



Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees: A replication and extension with temporary workers

Catherine E. Connelly^{a,*}, Daniel G. Gallagher^{b,1}, K. Matthew Gilley^{c,2}

^a DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada

^b College of Business, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, USA

^c William Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA

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Abstract

This study replicates and extends Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow's study (Coyle-Shapiro, J.A.-M., & Morrow, P.C. 2006. Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 28, 416–431) of organizational and client commitment among contracted employees. Our study focuses on temporary workers rather than long-term contracted employees, and also finds that perceived organizational support (POS) from a client organization indeed relates to affective organizational commitment towards the client. However, this study further suggests that client POS also relates to continuance commitment towards the client as well as affective and continuance commitment towards the temporary agency. Finally, temporary workers' desire to pursue temporary work relates to affective commitment towards the temporary agency, but continuance commitment to the temporary agency is related to a preference for permanent employment.

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* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 905 521 8995.

E-mail addresses: connell@mcmaster.ca (C.E. Connelly), gallagdg@jmu.edu (D.G. Gallagher), matt.gilley@okstate.edu (K.M. Gilley).

¹ Fax: +1 540 568 2754.

² Fax: +1 405 744 5180.

1. Introduction

Fewer workers now expect to find continuous employment with a single employer. Organizations are also increasingly searching for staffing flexibility and are replacing or supplementing their permanent core workforces with the growing legions of contract based temporary workers (Kalleberg, Reynolds, & Marsden, 2003; Mauno, Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, & Nätti, 2005; Quinlan & Bohle, 2004; Zeytinolgu, 1999). This growth of the temporary employment sector is likely to continue, as employers persist in seeking employment flexibility to match fluctuations in production and service requirements, and in an attempt to reduce labor costs, buffer permanent employees from job loss, reduce managerial responsibilities, and create an extended screening process for applicants for permanent positions (e.g., Houseman, 2001; Lepak, Takeuchi, & Snell, 2003; Nollen & Axel, 1996).

The growth of the contingent workforce raises a number of challenges for the management of these workers (Connelly & Gallagher, 2004). Many organizational behavior theories are predicated on the assumption of an on-going employment relationship between an employee and their employing organization, but some researchers have questioned the extent to which existing behavioral theories are applicable to contingent workers. In particular, Gallagher and McLean Parks (2001) have raised concerns over the extent to which various foci of work commitment and nested subcomponents are immediately relevant to different forms of contingent work, given these workers' tenuous links to their organizations.

A number of authors have begun to empirically examine how committed temporary workers are to their client organizations, where they complete their assignments as well as their temporary agencies that place them. For example, Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) examine how long-term contract workers' affective commitment to their client organizations is related to their affective commitment towards their contracting agency. Furthermore, they extend the work of Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, and Sparrowe (2003) and Newton McClurg (1999) to investigate potential predictors of these attitudes, such as perceived organizational support (POS). Although the data provided by Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow's (2006) study provides considerable support for their model, several questions are left unanswered.

First, the Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) study focused on long-term contract workers' affective organizational commitment to the temporary agency and the client organization, but they did not examine continuance commitment. However, contingent workers' continuance commitment is worth consideration, given prior research that links employees' continuance commitment, and not a lack of affective commitment, to occupational withdrawal (Snape & Redman, 2003) as well as loyal boosterism and altruism (Wasti, 2005). Furthermore, although temporary workers' continuance commitment towards their agencies has been previously linked to their perceptions regarding the agency's supportiveness (Van Breugel, Van Olffen, & Olie, 2005), workers' continuance commitment towards both the temporary agency and the client organization has yet to be examined simultaneously. Accordingly, the current study examines temporary workers' affective and continuance commitment towards both the temporary agency and the client organization.

Secondly, Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) did not explicitly examine the extent to which the contract workers in their sample actively chose contingent employment. Rather, they examined how attractive the workers found their client organizations, and how these perceptions related to their affective commitment towards the client organization.

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