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Linking Organizational Climate to Work Engagement in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Organizational climate plays a crucial role in shaping employee work engagement, particularly in non-profit institutions, such as universities, where limited resources necessitate strategic human resource management. This study investigated how various dimensions of organizational climate, such as leadership, employee relations, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation, affected work engagement among 272 employees at a university in Bandung, Indonesia. Using simple and multiple regression analyses, the results show that, while all five dimensions significantly influence work engagement when tested individually, only organizational commitment and employee motivation remain strong predictors when examined together. These findings indicate that internal factors, such as employees' emotional attachment to their organization and intrinsic motivation, play a more decisive role in fostering engagement than structural or relational factors. The results also extend the Social Exchange Theory by highlighting that reciprocal relationships between organizational support and employee dedication are primarily strengthened through mechanisms of commitment and motivation. From a practical perspective, this study highlights the importance of human resource strategies that foster internal motivation and enhance organizational commitment. These include implementing transparent reward systems, providing career development opportunities, and recognizing employee contributions. Such initiatives can help universities create a more supportive and engaging work environment, despite resource limitations. Overall, this study adds to the literature on organizational climate by identifying the most influential factors for building and sustaining work engagement within education institutions, offering both theoretical insights and actionable implications for HR practitioners.

Keywords: organizational climate; work engagement; employee commitment; employee motivation; higher education.

A. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the organizational climate is important for maintaining a competitive advantage, especially in the ever-changing digital era (Setiawan & Hendrawan, 2024). This is because, even if a company has sufficient resources to continue making changes, if employees do not have the right perception of change, the work environment will lack trust and be fearful of risk (Bin Saeed et al., 2019; Cygler et al., 2018; Viitala et al., 2015). Such an environment will not support change, and innovation will be slow. Therefore, organizational climate mismatch is a source of suboptimal performance.

An organizational climate is the way individuals view and characterize employees' perceptions of policies, practices, and procedures that are expected, supported, and valued within the organization's human resources (Steinke et al., 2015). Previous research explains that the organizational climate includes five main components: leadership, employee relations, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation (Rožman & Štrukelj, 2021). Based on this research, it can be concluded that organizational climate is a perception of the work environment that reflects how policies, practices, and procedures are implemented and how they affect behavior, motivation, and performance.

Previous studies have found that a positive organizational climate is shaped by several key factors, particularly leadership styles and human resource (HR) practices. Transformational leadership plays an important role in creating a positive climate, both directly and indirectly, by improving work resources (Rahmatika & Saragih, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Similarly, other findings indicate that servant leadership also positively affects OC and employee behavior, ultimately improving performance (Harmen et al., 2025). In this context, organizational climate is often viewed as a crucial link between leadership styles and employee work behavior, as it supports core values such as empathy and collaboration (Kouni et al.,

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2018; Limbong & Saragih, 2023; Rahmatika & Saragih, 2023). Beyond leadership, the organizational climate is strongly influenced by HR policies and practices, which shape employee perceptions of the work environment and performance. (Berberoglu, 2018) argues that a positive organizational climate significantly affects organizational commitment and perceptions of organizational performance, asserting that the more positive employees' perceptions of the work climate, the higher their commitment and performance outcomes.

The impact of organizational climate has also been extensively researched. Studies have shown that organizational climate affects creativity levels (Štrukelj & Zabukovšek, 2019) and that climates supporting innovative behavior foster proactive engagement (Hassi et al., 2025). However, existing research on organizational climate remains centered on profit-oriented organizations, leaving a gap in understanding how organizational climate operates in non-profit contexts. This distinction is important because non-profit organizations, such as universities, place greater emphasis on fulfilling their institutional missions and on social contributions. However, universities face unique pressures. Limited resources require them to remain competitive, one of which is high public trust in the institution. Therefore, this study examined how organizational climate components influence employee engagement among university staff in Bandung, Indonesia. By investigating this under-researched setting, this study contributes to organizational practice by identifying climate factors that enhance work engagement and institutional sustainability, while advancing the theoretical understanding of organizational climate construction in non-profit settings.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational climate is the shared perception of organizational members regarding policies, practices, and procedures in the work environment, and how these affect their behavior and motivation. A positive climate creates an environment that supports collaboration, trust, and enthusiasm(Ahmad et al., 2018; Berberoglu, 2018). In the modern context, organizational climate is no longer viewed solely in structural terms, such as rules and procedures, but also in psychosocial and relational terms that employees experience daily. This view aligns with (Rožman et al., 2020), who argue that organizational climate is a multidimensional construct encompassing leadership, employee relations, employee commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation, all of which contribute to increased job engagement.

