The Relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment of Volunteers

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ABSTRACT

This research has been carried out to find out if there is a significant difference between organizational trust and occupational commitment of volunteers (N=500) related to: a) their gender, marital status, age, highest achieved education and tenure b) and it is also aimed to emerge out whether there is a relationship between the volunteers’ organizational trust and occupational commitment. In this study, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analysis, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analysis, and Pearson Product-Moments Multiple Correlation techniques have been used. The results of the correlation analysis revealed that there is positive correlation between volunteers’ level of trust in, an organization and overall and each dimension of commitment related to occupation. Keywords: Organizational Trust, Occupational Commitment, Demographic Factors

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers’ having their organizational trust and occupational commitment are as important as organizational productivity and occupational qualifications. Because of the competition for globalization and staff policy during the 1980s, many nonprofit organizations hired many voluntary workers in order to reduce their expenses. As a consequence of these precautions, the relationship between the employers and employees has weakened (Noe et, al., 1997, p.241). There have been many important theoretical and empirical developments, because of which it has been found out that organizational trust and occupational commitment are complex and multi-dimensional issues. In the following years, there has been an increasing tendency towards experience, expertise, career, skills (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993, p.538). As the terms organizational trust and occupational commitment are key issues in this paper, these terms will be explained in advance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Trust in Organizations

Cummings and Bromiley (1995) defined trust as the expectation that another individual or group will (a) make a good faith effort to behave in accordance with commitments—both explicit or implicit, (b) be honest in whatever negotiations preceded those commitments, and (c) not take excessive advantage of others even when the opportunity exists. Rotter (1967) defined trust as the expectancy held by an individual or group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group could be relied upon. He further emphasized that the whole exchange relationship relies on the expectation that all concerned will act ethically with no intentions to cause harm to the other partners. On the other hand, Lewis and Weigert (1985) supported that trust means taking actions, which cannot be explained by self-interested behavior given current information and experience—only where a rational
Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995, p. 712) conceptualized trust as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party.” Similarly, Jones and George (1998) maintained that trust is an expression of confidence between the parties in an exchange of some kind – confidence that they will not be harmed or put at risk by the actions of the other party or confidence that no party to the exchange will exploit the other’s vulnerability. They also argued that trust leads to a set of behavioral expectations among people, allowing them to manage the uncertainty or risk associated with their interactions so that they can jointly optimize the gains that will result from cooperative behavior.

Baier (1994) asserted that trust has paradoxically been likened to both glue and a lubricant. As glue, trust binds leaders to volunteers and organizational participants to one another. Trust is essential to maintaining cohesive relationships and fostering effective cooperation (Baier). To be productive and to accomplish shared goals, organizations need cohesive and cooperative relationships (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). As a lubricant, trust greases the machinery of an organization. Trust facilitates communication. Greater efficiency is created when people can have confidence in other people’s words and deeds (Arrow, 1974). Without trust, conflict and heat are generated which bog down the work of the organization. Leaders need follower’s trust to foster communication and facilitate effectiveness.

Another view is that trust within an organization is a choice (Solomon & Flores, 2001). Solomon and Flores indicated that trust is a judgment based on evidence, but it always outstrips the evidence that would rationally justify it. The trustor makes this leap of faith out of care for the relationship. They also concluded that trust is a human virtue, “cultivated through speech, conversation, commitments, and action. Trust is never something already at hand; it is always a matter of human effort. It can and often must be conscientiously created, not simply taken for granted” (p. 87).

**Occupational Commitment**

Occupational commitment means one’s devotion of him or her to occupation. It requires three conditions; firstly, purpose of the occupation, secondly, belief in the values of the occupation and acceptance of them; and finally showing an effort to survive in his/her occupation and membership with his/her occupation (Morrow & Wirth, 1989, p.41). Accordingly, occupational commitment is defined either as a worker attitude or as a force that binds a worker to occupation. Commitment embodies a sense of being bound emotionally or intellectually to some course of action, which may include a person’s relationship with occupation (Huntington, 1986). It has also been defined as loyalty, identification, and involvement with some appropriate object (Buchanan, 1984). In a non-profit organizational setting, such loyalty involves feelings of attachment that develop as individuals share values in common with the occupation. This identification, expressed through the adoption of occupational goals, occurs when individuals take pride in the occupation, participate with intense interest in its activities, and speak positively about their connection with the occupation (Etzioni, 1975; Porter et al., 1982).

Corser (1998) made a distinction between organizational trust and occupational commitment, stating the latter was a broader concept and that it is a more complex set of loyalties, which an individual may feel to the entirety of their occupation, not simply an attachment to the specific job they hold. As noted by Porter, Mowday, and Steers (1982), commitment is the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, the occupation. Ostroff (1992) reported that committed
employees who are associated with better occupational performance have a low turnover rate and low absenteeism.

Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) investigated the relationship of job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and turnover in a longitudinal study of psychiatric technicians. They concluded that occupational commitment measures the “strength of the identification with, and involvement in, the goals and values of the occupation,” the “willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the occupation,” and the “strong desire to maintain membership in the organization” (p. 604). Porter et al. found that occupational commitment was a better predictor, at a statistically significant level, between “leavers” and “stayers,” because negative attitudes were only found in time-periods closest to the individual’s leaving. “Occupational commitment may represent a related but more global evaluative linkage between the employee and the occupation that includes job performance among its specific components” (p. 606). Torres, Zey, and McIntosh (1991) viewed members’ sense of commitment as essential to participation and involvement in nonprofit organizations. The tool developed by these authors to measure occupational commitment has been extensively utilized by many researchers since, and has been found to have internal reliability and predictive validity (Morgan, 1986).

**Relationship between Trust in Organization and Occupational Commitment**

A positive relationship between trust and commitment is predicted since trust is a determinant of relationship quality (Moorman et al., 1992). These authors also indicated that the level of honesty, reliability, and integrity influence how the relationship with the occupation is perceived. The perceived quality of the relationship then in turn influences the level of commitment extended towards the occupation. If the organization is perceived by employees to be honest, reliable, and worthy, then the outcome is a high perception of quality in the relationship. Conversely, if there is little trust in the organization, then the relationship would be perceived as unsatisfactory and little or no commitment from employees would exist. Consequently, high levels of trust are likely to lead to high levels of commitment to the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In two studies of British blue-collar workers, Cook and Wall (1980) found that trust subscales correlate positively with occupational commitment subscales. The overall correlation between trust and occupational commitment was .56 (p <.0001), while faith in peers had a correlation of .30 with trust and of .32 with organizational identification. Confidence in organization had a correlation of .52 (p <.0001) with trust.

**METHOD**

**Sample Group**

Employees who work at nonprofit organizations without pay in Taiwan constitute the scope of this research. According to the five principal categories of the nonprofit foundations (NPFs) from the “Directory of 300 Major Foundations in Taiwan” including culture and education, culture and arts, charity and social welfare, medicine and health, and special purpose, there were 500 volunteers who were chosen randomly to constitute the sample group. Of that 64.7% of the subjects who participated in the survey were women, 35.3% were men; 63.1% married 29.5% were single. According to their ages, 41.3% of the participants were the age range of 50 or older; 24.7% were between 40-49; 17.5% at the age 29 or younger, 16.5% were between 30-39. 58.2% of the participants had an undergraduate degree; 35.8% were with a secondary degree or under and 6% held a graduate degree or above. As far as their work
experience at the current organization is concerned, 42.9% of them had 24 months or less experience; 23.7% had between 25-60 months experience; 14% had 61-108 months experience and 19.4% had 109 months or more experience.

Data Instruments (Scales)

In this study, a personal information form and two instruments have been used. The first instrument has been adopted for the organizational trust inventory (OTI) and the second one for the occupational commitment questionnaire (OCQ).

1. Personal Information Data Form: It has been utilized to determine volunteers’ demographic variables. Items related to respondents’ gender, marital status, age, education and tenure variables are included in this section.

2. Organizational Trust Inventory Short-Form (OTI-SF): The Organizational Trust Inventory developed by Cummings and Bromiley (1995) was used to measure volunteers’ ratings of their trust in the organization as described by three factors including Reliability, Honesty, and Good Faith. The Organizational Trust Inventory-Short Form consists of 12 statements with a seven-point Likert-type scale from which the participants chose 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither disagree nor agree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree. The 12-item of the Organizational Trust Inventory-Short Form provides a more usable instrument without sacrificing substantial measurement factors. Bromiley and Cummings (1995) indicated that: We estimated the measurement model on the short version of 12 questions selected. Bentler’s comparative fit index was .98. We believe that the 12-item short form provides a more usable questionnaire without sacrificing substantial measurement assets. As well as, the three dimensions remained highly correlated. Most important, the composite reliability of the three measures was quite high: Dimension One at .9351, Dimension Two at .9358, and Dimension Three at .9009. (p. 319)

3. Occupational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ): This questionnaire aims to assess occupational commitment in three sub-dimensions. The 15-item of the Occupational Commitment Questionnaire divided the measurement into three components: belief and acceptance of occupational goals and values; willingness to exert effort for the occupation; and a desire to maintain membership in the organization. This instrument consists of 15 statements on the Likert seven-point scale that was developed by Porter, Steers, and Mowday (1979). The scores of the items were summed and divided by the number of items to provide an indicator of volunteers’ perceived level of commitment to the occupation. In the authors’ review, Porter et al. (1979) found the coefficient alphas for these three components ranged between .82 and .93.

