Exploring Organisational Commitment During Organisational Change: The Impact of Employee Motivation, Leader-Member Exchange, and Emotional Intelligence in the Georgian Banking Industry

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Abstract. Organisational change is a pervasive reality in the contemporary banking sector, driven by technological disruption, shifting regulatory landscapes, and intensifying competitive pressures. Sustaining high employee commitment is crucial for ensuring continuity of service quality, safeguarding institutional knowledge, and enabling successful change implementation. This study investigates the impact of employee motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions), leader-member exchange (LMX) processes, and the emotional intelligence (EI) competencies of organisational leaders on the affective, continuance, and normative dimensions of employee organisational commitment during organisational change in Georgia's private banking sector. The researchers adopt an integrative theoretical framework that draws on Self-Determination Theory, LMX Theory, and the ability-based model of emotional intelligence; employ a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design with internationally validated instruments; and analyse the data using hierarchical regression analysis, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation in IBM SPSS Statistics. The study's novelty resides in its contextual focus on the Georgian banking industry, its integrative theoretical framework, and its applied contribution in generating evidence-based recommendations for banking executives navigating digital transformation and regulatory change. During such transitions, sustaining high levels of employee organisational commitment is not merely desirable but strategically imperative for ensuring continuity of service quality, safeguarding institutional knowledge, and enabling successful change implementation.

Keywords: Organisational Commitment; Employee Motivation; Leader-Member Exchange; Emotional Intelligence; Organisational Change.

INTRODUCTION

The banking sector faces a particularly challenging juncture within the broader field of organisational change. Financial institutions are contending with digital transformation, shifting regulatory demands, changing customer expectations, and operational restructuring following the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this convergence of pressures, one issue stands out as especially consequential: how organisations manage their people through sustained periods of upheaval. Georgia's banking sector illustrates this dynamic with particular clarity. Since the country departed from the Soviet system, its financial institutions have undergone continuous restructuring, a process further intensified by Georgia's gradual alignment with European frameworks of financial regulation and governance.

At the heart of this challenge lies organisational commitment—the psychological bond that ties employees to their organisation, shapes their willingness to invest discretionary effort, and influences their decisions about whether to remain or depart during times of uncertainty [1, 2]. Declining organisational commitment during change initiatives represents one of the most significant threats to successful transformation, precipitating elevated turnover intentions, reduced performance output, increased resistance to change, and the erosion of tacit organisational knowledge [3, 4].

Three constructs emerge with particular salience in the scholarly literature on commitment under change: employee motivation, leader-member exchange (LMX) quality, and leader emotional intelligence (EI). Employee motivation—encompassing both intrinsic drives and extrinsic incentives—is a foundational determinant of employees' willingness to engage with organisational goals during periods of uncertainty [5, 6]. The quality of the dyadic relationship between leaders and individual subordinates, conceptualised within LMX Theory as a spectrum from low-quality transactional exchanges to high-quality partnerships [7], shapes both the informational resources available to employees during change and their sense of being valued. Finally, theoretical and empirical research has linked leaders' emotional intelligence to leadership quality, the emotional climate of work units, and followers' motivational states [8, 9].

Research Problem and Objectives. The central problem addressed by this study is: how do employee motivation, leader-member exchange quality, and leader emotional intelligence collectively and independently influence the three dimensions of organisational commitment during organisational change in the Georgian private banking sector?

The specific research objectives are:

a) To examine how intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of employee motivation influence affective and continuance commitment during organisational change in the Georgian banking sector.

b) To investigate the role of leader-member exchange quality in shaping employee perceptions and experience of organisational commitment during change processes.

c) To assess the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence competencies — specifically self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills — on employee commitment levels during organisational change.

d) To explore the interaction effects among employee motivation, LMX quality, and leader emotional intelligence as joint predictors of organisational commitment during change.

e) To develop evidence-based strategic recommendations for Georgian private banks to strengthen employee commitment during organisational transformation initiatives.

Significance and Novelty. This study makes three distinct contributions to the existing body of knowledge.

First, it provides the first empirically grounded examination of the motivation-LMX-EI triad as predictors of organisational commitment within the Georgian banking sector—a context notable for its unique institutional history, rapidly evolving regulatory environment, and increasing exposure to international management practices.

Second, it deploys an integrative theoretical framework synthesising Self-Determination Theory [10], LMX Theory [11], and the ability-based model of emotional intelligence [12], generating a more holistic analytical lens than single-theory approaches permit. Third, it generates actionable, context-specific recommendations for the main decision makers, including human resource practitioners in the Georgian banking industry, at a moment when the sector is navigating significant digital and regulatory transformation.

Literature Review

Employee Behaviour. Understanding what drives employee behaviour at work has long been a vital concern in organisational research. The studies reviewed in this section explore this question from various directions, investigating how effective leadership dynamics, motivation, and emotional intelligence shape employees' attitudes and actions across diverse workplace settings.

One recurring theme is the tension employees experience between their internal psychological states and the external environment they navigate daily. Authors [13] bring this tension into sharp focus by examining how employees' perceptions of organisational politics erode both their trust in leadership and their commitment to the organisation. When people sense that managers distribute rewards and recognition through favouritism rather than merit, a creeping sense of unfairness quietly chips away at their loyalty. What makes this finding particularly insightful is that trust acts as a bridge: when political perceptions undermine trust, commitment follows. Emotional intelligence, however, emerges as a meaningful buffer, helping individuals maintain their commitment even in politically charged environments by allowing them to process stress more adaptively. The damage politics does, in other words, is not inevitable—it depends significantly on the emotional resources individuals bring to work.

Leadership also shapes employees in ways that extend well beyond task management. Authors [14] shift attention to something more existential: whether employees experience their work as a calling—a source of meaning, passion, and purpose. Their findings reveal that leaders who feel a strong sense of calling in their own work tend to inspire that same orientation in the people around them. This transmission occurs not through direct instruction but through the quality of the relationship. When leaders are perceived as genuinely supportive and when the exchange between leader and employee feels reciprocal, employees are more likely to find deeper meaning in their work. Social exchange theory helps explain this dynamic: people respond to what they receive, and when they receive inspiration and care from a leader, something of those feelings transfers back. The implication is that people do not simply discover their calling in isolation—they can cultivate it through the right kind of leadership.

Motivation, or its troubling absence, is explored directly by authors [15], who focus on amotivation—the psychological state in which individuals feel unable or unwilling to engage with their work. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty members in Indian higher education institutions faced a sudden shift to online teaching that many were ill-prepared for, and this strain manifested as a creeping inability to perform. The research demonstrates that when individuals lose their motivational footing, normative commitment—the sense that one ought to stay and contribute—becomes a critical buffer against turnover. Both intrinsic motivation and introjected regulation strengthen this buffer further, suggesting that commitment, motivation, and a sense of personal responsibility operate together, and that even when one element weakens, the others can compensate.

Authors [16] bring the conversation to a concrete and high-stakes context: Ghana's security services. Their study examines employee agility—the capacity to adapt quickly, respond proactively, and remain effective under pressure—and finds that both commitment and engagement significantly enhance it. Abusive supervision, by contrast, systematically undermines agility by depleting the psychological resources it depends on. Emotional intelligence emerges here not as a cure for toxic leadership, but as an amplifier of positive conditions. It strengthens the link between commitment and agility, and between engagement and agility—yet it cannot neutralise the harm caused by persistent supervisory abuse; this is a sobering finding: personal emotional resources, however well developed, have limits when confronted with structural mistreatment.

Taken together, these studies reveal a consistent underlying logic. Employees do not operate in a vacuum. The meaning they find in their work, the commitment they bring to it, and the adaptability they display are all shaped by the quality of their relationships with leaders, the political climate of the organisation, and the motivational resources they can draw upon. Emotional intelligence can be a powerful tool in helping employees navigate these complexities and find meaning in their work.

Employee Motivation. Motivation is what drives people to get involved with their jobs, companies, and the world around them. Three interesting studies looked at this from different viewpoints: one examined how people share things online, another examined how leaders' styles affect their teams, and the last identified what makes people really care about their workplace. These studies show that motivation is a complex thing that can be influenced by many factors, including how we interact with each other and our surroundings. By understanding what motivates us, we can create better work environments and help people reach their full potential.

People share their experiences on social media for different reasons. One study by authors [17] looked into why people share things online, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. What they found was interesting: it's not just about being impulsive, but about who people are and what they get out of sharing. For example, people who are outgoing and like being around others are more likely to share their opinions and engage with brands online. On the other hand, people who care a lot about material things use social media to show off their status. The study also found that when people share things to express themselves, they are more likely to have positive feelings about sharing online; this differs from sharing to show off, which doesn't feel as genuine. During the pandemic, people turned to social media to cope with loneliness and anxiety, which made them more likely to share online; this shows that people's motivations for sharing online are complex and depend on their personalities and what they get out of it. The fact that people share more when it feels real, not just like they're trying to perform for others, is significant. It suggests that social media can be a powerful tool for connection and self-expression, especially during difficult times. By understanding what drives people to share online, we can better appreciate the role that social media plays in our lives and how it can be used to build meaningful relationships and communities. Overall, the study by authors [17] provides valuable insights into the motivations behind online sharing behaviour. It highlights the importance of considering the complexities of human personality and motivation when trying to understand why people share things online. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the social media landscape and how it is shaped by the people who use it.