Research by (Rožman et al., 2020) on medium-sized organizations in Slovenia found that all five dimensions had a significant positive effect on job commitment, with leadership and job satisfaction emerging as particularly powerful predictors. This finding highlights that leaders are the primary drivers of employee work experience through role modeling, empowerment practices, and decisions (Viitala et al., 2015). When leaders demonstrate support and value employee contributions, they create positive perceptions that cascade through the organization, ultimately fostering greater engagement. Meanwhile, job satisfaction represents employees' affective evaluation of working conditions, including relationships with coworkers, perceived organizational justice, and work-life balance. A conducive organizational climate increases job satisfaction and encourages employees to be more dedicated to their tasks.

The influence of organizational climate extends beyond immediate outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment. (Štrukelj and Zabukovšek, 2019) found that climate affects organizational creativity levels, and (Hassi et al., 2025) demonstrated that climates that support innovative behavior foster creativity and shape proactive employee attitudes. These studies show that climate operates beyond a mere backdrop; it actively shapes how employees perceive, behave, and contribute to organizational goals. A positive organizational climate often stimulates intrinsic motivation, commitment, and innovative work behavior, which, in turn, drives positive individual and institutional outcomes.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how organizational climate dimensions are converted into work engagement. SET posits that workplace interactions operate through reciprocal exchanges. As organizations provide resources, support, and favorable working conditions, employees respond with heightened contribution, loyalty, and engagement (Rožman et al., 2020). In this context, SET suggests that employees continuously evaluate their work environment, assess whether the organization provides leadership support, maintains positive employee relations, offers satisfying work conditions, and enables meaningful motivation (Mansoor et al., 2021; Saks, 2006). Through the SET lens, each factor in organizational climate acts as a unique indicator of

interaction. Leadership reflects the institutional commitment to crafting strategy and enhancing employee well-being. Prior research has shown that when leaders provide support and promote participatory behavior, they create positive perceptions regarding the working environment.

Job satisfaction and employee motivation are evaluative outcomes of exchange relationships. Within SET, satisfied employees indicate a satisfied exchange in which organizational practices meet employee needs and expectations (Berberoglu, 2018). Employee motivation reflects the degree to which an organizational climate stimulates engagement with work tasks. SET views this as a psychological contract in which organizations promote meaningful work in exchange for sustained employee contributions (Hassi et al., 2025; Štrukelj and Zabukovšek, 2019). Employee commitment plays a dual role in an exchange process. Commitment develops as a response to a positive workplace climate and strengthens work engagement over time. According to SET, when employees perceive that the organization invests in fostering a constructive atmosphere, they feel obligated to reciprocate by enhancing their work engagement. This reciprocation is not merely transactional but reflects a deeper sense of social obligation and emotional attachment.

Drawing on SET, this study views organizational climate as an exchange system in which leadership, employee relations, commitment, satisfaction, and motivation demonstrate an organization's investment in employees, shaping their positive perception and engagement. This investment explains why the climate matters in creating a sense of belonging and enthusiasm. Building on this foundation, this study investigates how the five dimensions of organizational climate (leadership, employee relations, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation) influence work engagement in a university setting.

To comprehensively test the central hypothesis (H6), the analysis examined each climate dimension individually (H1-H5)

H1: Leadership significantly influences work engagement.
H2: Employee relations significantly influence work engagement.
H3: Employee commitment significantly influences work engagement.
H4: Employee satisfaction significantly influences work engagement.
H5: Employee motivation significantly influences work engagement.
H6: Organizational climate significantly influences work engagement.

