



Dimensionality of organizational commitment in volunteer workers: Chamber of commerce board members and role fulfillment

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Abstract

This study explores the multi-dimensionality of organizational commitment of volunteer chamber of commerce board members using the Meyer and Allen (1997) scale. The effect of organizational commitment on desirable board member roles is also tested. Theory is developed by uniting past research in both organizational commitment and employee motivation. A proposed scale is tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis with data gathered from 616 respondents at 116 chambers of commerce in 36 states. Structural Equations Modeling is then used to examine the effects of organizational commitment on several critical roles the board member is hoped to perform. Unlike prior research using Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale that focused on paid employees, our results indicate that normative, affective, and continuance

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commitment based on low alternatives are the three distinct constructs applicable to volunteer employees. Moreover, these components have a positive effect on board member's roles.

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1. Introduction

Organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct that has been shown to influence several positive job outcomes including reduced absenteeism and turnover (Riketta, 2002), self-reported citizenship (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), work effort (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995), and job performance (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). The vast majority of studies in this area have looked at the commitment of paid employees (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002). A few studies, however, have examined organizational commitment of volunteers rather than employees (Dailey, 1986; Pearce, 1993). These volunteer studies used the former Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) OC instrument, and volunteer workers have yet to be studied using any variation of Meyer and Allen's (1984) multi-dimensional scale. In the last 20 years, the preponderance of published OC studies have used refinements of Meyer and Allen's (1984, 1991, 1997) 23-item instrument.

Volunteers are fundamentally different from paid employees in that the behavior of volunteers is less likely to be subject to "coercive" power than is the behavior of paid employees. This is due to the fact that volunteers are less likely to be dependent on organizational rewards than are employees who depend on the income from their employer for their livelihood (Pearce, 1993). Volunteers are also more likely to be part-time rather than full-time organizational participants and may have additional roles at other organizations.

One group of organizational actors for whom the concept of commitment has been ignored by researchers is volunteer board of directors. Directors potentially play a central part in the realization of organizational outcomes. Like other volunteers, they are usually part-time rather than full-time organizational participants and are likely to have additional professional responsibilities at other organizations, either as board members, business owners, employees, or a combination of these positions. In the case of not-for-profit organizations, the directors are most likely volunteers in the sense of receiving no monetary compensation for their service on the board.

The purpose of this paper is to unite recent research on organizational commitment and motivation to examine the applicability of Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale to volunteer chamber of commerce board members, a group that has not been studied in this context before. The instrument is then tested empirically on a population of volunteer board members at non-profit chambers of commerce.

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