

Job Status as an Antecedent of Affective Commitment

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Abstract

This study aims at finding the variation in the level of affective commitment between permanent and adhoc faculty members of a large public sector university. A sample of 71 respondents was selected through proportionate stratified sampling method. To collect the data a brief questionnaire was distributed among the selected respondents. The data were analyzed through cross-tabulation and the results revealed that affective commitment level of adhoc lecturers was low as compared to that of permanent lecturers.

Keywords: Job Status, Affective Commitment, Organizational Commitment

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Affective commitment (AC) is defined as “identification with, involvement in and emotional attachment to the organization. Employees who have strong affective commitment will remain with the organization reason being they feel they want to do so” (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 253). Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) argued that there are four major factors which contribute to the development of affective commitment. These factors include organizational structure, personal characteristics, work experiences and job characteristics.

The role of teachers, especially university teachers, is pivotal in imparting higher education. In current dynamic environment the educational institutions depend largely on faculty members who are committed to the institutional goals, willing to exert high energy levels and have strong wish to stay in the organization (Somech & Bogler, 2002). Such committed faculty members have unbreakable psychological ties to their institutions, their students and their subjects. However, their behavior varies depending upon their reason for stay in the organization, i.e. type of commitment (Cohen, 2000; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988).

Somech and Bogler (2002) found that there is a remarkable difference between the committed teachers and those which are either not committed or less committed to their jobs and

organizations. Firstly committed teachers perform much more than what is actually expected of them while others perform only a minimum amount of work. Secondly committed teachers are truly engaged and involved in their organizations than their counterparts who are not committed to the organization. Considerable evidence from literature shows that high organizational commitment effects the performance positively (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment shows the strongest and positive correlations with results of employees and organizations (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) as it plays an important role in the development of work attitudes and behaviors (Morrow, 1993). Recently researchers have noted that organizational commitment also have implication for employee outcomes like stress, health, well-being, and work – non-work conflict.

Despite the fact that considerable research work exists on the relationship between organizational commitment and performance, the public sector organizations are given less attention in the commitment literature (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996). The study in hand has taken into account the commitment level of public sector employees. Further, within the public sector organizations there is often a debate that whether the ad-hoc employees have higher level of organizational commitment or permanent employees and ultimately which group performs better. Proponent of first group argue that the adhoc employees have a greater commitment and better performance as they have a fear of losing job while the regular employees do not have any such fear. They further argue that adhoc teachers want their position to be made permanent and for this purpose they perform better. On the other side the proponents of second group claim that permanent employees are sure about the fact that they will remain with the organization for a long period and they own their organization, therefore they are more committed to the organization.

Studies conducted by Easley (2000) and Fox & Certo (1999) revealed that the issue of retaining teachers is emerging area of concern in the field of commitment and there is an urgent need of exploring the antecedents and consequences of teachers' commitment and loyalty to their organizations and professions. While earlier studies have signified the relationship between job performance, employees' turnover and affective commitment,

Little research has so far been conducted to explore the relationship between job status and affective commitment.

Job status is a multidimensional construct but in the current study it was defined as:

Regular/Permanent job

A permanent job is one which is sanctioned without time limit. It is the appointment made in accordance with the prescribed procedure against a clear vacancy.

Adhoc/temporary job

An adhoc/temporary job is other than permanent job. It is usually sanctioned with a specific time limit.

Research Objectives

Numerous research studies have been conducted on correlates and antecedents of affective commitment but the role of job status as an antecedent of affective commitment of teachers in higher education has not yet been explored. This study aimed at filling this gap in the existing literature.

The main objectives of the study were:

- To measure the level of affective commitment among the university faculty.
- To identify the variation in the level of affective commitment between permanent and adhoc faculty members of the university.

Significance of the Study

In the less developed economies like ours employees are not considered to be an asset of the organization. This study will provide the executives with information about the role of employees' job status (permanent/adhoc) on their organizational commitment, and thus will help them in deciding about the right status of the employees necessary for achieving higher level of organizational commitment.