The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

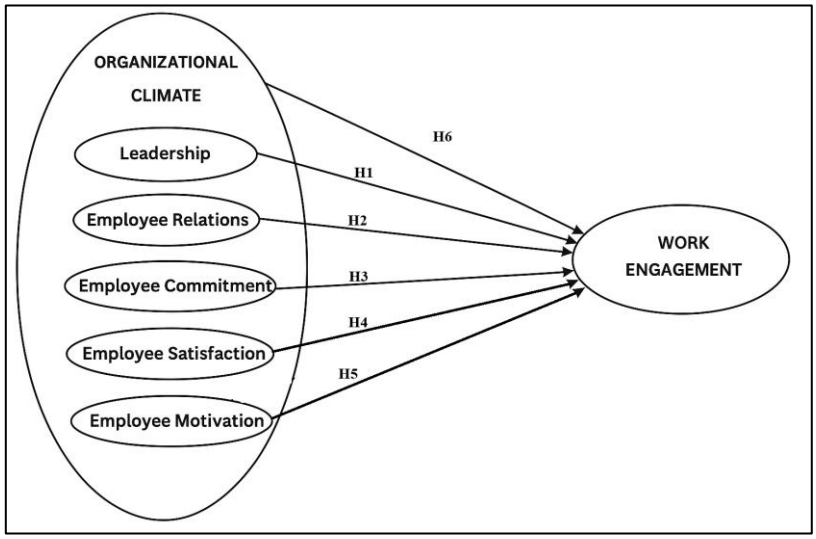


Figure 1. Research Model
Source: Research data, 2025

C. METHODS

Quantitative methods were used to conduct the research, with the CFA approach. The population for this study was limited to non-academic personnel at public universities in Bandung, specifically those in administrative and admissions roles. To reduce bias, the samples were selected based on specific criteria. Only employees who had worked for at least one year could participate in this study. Data were collected online by sending survey links to organizational leaders and directly to respondents. The minimum sample size was determined using (Hair et al., 2019), who stated that regression analysis requires a minimum of 15-20 observations per predictor variable. With five predictors, the minimum threshold ranges from 75 to 100 respondents. Thus, 272 responses were collected, exceeding the minimum requirement.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profiles

Based on the collected data, 272 respondents had diverse characteristics. Of these respondents, 147 (54%) were male, and 125 (46%) were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents were male. Most of the respondents were in the 23-30 age group (21%). This composition shows that most respondents were of productive age. In addition, the majority (68.7%) of the respondents were married. Respondents were spread across various work units, with the largest proportion in the faculty of geological engineering (14%), followed by the rectorate (11%), and the graduate school (8.5%). Other units had smaller proportions, but were evenly distributed across all faculties at the university. Most respondents (42.3%) had worked for five years. The demographic profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Respondent Profile

Profile	Category	∑	%
Gender	Male	147	54
	Female	125	46
Age (years old)	< 25	36	13.2
	26–30	57	21
	31–35	51	18.8
	36–40	49	18
	41–45	33	12.1
	46–50	21	7.7
	51–55	21	7.7
	>56	4	1.5
Marital Status	Married	187	68.7
	Single	66	24.3
	Widower/Widow	19	7
Number of Children	None	88	32.4
	1 Child	65	23.9
	2 people	81	29.8
	>3 people	38	14
Highest level of education	High School / Vocational School	44	16.2
	Diploma	21	7.7
	Bachelor	180	66.2
	Graduate	27	9.9
Employment Status	Civil Servant	123	45.2
	Non-Civil Servant Employees	117	43