Data Analysis

The one-way between-groups Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed to examine demographic differences in volunteers’ perceived trust in, and commitment to occupation, an organization. The one-way MANOVA is the best statistical technique to conduct while comparing two or more groups in terms of their means on a group of two dependent variables. The categorical independent variables included gender, marital status, age, highest achieved education and tenure. The Bonferroni adjustment was adopted to determine the critical value of a new alpha level, which uses the normal alpha level divided by pairwise comparisons (Baumgartner et al., 2002; Pallant, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore, there were two dependent variables to investigate; a new alpha level of .025 was given in this research (dividing .05 by 2). One-way ANOVA was conducted to measure the effects of different
volunteers’ demographics—age levels and tenure levels, on perceived commitment to an occupation and each factor of occupational commitment based on the multivariate analysis of variance results. Scheffe and LSD tests were done in order to find the source of the meaningful differences found through variance analysis. Pearson Product-Moments Correlation was calculated to determine the relationship between organizational trust and occupational commitment.

FINDINGS

Gender
The results of this multivariate analysis of variance suggest that there were no statistically significant differences between males and females on the combined dependent variables—Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment: F(2, 405) = .345, p = .709; Wilks’ Λ = .998; partial eta squared = .002. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, there were no differences to reach statistical significance between gender on levels of perceived trust in, and commitment to occupation, an organization using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025: F(1, 406) = .033, p = .855, partial eta squared = .000 for organizational trust; F(1, 406) = .142, p = .706, partial eta squared = .000 for occupational commitment. For the value of partial eta squared, there was 0% of the variance in perceived organizational trust and commitment scores explained by gender.

Martial Status
The results of this multivariate analysis of variance suggest that there were no statistically significant marital status differences on the combined dependent variables—Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment: F(6, 806) =1.444, p = .195; Wilks’ Λ = .979; partial eta squared = .011. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, there were no differences to reach statistical significance between marital status on levels of perceived trust in an organization, and commitment to occupation, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025: F(3, 404) = 1.493, p = .216, partial eta squared = .011 for organizational trust; F(3, 404) = 2.624, p = .051, partial eta squared = .018 for occupational commitment.

Age
There was a statistically significant age difference on the combined dependent variables: F(6, 806) = 3.269, p = .004; Wilks’ Λ = .953; partial eta squared = .024, with a .004 significance value of less than .05. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, Table 1 displays that the only difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025, was perceived commitment to occupation: F(3, 404) = 5.925, p = .001, partial eta squared = .042. The effect sizes, calculated using partial eta squared was .042, which, according to generally accepted criteria (Cohen, 1988), was considered a small effect and represented 4.2% of the variance in perceived commitment explained by age. The volunteers in the age 29 and younger perceived the highest levels of commitment to their occupations (M = 5.01, SD = 1.38). It was necessary to conduct a follow-up analysis to identify where the significant differences of diverse groups lie, when this independent variable (age) was with four levels (subgroups). The follow-up analysis was further conducted in using one-way analysis of variance based on the results of the multivariate analysis of variance.
Table 1: MANOVA of Volunteers’ Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment on Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Multivariate Tests</th>
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<td>Roy’s Largest Root</td>
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Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

- **Source**: Dependent Variable
- **Type III Sum of Squares**: df, MS, F, Sig., Pη²
- **Effect**: Value, Pillai’s Trace, .047, 3.239, 6.000, 808.000, .004, .023

**Note**: N = 408. Sig. = Significance, Pη² = Partial Eta Squared, MS = Mean Square, Trust = Organizational Trust, Commitment = Occupational Commitment.

Highest Achieved Education

The results of this multivariate analysis of variance suggest that there were no statistically significant education differences on the combined dependent variables—Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment: F(4, 808) = .622, p = .647; Wilks’ Λ = .994; partial eta squared = .003. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, there were no differences to reach statistical significance between education on levels of perceived trust in an organization, and commitment to occupation, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025: F(2, 405) = .547, p = .579, partial eta squared = .003 for organizational trust; F(2, 405) = .945, p = .389, partial eta squared = .005 for occupational commitment.

Tenure

There was a statistically significant tenure difference on the combined dependent variables: F(6, 806) = 2.620, p = .016; Wilks’ Λ = .962; partial eta squared = .019, with a .016 significance value of less than .05. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, Table 2 displays that the only difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025, was perceived commitment to an occupation: F(3, 404) = 4.309, p = .005, partial eta squared = .031. The effect sizes, calculated using partial eta squared was .031, which, according to generally accepted criteria (Cohen, 1988), was considered a small effect and represented 3.1% of the variance in perceived commitment explained by tenure. The volunteers with 24 months and less of tenure perceived the highest levels of commitment to their occupations (M = 4.72, SD = 1.26) than the others in occupational commitment. It was necessary to conduct a follow-up analysis to identify where the significant differences of diverse groups lie when this independent variable (tenure) was with four levels (subgroups). Further analysis of these differences following in using one-way analysis of variance based on the results of the multivariate analysis of variance.

