

EMPIRICAL STUDIES  
RECHERCHES EMPIRIQUES

THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS,  
PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED SATISFACTION  
AND THWARTING, AND AFFECTIVE  
COMMITMENT ON WORKERS' WELL-BEING  
AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS

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RÉSUMÉ

EFFETS DES FACTEURS ORGANISATIONNELS, DE LA SATISFACTION ET DE LA FRUSTRATION DES BESOINS PSYCHOLOGIQUES, ET DE L'ATTACHEMENT AFFECTIF SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE DES SALARIÉS ET LEURS INTENTIONS DE DÉPART

*Cette recherche présente un double objectif. Premièrement, nous avons souhaité analyser le rôle médiateur de la satisfaction et de la frustration des besoins psychologiques d'autonomie, de compétence et d'affiliation dans les relations entre d'une part, la variété des tâches professionnelles, le conflit de rôles et le soutien du superviseur perçu, et d'autre part, l'attachement affectif. Deuxièmement, nous avons étudié les effets de l'attachement affectif des salariés sur leurs émotions positives, leur cynisme, et leurs intentions de départ. Cent vingt-neuf étudiants inscrits dans un programme MBA ont répondu à différents questionnaires permettant de mesurer les caractéristiques des tâches professionnelles, les perceptions du soutien proposé par le superviseur, la satisfaction et la frustration des besoins psychologiques au travail, les émotions positives, le cynisme et les intentions de départ. Nous avons ensuite testé un modèle en pistes causales à partir des données recueillies. Les résultats obtenus étaient en accord avec les hypothèses formulées initialement. Plus particulièrement, nous avons démontré que la variété des tâches professionnelles, le conflit de rôles et le soutien du superviseur perçu avaient une influence significative sur la satisfaction et la frustration des besoins psychologiques qui à leur tour étaient significativement associées à l'attachement affectif. Finalement, l'attachement affectif avait respectivement des effets positifs sur les émotions positives, et négatifs sur le cynisme et les intentions de départ. De tels résultats soulignent l'importance des mécanismes explicatifs dans les relations entre d'une part, des facteurs organisationnels et d'autre part, le bien-être et les*

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*intentions de départ des salariés. Les implications théoriques et pratiques sont présentées et discutées dans la dernière partie de cet article.*

**Mots-clés :** *soutien du superviseur, besoins psychologiques, attachement affectif, bien-être au travail, intentions de départ.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become an increasingly important issue for researchers and practitioners alike because it has been related to important economic considerations (Schott, 1999). For instance, the total costs of depression in the European Union have been estimated at 118 billion Euros per annum (Sobocki, Jonsson, Angst, & Rehnberg, 2006). However, according to the World Health Organization (1948), health is not just the absence of disease or infirmity but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) was recently established as a new perspective specifically addressing the study of individual well-being. In addition, the emerging literatures involving Positive Organizational Behavior (POB; Luthans, 2002) and Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS; Bernstein, 2003) emanate from prior research in the field of positive psychology.

Recently, researchers have begun to study the positive phenomena embedded in POB and POS. For instance, there is now a fairly sizeable body of research linking organizational commitment to both positive and negative health outcomes (e.g., Lu, Siu, Spector, & Shi, 2009). However, additional studies need to be carried out to identify the role of job characteristics (e.g., task variety), work stressors (e.g., role conflict), and managerial styles (e.g., supervisor support) to the development of employees organizational commitment and, in turn, well-being in the work context. In addition, the nature of the mechanisms through which these factors relate to organizational commitment requires future investigation.

Meyer and Maltin (2010) have recently provided a framework based on an integration of the well-established three-component model of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). First, these authors propose that affective commitment is positively associated with need-supportive work conditions (e.g., job resources, organizational support, transformational leadership) and satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. More specifically, the effects of need-supportive conditions on affective commitment are mediated by need satisfaction. Then, employees with a strong affective commitment to the organization will experience well-being. Some research has started to assess some of these relationships but several aspects of this theoretical framework remain to be tested. The present research aims to contribute to the extant literature by examining: 1) whether need satisfaction and need thwarting mediate the effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment;

and 2) whether affective commitment relates to positive affect, cynicism<sup>1</sup>, and turnover intentions.

While research has shown that organizational commitment can take multiple forms (i.e., affective, normative, high-sacrifice, and low-alternatives; see Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Vandenberghe, 2012), the present study focuses on its affective component (i.e., one's commitment to the organization is driven simply by an emotional attachment to and identification with the organization) as it has consistently emerged as the strongest predictor of well-being and turnover intentions (e.g., Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). Overall, our study has the potential to contribute to the improvement of the management of employees' organizational commitment and well-being.

### I.1. DETERMINANTS OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

In the present research, we focused on task variety because this job characteristic is tightly embedded in the individual psychological well-being literature (van Mierlo, Rutte, Vermunt, Kompier, & Doorewaard, 2007). According to Morgeson and Humphrey (2006, p. 1323), "task variety refers to the degree to which a job requires employees to perform a wide range of tasks on the job. As such, it is similar to notions of task enlargement discussed in the literature." Previous research has shown that task variety positively relates to affective commitment (e.g., Scott-Ladd, Travaglione, & Marshall, 2006). According to the Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics model, task variety has a significant influence on affective commitment because tasks offering variety meet individuals' psychological needs (see Pearson & Duffy, 1999). It thus seems important to examine, in the present research, the effect of task variety on affective commitment through the satisfaction of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (see Deci & Ryan, 1985).