Here's a rewritten version of the input text in a more human-like tone, mimicking the style and structure of the provided human samples: Let's take a look at what happens when leaders inspire their teams. Authors [18] found that transformational leaders have a big impact on their employees. These leaders motivate and encourage their team members to grow and develop. They make people want to do their best work. The researchers conducted the study at a state-owned port company in Indonesia, which represents a relatively traditional work setting. The researchers found that when leaders are transformational, it affects how satisfied employees are with their jobs and how committed they are to the organisation. But here's the interesting part: just because employees are satisfied with their jobs and committed to the organisation, it doesn't necessarily mean they'll perform better. What really matters is how employees feel day to day. If they're happy and satisfied with their work, they're more likely to be productive; this means leaders who create a positive work environment and help employees feel good about their jobs are more likely to see better results. It's not just about being loyal to the organisation, but about feeling motivated and inspired to do good work every day. In short, the key to getting the best out of employees is to make them feel valued and supported. When leaders can do this, they create a positive and productive work environment that benefits everyone. They can start by being more transformational in their approach, focusing on inspiring and motivating their teams rather than just giving orders. By doing so, they can create a workplace where employees feel happy, satisfied, and motivated to do their best work.

When it comes to what really matters in a workplace, it's not just about the rules and policies written down on paper. What actually makes a difference is how employees feel about their job and the people they work with. A study by [19] examined this issue in public hospitals in Pakistan. They found that when supervisors are perceived to be doing a good job with things like performance reviews, promotions, and pay, employees are more likely to agree. But here's the thing: it's not just about what's on paper; it's about what's actually happening in the workplace. Employees respond to what they see and feel every day. Another important finding was that the relationship between an employee and their supervisor plays a big role in all of this.

When a supervisor is supportive, fair, and communicates well, it directly affects how an employee views their job and the workplace. This relationship is like a bridge between the employee and the company's policies. If the bridge is strong, the employee is more likely to feel positive about their job and the company. But if the bridge is weak, it doesn't matter how good the policies are - the employee will still feel unhappy and uncommitted. Supervisors need to focus on building strong relationships with their employees. They need to be supportive, fair, and communicate well. It's not just about following the rules and policies; it's about creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued and supported. When this happens, employees are more likely to be motivated, committed, and happy in their jobs. And that's what really matters in the end.

When you look at these three studies together, you can see a common theme. It doesn't matter if it's online, in a leadership role, or just in everyday work experiences - how people feel at the moment really matters. I mean, think about it - their emotional state, whether they feel supported, and how much they actually want to do something all play a big role in shaping their behaviour. It's not just about having rules or policies in place, but about how people interact with their surroundings. Motivation isn't something that can be forced on someone from the outside; it comes from within, and the world around them influences it. So, it's really about finding that balance between what people want to do and the environment they're in.

Organisational Commitment: Theoretical Foundations and Dimensionality. Organisational commitment has been one of the most extensively studied constructs in organisational behaviour research over the past four decades. Early conceptualisations framed commitment as a one-dimensional attitudinal construct reflecting the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation [20]. Authors [21] operationalised this perspective through the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), capturing three underlying elements: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values; a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and a definite desire to maintain organisational membership.

The way people think about commitment at work has changed a lot because of the author's [1] important three-component model. According to this model, affective commitment is the emotional attachment to the organisation, which is when you really like your job and feel connected to the company. Then, there's continuance commitment, which is when you stay at your job because you feel like you have to, not because you want to; this is based on the calculative needs [22]. Lastly, there's normative commitment, which is when you feel like you should stay at your job because it's the right thing to do; this can be because you feel loyal to the company or because you think the company has invested a lot in you. So, to sum it up, people stay at their jobs for different reasons: some because they want to, some because they need to, and some because they feel like they ought to.

This three-component model has been validated across diverse cultural and occupational contexts, including banking and financial services [23, 24].

What's interesting is that when people invest emotionally in their organisation, they tend to perform better, are more likely to go above and beyond, and are less likely to want to leave. Researchers have consistently identified affective commitment as a strong predictor of these positive outcomes. On the other hand, when people feel like they have to stay with an organisation because it's convenient or they don't have other options, this is called continuance commitment. Research has consistently demonstrated that affective commitment is the most potent predictor of positive organisational outcomes—including performance, citizenship behaviour, and reduced turnover intention—while continuance commitment shows a null or slightly negative relationship with performance, reflecting its qualitatively distinct motivational character [23, 25]. This study focuses on affective and continuance commitment.

When it comes to organisational change, commitment becomes even more important and complicated. Authors [3] found that employees' attitudes shape how they respond to organisational change. If they really want the change to happen, they'll work hard to make it succeed. If they feel like they should support the change, they'll do what they're supposed to do. But if they're only going along with the change because they feel like they have to, they might not be very enthusiastic about it. The researchers discovered that when employees are genuinely committed to a change, they're more likely to do what it takes to make it work; this is a crucial finding for leaders who want to motivate their teams and make change happen. It means that leaders should focus on getting their employees excited and invested in the change, rather than just trying to get them to comply. By doing so, they can create a more positive and supportive work environment that helps the change succeed. Empirical findings confirm that affective commitment is one of the strongest predictors of desired change-supportive behaviours during organisational change [3].

Employee behaviour and Organisational Commitment

1) Employee Motivation and Organisational Commitment. The relationship between employee motivation and organisational commitment has been comprehensively theorised and empirically examined, primarily through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) [5, 10], which provides the most detailed and empirically supported framework for understanding the quality of employee motivation and its organisational consequences. SDT differentiates between autonomous motivation — encompassing intrinsic motivation (driven by inherent interest and enjoyment) and identified regulation (driven by personal valuation of the activity) — and controlled motivation, including introjected regula-

tion (driven by internal pressures such as ego-involvement or shame avoidance) and external regulation (driven by external contingencies such as rewards and punishments).

A meta-analytic review by authors [6] confirmed that autonomous motivation is more strongly and positively associated with organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing than controlled or extrinsic forms of motivation. This differential effect has been attributed to the basic psychological need satisfaction—for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that autonomous motivation both reflects and facilitates [26]. During organisational change, the satisfaction of these basic needs becomes particularly uncertain: changes to job roles, lines of authority in the corporate structure, and job procedures frequently have negative impacts on employees' competence and autonomy, while restructuring disrupts the relational bonds that satisfy the need for relatedness.

Intrinsic motivation has been linked strongly to affective organisational commitment. Intrinsically motivated employees find their work more meaningful and enjoyable, which makes them more likely to identify with their organisation and feel a sense of deeper identification with their organisation [27]; when employees are motivated by a genuine interest in their work, they are more likely to take an active role in solving problems and going above and beyond their basic job duties that generate positive social exchanges and feedback cycles, further strengthening organisational bonds [26]. This kind of desired behaviour can create a positive feedback loop: employees receive recognition and appreciation from their colleagues, which further strengthens their bond with the department and the organisation. In industries like banking, where building strong relationships with customers and using knowledge to make informed decisions are crucial, fostering this kind of internal motivation is especially important. By encouraging employees to be more engaged and motivated, companies can create a more positive and effective work environment.

Extrinsic motivation operates through different but complementary courses. Perceived organisational support (POS) authors [28]—employees' beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing—has been consistently identified as one of the most vigorous predictors of affective commitment [29]. The relationship between POS and affective commitment is theoretically grounded in social exchange theory [30] and the norm of reciprocity [31]. When employees perceive that the organisation is investing in their welfare, they respond with increased involvement and behavioural loyalty. During organisational change, POS serves as a particularly critical psychological buffer, moderating the negative effects of change-related uncertainty and role ambiguity on commitment [2]. Overall, POS is an important factor for companies to consider because it can significantly influence employee satisfaction and commitment. By showing employees that they care, companies can build strong relationships with them and help them feel more secure, even during times of change.

The banking sector in Georgia has a unique setup that affects how motivated people are to work. For a long time, banks in Georgia have had a very top-down approach. Historically, the sector has exhibited relatively hierarchical corporate cultures and high power distance norms [32]. This can make it hard for employees to feel motivated from within, because they don't have the freedom to make their own decisions or speak up. But things are changing positively - Georgian banks are now more connected to the regional and international banking sectors, and they're starting to realise how important it is to make employees happy and engaged, because this can lead to excellent customer service. This shift could create an environment where employees are more motivated to work independently and take ownership of their jobs.