Literature Review

Organizational commitment has been central concept in the studies related to the attitude and behaviors of workers in the past

few years (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Reichers, 1985). It plays a vital role in the development of different behaviors and attitudes related to work (Morrow, 1993). It is a multidimensional construct which results in various jobs related behaviors (Becker, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mayer & Schoorman, 1992; Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Becker is said to be one of the pioneers of the term ‘commitment’ as the famous side-bet theory was presented by him in 1960. The basic idea of the theory is much closer to the attitudinal commitment than that of behavioral commitment (H. S. Becker, 1960). He explains the concept of commitment by indicating to factors which he called as “side bets”. According to Becker, as one proceeds along with a course of action with some organization, some side bets are made and the fear that the side bets would be lost results in commitment development. For example pension and seniority etc. are contingent upon continued job of the employee with the same organization otherwise the employee will not be able to get these benefits.

Further Becker says that “individuals make side-bets when they take an action that increases the costs associated with discontinuing another, related action”. For example, if there is an employee who learn some skill related to his job and spends much time and makes considerable effort to learn that skill, but if his skill cannot work in any other organization, it means he is 'betting' his time and energy which will be going to pay him if he wins the bet, but of course he will have to stay in the same organization. Becker (1960) said that employee’s stay with the organization will depend upon number and magnitude of side bets the employee has made. Due to these logics he explained that commitment is such an action of the individual where he engages himself in “consistent line of activity”(1960, p. 33).

Much attention was paid to the concept of organizational commitment in 1990s. More theories were developed and refined. Till that time it was established that the concept of commitment is multidimensional and its antecedents, correlates, and consequences differ for its different dimensions (Meyer, et al., 2002).

Three components model was developed by the Allen and Mayer (1990). In the said model three components of attitudinal dimension of organizational commitment were mentioned and their measures were developed. Allen and Meyer (1990) explained that:

“The affective component of organizational commitment, proposed by the model, refers to employees’ emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization. The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. Finally, the normative component refers to employees’ feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” (p. 01).

Affective commitment is employee’s “emotional bond” with their organization. Employees who have affective commitment to their organizations have a sense of attachment to their organization. They are always concerned about achieving organizational goals and have increased level of desire to be with the same organization. There is a strong linkage between affective commitment and employee’s turnover, absenteeism and performance (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). The employees with the strong organizational commitment enjoy being the member of that organization (Allen, 1990) while turnover has a very strong relationship with affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Scholars have also argued that affective commitment reduces the negative shock of different factors creating stress and effecting health of employees at work (e.g., Begley & Czajka, 1993). Meyer and Allen (2001) noted that there is a strong correlation between affective and normative commitment and there is also a reasonably strong correlation between affective commitment and job satisfaction, job involvement and occupational commitment (Mayer at el, 2001). So if the employees are to be understood and their behaviors are to be managed properly then their job satisfaction and affective commitment must have to be considered (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Demographic variables have little role in the development of organizational commitment but work experiences have a strong

relationship with the affective commitment similarly perceived organizational support has strongest positive relationship with affective commitment (Mayer et al., 2001). Meyer et al also noted that affective commitment has strongest correlation with the different forms of organizational justice and with leadership (2001).

Research Methodology

This study was conducted using survey research method. Survey research consists of cross sectional design in which data was collected normally by questionnaire or by interview usually on many cases at a single point of time in order to collect quantitative data for more than one variable; these variables were then analyzed to test their association (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

The study was confined to post-graduate teaching and research departments of a large public sector University. The respondents for the study in hand were permanent and adhoc lecturers of the University.

University was further restricted through administrative definition and all Research Centers and undergraduate colleges were excluded. The current universe of this study was therefore confined to the six faculties mentioned above. To make an objective assessment the study was further restricted to the Lecturers only and Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors were not considered as respondents.

Each faculty was considered separate strata due to homogeneity in their working environment and other characteristics. A total of 71 respondents were selected as sample through proportionate stratified sampling consists of total of 71 respondents out of which 30 (42.3%) were adhoc and the rest of 41 (57.7%) were permanent.

Table 1. *Sample Description*

Name of Faculty	Total Lecturers	Sample Lecturers as Respondents		
		Permanent	Adhoc	Total
Arts & Humanities	25	6	3	9
Islamic & Oriental Studies	9	3	0	3
Life & Environmental Sciences	50	7	10	17

Management & Information Sciences	60	14	06	20
Numerical & Physical Sciences	28	4	5	9
Social Sciences	38	6	7	13
Total	210	40	31	71

Every third lecturer of each faculty was considered as respondent. Within the faculty however, through lottery method names of lecturers were picked to be taken as respondents without any consideration of gender or nature of service. Sampling for the purpose was done as it was very difficult to interview all of them.