A variety of work stressors, including role conflict, may also have an influence on organizational commitment (see Yang, 2010). Given its prevalence in the stress literature, role conflict was retained in the current study. Role conflict reflects employee's perception of having to meet inconsistent expectations (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Vandenberghe, Panaccio, Bentein, Mignonac, and Roussel (2011) have shown that role conflict was negatively correlated with affective commitment. One explanation for these findings may be that role conflict constrains employees' ability to perform and be effective in their jobs, and reduces job satisfaction (Schaubroeck, Cotton, & Jennings, 1989). Therefore, employees react to increases in this hindrance stressor with disengagement from the organization. Recent research has also shown that work demands (i.e., aspects of

1. We chose to focus on cynicism rather than on emotional exhaustion or reduced sense of personal accomplishment in the present research because, despite the fact that numerous studies have linked employee cynicism to various antecedents, more detailed empirical examination of these relationships seems warranted (see Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013). This knowledge gap may notably reflect insufficient attention to organizational cynicism in work psychology research (Andersson, 1996).

the work context that tax employees' personal capacities) have an indirect effect on employee burnout and work engagement through the satisfaction of their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (e.g., Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). It is thus possible that need satisfaction would mediate the effect of role conflict on employee affective commitment.

Although a number of environmental and interpersonal factors have been identified as potential determinants of affective commitment (see Meyer *et al.*, 2002), human resources policies and practices that recognize and reward employee contributions appear to be particularly important for promoting employee affective commitment. In the present study, we focus on perceived supervisor support that refers to the degree to which employees believe that their supervisor values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). By supporting these employees, the supervisor is sending the message that he/she respects them or appreciates their true worth. As a result, employees feel supported by their supervisor, and this is likely to produce positive consequences both for them and for the organization (see Newman, Joseph, Sparkman, & Carpenter, 2011; Nimon, Zigarmi, Houson, Witt, & Diehl, 2011). For instance, Lapalme, Tremblay, and Simard (2009) showed that when supervisors provided support to their subordinates, employees displayed higher levels of affective commitment.

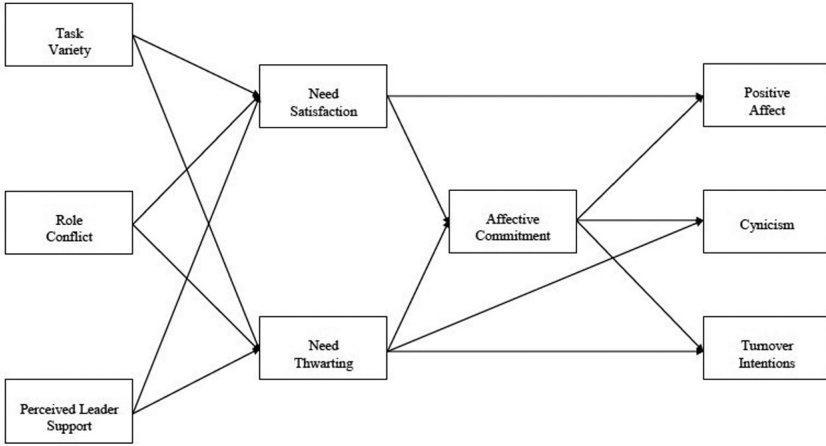
Given that task variety, role conflict, and perceived supervisor support have a significant impact on employees' affective commitment, then what are the processes mediating such effects?

## I.2. NEED SATISFACTION AND THWARTING AS MEDIATORS

Surprisingly, empirical studies which explore the processes underlying the relationships of task variety, role conflict, and perceived supervisor support with affective commitment are relatively scarce. Meyer and Maltin (2010) recently suggested that there is a need for research to move away from simplistic investigations of bivariate work conditions-affective commitment relationships and examine the role of potential mediators which may explain causal pathways between need-supportive work conditions/stressors and affective commitment. Based on the works described above (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) and the suggestions made by Meyer and Maltin (2010), we believe that the satisfaction and thwarting of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985) may be at play in the relationships of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support to affective commitment. We included psychological need satisfaction and thwarting as mediating variables in our theoretical model (see Figure 1) because self-determination theory has been shown to be helpful in understanding the mechanisms by which social factors exert their effects on individual and organizational outcomes (see Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

Figure 1 : Modèle théorique.

Figure 1: Theoretical model.



For instance, Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, Brunault, and Colombat (2012, Study 1) have shown that workers' perceptions of organizational support and supervisor autonomy support predicted satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn predicted aspects of hedonic and eudaemonic well-being. In the study by Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Cuevas, and Lonsdale (2014), need thwarting was predicted by teachers' perceptions of job pressure. In turn, the thwarting of the three psychological needs was positively associated with burnout. The thwarting of the need for competence also predicted somatic complaints. Finally, mediation analyses supported the explanatory role of need thwarting. In line with these results, the present study examines whether the satisfaction and thwarting of psychological needs, as defined in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), mediate the relationships of task variety, role conflict, and perceived supervisor support with affective commitment.

The need for autonomy reflects the need to perceive behaviour as freely chosen. The need for competence refers to employees' need to interact effectively with their environment. The need for relatedness pertains to the desire to feel connected and to be accepted by others. Prior studies showed that psychological need satisfaction was positively associated with individuals' optimal functioning. These findings were observed cross-culturally (e.g., Deci *et al.*, 2001) and within various life domains such as sport and education (see Deci & Ryan, 2000, for an overview).