2) Leader–Member Exchange Theory and Organisational Commitment. Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, originally proposed by [33] under the label Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory and subsequently refined by [7], constitutes one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in organisational leadership research. The theory's foundational insight is that leadership is not a uniform process applied equivalently to all subordinates but a differentiated set of dyadic relationships that develop over time between leaders and individual group members, varying systematically in quality and character.

High-quality LMX relationships, characterised by mutual trust, respect, and obligation as well as increased information exchange, decision-making influence, and career support, constitute what authors [7] termed the 'in-group.' In-group members receive greater resources, latitude, and developmental investment than their 'out-group' counterparts, whose relationships with supervisors are more formally bounded and instrumentally defined. Theoretical and empirical research has shown that the quality of the LMX relationship shapes outcomes, including job performance [34], organisational citizenship behaviour [35], job satisfaction, and organisational commitment [36].

Researchers have examined the LMX–commitment relationship through multiple theoretical lenses. From a social exchange perspective, high-quality LMX relationships generate a sense of felt obligation and reciprocal loyalty in subordinates, which translates into normative and affective commitment [37]. From a need satisfaction perspective, high-quality LMX relationships satisfy employees' needs for autonomy support, competence feedback, and relational belonging, facilitating autonomous motivational regulation and the affective organisational attachment that follows [38]. From an organisational identity perspective, inclusion in the in-group through high LMX fosters a sense of valued organisational membership that deepens employees' identification with the organisation as a whole [39].

Despite this strong theoretical tradition, a recent problematising review by authors [40] offers a searching critique of how LMX and social exchange theory are operationalised in practice. Their analysis of 141 empirical articles published in leading management journals between 2000 and 2023 reveals that leadership research has largely reduced social exchange theory to a simple transactional loop: the leader provides something of value, and the follower reciprocates with positive attitudes or behaviours. This reduction, authors [40] argue, strips away the theory's original emphasis on emergent reciprocity, negotiated power asymmetries, and the open-ended, socially embedded character of genuine exchange. Their review identifies six assumptions that structure this reductionism: treating exchange as transactional reciprocity, framing exchange as unidirectional and leader-initiated, conceptualising exchange as static, inferring exchange through indirect proxies, treating exchange actors as identity-neutral, and decontextualising exchange. Each of these assumptions narrows the explanatory power of social exchange theory and limits the field's capacity to capture how leader–follower relationships actually develop over time.

While high-quality LMX is generally protective, the literature increasingly recognises conditions under which LMX dynamics complicate rather than ease organisational change. LMX differentiation, the variation in relationship quality that a leader maintains across members of the same team, can generate perceptions of unfairness when it is not transparently justified, potentially undermining group cohesion at precisely the moments when unified support for change is most needed [41]. Employees who perceive unexplained disparities in how leaders allocate attention, information, or resources during a change initiative may respond with resentment or reduced cooperation rather than support.

During organisational change, the quality of LMX relationships plays a particularly vital role. Research by authors [42] demonstrated that high-quality LMX serves as a buffer against the commitment-eroding effects of organisational uncertainty, partly because in-group members receive more timely and detailed information about change rationale and implications, and partly because they experience change as something navigated in partnership with a trusted supervisor rather than imposed from an impersonal hierarchy. In the banking context—where organisational changes frequently involve restructuring of reporting lines, role redefinition, and technology-driven workflow transformation—the relational quality of supervisor–subordinate dyads may be especially consequential for employees' experience of continuity, support, and valued membership.

The LMX and social exchange literatures converge in identifying the importance of attending to the emotional and affective dimensions of leader–follower relationships. Authors [43] demonstrate this directly by examining how specific leader behaviours targeted at managing followers' negative emotions shape the quality of LMX. Drawing on the emotion regulation framework of [44], they identify four interpersonal emotion management strategies: situation modification (directly altering the source of the negative emotion), cognitive change (reframing the situation), attentional deployment (distracting the follower), and modulating the emotional response (encouraging suppression). Problem-focused strategies—situation modification and cognitive change—are positively associated with

LMX, signalling to followers that the leader is willing to invest time and resources in addressing obstacles. Emotion-focused strategies, particularly suppression, undermine LMX by signalling disregard for followers' emotional experiences.

A further strand of research examines how LMX shapes safety-relevant behaviours among employees in high-risk environments. Authors [45] investigate this question in the context of Algerian healthcare workers, proposing and testing a moderated mediation model in which LMX influences safety compliance behaviour (SCB) and safety participation behaviour (SPB) through the mediating role of job satisfaction, with psychological safety as a moderating variable. Their longitudinal three-wave design represents a methodological advance over most LMX research. The findings confirm that job satisfaction fully mediates the LMX–SCB relationship and that high psychological safety strengthens this indirect pathway. Importantly, job satisfaction does not mediate the LMX–SPB relationship, suggesting that the pathways to compliance and to more proactive participation behaviours are meaningfully different.

The role of LMX as a relational resource extends into technology-intensive work environments as well. Authors [46] investigate how technostress affects innovative work behaviour (IWB) both directly and indirectly via work engagement in the Indian banking industry, and how LMX moderates these pathways. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, researchers conceptualise technostress as a hindrance demand that depletes resources and reduces employees' capacity to engage productively. LMX enters the model as a job resource that can buffer against these depleting effects. The empirical findings reveal that while LMX does not significantly moderate the direct relationship between technostress and IWB, it does significantly moderate the indirect pathway via work engagement: the negative effect of technostress on IWB is weaker when LMX is high; this suggests that supportive leader–follower relationships can partially protect employee engagement from technology-induced stress—a finding directly relevant to the Georgian banking sector's ongoing digital transformation.

3) Emotional Intelligence and Organisational Commitment. Emotional intelligence has emerged over the past three decades as one of the most debated and dynamically evolving constructs in the organisational behaviour and leadership literatures. Following the foundational work of aurhors [47, p. 189] — who defined emotional intelligence as 'the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions' — and the subsequent popularisation of the construct by authors [9, 48], EI has been operationalised through a proliferation of competing models that have generated considerable scholarly controversy alongside growing practical application.

The three main models are the ability model [8, 12], which assesses EI through performance-based testing; the trait model [49], which views EI as emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions; and mixed models [48, 50], which combine emotional competencies with personality traits. Ability-based EI measurement is more valid and actionable for leadership research [51, 52].

The relationship between leader emotional intelligence and employee organisational commitment operates through several theoretically articulated pathways. Emotionally intelligent leaders create a climate of emotional safety and validation, sustaining employees' organisational attachment [53, 54]. Leaders who skillfully manage their own emotional expression during periods of organisational uncertainty project confidence and composure that buffer employees from change-related anxiety and cynicism, thereby preserving their motivation to remain committed [55]. Emotionally intelligent leaders build high-quality LMX relationships through superior social skills, empathic accuracy, and emotional regulation [56].

In the Georgian banking context, the relevance of leader emotional intelligence is heightened by the sector's high-emotion interpersonal demands—customer relationship management, credit negotiation, employee appraisal—in which emotional regulation and empathic accuracy are core professional competencies. During organisational change, these emotionally demanding role requirements intensify, as employees simultaneously manage their own change-related anxieties and their clients' and colleagues' emotional responses, making their supervisors' emotional intelligence a particularly salient resource.

Organisational Change: Contextual and Theoretical Background

Organisational change in the banking sector has accelerated dramatically over the past two decades, driven by the convergence of several transformative forces. The global diffusion of digital banking technologies—including mobile banking applications, AI-powered credit scoring, robotic process automation, and blockchain-based transaction management—has compelled financial institutions worldwide to restructure their service delivery models, redefine professional roles, and invest in large-scale workforce reskilling initiatives [57]. Concurrently, post-2008 financial crisis regulatory reforms, including Basel III capital adequacy requirements and progressively tightening anti-money laundering compliance frameworks, have imposed significant organisational restructuring demands on banking institutions globally.

In Georgia specifically, the banking sector has undergone a distinctive trajectory of transformation shaped by the country's post-Soviet institutional transition, its progressive adoption of European regulatory standards within the framework of the EU–Georgia Association Agreement (2014), and the National Bank of Georgia's increasingly stringent prudential supervisory framework. Georgia's two dominant banking conglomerates — TBC Bank and Bank of Georgia — have pursued aggressive digital transformation strategies since approximately 2016, significantly restructuring their branch networks, automating back-office functions, and introducing data-driven relationship management models that have substantially altered the nature of banking employment.

These structural transformations have important implications for organisational commitment. Research on organisational change generally identifies four categories of employee response: enthusiastic adoption, compliant engagement, passive resistance, and active resistance [4, 58]. The distribution of responses is shaped by multiple factors, including employees' perceptions of the change's legitimacy and necessity, their change self-efficacy, the quality of communication about change rationale and implications, and—critically—the quality of their relationships with supervisors and their broader motivational orientations toward their work and organisation. The literature converges on a common insight: in change-intensive environments like Georgian banking, leaders' relational and motivational conditions are central determinants of sustainable commitment or mere compliance.

