values above 0.8 and 0.9 considered optimal and excellent, respectively (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Additionally, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (BTS) was used, with statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) being the expected outcome (Matos & Rodrigues, 2019). The results obtained were KMO = 0.961 (excellent) and BTS = 0.000 (significant).

The commonality (COM) of the items was examined, with a suggested minimum level of 0.50 (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2009). All items were retained as they exceeded the minimum value, ranging from 0.533 to 0.788. The variance explained was 70.38%, considered satisfactory since “[...] in the social sciences, where information is often less precise, it is common to consider a solution that accounts for 60 percent of the total variance (and in some instances even less) as satisfactory” (Hair et al., 2009, p. 114). The component matrix indicated a single-factor solution, consistent with the validated instrument (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015), and the reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach’s alpha (α) of 0.960, exceeding the literature’s recommended threshold (> 0.70) (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 1 presents the psychometric indices of the "Organizational Commitment Measure" obtained in this study with young Brazilian apprentices.

Table 1
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results for organizational commitment among young apprentices

Item	Statements about the Reality of Work	COM.	KMO	α
CO_01	I feel proud to tell people that I'm part of the organization I work for.	0.664	0.961	0.960
CO_02	When talking to friends, I always describe this organization as an excellent place to work.	0.704		
CO_03	I perceive my organization's objectives as if they were my own.	0.733		
CO_04	The organization I work for truly inspires me to give my best and advance in my work.	0.788		
CO_05	My way of thinking closely aligns with that of the organization.	0.762		
CO_06	I believe my values strongly resemble those upheld by the organization I work for.	0.755		
CO_07	I feel a profound emotional connection with my organization.	0.733		
CO_08	This organization holds immense personal significance for me.	0.682		
CO_09	I accept the organization's rules because I genuinely agree with them.	0.637		
CO_10	I genuinely care about the future of the organization I work for.	0.757		
CO_11	If I were in a leadership position in an organization, I would adopt the same standards as the one I work for.	0.698		
CO_12	I genuinely identify with the organization's challenges as if they were my own.	0.533		

Source: Research data.

The results indicate satisfactory psychometric indices for the instrument when applied to the young apprentices in this study. In the validation process conducted by Bastos and Aguiar (2015), the "organizational commitment measure" comprised 12 items, which remained unchanged in this research. Commonalities ranged from 0.622 to 0.758, with only one value lower than those obtained by Bastos and Aguiar (2015), specifically for item CO_12, whose loading was 0.569. However, this value still exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.50, as suggested by the literature (Hair et al., 2009). This discrepancy could be attributed to the relatively short tenure of the young apprentices surveyed (49.7%), who had been working in their current organization for less than six (6) months. This suggests that their initial relationship with the organization may not yet fully align with respect to the perception, handling, and appropriation of problems.

Conversely, items CO_04 and CO_05 exhibited slightly higher commonalities compared to those obtained in the instrument's validation process. This suggests that, for the young apprentices surveyed, the perception of being inspired "to advance in my work performance" and having "a way of thinking closely aligned to that of the organization" may be heightened due to their lack of formal experience (Costa et al., 2023), as most of them are entering the job market for the first time.

Confirmatory factor analysis of the "organizational consent scale"

Continuing from the methodological procedures, the "organizational consent scale" (Silva & Bastos, 2015) underwent Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), maintaining the original content of the items and scale measures as instructed by the authors. The KMO test yielded a result of 0.887, which is considered optimal (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), indicating that the factor analysis model used is appropriately adjusted to the data. Similarly, the BTS result was significant at $p < 0.05$ (BTS = 0.000, sig.).

Regarding commonalities, the initial factor extraction resulted in a commonality value of 0.257, falling below 0.50 (Hair et al., 2009), only for item CS_09 ("I believe that when I receive an order, my superior is responsible for what I do"). Consequently, a second-factor extraction was conducted, excluding this item, resulting in values above 0.50 (Hair Jr. et al., 2009) and a variance

of 57.141, deemed acceptable for this study's objectives. The final structure remained unifactorial, and Cronbach's alpha (= 0.890) surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.70 recommended in the literature (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 2 illustrates the results obtained from applying the "organizational consent scale" (Silva & Bastos, 2015) to the apprentices.