According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), social contexts that facilitate the satisfaction of these three needs will promote self-determined motivation (i.e., employees behave with a full sense of volition and choice) and favourable job attitudes such as affective commitment. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have looked at the effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on need satisfaction.

However, job demands such as role conflict may have a negative influence on the satisfaction of the need for autonomy because workers do not receive a meaningful rationale for executing the requests. In contrast, proper feedback delivered in a respectful and supportive manner fosters learning, thereby facilitating competence need satisfaction. More generally, we can argue that contrary to role conflict, job characteristics such as task variety and perceived leader support would facilitate the satisfaction of the three psychological needs because they have a significant and positive impact on the three critical psychological states (i.e., experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results) described by Hackman and Oldham (1975).

Prior research showed that task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support had a significant impact on affective commitment (e.g., Lapalme *et al.*, 2009; Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2011). In addition, past investigations examined the relationships of task variety (e.g., Schroer & Hertel, 2009), role conflict (e.g., Tummers, Landeweerd, & van Merode, 2002), and perceived organizational support (e.g., Gagné *et al.*, 2010) with intrinsic motivation (i.e., a form of self-determined motivation). Finally, Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) found that need satisfaction positively related to affective organizational commitment. Based on these findings and given that need satisfaction is a proximal predictor of self-determined motivation (see Deci & Ryan, 1985), we hypothesized that need satisfaction would be a mediator in the relationships linking task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support to affective commitment.

In past research (e.g., Reinboth, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2004) linking need satisfaction and various maladaptive outcomes (e.g., burnout), low need satisfaction scores were inadvertently considered evidence of both a lack of need satisfaction and need thwarting, without distinguishing between the two constructs. However, Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, and Thøgersen-Ntoumani (2011b) showed that low scores on need satisfaction simply reflect need dissatisfaction and cannot be conceptually equated with need thwarting. Indeed, low need satisfaction is not the same as having one's psychological needs actively frustrated. Specifically, "need thwarting does not simply reflect the perception that need satisfaction is low, but moreover the perception that need satisfactions are being obstructed or actively frustrated within a given context" (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011b, p. 78).

Bartholomew *et al.* (2011b, Study 2) examined the relations between need thwarting and need satisfaction via correlations and exploratory factor analysis to test for discriminant validity. Relatively small negative correlations were observed between corresponding need satisfaction and need thwarting subscales. Further, the results of three separate exploratory factor analyses showed that, within each need, need thwarting and need satisfaction represented distinct factors. In their third study, Bartholomew *et al.* (2011b) also found that need thwarting predicted additional variance of outcomes, over and above that accounted for by need satisfaction. Compared to low need satisfaction, need thwarting is more strongly associated with a range of maladaptive outcomes including depression, negative affect, physical symptoms, and biological indicators of perturbed

immunological functioning (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011a). Finally, findings from recent research (e.g., Gillet *et al.*, 2012, Study 2) provided support for the utility of measuring need thwarting alongside need satisfaction.

Contrary to need satisfaction, need thwarting negatively predicted health and well-being, and more generally adaptive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theoretical position suggests that psychological need thwarting should provide a conceptual framework for explaining the mechanisms through which social factors (e.g., task variety, role conflict, perceived leader support) lead to organizational commitment. However, psychological need thwarting represents an under-studied area of conceptual and practical importance (Vallerand, Pelletier, & Koestner, 2008). Moreover, additional research is needed to simultaneously and explicitly explore experiences of both psychological need satisfaction and need thwarting within a given context (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011a). The current research aims to explore further the important theoretical distinction between need satisfaction and thwarting, and expand on the initial work of Bartholomew and her colleagues (i.e., Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b) by examining the influence of both psychological need satisfaction and thwarting on affective commitment. Examining whether need satisfaction and thwarting have significant effects on affective commitment can provide new information on the determinants of employees' organizational commitment. More generally, utilizing an approach that includes assessments of both need-supportive work conditions (i.e., task variety and perceived leader support) and work stressors (i.e., role conflict) as well as need satisfaction and need thwarting reflects a more comprehensive examination of the psychological experiences of employees in the work context and can potentially provide a better understanding of the motivational factors that result in variability in affective commitment.

Gillet *et al.* (2012, Study 2) examined the relationships among perceived organizational support, perceptions of supervisors' interpersonal style (i.e., autonomy support and controlling behaviors), psychological need satisfaction and thwarting, and hedonic and eudaemonic well-being. Results revealed that perceived organizational support and supervisor autonomy support related positively to need satisfaction and negatively to need thwarting. In addition, supervisor controlling behaviors were positively and negatively associated with psychological need thwarting and need satisfaction, respectively. Finally, need satisfaction positively related to work satisfaction, happiness, and self-realization, while the relationships between need thwarting and these facets of hedonic and eudaemonic well-being were negative. This is because, in self-determination theory, the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness specify the necessary conditions for psychological well-being and their satisfaction is associated with the most effective functioning (e.g., Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). In contrast, negative consequences accrue in situations that thwart these needs.

*Hypothesis 1:* Need satisfaction and need thwarting will totally mediate the effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment.