Conceptual Model

1) Overview. This model (Figure 1 below) proposes that employee motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), leader-member exchange (LMX) quality, and the emotional intelligence (EI) competencies of organisational leaders each act as antecedents of organisational commitment.

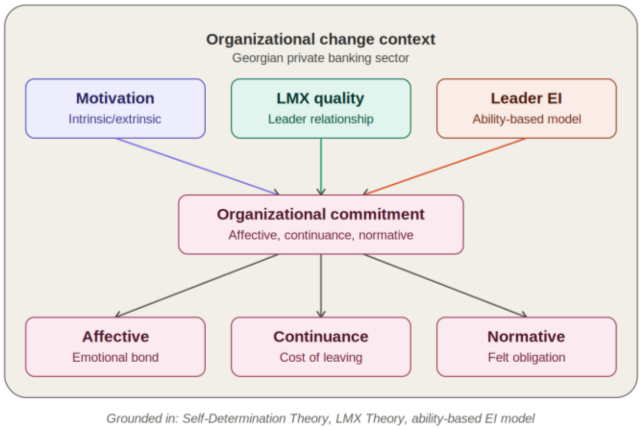

Figure 1 – Conceptual model of employee organisational commitment during organisational change

This study treats organisational commitment as a three-dimensional construct—affective, continuance, and normative—consistent with Meyer and Allen's framework; however, it focuses on the affective and continuance dimensions. The proposed model theorises that the entire set of relationships operates within, and is shaped by, the organisational change context characterising Georgia's private banking sector, including digital transformation, evolving regulation, restructuring, and intensifying competition.

2) Constructs and theoretical grounding. The literature review discusses the constructs and relevant theories. The following section presents a compact summary in Table 1.

Table 1 – Constructs and theoretical grounding

Construct	Role in model	Theoretical grounding	Dimensions/ focus
Employee motivation	Independent variable	Self-Determination Theory	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
LMX quality	Independent variable	Leader-Member Exchange Theory	Quality of leader-employee exchange relationship
Leader emotional intelligence	Independent variable	Ability-based model of EI	Leaders' EI competencies as perceived/ experienced by employees
Organisa-tional commitment	Dependent variable	Meyer & Allen's three-component model	Affective, continuance, and normative commitment
Organisational change	Contextual frame	Organisational change / digital transformation literature	Digital transformation, regulatory change, competitive pressure

Research Questions and Hypotheses. The following research questions guide the empirical investigation:

RQ1: How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation dimensions, individually and jointly, influence affective and continuance commitment during organisational change in the Georgian banking sector?

RQ2: What is the relationship between LMX quality and organisational commitment among Georgian banking employees during change?

RQ3: How does leader emotional intelligence influence employee organisational commitment during organisational change, and through which mediating mechanisms?

RQ4: What interactive effects emerge among motivation type, LMX quality, and leader EI as predictors of organisational commitment under change conditions?

The following hypotheses are derived from the theoretical framework and prior empirical evidence:

H1: Intrinsic employee motivation is positively associated with affective organisational commitment during organisational change.

H2: Extrinsic motivation, particularly perceived organisational support, is positively associated with affective- and continuance commitment during organisational change.

H3: LMX quality is positively associated with the dimensions of organisational commitment (affective- and continuance) during organisational change.

H4: Leader emotional intelligence is positively associated with LMX quality.

H5: Leader emotional intelligence is positively associated with employee affective organisational commitment during change, partially mediated by LMX quality.

H6: Leader EI competencies differentially predict the three OC dimensions, with empathy and social skills demonstrating the strongest relationship with affective commitment.

H7: The joint effect of high intrinsic motivation and high LMX quality on affective organisational commitment is greater than the sum of their individual effects (positive interaction effect).

METHODS

Research Design and Philosophy. This study adopts a positivist approach and a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design. The quantitative approach is selected for its capacity to test theoretically derived hypotheses across a sufficiently large sample to support statistical generalisation, and for its alignment with the measurement properties of the validated scales deployed. The analytic strategy combines descriptive profiling, bivariate correlational analysis, and multivariate hierarchical regression modelling.

Population and Sampling. The target population is employees at every hierarchical level—front-line, supervisory, middle management, and senior management—working in private banking institutions in Georgia. The researchers used a purposive stratified sampling strategy to ensure representation across hierarchical levels, functional departments (retail banking, corporate banking, risk, compliance, operations, HR, and digital/IT), and bank size categories. In total, 135 employees from Georgian private banking organisations completed the survey (female: 73.3%, n = 99; male: 26.7%, n = 36). The largest age group was 36–45 years (53.3%, n = 72), followed by 18–25 years (26.7%, n = 36) and 26–35 years (20.0%, n = 27). On education, 53.3% held a bachelor's degree, 33.3% a master's degree, and 13.3% a doctoral degree. Most respondents worked full-time (86.7%). Organisational tenure varied: 33.3% had 4–7 years of experience, 26.7% less than one year, 20.0% 1–3 years, 13.3% more than 15 years, and 6.7% 8–15 years.

Measurement Instruments. The 31-item questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to assess eight constructs: Intrinsic Motivation (IM; 3 items), Identified Regulation (IR; 3 items), Introjected Regulation (InR; 3 items), External Regulation (ER; 4 items), Emotional Intelligence (EI; 5 items), Affective Commitment (AC; 4 items), Continuance Commitment (CC; 3 items), and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX; 6 items). Items were adapted from validated international instruments and underwent forward-backwards translation for the Georgian banking context.

Table 2 – Validated Measurement Instruments: Summary of Sources and Reliability

Construct	Instrument	Items	α	Source
Organisational Commitment (AC, CC, NC)	Three-Component OCQ	24	0.80	[1]
Leader-Member Exchange quality	LMX-7 Questionnaire	7	0.92	[7]
Emotional intelligence (4 branches)	MSCEIT v.2.0	141	0.91–0.93	[23]
Intrinsic motivation	Motivation subscale	6	0.75	[59]
Intrinsic non-monetary rewards	Subscale	5	0.80	[61]
Extrinsic non-monetary rewards/ POS	SPOS short form	8	0.93	[62]
Extrinsic monetary rewards	Job Satisfaction Survey (pay subscale)	6	0.91	[64]

1) Organisational Commitment: Allen and Meyer's Three-Component Model (OCQ). Organisational commitment will be assessed using the Three-Component Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by [1], comprising 24 items organised into three 8-item subscales for affective (ACS) and continuance commitment dimensions, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The researchers will translate the instrument into Georgian and verify the translation through back-translation, following the procedures recommended by [65].

2) Leader-Member Exchange: The LMX-7 Questionnaire. LMX quality will be measured using the LMX-7 questionnaire [7], comprising seven items assessing the overall quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship on a 5-point scale (α = 0.92). Researchers have validated the instrument across numerous international contexts, and meta-analysis [34] confirmed its concurrent validity with performance, satisfaction, and commitment outcomes.

3) Emotional Intelligence: The MSCEIT. Leader emotional intelligence will be assessed using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test version 2.0 (MSCEIT v.2.0) [23], an ability-based performance measure assessing four branches: perceiving emotions (PE), using emotions to facilitate thought (UE), understanding emotions (UN), and managing emotions (ME). The MSCEIT comprises 141 items with overall reliability of α = 0.91–0.93 and is administered to managerial and supervisory-level employees, enabling a matched-pair analytical design linking leader EI scores to subordinate commitment outcomes.

4) Employee Motivation Scales. Employee motivation is assessed through a multi-scale battery capturing four dimensions: intrinsic motivation (Wright's 2001 six-item scale, α = 0.75), intrinsic non-monetary rewards (Lytle's 1994 five-item subscale as used by Kim, Leong & Lee, 2005; α = 0.80), extrinsic non-monetary rewards/POS (SPOS eight-item short form; Eisenberger et al., 1990; α = 0.93), and extrinsic monetary rewards ([64] Job Satisfaction Survey pay subscale; α = 0.91).

Data Analysis. The statistical analysis included:

1) Descriptive statistics (means, SDs, skewness, kurtosis);

2) One-way ANOVAs comparing age groups (18–25, 26–35, 36–45) and educational levels;

3) Independent samples t-tests comparing male and female respondents;

4) Pearson correlation coefficients among scale composites; and

5) The study used a multivariable OLS regression to predict affective commitment from all other scale composites simultaneously. The researchers evaluated items for inclusion in the final questionnaire based on how consistently they performed across all four analytical criteria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics (Research Objectives 1–3). Table 3 and Figure 2 summarise the descriptive statistics for all 31 items. Scale composite means ranged from M = 3.42 (CC) to M = 4.20 (IM), and every scale came in above the scale midpoint of 3.0. EI (M = 4.15, SD = 0.57) and LMX (M = 4.14, SD = 0.75) showed the highest and most consistent endorsement.

