IDENTIFYING CORRELATES OF OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are the saviours of a nation. They dispel darkness and bring light into everyone's life; they remove ignorance and spread knowledge. They steer the nation towards success and prosperity. Their role in national development is unquestionable. A nation therefore requires teachers to be totally committed and dedicated to their profession. Occupational commitment of teachers is a crucial input for school efficiency and they are held responsible for the academic performance of their students. Colaralli and Bishop (1990) opine that occupational commitment might be an important precursor of exemplary work performance. Wallace (1995) concluded that employees who are strongly committed to their occupation might be more likely to set a higher standard of performance quality and be more willing to work hard to achieve this standard than those with weak commitment. This study examines the relationship between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and their work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support. The study further focuses on whether significant differences in the independent variables would account for significant differences in the dependent variable occupational commitment of teachers. The study was conducted on a sample of 120 IX standard teachers giving due representation to gender and type of school management. Four tools were administered of

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which three were adapted and standardized by the investigator. The data was analysed using correlation and t-test. The results revealed that there was a highly significant and positive correlation between occupational commitment and work ethics, occupational commitment and job involvement and occupational commitment and perceived organizational support. The t-test analysis revealed that teachers who had higher levels of work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support had higher levels of occupational commitment. The study conclusively reveals that teachers require to possess a high level of work ethics and job involvement to be committed. The study further pinpoints that perceived organizational support is vital for increasing occupational commitment of teachers. Educational organizations therefore need to value the contribution of teachers and care about their well-being. The teaching profession is a humane one and it requires its teachers to be treated with humaneness. Basic material rewards such as pay and promotion and social rewards such as approval and recognition would go a long way in enhancing the occupational commitment of teachers.

1. Introduction

Commitment to work has been a topic of interest to researchers for some time, as reflected by the many reviews of commitment theory and research (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morrow, 1983, 1993). Work according to Morrow (1983, 1993) has played an important role in helping to clarify the various domains to which members of the workforce can be committed. In her review, she identified five forms of work commitment grouped according to their major focus (i.e., work itself, career, job, organization, union). Although organizational commitment is the most extensively studied (Meyer & Allen, 1997), considerable attention has also been given to commitment to the occupation.

Understanding the occupational commitment construct is important for several reasons. First, occupations represent a meaningful focus in the lives of many people. This has become increasingly the case as educational levels rise and work becomes more specialized (Burris, 1983) and as employees deal with extensive organizational change. Second, occupational commitment is important because of its potential link to retention - in terms of both occupational and organizational membership. Whether the concern is society's need to retain people in particular occupations or an organization's need to maintain the optimal level of turnover (see Colarelli, 1998), a link between occupational commitment and

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retention would have important human resources management implications. Third, occupational commitment is important because of its potential links to work performance. Researchers have demonstrated that the development of expertise necessary for consistent high-level performance requires individuals to engage regularly in the relevant activities for long periods of time (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996). Thus, to the extent that it influences continued involvement in the occupation (and, hence, sustained practice), occupational commitment might be an important precursor of exemplary work performance (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). Finally, the occupational commitment construct is important because it contributes to our understanding of how people develop, make sense of, and integrate their multiple work-related commitments, including those that go beyond organizational boundaries (Meyer, Allen & Topolnytsky, 1998; Reichers, 1985). Although researchers have examined occupational commitment in relation to a wide range of variables, there has been no quantitative synthesis of this information.

2. Concept of Occupational Commitment

An occupation is viewed here as an identifiable and specific line of work that an individual engages in to earn a living at a given point in time. It is made up of a constellation of requisite skills, knowledge, and duties. The terms *occupation, profession,* and *career* have been used somewhat interchangeably in the commitment literature. The word *occupation is preferred* over *profession* simply because it is more general, encompassing both professionals and nonprofessionals. This allows us to convey the idea, noted by several authors (G. Blau, 1988, 1989; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993), that both professionals and nonprofessionals can experience commitment to their chosen line of work. The main reason for choosing *occupation* over *career* is to avoid potential confusion.

Commitment to one's occupation is conceptualized here as a psychological link between a person and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to that occupation. A person with strong occupational commitment will more strongly identify with, and experience more positive feelings about, the occupation than will one with weak occupational commitment. This emotional connection that the person feels with the occupation has implications for various work behaviors and, importantly, for whether the person wants to remain in the occupation. This view of occupational commitment is consistent with that of several researchers (G. Blau, 1985a, 1988, 1989; G. Blau et al., 1993). Individuals high in occupational commitment should be more likely to participate in skill development, devote greater energy to developing their careers, do more to advance their occupation, and should be less likely to leave their occupation. Organizations would likely profit from occupationally committed employees who continue to invest in their own occupational knowledge and job expertise.