### I.3. DETERMINANTS OF WORKERS' WELL-BEING AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS

The second purpose of the present research was to examine whether affective commitment relates to positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions. Employees experiencing affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to, not because they need to (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). In this case, the organization provides them with job resources that not only enable them to achieve their work goals, but that also provides opportunities for learning, growth, and development (Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001). Therefore, it seems reasonable that those high in affective commitment should experience higher levels of well-being and lower levels of cynicism. Prior research showed positive relations between affective commitment and positive affect (e.g., Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003). In contrast, negative relations have consistently been found with cynicism (e.g., Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013). Finally, recent studies showed that low levels of affective commitment were associated with higher levels of turnover intentions (e.g., Joo, 2010).

According to self-determination theory, humans are naturally active and inclined toward integration of their psychic elements into a unified sense of self. These natural organismic activities and the integrative propensities that coordinate them require the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As such, the natural processes such as movement toward well-being are theorized to operate optimally only to the extent that the three psychological needs are satisfied. In contrast, in situations in which need satisfaction cannot be achieved, people's inherent tendency toward activity and organization will lead to protective responses. In such cases, people develop substitute motives and rigid behavior patterns that serve to protect them from the threat. These compensatory processes are expected to result in goal processes and contents that are associated with lower well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on this reasoning, self-determination theory posits that satisfaction of the three psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is required for psychological well-being, while the thwarting of psychological needs will lead to non-optimal development and ill-health. Consistent with these notions, Bartholomew *et al.* (2011b) found that need satisfaction positively related to vitality and positive affect, while need thwarting was positively associated with depressive symptoms, burnout, and disordered eating. Other studies (e.g., Gillet *et al.*, 2012; Ng, Ntoumanis, Thøgersen-Ntoumani, Stott, & Hindle, 2013) showed that need satisfaction positively related to favourable outcomes (e.g., positive affect), while need thwarting negatively related to unfavourable outcomes (e.g., burnout, turnover intentions).

In sum, psychological need satisfaction and thwarting should lead to positive and negative outcomes, respectively (e.g., Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Moreover, need satisfaction should be positively related to affective commitment, while need thwarting should be negatively related to affective commitment (e.g., Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Finally, affective commitment should be positively associated with positive affect and negatively linked to cynicism and turnover intentions (e.g., Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, based on this reasoning and the recent suggestion made



by Meyer and Maltin (2010), need satisfaction and thwarting should have a significant impact on positive and negative outcomes via affective commitment.

*Hypothesis 2:* Affective commitment will partially mediate the effects of need satisfaction and need thwarting on positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions.

As mentioned above, Gillet *et al.* (2012, Study 2) recently conducted a similar study on the mediating role of need satisfaction and thwarting in the relationships between organizational factors and well-being. The additional contribution of the present investigation resides in considering affective commitment. Indeed, additional studies need to be carried out to examine the effects of task variety, role conflict, and supervisor support on affective commitment through need satisfaction and thwarting, and whether affective commitment relates to positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions (see Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Another important contribution of the present research is that we looked at the joint effects of task variety, role conflict, and supervisor support on need satisfaction, need thwarting, and affective commitment. There is a dearth of studies documenting these links even though prior research (e.g., Gillet *et al.*, 2012) considered the influence of other organizational and managerial factors. In addition, a convenience sample of 650 workers from various small to medium French companies (< 250 employees) participated in the second study by Gillet *et al.* (2012), whereas the present research was conducted with a sample of executive MBA students working in Canada. Such research is important to confirm that similar results may be obtained with samples from different cultures. Finally, we considered both positive and negative outcomes (i.e., positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions) in the present research, while Gillet *et al.* (2012) only assessed positive facets of subjective well-being (i.e., work satisfaction, happiness, and self-realization). In sum, the present research adds to the literature because we considered need satisfaction, need thwarting, and affective commitment as mediating variables in the relationships of task variety, role conflict, and supervisor support with positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions. In order to develop more adaptive and healthy work environments, we need to better understand the way in which task variety, role conflict, and supervisor support lead to well-being, ill-being, and turnover intentions.

## II. METHOD

### II.1. PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

A total of 129 executive MBA students (51 women) working full-time and taking classes on weekends (every five weeks) participated in the present study. These executives are working in the metropolitan Montréal area, in Canada, and typical students for this program work in service firms (e.g., telecommunications, consulting firms, financial institutions) and, to a lesser extent, in production (e.g., consumer goods, transportation).

Examples of occupations include task managers, senior executives, and human resources assistants. Participants received a survey packet including the questionnaire, a cover letter explaining the study's purposes, and a consent form stressing that participation was confidential and voluntary. The study protocol was approved by the University research ethics board and all participants provided informed consent. The age of respondents ranged from 25 to 57 years, with a mean age of 39 years ( $SD = 6.56$ ) and organizational tenure ranged from 1 to 29.9 years, with a mean of 5.75 years ( $SD = 5.30$ ).

## II.2. MEASURES

*Task variety and role conflict.* Task variety (three items;  $\alpha = .70$ ; sample item: "The job involves performing a variety of tasks") and role conflict (eight items;  $\alpha = .83$ ; sample item: "In my work, I know exactly what is expected of me"; reversed) were measured using the French version (Barnabé, 1991) of the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The response scale ranged from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree).