Table 3 – Descriptive Statistics – All Items (N = 135; Scale: 1–5)

Scale	Item	Description	M	SD
Intrinsic Motivation (IM)	IM1	Work is fun	4.00	0.90
	IM2	Pleasure from mastering challenges	4.33	0.70
	IM3	Joy of discovering new things	4.27	0.68
Identified Reg. (IR)	IR1	Helps reach life goals	3.93	1.07
	IR2	Aligns with chosen lifestyle	3.60	0.80
	IR3	Fits career plans	3.87	1.09
Introjected Reg. (InR)	InR1	Want to be seen as successful	3.80	0.98
	InR2	For personal reputation	4.27	0.68
	InR3	Low effort is unacceptable	3.73	1.24
External Reg. (ER)	ER1	Salary & financial benefits	4.13	1.15
	ER2	Provides sense of stability	4.27	1.13
	ER3	Work reflects personal values	4.27	0.86
	ER4	Aligns with deep values	3.87	0.89
Emotional Intel. (EI)	EI1	Aware of emotions while working	3.87	1.21
	EI2	Maintain positive mood at work	4.40	0.61
	EI3	Manage emotions when frustrated	4.47	0.62
	EI4	Stay calm under pressure	3.80	1.17
	EI5	Sense colleagues' emotional states	4.20	0.75
Affective Commit. (AC)	AC1	Emotionally close to my bank	4.00	0.90
	AC2	Duties are interesting & inspiring	3.93	1.00
Affective Commit. (AC)	AC3	Strong sense of belonging	3.80	0.91
	AC4	Satisfied with work environment	4.20	0.91
Continuance Commit. (CC)	CC1	Few other alternatives	2.87	1.51
	CC2	Benefits & conditions are good	4.00	0.82
	CC3	Leaving disrupts personal life	3.40	1.09
LMX	LMX1	Can always rely on supervisor	4.07	1.13
	LMX2	Supervisor trusts me freely	4.13	1.03
	LMX3	Collaborate effectively on projects	4.20	0.66
	LMX4	Supervisor recognises contributions	4.20	0.84
	LMX5	Supervisor understands my needs	4.20	0.66
	LMX6	Open communication with supervisor	4.07	1.07

Notes: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. IM = Intrinsic Motivation; IR = Identified Regulation; InR = Introjected Regulation; ER = External Regulation; EI = Emotional Intelligence; AC = Affective Commitment; CC = Continuance Commitment; LMX = Leader-Member Exchange.

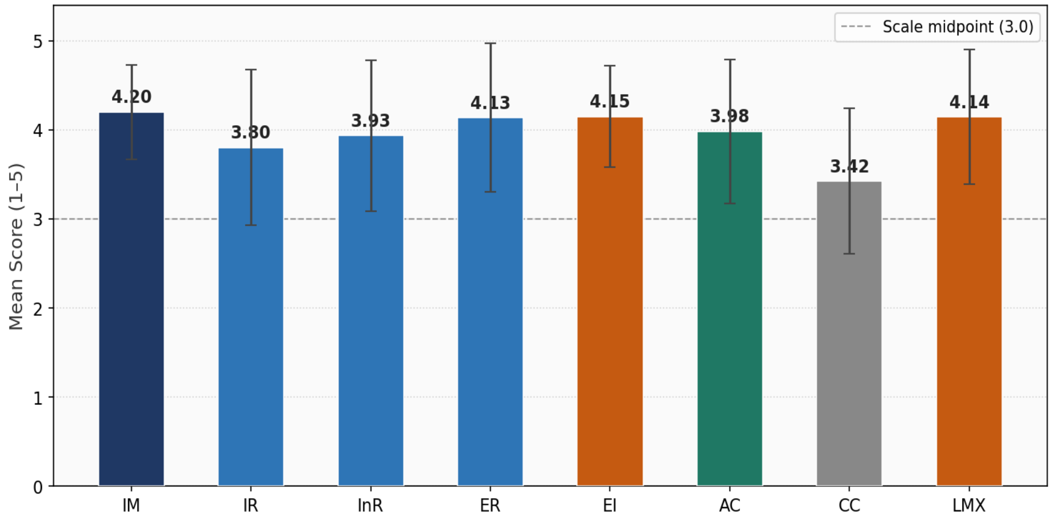

Figure 2 – Composite scale means with ±1 SD error bars

Notes: All constructs exceeded the scale midpoint (dashed line at 3.0). CC showed the lowest mean; IM the highest.

The only item below the midpoint was CC1 — "I feel I have few other alternatives" ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.51$), which was also the highest-variance item in the dataset. The highest-scoring item overall was EI3 — "I can manage my emotions when frustrated" ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.62$). Skewness was mostly negative (range: −1.78 to +0.85), which fits the left-skewed distributions typically seen in professional organisational research.

Group Differences: ANOVA and Independent Samples t-Tests (Objectives 1–3)

1) Motivation: Age and Gender Effects (Objective 1). One-way ANOVAs turned up significant age-group differences across every motivational subscale. Intrinsic motivation showed significant age effects on all three items (IM1: $F = 9.13$, $p < .001$; IM2: $F = 7.99$, $p < .001$; IM3: $F = 18.48$, $p < .001$). The 26–35 cohort reported the highest IM scores ($M = 4.44$), while the 18–25 and 36–45 cohorts scored somewhat lower ($M = 4.08$ and 4.17, respectively). External regulation showed the strongest age effects of any motivational construct: ER2 (stability) produced $F = 22.21$ ($p < .001$) and ER3 (values alignment) $F = 29.68$ ($p < .001$). The youngest cohort (18–25) reported the highest ER scores ($M = 4.75$), which suggests financial and stability-based motivators matter most at the start of a banking career.

Gender t-tests showed a significant female advantage in identified regulation (IR1: $t = −2.93$, $p = .004$; IR3: $t = −2.40$, $p = .018$) and a pronounced female advantage in external regulation (ER1: $t = −6.05$, $p < .001$; ER2: $t = −10.69$, $p < .001$; ER3: $t = −7.43$, $p < .001$). Female banking employees score noticeably higher on both goal-oriented and financial motivation than their male colleagues.

2) LMX: Age and Gender Effects (Objective 2). The gender gap in LMX perceptions was among the most striking findings in the dataset. All six LMX items showed highly significant gender differences (all $p < .001$), with female employees reporting substantially better perceived supervisor relationship quality. The composite LMX mean was 4.42 for female employees versus 3.38 for males—a gap of more than a full-scale point. Age-group effects were just as pronounced: LMX4 (supervisor recognition) produced $F = 33.24$, $p < .001$, with the 26–35 cohort reporting the most positive LMX experience ($M = 4.67$) and the 36–45 cohort the lowest ($M = 3.83$).

3) Emotional Intelligence: Age and Gender Effects (Objective 3). All five EI items showed significant age effects ($p \le .005$) and significant gender differences on EI4 (calm under pressure: $t = −7.46$, $p < .001$) and EI5 (sensing colleagues' emotions: $t = −7.88$, $p < .001$). Female employees again reported higher EI overall ($M = 4.33$ vs 3.65 for males). The 26–35 cohort also led on EI ($M = 4.47$), continuing the pattern of this mid-career group showing the most integrated motivational-relational-emotional profile. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate these cross-group patterns.

Table 4 – One-Way ANOVA by Age Group and Independent Samples t-Test by Gender – All Items

Item	Description	F (Age)	p (Age)	t (Gender)	p (Gender)
IM1	Fun & enjoyable	9.13	.000**	-1.97	.051
IM2	Mastering challenges	7.99	.001**	1.68	.096
IM3	Discovering new things	18.48	.000**	-2.81	.006**
IR1	Reach life goals	3.13	.047*	-2.93	.004**
IR2	Chosen lifestyle	25.61	.000**	-0.87	.385
IR3	Career plans	10.54	.000**	-2.40	.018*
InR1	Be seen as successful	17.25	.000**	-0.36	.723
InR2	Reputation	14.75	.000**	-2.81	.006**
InR3	Low effort unacceptable	7.39	.001**	-2.80	.006**
ER1	Salary & benefits	18.03	.000**	-6.05	.000**
ER2	Stability	22.21	.000**	-10.69	.000**
ER3	Work reflects values	29.68	.000**	-7.43	.000**
ER4	Deep personal values	7.46	.001**	-0.92	.359
EI1	Emotion awareness	8.35	.000**	-2.16	.033*
EI2	Maintain positive mood	20.12	.000**	-1.73	.087
EI3	Manage emotions	5.51	.005**	-2.49	.014*
EI4	Calm under pressure	6.13	.003**	-7.46	.000**
EI5	Sense colleagues' emotions	22.12	.000**	-7.88	.000**
AC1	Emotionally close	15.93	.000**	0.00	1.000
AC2	Duties interesting	12.59	.000**	-5.23	.000**
AC3	Sense of belonging	10.13	.000**	-0.38	.703
AC4	Satisfied with environment	5.69	.004**	-9.36	.000**
CC1	Few alternatives	2.16	.120	1.80	.074
CC2	Good benefits	3.17	.045*	-2.17	.032*
CC3	Leaving disrupts life	47.33	.000**	0.64	.521
LMX1	Rely on supervisor	14.40	.000**	-8.05	.000**
LMX2	Supervisor trusts me	6.66	.002**	-7.02	.000**
LMX3	Effective collaboration	11.98	.000**	-5.27	.000**
LMX4	Contributions recognised	33.24	.000**	-6.78	.000**
Item	Description	F (Age)	p (Age)	t (Gender)	p (Gender)
LMX5	Understands my needs	11.98	.000**	-5.27	.000**
LMX6	Open communication	8.92	.000**	-8.77	.000**

Notes: F = ANOVA F-statistic (df between = 2; df within = 132). t = t-statistic (male vs female, two-tailed). Negative t-values indicate females scored higher. ** p < .01; * p < .05.