The data were collected through the eight item-scale developed by Allen and Mayer (1990). Questionnaire comprises of two major sections. Responses were collected on five-point Likert scale where 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using cross tabulation. The results are given in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Cross Tabulation: Job Status X Affective Commitment

Job Status	Affective Commitment			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
Adhoc	2	20	8	30
Permanent	37	3	1	41
Total	39	23	9	71

Total number of adhoc employees was 30 while permanent employees were 41. Affective commitment level was divided into three main categories high, medium and low. As there were 8 items in the questionnaire and answers to the questionnaire were taken on five-point likert scale so the minimum score was five and the maximum score was 5x8=40. However, if the ranges were made on the basis of theoretical maximum and minimum it may give wrong results in cross tabulation. Empirically it was not expected that any respondent selects option 5 (Strongly Agree) on the Likert scale for all the questions. If we make categories on the basis of these maximum and minimum possible scores, there was a danger that all responses may fall in the medium category. And the results of cross-tabulation may be totally wrong. So, for the

purpose of the tabulation and categorization, the ranges of observed values were equally divided into three parts instead of dividing theoretically possible ranges into three categories. The three categories high, medium and low were used as basis for cross-tabulation.

Data analysis revealed that only 2 faculty members which were 6.45% in adhoc service have high commitment while 37 being 90% in permanent service have high commitment. In medium commitment again the number of affectively committed employees in permanent service was high i.e. 20 which was 48.7% as compared to adhoc ones which was 3 only and if we calculate it in percentage it makes only 15% of the total adhoc employees.

In case of low commitment only one permanent employee which was only 2.43% has a low commitment again which justifies the consistency of the results while 8 being 40% adhoc employees have low level of affective commitment which was quite a big number.

Overall results of the table and graph shows that a big number of permanent employees have a high level affective commitment to the organization and only a few adhoc employees have high affective commitment to the organization they work for while a minimum number of permanent employees have low affective commitment and a big number of Adhoc employees have low affective commitment.

Discussion

The data reveals that majority of the respondents served on adhoc before being permanent as on 14 out of 40 permanent lecturers interviewed turned up with response that they never served on adhoc basis that show more than 60 % of teachers serve on adhoc before joining permanent service at University. Majority of permanent lecturers were committed to the university and were of the view to serve the institution for the rest of their life. Adhoc lecturer's affective commitment turned up to be low.

The results show that only 6.45% faculty members in adhoc service showed high commitment while 90% in permanent service have high commitment. In medium commitment number of

affectively committed employees in permanent service was also high i.e. was 48.7% as compared to adhoc ones which was only 15% of the total adhoc employees.

Only one permanent employee which was only 2.43% has a low commitment again which justifies the consistency of the results while 40% adhoc employees have low level of affective commitment which was quite a big number.

Overall results shows that a large number of permanent employees have a high level affective commitment to the organization and only a few adhoc employees have high affective commitment to the organization, while a minimum number of permanent employees have low affective commitment and a high number of Adhoc employees have low affective commitment.

Results of the current study supported and extended the findings of earlier similar studies. For example, Balfour and Wechsler (1996) in a study conducted on antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment in public sector organizations developed the measures of organizational commitment based on employee's work experiences and found that organizational commitment is greatly affected by work experience and job characteristics, personal characteristics and many other job related variables. The said study noted that there are many job related variables like work experience, characteristics of job like participation and opportunity for advancement which serve as key variables for commitment to escalate.

Future research Avenues

Current study examined the effect of job status on affective commitment of employees, while it can be extended to both ends i.e. along with job status the effects of other job related variables like promotion and rewards etc. can also be seen. Moreover, along with affective commitment there are other components (continuous and normative) of commitment on which the effects can be gauged.

A cross-cultural research comparison is advisable to explore that applicability of current findings in other regions to investigate possible cultural differences. Further, research can be

conducted in the other vocational organizations to measure the level of commitment.

Relationship of different demographic and psychographic variables like gender, education, class status, political systems, experience and family stress level may cause variation in the level of commitment. So it is suggested that these variables should be taken stock to have the better and improved results and betterment of the research rewards.

Current study was applied to measure the commitment level of the lecturers, while the same may be conducted for assistant professors and the titles above. Similarly the effects of commitment on the wellbeing of employees can also be measured.

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