*Perceived supervisor support.* We adapted the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Hungtington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986;  $\alpha = .91$ ; sample item: "My supervisor takes my opinion into account"), replacing the word organization with the term supervisor. We selected eight items (items 10, 13, 17, 20, 23, 25, 27, and 35; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) on the basis of (a) the factor loadings of their parallel perceived organizational support items (loadings from .66 to .84), and (b) their content. These eight items have already been used in two recent studies among French workers (i.e., Gillet *et al.*, 2012) and have been shown to have high internal reliability. The anchors for the response scale ranged from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree).

*Need satisfaction.* Need satisfaction was measured through the 16 items of the French-translation of the Work-Related Basic Psychological Needs Scale (Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2010) using a response scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). Autonomy was measured with six items ( $\alpha = .76$ ; sample item: "I feel like I can be myself at my job"), competence with four items ( $\alpha = .77$ ; sample item: "I feel competent at my job"), and relatedness with six items ( $\alpha = .84$ ; sample item: "At work, I can talk with people about things that really matter to me"). The response scale is from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). To reduce the number of variables to a manageable set that was conceptually consistent with the self-determination theory formulations, scores on the three subscales were averaged to obtain a global need satisfaction index (see Smith, Ntoumanis, Duda, & Vansteenkiste, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

1. We conducted three confirmatory factor analyses on this scale with the present data. In the first model, the 16 items loaded on one latent variable (i.e., need satisfaction). In the second model, the 16 items loaded on their respective factors (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness). In the third model, psychological need satisfaction represents a multidimensional construct which subsumes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as first-order factors. Results revealed that the third model was the best fitting model. In addition, an

*Need thwarting.* This variable was measured using a work-adapted French translation of the Psychological Need Thwarting in Sport Scale (PNTS; Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011b). The items measure autonomy frustration (four items;  $\alpha = .86$ ; sample item: "I feel pushed to behave in certain ways"), competence frustration (four items;  $\alpha = .73$ ; sample item: "There are times when I am told things that make me feel incompetent") and relatedness frustration (four items  $\alpha = .63$ ; sample item: "I feel I am rejected by those around me"). Since the alpha was low for this third factor, one item was dropped to increase the alpha to .70, we thus used 11 items in total. Similarly to the scores for need satisfaction, scores on the three subscales were averaged to obtain a global need frustration index<sup>1</sup>. The response scale also ranged from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree)<sup>2,3</sup>.

*Affective commitment.* A French-version (Vandenberghe, 2003) of the affective commitment subscale (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993) was used in this study. This scale has six items ( $\alpha = .87$ ; sample item: "I do not feel like "a part of the family" in my organization"; reverse coded) and used a response scale which ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

*Positive affect.* Positive affect was measured using the 10 positive items of the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988;  $\alpha = .90$ ). Using the stem "Indicate to what extent you have felt this way at work during the past few weeks", participants were invited to rate each item on a 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) scale.

*Cynicism.* Participants completed the cynicism subscale of the validated French version of the Maslach and Jackson's Burnout Inventory (Dion

exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation revealed three factors with an eigenvalue above 1, reflecting respectively autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, in line with self-determination theory assumptions and previous research, the scree plot showed a strong drop in eigenvalue from the first (eigenvalue = 5.19) to the second (eigenvalue = 2.22) and third (eigenvalue = 1.52) factors. More generally, these results empirically justify the use of a global need satisfaction index.

1. Similarly to need satisfaction, we conducted three confirmatory factor analyses with the present data on the need thwarting items. In the first model, the 11 items loaded on one latent variable (i.e., need thwarting). In the second model, the 11 items loaded on their respective factors (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness). In the third model, psychological need thwarting represents a multidimensional construct which subsumes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as first-order factors. Results revealed that the third model was the best fitting model. We also conducted an exploratory factor analyses with the present data. Results empirically justify the use of a global need thwarting index (e.g., eigenvalues = 5.03, 1.73, and 1.09 for the first, second, and third factors, respectively).

2. The results of three separate exploratory analyses showed that, within each need, need thwarting and need satisfaction represented distinct factors. For instance, for the need of competence, the need thwarting items had primary factor loadings ranging from .51 to .89 (mean loading = .78) and secondary loadings ranging from .06 to .14 (mean loading = .11). Similarly, the need satisfaction items had primary loadings ranging from .64 to .82 (mean loading = .77) and secondary loadings ranging from .08 to .24 (mean loading = .14). In concert, these findings indicate that need thwarting and need satisfaction should be viewed as independent constructs.

3. Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to examine the incremental effect of need thwarting on the outcomes studied in the present research. Specifically, need satisfaction was entered in the first step and need thwarting was entered in the second step. Need thwarting made a significant contribution to the prediction of outcomes over and above the significant contribution of need satisfaction. For instance, for cynicism and turnover intentions, need thwarting was a stronger predictor than need satisfaction ( $\Delta R^2$  values = .07 and .08, respectively). These findings support the predictive validity of the PNTS and confirm that it is useful to study the joint effects of both need satisfaction and need thwarting.

& Tessier, 1994). This scale assesses how participants felt in the past year (sample item: “I doubt the importance of my work”; four items;  $\alpha = .85$ ). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from never (0) to every day (6).

*Turnover intentions.* We measured turnover intentions with two items ( $\alpha = .90$ ): “I often think about quitting this organization” and “I intend to search for a position with another employer within the next year”. These items were adapted from Hom and Griffeth (1991) and Jaros (1997), and the two-item scale has been shown to have acceptable reliability (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Stinglhamber, 2005).