Table 2
CFA results for the organizational consent of the young apprentices surveyed

Item	Statements about the Reality of Work	COM.	KMO	α
CS_01	If the boss says so, we must do it.	0.565	0.880	0.890
CS_02	Superiors possess authority, and employees are expected to comply with directives.	0.510		
CS_03	Even when things bother me at work, I do what I'm told.	0.585		
CS_04	When I disagree with a given directive at work, I do it anyway.	0.560		
CS_05	As an employee, I believe it is essential to consistently follow the organization's rules and regulations.	0.549		
CS_06	I always comply with directives within this company.	0.570		
CS_07	I follow orders because I trust my superior's expertise in determining what needs to be done.	0.603		
CS_08	I do what my boss tells me because I believe it is the right thing to do.	0.630		

Source: Research data.

Overall, the instrument exhibited commonalities slightly lower than those reported in the validation study (Silva & Bastos, 2015). However, the values obtained surpass what is typically anticipated with this technique (Hair et al., 2009). The exclusion of statement CS_09, due to its failure to meet the literature's criteria, suggests that rather than these workers disavowing responsibility for any consequences stemming from their actions, as the theory posits (Silva & Bastos, 2015), they might attribute accountability for their actions to themselves, even when following orders or behaving according to pre-established directives (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

Interpreting levels of organizational commitment and consent

Following the methodology outlined by the authors who validated the organizational commitment instrument, the scores for each statement were aggregated and divided by the number of items (12 in total). Consequently, the following classification was applied: scores ranging from 1.0 to 2.5 denote a "low" level of commitment; levels surpassing 2.5 but falling below 4.5 are categorized as "medium," with a subdivision into lower medium (between 2.5 and 3.5) and upper medium (between 3.5 and 4.5); and values exceeding 4.5 indicate a "high" level of commitment (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015, p. 85). The mean score for the construct was $\bar{x} = 4.66$, with a standard deviation of $s = 1.12$. Additionally, the distribution of respondents by commitment level was calculated, revealing that the majority (66.19%) demonstrated high levels of commitment.

For organizational consent, a similar approach was adopted: aggregating the scores of each statement and dividing by the number of items, which decreased from nine (9) to eight (8) items following CFA. Scores below 2.5 indicate a "low" level of consent; those falling between 2.5 and 3.5 signify a "lower medium" level; values ranging from 3.5 to 4.5 represent an "upper medium" level; and scores exceeding 4.5 correspond to a "high" level (Silva & Bastos, 2015). The mean score obtained was $\bar{x} = 4.81$, with a standard deviation of $s = 0.87$, indicating a prevalence of higher levels of consent (70.85%), as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3
Parameters for interpreting the relationships of the young apprentices surveyed

Commitment			Percentages of Respondents by Interpretation Level			
Sample	$\bar{x}$	s	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High
2543	4.66	1.12	4.86 %	8.17 %	20.78 %	66.19%
Consent			**Percentages of Respondents by Interpretation Level**			
Sample	$\bar{x}$	s	Lower	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	Upper
2543	4.81	0.87	1.70%	5.56%	23.12%	69.62

Source: Research data.

In Table 3, guided by the literature (Peixoto et al., 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015; Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020) and the instructions for interpreting the research instruments (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015), high levels prevail for both commitment and consent. Additionally, there is a trend for the percentages of the other levels – upper middle, lower middle, low, and/or lower – to be closely aligned when comparing these ties. These findings support the notion that commitment and consent, while distinct phenomena (Peixoto et al., 2015), can coexist (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

The mean values of the constructs in the sample ($\bar{x}$ = 4.66, commitment; $\bar{x}$ = 4.81, consent) fall within the high and upper brackets. This provides empirical evidence that different types of bonds can exhibit similar intensities. Considering that they may have varying impacts on performance, from a pragmatic organizational perspective, this underscores the need to implement strategic measures to engage with these workers (Silva & Bastos, 2015) that foster adjustments in their attitudes and align their organizational and personal values (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020).