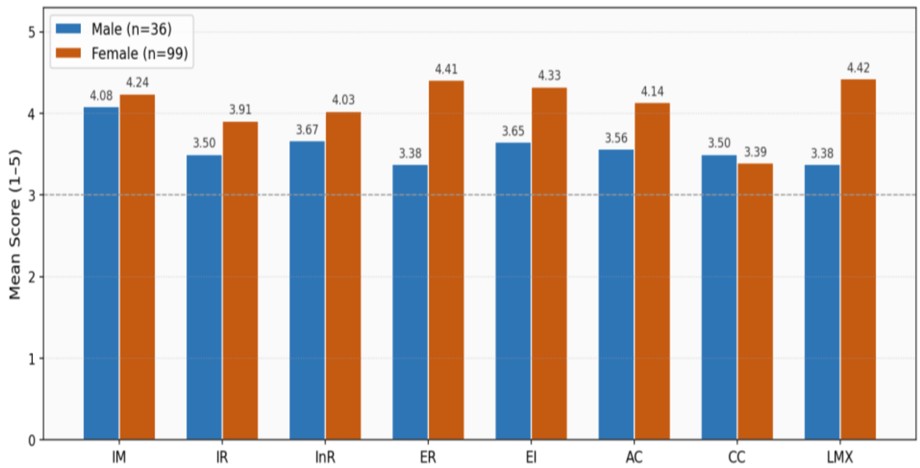

Figure 3 – Scale composite means by gender

Notes: Female employees scored higher on all scales except CC. Differences were largest for ER (Δ = 1.03), EI (Δ = 0.68), and LMX (Δ = 1.05).

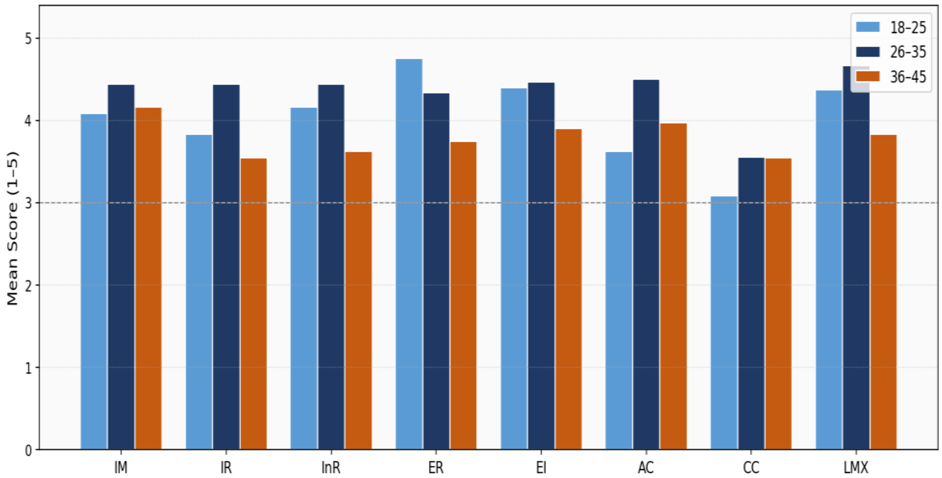

Figure 4 – Scale composite means by age group

Notes: The 26–35 cohort consistently led across IM, IR, InR, EI, AC, and LMX. External regulation was highest in the 18–25 group.

Pearson Correlation Analysis (Objectives 2, 3 & 4)

Table 5 and Figure 5 present the inter-scale correlation matrix, and three findings stand out. First, the correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Leader-Member Exchange ($r = .936$, $p < .001$) is exceptionally high—close to unity. In the Georgian banking context, this means employees' perceptions of a supervisor's emotional competence and their perceptions of overall relationship quality are essentially the same. Second, Affective Commitment correlated most strongly with LMX ($r = .732$), IM ($r = .702$), and IR ($r = .705$), all $p < .001$, marking these three as the primary correlates of affective attachment. Third, Continuance Commitment was largely unrelated to the other scales (range: $r = -.042$ to $.238$), which confirms its conceptual distinctiveness as a construct driven by perceived constraint rather than positive attraction.

Table 5 – Pearson Correlation Matrix – Scale Composites (N = 135)

	IM	IR	InR	ER	EI	AC	CC	LMX
IM	—	0.83	0.46	0.54	0.53	0.70	-0.04	0.43
IR	0.83	—	0.79	0.71	0.69	0.70	0.23	0.64
InR	0.46	0.79	—	0.57	0.51	0.39	0.03	0.54
ER	0.54	0.71	0.57	—	0.77	0.42	0.24	0.74
EI	0.53	0.69	0.51	0.77	—	0.69	0.17	0.94
AC	0.70	0.70	0.39	0.42	0.69	—	0.21	0.73
CC	-0.04	0.23	0.03	0.24	0.17	0.21	—	0.18
LMX	0.43	0.64	0.54	0.74	0.94	0.73	0.18	—

Notes: Values ≥ .70 (excluding diagonal) indicate strong association. All marked correlations are significant at $p < .001$. CC = Continuance Commitment shows the weakest inter-construct associations. The EI–LMX correlation ($r = .936$) indicates substantial shared variance (87.8%).

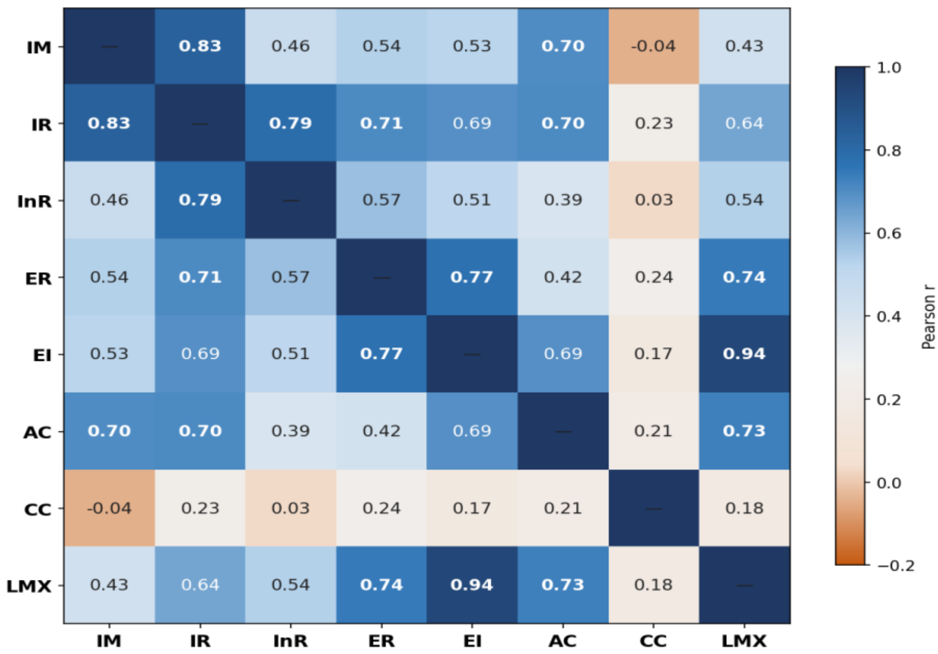

Figure 5 – Pearson correlation heatmap

Notes: Darker blue = stronger positive association. The EI–LMX dyad (r = .936) and IM–IR dyad (r = .832) are the two most cohesive pairs in the data.