Table 2: MANOVA of Volunteers’ Organizational Trust and Occupational Commitment on Tenure

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Specifically, the volunteers, who were 29 and younger and with 24 months and less of tenure, perceived the highest levels of commitment to their occupations in this sample. Consequently, according to the results of the Scheffe test of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), significant differences were found in overall occupational commitment and each factor of occupational commitment, between volunteers’ age levels or tenure levels.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was performed to evaluate the relationship between follower outcomes of organizational trust and occupational commitment. The result showed that positive correlation and linear relationship was found between volunteers’ perceived trust in, and commitment to occupation, an organization, with higher levels of perceived organizational trust correlating with higher levels of perceived occupational commitment.

**DISCUSSION**

Consistent with previous research (Port et al., 1974), these two follower outcomes of occupational commitment and organizational trust were correlated positively and significantly with each other. Furthermore, in two studies of British blue-collar workers, Cook and Wall (1980) found that trust subscales correlate positively with occupational commitment subscales. The overall correlation between trust and occupational commitment was .56 (p<.0001), while faith in peers had a correlation of .30 with trust and of .32 with organizational identification. Confidence in organization had a correlation of .52 (p<.0001) with trust.

Trust in organizational authorities has shown to influence a variety of unpaid employees’ work attitudes and behaviors (Brockner et al., 1997). Followers are supportive of, or committed to, leaders and the institutions that the leaders represent, when trust is relatively high. The followers committed to occupations are likely to be satisfied with their relationship to the leaders, trusting in organizations, and willing to behave in ways that help to further the leaders’ goals and by extension the goals of the organizations.

The statistically significant differences were found among the demographic factors of age and tenure (length of volunteering) of the followers and the levels of each factor and overall occupational commitment, based upon the results of conducting the analyzes of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Age was a contributing variable in explaining volunteers’ commitment to the occupation. The negative relationship suggested that younger volunteers demonstrated more commitment to their occupation than older volunteers did. The level of commitment to the occupation of volunteers aged 29 and younger was significantly (p< .05) higher than that of volunteers among other age groups of 30-39, 40-49, and 50 and older. Tsui, Egan, and O’Reilly (1992) found that difference in age was related negatively and significantly to commitment or intent to stay. Specifically, younger volunteers tended to be more committed to their foundation than older volunteers.
Past studies suggested that volunteerism generally increases with age until an individual’s health begins to restrict his or her ability to engage in volunteer activities (Wilson & Musick, 1997). Nevertheless, the situation has now been changed and a number of young people are more aware of the importance and meaningfulness of volunteerism. Volunteering is far-reaching. The younger volunteers now comprise a considerable proportion of society and the nonprofit workforce. They seek a life balance, a sense of independence, and a sense of being a part of the communal stress-free workplace (Fisher & Ackerman, 2005).

In general, the participants the researcher interviewed reflected that they began volunteer work before or during college and this fostered a stronger interest in serving others. In essence, many donations to the nonprofit organizations were made to diverse training programs that helped young volunteers develop their potential. These younger and middle-aged volunteers tended to participate in educational training programs. They combined this with learned personal experience and knowledge acquired from getting involved in the programs themselves or through their volunteer work. Many young, well educated, and professionally trained volunteers expressed a passion to share their time, energy, and talents in volunteering as a way of making society a better place to live. In addition to the desire to devote skills and time to an organization, these qualified young volunteers had a strong sense of personal responsibility and commitment to their occupation and organization. This devotion was driven by the intense desire to be useful to others even though the volunteers had full-time jobs.

This study has demonstrated a significant and negative relationship between volunteer’s tenure and the level of commitment to occupation. The negative relationship indicated shorter tenure volunteers perceived more commitment to their occupation than longer tenure volunteers did. The level of commitment to occupation of volunteers with tenure of 24 months and less is significantly (p < .05) higher than that of volunteers among other tenure groups of 25-60, 61-108, and 109 and more. Although there seems to be empirical evidence to positively link tenure and occupational commitment, it is still not clear how this link operates (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen also suggested that employees with longer organizational tenure might develop retrospective attachment to the organization. They presented that senior employees exhibited less measured commitment than new or middle tenure employees did. These findings are supported by Liou and Nyhan (1994), who found a negative relationship between tenure and occupational commitment (t = -3.482). In this study, the results corresponded since younger volunteers responded as having a higher level of commitment to their occupation and they only had tenure of 24 months or less. In short, once these young volunteers are committed to their leader’s values and the organization’s mission, they are the ones who have a strong commitment to the occupation and will remain.

REFERENCES