While high levels of commitment and some degree of consent are desirable, driven by genuine agreement with the rules, it is also important to allow for an active – contributory and critical – profile in certain circumstances (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015).

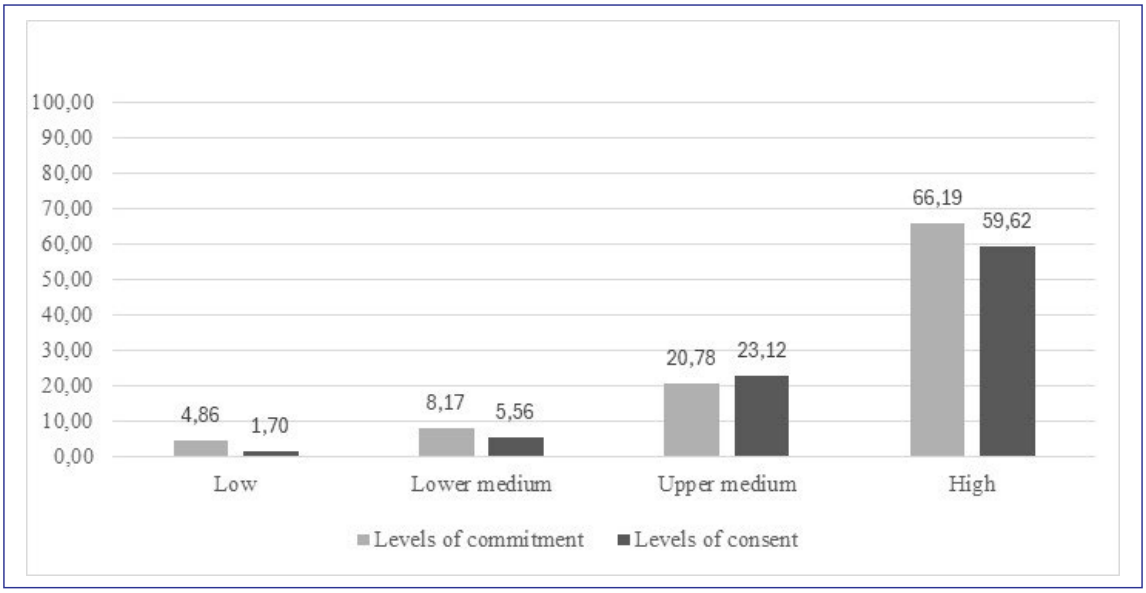
Are workers effectively committed to and/or aligned with organizational roles?

The inclusion of the conjunction "and" in questioning effective commitment and adjustment to organizational roles, as presented in this section, reflects the recognition that different yet not mutually exclusive ties are under consideration (Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020). A notable aspect of this study, which potentially addresses a gap in the literature, is its exploration of the inherent nuances within the parameters utilized in the research instruments (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015).

Indeed, research on commitment appears to be more extensive than that on consent (Pereira & Lopes, 2019). Nevertheless, in both instances, the objective is to analyze the relationship with other constructs, antecedent and consequent factors, and predictive factors (Costa et al., 2022; Rodrigues, 2020; Tomazzoni & Costa, 2020), overlooking the fact that the use of scales allows for "[...] significant distinctions regarding the nature and intensity of the bonds and how workers articulate them" (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015, p. 87). These possibilities enable, for instance, the differentiation between highly committed and obedient workers and those who exhibit lower levels of commitment and obedience.

In response to the raised inquiries, each parameter for interpreting the results of the measures was scrutinized, establishing a comparison between the different ties, as depicted in Graph 1.

Graph 1
Comparison of the percentages of young respondents based on parameters for interpreting ties



Source: Research data.