### III. RESULTS

#### III.1. PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal reliability coefficients of the study variables, which were all above the minimum criterion of  $\alpha = .70$ , as well as correlations among the variables. Participants had relatively high scores on task variety, role conflict, perceived supervisor support, need satisfaction (means higher than 5 on a 7-point scale), as well as affective commitment and positive affect ( $M_s = 3.50$  and  $3.55$ , respectively on a 5-point scale). Further, they had low to moderate scores on need thwarting, cynicism, and turnover intentions (see Table 1). Finally, an examination of the size and direction of the correlations revealed good preliminary support for the hypotheses<sup>1, 2</sup>.

#### III.2. MAIN ANALYSES

To test the hypothesized model, a path analysis with AMOS was conducted with maximum-likelihood estimation. Paths were specified according to the hypotheses. Because the correlation between need satisfaction and need thwarting was substantial (see Table 1), the two variables were free to covary with each other. Error covariances were also allowed between the three outcomes assessed in the present research (i.e., positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions) because of their significant

1. The correlations between the need satisfaction and thwarting subscales ranged from  $-.18$  to  $-.77$  ( $p < .05$ ). All results, as well as the correlations between the need satisfaction and thwarting subscales and the other variables studied in the present research, are available upon request from the first author. Need satisfaction and need thwarting are highly correlated but these results are in line with past research (Gillet *et al.*, 2012, Study 2). Although these two constructs share common variance, results mentioned above revealed that need thwarting and need satisfaction represented distinct factors (see also Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011b).

2. We also examined the interactive effect of perceived need thwarting and need satisfaction on affective commitment. The need satisfaction and need thwarting indexes were standardized, as recommended by Aiken and West (1991), before being entered into the equation. Need satisfaction was entered in the first step, need thwarting was entered in the second step, and the interaction term was added in the third step. The interaction term did not reach significance ( $p = .85$ ).

intercorrelations (see Table 1). All expected paths were significant but the model fit was poor: NNFI = .92, CFI = .96, IFI = .97, GFI = .92, and RMSEA = .14.

The modification indices suggested that model fit could be substantially improved by adding paths between task variety and affective commitment, and between task variety and positive affect. Past studies have shown that task variety positively related to affective commitment and positive affect (e.g., Scott-Ladd *et al.*, 2006). These two paths were thus specified. The overall fit of the model improved. All estimated paths were significant and the goodness of fit of this revised model was adequate. Although the chi-square value was significant,  $\chi^2 (13, N = 129) = 27.15, p < .05$ , the other fit indices were satisfactory, NNFI = .96, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, GFI = .96, and RMSEA = .09.

TABLEAU 1 : Moyennes, écarts-types, alphas de cronbach et corrélations entre les variables étudiées. Toutes les corrélations sont significatives ( $p < .001$ ). Les alphas de cronbach sont présentés entre parenthèses dans la diagonale.

TABLE 1: Means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities, and correlations for study variables. All the correlations are significant ( $p < .001$ ). Cronbach's alphas are shown in parentheses on the diagonal.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Task variety	5.13	1.26	(.70)								
2. Role conflict	5.16	1.12	.34	(.83)							
3. Supervisor support	5.03	1.41	.33	.46	(.91)						
4. Need satisfaction	5.29	0.78	.47	.63	.55	(.85)					
5. Need thwarting	2.38	0.98	-.34	-.55	-.53	-.73	(.88)				
6. Affective commitment	3.50	0.95	.53	.57	.47	.60	-.54	(.87)			
7. Positive affect	3.55	0.79	.53	.51	.39	.58	-.46	.58	(.90)		
8. Cynicism	2.22	1.18	-.32	-.62	-.43	-.59	.60	-.63	-.59	(.85)	
9. Turnover intentions	3.39	2.09	-.42	-.49	-.44	-.52	.58	-.61	-.55	.66	(.90)

The model with standardized coefficients is shown in Figure 2. To examine whether need satisfaction and thwarting acted as mediators between task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on the one hand,

and affective commitment on the other hand, a bootstrapping approach was used (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Specifically, bootstrapped confidence interval (CI) estimates for the indirect effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment through need satisfaction and thwarting were calculated. The bootstrapping process essentially consists in estimating the indirect effects of independent variables using a large number of random resamples with replacement from the original data. The CI around these estimated effects can then be computed. If the CI does not include zero, the effect is reputed to be significant. In the present study, 95 % CI for the indirect effects were computed using 1,000 bootstrapped samples. The use of bootstrap analyse methods to estimate indirect effects is especially recommended in small-to-moderate samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Indirect effects are estimated as products of the regression coefficients linking the predictors (i.e., task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support) to outcomes (i.e., affective commitment) through the mediators (i.e., need satisfaction and thwarting). methods to estimate indirect effects is especially recommended in small-to-moderate samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Indirect effects are estimated as products of the regression coefficients linking the predictors (i.e., task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support) to outcomes (i.e., affective commitment) through the mediators (i.e., need satisfaction and thwarting).