Profile	Category	∑	%
Work Unit	Rectorate	30	11
	Graduate School	23	8.5
	Faculty of Economics and Business	12	4.4
	Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	12	4.4
	Faculty of Cultural Studies	21	7.7
	Faculty of Communication Sciences	21	7.7
	Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	11	4
	Faculty of Medicine	11	4
	Faculty of Dentistry	11	4
	Faculty of Nursing	14	5.1
	Faculty of Psychology	11	4
	Faculty of Pharmacy	12	4.4
	Faculty of Agriculture	12	4.4
	Faculty of Agricultural Industrial Technology	11	4
	Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences	11	4
	Faculty of Geological Engineering	38	14
	Faculty of Animal Science	11	4
Years of Experience	≤ 5 Years	115	42.3
	6–10 years	64	23.5
	11–15 years	31	11.4
	16–20	22	8.1
	21–25	27	9.9
	≥ 26	13	4.8

Profile	Category	∑	%	Profile	Category	∑	%
	Contract Employees	32	11.8				

Source: Research data, 2025

Validity and Reliability

Research instrument quality testing must be conducted before analyzing the variables' influence. Validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the questions in this study accurately and consistently measured the constructs in the research model. In this study, validity and reliability measurements were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Validity was measured using the method employed in this study, namely, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) testing with a factor loading criterion of > 0.50 for construct validity. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, where the instrument was considered reliable if the value was > 0.70. (Laili et al., 2021) reported very high internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.946$) for measuring contextual performance through CFA. In addition, (Hair et al., 2012) reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha is a standard and important method before instruments are used in research, combining CFA analysis with composite reliability testing to assess the reliability of psychological scales. Therefore, the selection of factor loadings> 0.50 and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70 in this study can be considered appropriate and supported by credible empirical research practices. Table 2 presents the final questions that met validity and reliability requirements. Since all Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.804 to 0.959, the research instrument was considered reliable and free of significant random error.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number items questions	*Factor Loading* (Validity)	*Cronbach Alpha* (Reliability)	Description
L	9	0.750 – 0.848	.959	Valid and Reliable
ER	3	0.534 – 0.837	.804	Valid and Reliable
EC	7	0.526 – 0.756	.879	Valid and Reliable
ES	5	0.580 – 0.682	.897	Valid and Reliable
EM	6	0.596 – 0.744	.920	Valid and Reliable
WE	7	0.653 – 0.778	.909	Valid and Reliable

Note. L: leadership, ER: employee relations, EC: employee commitment, ES: employee satisfaction, EM: employee motivation, WE: employee engagement.
Source: Research data, 2025

Simple Regression Analysis: Testing Each Dimension

Hypothesis testing began by examining each organizational climate dimension individually (L, ER, EC, ES, and EM) through simple regression analysis (using IBM SPSS Statistics). This approach allowed us to understand each dimension's unique relationship with work engagement before examining their interactions. These findings are presented in Table 3, which initially shows a key pattern, and every dimension of organizational climate significantly predicted work engagement when examined independently.

Table 3. Simple Regression Test Results

H	Variable Independent (X)	Regression Coefficient (B)	β	t-statistic	R Square	Significance (p)	Decison
H1	Leadership (L)	0.297	0.395	7.072	0.156	0.00	Accepted
H2	Employee relations (ER)	0.325	0.341	5.958	0.116	0.00	Accepted
H3	Organizational commitment (EC)	0.583	0.591	12.038	0.349	0.00	Accepted
H4	Job satisfaction (ES)	0.396	0.530	10.275	0.281	0.00	Accepted
H5	Employee motivation (EM)	0.558	0.642	13.746	0.412	0.00	Accepted

Source: Research data, 2025

The results of the simple regression analysis showed that five independent variables (leadership, employee relations, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation) significantly affected work engagement. This is indicated by the significance value (p) for all variables, which was

0.00. Therefore, H1-H5 are accepted. Table 3 shows that employee motivation was the strongest predictor of employee engagement (β = 0,642, p < 0,001), explaining approximately 41% of the variance in work engagement. This finding suggests that non-academic personnel at public universities, where rewards of all types are often limited, respond to elevated levels of engagement when their intrinsic motivation is satisfied or when their contributions receive adequate recognition. This finding aligns with previous research by (Grah et al., 2024; Jankelová et al., 2025), who confirm that intrinsic motivation strengthens energetic and committed work behavior in an academic setting.