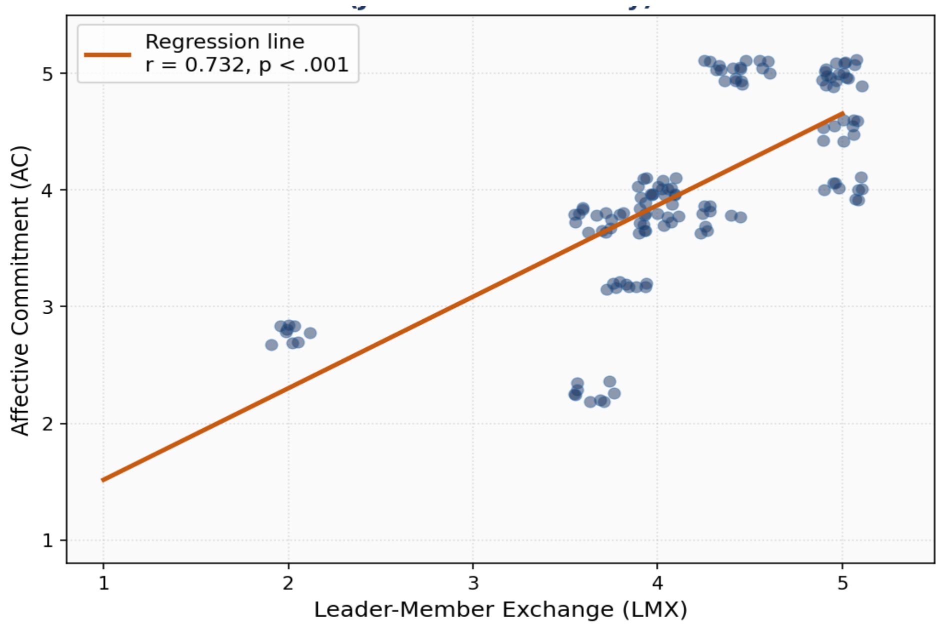

Figure 6 – Scatter plot: LMX vs Affective Commitment (r = .732, p < .001)

Notes: Points jittered for visibility. The regression line confirms a strong positive linear relationship.

Multivariable Regression: Predicting Affective Commitment (Objectives 1–4). A multivariable OLS regression entered all seven scale composites simultaneously to predict Affective Commitment. The model performed exceptionally well: R^2 = .906, Adjusted R^2 = .901, meaning the full predictor set accounts for over 90% of the variance in employees' affective bond with their organisation.

Leader-Member Exchange was the dominant predictor (unstandardised β = 1.206; standardised β = 1.126), followed closely by Intrinsic Motivation (β = 1.121; std. β = 0.736). Together, these two predictors form the core of the commitment architecture. Continuance Commitment added a small positive contribution (std. β = 0.231). After controlling for the other scales, Identified and Introjected Regulation emerged as negligible net predictors (standardised β = −0.020 and −0.052, respectively), indicating that their effects operate through IM and LMX rather than independently. External regulation was a significant negative predictor (std. β = −0.607), and Emotional Intelligence entered the model negatively (std. β = −0.279)—most likely a suppressor artefact given its near-perfect collinearity with LMX. Table 6 and Figure 7 summarise the regression coefficients.

Table 6 – Multivariable Regression – Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment (R^2 = .906; Adj. R^2 = .901)

Predictor	Scale	Unstd. β	Std. β	Direction	Interpretation
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange	1.206	1.126	Positive ↑	Dominant predictor
IM	Intrinsic Motivation	1.121	0.736	Positive ↑	Key driver
CC	Continuance Commitment	0.229	0.231	Positive ↑	Weak positive
InR	Introjected Regulation	-0.049	-0.052	≈ 0	Non-significant
IR	Identified Regulation	-0.018	-0.020	≈ 0	Non-significant
EI	Emotional Intelligence	-0.395	-0.279	Negative ↓	Suppressor (collinear LMX)
ER	External Regulation	-0.587	-0.607	Negative ↓	Negative predictor

Notes: Unstandardised (Unstd. β) and standardised coefficients reported. The negative EI coefficient reflects multicollinearity with LMX (r = .936) and should not be read as a genuine negative effect in isolation. N = 135.

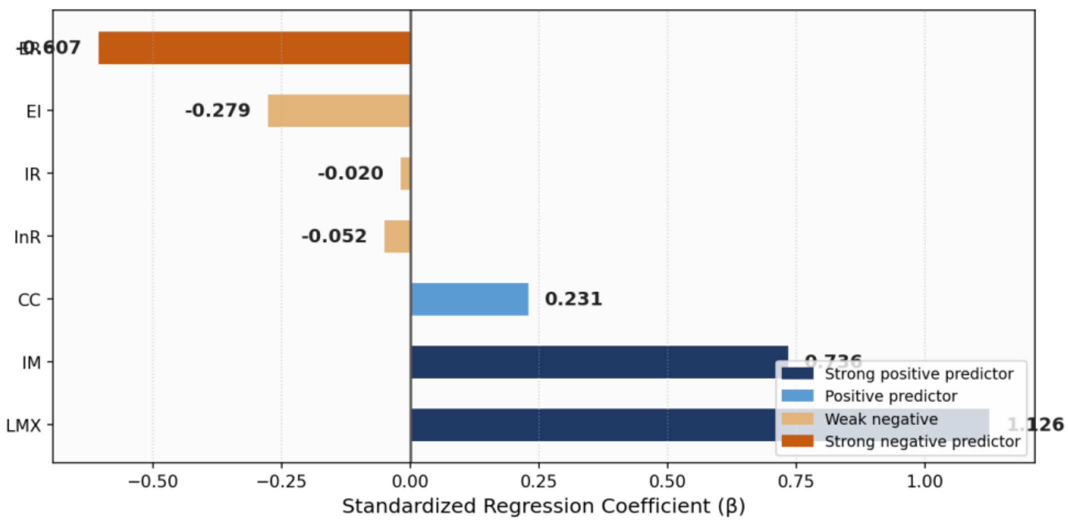

Figure 7 – Standardised regression coefficients predicting Affective Commitment

Notes: LMX and IM are the dominant positive predictors. ER is the strongest negative predictor. Coefficients above bars indicate exact values.

Motivation and Organisational Commitment (Objective 1). The data clearly support that intrinsic motivation drives affective organisational commitment during change. Employees who genuinely find their work enjoyable and intellectually engaging report noticeably stronger emotional ties to their bank (std. β = 0.736); this fits Self-Determination Theory [5]: autonomous motivation—doing work because it feels meaningful and interesting—produces the kind of psychological engagement that keeps commitment intact through uncertainty.

External regulation, on the other hand, was a negative predictor of affective commitment (std. β = −0.607); this is a counterintuitive but theoretically sensible result, and it points to something worth calling a commitment paradox in Georgian banking: employees motivated mainly by salary and stability may well stay (continuance commitment) while remaining affectively disengaged. Change initiatives leaning heavily on financial incentives risk reinforcing exactly this pattern—keeping people in their seats while losing their genuine investment. Identified regulation (goal-oriented motivation) correlated strongly with AC (r = .705). Still, it did not independently predict it in the regression, suggesting that intrinsic motivation and LMX channel its effect rather than allowing it to act on its own.

The age-group analyses add some nuance: younger employees (18–25) show the highest external regulation, while the 26–35 cohort shows the most balanced motivational profile (high IM, IR, and moderate InR); this suggests that converting external motivation into intrinsic motivation—a process helped along by meaningful work design and supervisory support—is a key developmental task in the banking talent pipeline.

Leader-Member Exchange and Commitment (Objective 2). LMX turned out to be the single strongest predictor of affective commitment in this study (std. β = 1.126; r = .732), confirming how important supervisor-employee relationship quality is. All six LMX items were highly significant across both gender and age analyses, suggesting that trust, mutual respect, recognition, open communication, and supervisory reliability are valued fairly universally—even though they are perceived quite differently across demographic groups.

The gender gap in LMX perceptions is a finding worth flagging on its own; female employees reported substantially higher supervisor relationship quality (M = 4.42 vs 3.38 for males). Since LMX is the dominant predictor of AC, this finding implies that lower LMX quality systematically disadvantages male employees on the mechanism most central to generating commitment in this model If this gap reflects real differences in how much relationship investment supervisors give—rather than differences in how men and women respond to survey items—it points to a structural vulnerability in Georgian banking: male employees may show lower affective commitment not because they are less capable of commitment, but because supervisors develop lower-quality relationships with them.

Emotional Intelligence and Commitment (Objective 3). The near-perfect correlation between Emotional Intelligence and LMX (r = .936) is the most theoretically interesting finding of this study. It suggests that, from the perspective of Georgian banking employees, a supervisor's emotional intelligence and the quality of their relationship with that supervisor are functionally the same thing. Supervisors who regulate their own emotions (EI3), stay calm under pressure (EI4), and pick up on their team members' emotional states (EI5) are also seen as trustworthy (LMX2), communicative (LMX6), and appreciative of contributions (LMX4).