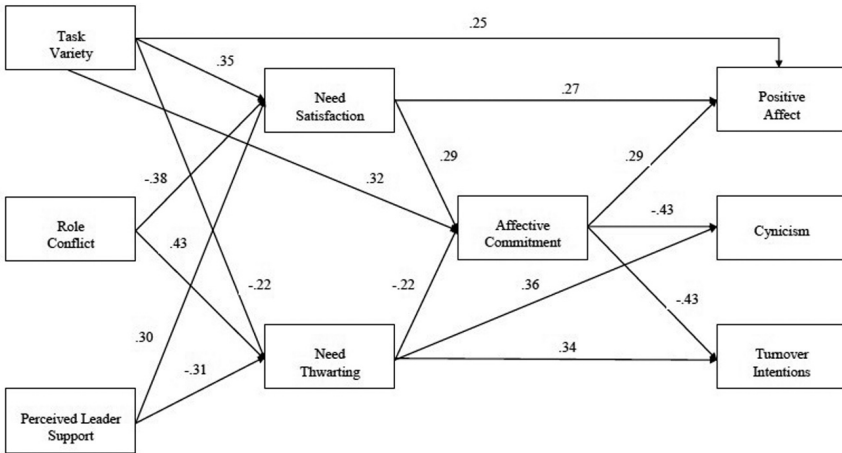
Bootstrap analyses revealed that the indirect effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment through need satisfaction were as follows: .08 [ $CI = .02, .16$ ],  $p < .01$ , for task variety; -.05 [ $CI = -.13, -.01$ ],  $p < .05$ ; for role conflict; and .05 [ $CI = .01, .13$ ],  $p < .05$ , for perceived leader support. In addition, the indirect effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment through need thwarting were as follows: .01 [ $CI = -.02, .06$ ],  $p = .56$ , for task variety; -.05 [ $CI = -.12, -.01$ ],  $p < .05$ , for role conflict; and .04 [ $CI = -.00, .10$ ],  $p = .09$ , for perceived leader support. These results are generally consistent with our first hypothesis. Specifically, task variety has both direct and indirect (via need satisfaction) effects on affective commitment. Perceived leader support has indirect effects (via need satisfaction) on affective commitment. Role conflict has indirect effects (via need satisfaction and need thwarting) on affective commitment. Only the indirect effects of task variety and perceived leader support on affective commitment through need thwarting were not confirmed. Therefore, need satisfaction partially mediates the effects of task variety on affective commitment, and fully mediates the effects of perceived leader support on affective commitment. In addition, need satisfaction and thwarting fully mediate the effects of role conflict on affective commitment.

Bootstrap analyses also showed that the indirect effects (via affective commitment) of need satisfaction and need thwarting on positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions were statistically significant: .08 [ $CI = .02, .21$ ],  $p < .01$ , and -.07 [ $CI = -.16, -.01$ ],  $p < .05$ , for the effects of need satisfaction and thwarting on positive affect, respectively; -.12 [ $CI = -.26, -.03$ ],  $p < .01$ , and .10 [ $CI = .02, .19$ ],  $p < .05$ , for the effects of need satisfaction and thwarting on cynicism, respectively; and -.12 [ $CI = -.23, -.04$ ],  $p < .01$ , and .10 [ $CI = .02, .19$ ],  $p < .05$ , for the

effects of need satisfaction and thwarting on turnover intentions, respectively. These results are consistent with our second hypothesis. Specifically, need satisfaction has both direct and indirect effects (via affective commitment) on positive affect. Need thwarting has both direct and indirect effects (via affective commitment) on cynicism and turnover intentions. Therefore, affective commitment partially mediates the effect of need satisfaction on positive affect, and the effects of need thwarting on cynicism and turnover intentions. Finally, affective commitment fully mediates the effects of need satisfaction on cynicism and turnover intentions, and the effect of need thwarting on positive affect<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 2 : Résultats de l'analyse en pistes causales. Tous les coefficients sont standardisés et toutes les relations sont significatives ( $p < .05$ ). Pour des raisons de clarté, les erreurs de covariances ne sont pas présentées.

Figure 2: Results from the path analysis. All coefficients are standardized and all relationships are significant ( $p < .05$ ). For the sake of clarity, covariances among error terms are not shown.



#### IV. DISCUSSION

In the present research, we first hypothesized that need satisfaction and need thwarting would mediate the effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment. Then, we

1. For information purposes only, we tested the indirect effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions through need satisfaction, need thwarting, and affective commitment. Results from bootstrap analyses confirmed these indirect effects. Detailed results of these analyses are available from the first author on request.

hypothesized that affective commitment would relate positively to positive affect, and negatively to cynicism and turnover intentions. Results from path analyses support these hypotheses and lead to a number of implications.

First, results revealed that task variety and perceived leader support positively related to need satisfaction, while role conflict negatively predicted need satisfaction. The opposite pattern of relationships was found for need thwarting. No previous research to the best of our knowledge has investigated the influence of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on psychological need satisfaction and need thwarting. The present research is thus the first to demonstrate that the more employees believe that their work involves performing a variety of tasks, the more they perceive high levels of leader support, and the less they perceive role conflict at work, the more they will satisfy their psychological needs, and the less their needs will be thwarted. This is consistent with Meyer and Maltin's (2010) suggestion that need-supportive work conditions are positively associated with the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The present results are also in accordance with those reported by Bartholomew *et al.*, (2011a, Study 1) who found that need thwarting was respectively negatively and positively predicted by autonomy-supportive behaviours and controlling behaviours in the sport domain. Finally, our findings also corroborate the two studies conducted by Gillet *et al.* (2012). Indeed, these researchers have shown that need-supportive work conditions (i.e., workers' perceived organizational support and their perceptions of supervisor autonomy support) and workers' perceptions of supervisor controlling behaviors were both positively and negatively correlated to need satisfaction and thwarting, respectively.