Furthermore, the results show that organizational commitment (EC) ranked second in predictive strength. This finding indicates that employees who identify with their institutions' values and mission demonstrate higher engagement. As mission-driven organizations, universities share a clear purpose that exceeds transactional rewards. Thus, non-academic personnel will perceive their duties as a mission that satisfies intrinsic motivation. In general, the majority of respondents in this study had worked for five years (see Table 1). Although this period was considered moderate, employees perceived a high sense of responsibility and emotional attachment to their organization. This finding supports prior research by (Prabaswara et al., 2025; Ramadhan et al., 2025). Their results also show that motivation consistently affects work engagement and employee performance, emphasizing the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in triggering employee energy and dedication.

On the other hand, employee relationships had the weakest effect among the dimensions tested (Hypothesis 2). This relatively modest relationship indicates that working in a harmonious work environment is important, but plays a less significant role in driving engagement compared to other psychological factors such as motivation and commitment. This finding is consistent with that of (Goyal et al., 2025), who stated that prosocial behavior and positive interpersonal relationships contribute less to work engagement compared with variables rooted in perceived personal control and identification.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the simultaneous effects of all five dimensions of organizational climate on work engagement. Multicollinearity diagnostics (Table 4) revealed that all VIF values ranged from 1.975 to 2.867, well below the recommended threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating that multicollinearity did not pose a significant threat to the regression analysis. Although some conceptual overlap existed among organizational climate dimensions, the VIF results suggest that each dimension contributed unique variance to the prediction of work engagement. Table 4 presents a notable finding. While the overall model retained significance (p < 0,001), confirming that organizational climate was a significant predictor of work engagement, the individual predictive pattern shifted substantially. Only two dimensions maintained significant effects: organizational commitment and employee motivation. Conversely, leadership, employee relations, and job satisfaction, which were significant when tested individually, became insignificant when examined along with commitment and motivation. These findings indicate the existence of variance redundancy from other significant variables, namely, employee commitment and motivation.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Model	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	Sig.	VIF	Description
Constant	1.290	0.224	-	5.764	0.000		
TotalL	.065	.046	.086	1,418	.157	2.008	Not Significant
Total ER	-.031	.054	-.033	-.575	.566	2.283	Not Significant
TotalEC	.318	.059	.322	5.416	.000	1.975	Significant
TotalES	.006	.052	.008	.110	.912	2.867	Not Significant
Total EM	.360	.058	.414	6,250	.000	2.316	Significant
Dependent Variable: Total_WE							

Note. L: leadership, ER: employee relations, EC: employee commitment, ES: employee satisfaction, EM: employee motivation, WE: employee engagement
Source: Research data, 2025

Discussion

This finding suggests something important about the organizational climate in university settings. In the context of universities as non-profit oriented organizations, leadership and social interaction at work cannot always translate into concrete benefits and fulfillment at work. Universities should prioritize the cultivation of psychological channels, such as fostering a sense of meaningfulness and contribution to society, and relying solely on direct transactional or material benefits, which are often limited to public universities. Similarly, job satisfaction became non-significant because it reflects employees' evaluations of work conditions rather than directly driving engagement. In universities, feeling connected to the mission and intrinsically motivated matters more than simply being satisfied with the working conditions.

This finding aligns with recent research that demonstrates that engagement operates as a mediating mechanism in university settings. (Margaretha et al., 2025) found that employee engagement mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality, person-organization fit, and faculty turnover intention, confirming that external organizational factors influence outcomes by first cultivating internal psychological states, such as engagement, commitment, and motivation. SET posits that workplace relationships operate through mutual exchange, organizations provide resources and support, and employees tend to respond through optimal performance and dedication (Ahmad et al., 2023). However, in resource-constrained universities, the currency of exchange has shifted from material to symbolic and emotional. Leadership may provide vision and recognition; colleague relationships may offer social support; and satisfaction may reflect fair treatment; however, these external factors ultimately drive engagement by cultivating internal states of commitment and motivation. In essence, organizational commitment and motivation represent internalized forms of reciprocity that sustain engagement when tangible rewards are limited.