This overlap supports a specific reading of the two constructs: leader EI is not a separate thing from LMX, but the mechanism that produces it—emotionally intelligent leadership behaviour builds high-quality dyadic relationships, which in turn generate affective commitment. The negative regression coefficient for EI (standardised β = −0.279) is a statistical artefact of this collinearity and does not represent a substantive effect. Future research should test whether it can reliably distinguish EI from LMX at the latent factor level in this population.

Interaction of Motivation, LMX, and EI (Objective 4). The R^2 = .906 produced by the joint model reveals real synergy among the three construct families. LMX and IM together account for the overwhelming majority of variance in AC. At the same time, external regulation works against both—pointing to a fairly clear motivational pathway: intrinsic engagement with the work itself and a positive relationship with one's supervisor jointly build the architecture of commitment. These two pathways are relatively independent of each other (IM–LMX: r = .432, a moderate correlation) yet mutually reinforcing.

The 26–35 cohort is a good illustration of this convergence: they score highest on IM (M = 4.44), LMX (M = 4.67), EI (M = 4.47), AC (M = 4.50), and IR (M = 4.44) all at once. This profile suggests that when intrinsic motivation and high-quality LMX come together, they produce an unusually committed employee—someone engaged by the work itself and supported by a strong relationship with their supervisor. Organisations going through change would do well to identify and lean on these employees as change champions, given how resilient their commitment appears to be.

Item Selection for the Final Questionnaire. Based on convergent criteria—descriptive properties, ANOVA and t-test significance, and inter-construct correlations—the following item-level recommendations are made.

1) Items Recommended for Retention. IM1, IM2, IM3 — all three items meet every selection criterion, with significant age and education effects and a strong AC correlation (r = .702). Retained as the core intrinsic motivation subscale.

IR1, IR3 — significant age, education, and gender effects. IR2 is retained conditionally, given its positive skew and non-significant education effect.

InR2, InR3 — strong gender differentiation ($p < .01$). InR1 does not differ significantly by gender and is a candidate for revision.

ER1, ER2, ER3 — large, highly significant age and gender effects, and ER is the primary negative predictor in the regression. ER4 conceptually overlaps with the IR items and is recommended for removal or rewording.

EI2, EI3, EI4, EI5 — the strongest EI items on group-difference criteria and regression contribution. EI1 is retained as a secondary item.

AC1, AC2, AC4 — three strong AC items. AC3 (sense of belonging) showed non-significant gender differences and is retained pending confirmatory factor analysis.

CC2 and CC3 performed well, with CC3 emerging as the single most powerful item across all ANOVA tests ($F = 47.33$). Based on these findings, the researchers recommend removing CC1 because it had the lowest mean, the highest standard deviation, and a non-significant ANOVA result.

LMX1–LMX6 — all six items retained. Consistently large, significant group differences, and LMX is the dominant regression predictor.

2) Items Flagged for Revision or Removal. IR2 (positive skew; non-significant education difference), InR1 (non-significant gender t-test, $t = -0.36$), ER4 (conceptual overlap with identified regulation; non-significant gender difference), and CC1 ($M = 2.87$; highest $SD = 1.51$; non-significant ANOVA) are recommended for revision or replacement in the final instrument.

Limitations. Several limitations are acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; future research employing longitudinal or experimental designs would be necessary to test causal pathways more rigorously. Second, reliance on self-report measures for motivation and organisational commitment introduces the possibility of common method variance bias—partially addressed through procedural separation (leader EI assessed via performance-based MSCEIT) and statistical testing using Harman's single-factor test. Third, the exclusive focus on the Georgian private banking sector limits the direct generalizability of findings to other national contexts or industries. Fourth, the control variables employed do not capture the full range of individual difference variables (e.g., change readiness, personality traits, and prior change experience) that may influence commitment outcomes.

Strategic Recommendations for Georgian Private Banks (Objective 5). The recommendations below are based on the empirical results and organised around the four mechanisms that mattered most in the analysis.

1. Cultivate Intrinsic Motivation Through Meaningful Work Design

a) Design change initiatives that clearly communicate how employees' existing skills and interests are preserved or built on in the new structure, directly speaking to the IM items.

b) Involve employees in solving change-related problems to activate curiosity and a sense of mastery (IM2, IM3)—the motivational components most strongly tied to AC.

c) Avoid framing organisational change mainly around pay or job security; ER was a significant negative predictor of affective commitment. Financial incentives may keep people from leaving without generating real engagement.

d) Tailor motivational support by age cohort: the 18–25 group needs developmental pathways that convert external motivation into intrinsic motivation (mentoring, growth opportunities); the 36–45 group needs its continuance concerns acknowledged alongside targeted re-engagement with meaningful work.

2. Invest in High-Quality Leader-Member Relationships

a) Train supervisors explicitly on the relationship behaviours that matter during change: transparent communication (LMX6), individualised recognition (LMX4), and building trust (LMX2) — all highly significant across demographic groups.

b) Build structured individual check-ins into change periods so supervisors understand each employee's needs and expectations (LMX5). These do not need to be formal—brief, regular one-on-ones meaningfully improve LMX quality on their own.

c) Address the gender gap in LMX directly: male employees reported substantially lower supervisory relationship quality (Δ = 1.05 scale points). HR systems should track and actively address supervisory relationship quality by gender to prevent this commitment vulnerability from widening.

d) Use the LMX–AC relationship as a change-management lever: supervisors with the strongest LMX scores should be prioritised to lead change communication and help stabilise teams.

3. Develop Emotional Intelligence as a Core Leadership Requirement

a) Given the EI–LMX overlap (r = .936), treat EI development not as a nice-to-have soft-skills add-on but as the primary lever for improving LMX quality. EI training builds the relational behaviours that predict commitment directly.

b) Build EI competencies—emotional self-awareness, regulation, empathy, social sensing—into leadership selection criteria, especially for roles managing teams through restructuring or process change.

c) Focus development on EI4 (calm under pressure; M = 3.80, the lowest EI item): leaders who stay composed during organisational turbulence provide the emotional stability that sustains team commitment; this is both the most developable and the most circumstantially important competency during change.

d) Build EI assessment into 360-degree feedback systems, combining self-report and subordinate-rated measures to get a fuller picture of a leader's emotional competence during change.

4. Differentiated Strategies by Demographic Segment

a) 18–25 cohort: prioritise goal-alignment conversations (IR1), career-vision mentoring, and structured skill-building that converts extrinsic motivation into identified regulation.

b) 26–35 cohort: the highest-commitment group — use them as change champions and peer coaches, and protect their LMX quality during change, since they act as the most productive commitment amplifiers.

c) 36–45 cohort: address continuance commitment concerns directly (CC3: "leaving disrupts my personal life" had the strongest ANOVA effect, F = 47.33); this is where the risk of entrenched, low-affect retention is highest, so re-engagement with meaningful work should be the priority.

d) Male employees: invest deliberately in closing the 1.05-point gender gap in perceived supervisory quality. It's worth examining whether supervisory assignment practices or informal relationship norms are inadvertently disadvantaging male employees.

Future Research

Firstly, we can apply a longitudinal approach in data collection in the same banking industry. Tracking employees before, during, and after a specific change initiative—such as introducing new technology into operations or restructuring—would show whether commitment shifts as LMX quality or emotional intelligence develops or motivation changes, or whether the reverse holds. We can utilise different job attitudes. A longitudinal panel design tracking multiple banks over 12–18 months provides a strong framework to assess change initiatives. It allows researchers to see how different work attitudes operate across phases. Secondly, cross-country comparisons with banking sectors in neighbouring Caucasus-, Central Asian-, or Eastern European markets would also test whether the Georgian findings are context-bound or reflect a broader pattern of developed banking. Finally, the interaction between LMX & any other work attitudes in constantly changing organisational change contexts, including the rapid dissemination of artificial intelligence tools into workplace routines, remains largely unexplored. It is definitely worth investigating this important direction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study addresses a significant gap in the organisational behaviour and change management literatures by proposing and empirically testing an integrative model of the antecedents of organisational commitment during organisational change in the Georgian banking sector. By examining the independent and interactive contributions of employee motivation, leader-member exchange quality, and leader emotional intelligence to organisational commitment, the research generates both theoretical insight and practical guidance directly relevant to one of the most challenging human resource management problems facing the Georgian banking sector during its ongoing digital and regulatory transformation.

The selection of internationally validated, psychometrically robust measurement instruments with confirmed Cronbach's alpha coefficients — the LMX-7 (α = 0.92), Allen and Meyer's OCQ (α = 0.80), the MSCEIT (α = 0.91–0.93), and established motivation scales (α = 0.75–0.93) — ensures the reliability and potential generalizability of the study's findings. The rigorous translation and validation procedures planned for the Georgian-language versions of these instruments will further contribute to the development of organisational psychology research capacity in the South Caucasus region.

The anticipated findings promise to enrich the understanding of how organisations can actively maintain and strengthen employee commitment during periods of profound change by investing in motivational quality, relational leadership development, and the cultivation of emotionally intelligent management practices.

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