Second, prior investigations indicated that employees report higher levels of affective commitment when task variety is high (e.g., Scott-Ladd *et al.*, 2006). Findings from the present research are coherent with these past studies. Indeed, the present study highlights that task variety positively predicts employees' affective commitment. Aligned with our hypotheses and in accordance with the predictions of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the present results also showed that satisfaction and thwarting of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness mediated the effects of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment. In line with the results of Gillet *et al.* (2012), these findings point to the constructs of need satisfaction and thwarting as promising underlying mechanisms for explaining employees' affective commitment. However, the mediation was full for role conflict and perceived leader support but only partial for task variety. This means that the effects of task variety on affective commitment may be better explained by considering other variables such as psychological empowerment or organizational justice. Indeed, empowerment, which reflects the intrinsic motivation derived from challenging job characteristics (e.g., task variety), was positively related to affective commitment (e.g., Joo & Shim, 2010). In addition, past research found that when employees felt fairly treated by their organizations, they responded positively with higher affective commitment (Elanain, 2009). Future research should thus examine other



mediators than need satisfaction and thwarting to identify the mechanisms that might account for the beneficial effects of task variety.

Third, the present results revealed that affective commitment related positively to positive affect, and negatively to cynicism and turnover intentions. This is in agreement with prior research finding positive links between affective commitment and positive affect (e.g., Thoresen *et al.*, 2003), and negative links of affective commitment to cynicism and turnover intentions (e.g., Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013). More generally, these results demonstrated the benefits to organizations of having a strongly affectively committed workforce.

#### IV.1. LIMITATIONS

Certain limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the present research. First, the data collection was cross-sectional and the data are correlational in nature. Conclusions about causality are unwarranted and future research using longitudinal designs should attempt to replicate the present results. Second, the small sample size did not allow us to test the invariance of our model by gender. In addition, full-time employees would better represent the variables chosen for this study. Because of sample size constraints, we also used global need satisfaction and thwarting indexes. Therefore, future research with larger samples across different situations and contexts should seek to replicate these findings. It would also be interesting to extend the present results by examining the independent contribution of the satisfaction and thwarting of each psychological need in the prediction of affective commitment and other outcomes. Third, we only considered one form of organizational commitment in the present research, namely affective commitment. Normative and continuance commitment should also be taken into consideration in future research because these two dimensions have been found to predict numerous work outcomes (see Meyer & Allen, 1997). Finally, the present sample only comprised employees from one country (Canada). Future research with workers from different cultures is needed to replicate and extend the present results.

#### IV.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our results indicate that organizations should create a positive work environment in order to enhance workers' well-being and reduce their turnover intentions. In addition, small shifts in employees' well-being can make a big impact on organizational performance (see Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). The present findings have some practical implications for enhancing positive affect, and reducing cynicism and turnover intentions. Specifically, our findings suggest that need satisfaction is positively associated with affective commitment (contrary to need thwarting), which in turn leads to an increase in positive affect and a reduction in cynicism and turnover intentions. Therefore, contrary to need thwarting, need satisfaction and affective commitment play key roles in strengthening positive

affect and decreasing cynicism and turnover intentions. It thus appears important for researchers to identify factors that facilitate need satisfaction, enhance affective commitment, and lessen turnover intentions. In light of the present results, managers and organizations who want to promote well-being and diminish ill-being and turnover intentions should try to design and craft jobs to increase the presence of positive work characteristics (e.g., task variety, perceived supervisor support) and minimize the presence or mitigate the impact of negative work characteristic (e.g., role conflict).

Increased attention is needed for promoting supportive work environments and encouraging supportive supervisory practices (Gentry, Kuhnert, Mondore, & Page, 2007). Employees' experience of supervisor support can be facilitated by way of practices such as frequent interactions between supervisors and subordinates in order to foster trust, fairness, and respect. Moreover, providing regular feedback on individual performance is crucial for promoting perceived supervisor support (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2013). Findings from previous research also showed that role stress is present in the workplace and may affect employee's well- and ill-being as well as turnover intentions (e.g., Madera, Dawson, & Neal, 2013). It is thus important to clarify roles in the workplace, as well as employees' tasks and responsibilities. For instance, managers should be trained to lead within a clear framework that eases workers' burden to fulfil their job position (Schmidt, Roesler, Kusserow, & Rau, 2014).

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the present research was twofold: 1) examine the mediating role of need satisfaction and need thwarting in the relationships of task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support on affective commitment; and 2) examine whether affective commitment leads to positive affect, cynicism, and turnover intentions. We tested a model in which task variety, role conflict, and perceived leader support independently predicted satisfaction and thwarting of workers' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn predicted affective commitment. The hypothesized model also posited that affective commitment related positively to positive affect, and negatively to cynicism and turnover intentions. Results from a sample of 129 executive MBA students provided support for the hypotheses. The present findings underscore the importance of understanding the mechanisms through which social factors relate to workers' well-being and turnover intentions.*

**Keywords:** leader support, psychological needs, affective commitment, workers' well-being, turnover intentions.

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