The percentages of respondents within each interpretation range suggest that the bonds formed by the apprentices with the organization maintain consistent standards. High levels of affective commitment may indicate a deep-seated belief in and acceptance of the organization's core values, coupled with a willingness to exert effort on its behalf and a desire to sustain the attachment (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015, p. 79). This strong embrace of organizational values often translates into highly compliant behavior among these workers, distancing them from adopting an analytical or critical approach toward organizational demands and fostering a passive stance (Silva & Bastos, 2015).

This pattern of findings was also observed by Rodrigues and Álvares (2020) in their study involving participants from the police force. They noted that pride in the institution reinforces emotional attachment to the organization, while power dynamics and authority relationships foster a sense of duty toward obedience. Similarly, among apprentices, affection for the organization may be cultivated through the significance attached to work, which often represents their first formal tie and the "right to establish one's identity" (Costa et al., 2023, p.10). Additionally, the camaraderie among colleagues and social interactions underscores the notion of cooperation (Costa et al., 2023), thereby fostering high levels of consent among this demographic as a form of reciprocation for the support received and a commitment to cooperative teamwork, as well as compliance with directives and requests.

According to Balsan et al. (2019, p.143), there exists a positive correlation between the centrality of work and the level of commitment a worker develops toward their employing organization. Thus, "[...] organizations that factor in these considerations when hiring are more likely to attract individuals who are dedicated to achieving organizational objectives and adhering to hierarchical norms embodied by superiors." This assertion likely holds true for apprentices as well, given the central role that work plays in their lives (Costa et al., 2023), suggesting that work centrality could serve as one of the potential precursors to high levels of commitment (= 66.19%) and consent (= 69.62%), as it instills both a commitment to organizational objectives and a readiness to comply with hierarchical directives and regulations (Balsan et al., 2019).

The interpretation range for the consent bond is notably higher (23.12%) compared to commitment (20.78%) at the "upper medium" level. This suggests an inclination toward an active stance aimed at confronting challenges and adapting to unforeseen circumstances (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015). At this level, consent is not absolute but rather intertwined with other behaviors that necessitate an active approach.

Behaviors indicating adherence to organizational rules alongside traits of proactive engagement are understandable, given that these young individuals are contemplating future prospects for professional advancement, including within their current organization (Franco et al., 2017). Moreover, this demographic exhibits distinct characteristics (Oleto et al., 2020), such as navigating a context marked by stigma and encountering challenges in accessing formal employment opportunities

(Franco et al., 2017, p. 45), facing unequal working conditions (ILO, 2017), and occupying low hierarchical positions (Oleto et al., 2020). These factors tend to reinforce both proactive and passive behaviors within this cohort.

The data depicted in Graph 1 reveals that the percentages of respondents across interpretation ranges for the bonds established by apprentices with their organization display consistent patterns of commitment and consent. Given that commitment is commonly associated with active engagement (as corroborated by existing literature), while consent is viewed as more passive, the survey findings suggest that workers exhibiting active behavior (commitment) also demonstrate passive behavior (consent). Hence, active and passive tendencies seem to coexist within the same worker.

The characteristics of the research sample prompt reflection on the investigation of organizational ties.

This cohort comprises young individuals seeking entry into the job market, many of whom have been employed at their current organization for less than six months. These characteristics may serve as pertinent explanatory factors for the observed high levels of commitment and consent identified in the study. It is conceivable that the pronounced levels of commitment and consent stem from an inherent inclination among these young apprentices toward attachment, which may evolve over time based on organizational factors, practices, and policies (Balsan, 2017).

Consequently, the results offer insights that challenge the notion of passivity typically associated with consent. Blind obedience may not accurately represent passive behavior on the part of workers. Conversely, consent might signify a form of attachment characterized by nuanced conceptual boundaries within the literature – and the findings of this study underscore this point. Given that addressing this issue warrants a thorough reexamination of the delineation of consent and a theoretical exploration of the overlaps and distinctions between these two bonds, it is recommended that a new study be undertaken – of a predominantly theoretical nature – to facilitate a comprehensive discussion of these nuances.

