

Understanding the Links between Work Commitment Constructs

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This study investigated the conceptual distinctiveness and causal links (based on Randall and Cote's (1991) model) between organizational commitment (OC), occupational commitment (OcC), job involvement (JI), work involvement (WI), and intentions to withdraw from the organization and from the occupation. The process involved exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses which supported the distinctiveness of the constructs. Results suggest that WI affects both OC and OcC indirectly through its effect on JI. Furthermore, JI affects intention to leave the organization indirectly through its effect on OC and affects intention to leave the occupation indirectly through its effect on OcC. Analyses also suggest that OC and OcC have direct and indirect effects on both forms of withdrawal intentions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed. © 2001 Academic Press

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The topic of work commitment (WC) has been of continuing interest among scholars and practitioners alike (Blau & Ryan, 1997; Cohen, 1998, 1999; McGinnis & Morrow, 1990; Morrow & McElroy, 1987). Work commitment embodies various facets of employee commitment within the realm of work (Blau, Paul, & St-John, 1993; Cohen, 1993; Morrow, 1983; Randall & Cote, 1991). These facets are conceptualized as being distinct yet related constructs. Distinct facets or dimensions of WC include job involvement (JI; e.g., Kanungo, 1982), organization commitment (OC; e.g., Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979), occupational commitment (OcC; e.g., Blau, 1985), commitment to the union (e.g., Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, & Spiller, 1980), commitment to the work group (e.g., Sheldon, 1971), and work

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involvement (WI; e.g., Kanungo, 1979). Researchers have argued that “a multivariate approach to WC research will advance the understanding of how various pieces of the commitment puzzle fit together and how constellations of WC constructs influence outcome variables” (Randall & Cote, 1991, p. 209). Wiener and Vardi (1980) stated that since employees in a work setting simultaneously experience different levels of commitment to several different foci of working life, work outcomes such as withdrawal intentions or behaviors may be best understood as a function of all commitment types rather than of one or another in isolation. They further argued that as different foci of WC represent distinct attitudes, different effects on work outcomes could be expected. This article reviews and builds upon the relevant research in this area.

Although previous research supports the importance of considering multiple facets of employee commitment to best understand behavioral outcomes or intentions (e.g., Becker, 1992; Blau & Boal, 1989; Cohen, 1998; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), little research has addressed the causal links between the different commitment facets (e.g., Cohen, 2000; Randall & Cote, 1991). The present research sought to replicate, extend, and help establish the causal links between work involvement, job involvement, organizational and occupational commitment, and intentions to withdraw from both the organization and the occupation. Specifically, we examined the mediating role played by organizational and occupational commitment in the relation between job involvement and intentions to leave both the organization and the occupation, as well as the mediating role played by job involvement in the relation between work involvement and both organizational and occupational commitment. Figure 1 presents a graphic representation of the overall model tested in this study. Following are the conceptual definitions of the four facets of work commitment portrayed in that model.

Occupational commitment. Occupational commitment denotes the strength of motivation to work in a chosen career role (Hall, 1971). Terms used interchangeably with OcC include professional commitment (Morrow & Wirth, 1989), career commitment (Blau, 1985) and professionalism (Wetzel, Soloshy, & Gallagher,

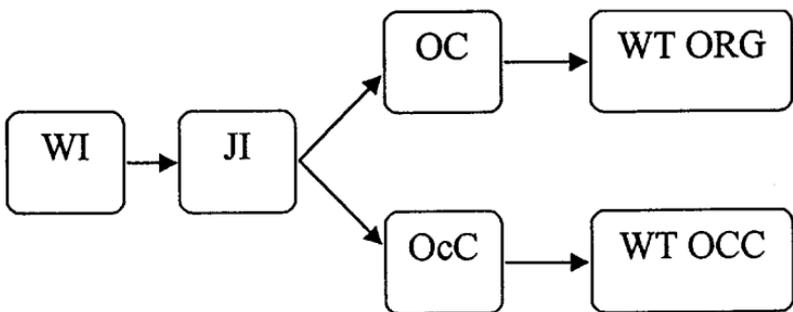


FIG. 1. Overall model to be tested (based on Randall & Cote, 1991). WI, work involvement; JI, job involvement; OC, organizational commitment; OcC, occupational commitment; WT ORG, intention to withdraw from the organization, and WT OCC, intention to withdraw from the occupation.

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