These findings reinforce previous research on the key mechanisms that organizations can utilize to build a dedicated workforce, namely, creating a climate that strengthens employees' intrinsic connection to the institution's mission and fosters authentic motivation. The findings (Berisha et al., 2025) also reinforce this argument, as they found that the organizational climate and the quality of social relationships within organizations increase employees' innovative disposition and proactive engagement, particularly through supportive leadership and psychological empowerment. Thus, these two studies provide a strong empirical basis that organizational climate is an important mechanism in Social Exchange Theory, as perceptions of support and fairness encourage reciprocity in the form of commitment, intrinsic motivation, and innovative work behavior. Their findings show that organizational climate alone does not directly predict innovative intent outcomes but rather that a positive climate encourages innovative work behavior, which in turn increases employee commitment and entrepreneurial initiative. This full mediation confirms that the power of organizational climate lies in its ability to stimulate intrinsic motivation, commitment, and innovation. This explains why employees' proactive attitudes and behaviors are strong factors that influence positive individual and institutional outcomes.

These findings extend the SET in different ways. While traditional applications emphasize reciprocity through tangible exchanges (Ahmad et al., 2023), this study suggests that in mission-driven organizations with limited resources, the primary currency of social exchange shifts from material to psychological. When universities foster climates that build commitment and intrinsic motivation, reciprocal obligations are created, as employees reciprocate dedication because their work is inherently meaningful. These ideas have direct and practical meaning for university leaders. The challenge lies in realizing that broad management changes (leadership and relationships) operate indirectly; consequently, the opportunity is to achieve better returns by concentrating limited resources on interventions that specifically build commitment and motivation. This targeted approach (e.g., transparent mission communication and meaningful recognition programs) reframes leadership and relationship-building not as ends in themselves, but as pathways to foster the required psychological connection, ensuring surface-level improvements translate into genuine shifts in employees' internal dedication to the institution and their work's meaning.

E. CONCLUSIONS

The core purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of the five dimensions of organizational climate on work engagement among non-academic personnel in a resource-constrained university setting. Comprehensive analysis confirmed that all five dimensions (leadership, employee relations,

organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation) independently and positively predicted work engagement. However, subsequent multiple regression analysis revealed a critical shift in the predictive pattern: only organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$) and employee motivation ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < 0.001$) retained significant effects when examined simultaneously. This finding substantially extends the application of the Social Exchange Theory within resource-constrained public institutions by demonstrating that the primary currency of social exchange shifts from material to psychological. Organizational support is primarily effective when internalized by employees as deep commitment and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the study offers empirical evidence that the influence of organizational climates on engagement is mediated through these internal psychological states, confirming that external factors such as leadership and employee relations are antecedent factors that operate by first stimulating commitment and motivation.

These theoretical insights hold profound practical significance for university policymakers: management focus must shift from broad, surface-level climate improvements to interventions that strategically build commitment and motivation. The challenge lies in recognizing that improving leadership practices or employee relations will not yield a direct boost in engagement; rather, their influence is indirect. The opportunity is to maximize the impact of limited resources by investing specifically in the dominant factors: fostering commitment (by clarifying career paths and valuing contributions) and enhancing motivation (through fair, non-financial reward and recognition systems). This targeted approach reframes the role of non-significant factors as vital tools for achieving the psychological ends.

While this study offers robust insights, limitations must be acknowledged, including reliance on an online cross-sectional survey and a limited scope of antecedent factors. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies and incorporate additional variables (e.g., digitalization and organizational justice perceptions) to provide a more holistic model. In conclusion, this study definitively affirms the critical role of organizational climate in building work engagement within higher education, demonstrating that the successful creation of a dedicated workforce hinges not on attempts to match the material rewards of the private sector, but on strategically cultivating the psychological bonds that make the university mission an internalized source of employee dedication and vigor.

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