Is there a connection between affective commitment and organizational consent?

To assess the relationship between affective commitment and organizational consent, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized to test the normality of the data, revealing a non-normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). Spearman's correlation coefficient, recommended in the literature (Field, 2013), was employed to measure the correlation between the variables. The correlation was positive and statistically significant [sig < 0.01], albeit of modest magnitude ($r = 0.380$), as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4
Correlation between the commitment and consent of the young apprentices surveyed

		Commitment	Consent
Commitment Factor Score	Pearson's Correlation	1.000	0.380**
	Significance Level (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	2543	2543
Consent Factor Score	Pearson's Correlation	0.388**	1.000
	Significance Level (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	2543	2543

Source: Research data.

According to Dancey and Reidy (2007, p. 186), "the closer a correlation coefficient is to 1, the stronger the relationship between the variables;" in this study, correlation coefficients between 0.10 and 0.39 are considered weak, consistent with this understanding. Convergent validity was affirmed by the strong correlation between the commitment factor score and its measurement scale (=1.00), as well as the strong correlation between the consent factor score and its measurement scale (=1.00). In terms of discriminant validity, there was a low correlation between the commitment and consent scores, as well as between the consent and commitment scores.

Thus, the consent scale (Silva & Bastos, 2015) fulfilled the requirement to create a measure that accurately captured the distinction between the concepts of consent and affective commitment (Ko et al., 1997). This distinction has been emphasized since questions emerged regarding the conceptual overlap inherent in Meyer and Allen's three-component model. While the literature presents two perspectives on organizational commitment – unidimensional and three-component – the findings of this research align with prior studies (Peixoto et al., 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015), suggesting that in the three-component model, conceptual overlap may exist, making the unidimensional commitment model a viable alternative (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article aimed to comparatively analyze the levels of affective commitment (active behavior) and organizational consent (passivity and role adjustment) among young apprentices. A descriptive and quantitative study was conducted using a questionnaire administered to a sample of 2,543 young apprentices placed in organizations through a vocational training institution in compliance with the "Apprenticeship Law" (Decree No. 11,061/2022). The data underwent confirmatory and descriptive factor analysis, as well as correlation tests.

The bonds formed by the apprentices with their respective organizations exhibited consistent patterns, reflecting a unidimensional structure of commitment based on affective factors (AC) and obedience to consent (OC), as supported by existing literature (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015). Notably, the interpretation ranges indicated "high" AC (= 66.19%) and "higher" OC (= 69.62%), potentially influenced by the specific characteristics of the surveyed individuals and their work context. The correlation matrix revealed a weak correlation coefficient, affirming the discriminant validity between the constructs and aligning with prior research (Silva & Bastos, 2010).

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study delved into nuances previously unexplored, considering the parameters utilized in the research instruments (Bastos & Aguiar, 2015; Silva & Bastos, 2015). Additionally, it sheds light on the relationship between more active and passive behaviors among young apprentices, but a discussion is still nascent in the field of study concerning these topics, particularly with this demographic. Practical implications include uncovering how young individuals establish connections with organizations and showcasing their diverse perceptions and behaviors regarding such bonds.

A limitation of this study is its focus on a specific context without addressing potential variations in social markers such as education, employment, housing, family structure, income, and social networks. Future research is recommended to adopt a qualitative approach and develop a conceptual framework to facilitate a deeper analysis and understanding of organizational behavior concerning these bonds. In quantitative studies, various social, demographic, and professional characteristics can be examined, such as gender; type of employment contract (intermittent, part-time, full-time, etc.); individual and household income; number of children or dependents; holding two or more paid jobs simultaneously in different organizations; and age (whether younger, middle-aged, or near retirement), among other possibilities.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request from the corresponding author, Kely César Martins de Paiva. The dataset is not publicly available as it contains information that compromises the privacy of the research participants.

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