Occupational Commitment has been studied in organizational behaviour researches particularly with reference to nurses. Since nursing and teaching are human service professions the present investigator has made a fresh attempt to examine the occupational commitment of secondary school teachers and related variables. A nurse takes care of the patient and nurses him to good health, a teacher teaches and guides a child and helps him develop a healthy wholesome personality. Both professions are concerned about the individual and his well-being. Based on this justification the present investigator was convinced to undertake the present study to identify the significant correlates of occupational commitment of teachers.

3. Correlates of Occupational Commitment

Research studies by Miller and Woehr (2002) and Lee et al (2000) have revealed that work related variables such as work ethics and job involvement are positively correlated with occupational commitment. Similarly Becker, 1960; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Koslowski et al., 1988; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983 have conclusively accepted that employees with high perceived support would be more committed to fulfilling the role requirements of their jobs and would be less inclined to seek and accept jobs in other organizations. Based on empirical evidence stated above the present investigator has selected the above mentioned variables as independent variables of the study. Besides biographical variables such as gender, type of management, age and experience have also been included.

4. Work Ethics

Modern formulations of the work ethic construct stem from the work of the German scholar Max Weber (1904). Weber (1958) states that the foundation of this ethic was hard work and the shunning of leisure as "... the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life" (p. 53), and the avoidance of "... ostentation and unnecessary expenditure" (p. 71) became the accepted way of life. He goes on to suggest that delay of gratification was also found in this ethic as "... the comfortable attitude toward life gave way to a hard frugality.... because they did not wish to consume but to earn" (p. 68). Weber then stresses the centrality of work to peoples' lives. Simply put, these individuals worked hard and live frugally due to an emphasis of work for work's sake. Not surprisingly, a prominent component of this work ethic concerns the constructive use of time.

Originating in Weber's Work, current conceptualizations tend to view work ethic as an attitudinal construct pertaining to work-oriented values. An individual espousing a high work ethic would place great value on hard work, autonomy, fairness, wise and efficient use of time, delay of gratification, and in the intrinsic value of work (Cherrington, 1980; Dubin, 1963; Furnham, 1984; Ho & Lloyd, 1984; Weber; 1958; Wollack, Goodale, Wijting, & Smith, 1971). Thus, consistent with Weber's early formulation, "work ethic" seems to be a multidimensional set of values.

Given the apparent multidimensionality of the work ethic construct and the absence of a firmly accepted conceptual definition, "work ethics" reflects a constellation of attitudes and beliefs pertaining to work behavior. Characteristics of the work ethic construct are that it (a) is multidimensional; (b) pertains to work and work-related activity in general, not specific to any particular job (yet may generalize to domains other than work – school, hobbies, etc.); (c) is learned; (d) refers to attitudes and beliefs (not necessarily behavior); (e) is a motivational construct reflected in behavior; and (e) is secular, not necessarily tied to any one set of religious beliefs.

5. Job Involvement

Job involvement denotes the cognitive state of psychological identification with a job or the importance of work in his total self-image (Lodahl and Kajnar, 1965, p. 24, Kanungo, 1982; Lawler & Hall, 1970; Rabinovitz & Hall, 1977). It is a belief about one's current job and tends to be a function of how much the job can satisfy one's present needs (Kanungo, 1982). Highly job-involved individuals make the job an important part of their personal identity. Furthermore, people with high job involvement center most of their interests around their job.

6. Perceived Organizational Support

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) suggested that, to meet needs for approval, affiliation, and esteem and to determine the organization's readiness to compensate increased effort with greater rewards, employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Employees from nine organizations were given 36 statements about the degree to which the organization appreciated their contributions and would treat them favorably or unfavorably in diverse situations. The employees were found to view their evaluation by the organization as positive or negative to a consistent degree across various dimensions and to believe that such evaluations would influence many aspects of their treatment. Such perceived organizational support was found to be positively related to job

attendance among private high school teachers. In accordance with a social-exchange interpretation, this effect was greater among teachers expressing a strong acceptance of the appropriateness and utility of trading work effort for organizational rewards.

The perception of being valued and cared about by the organization would encourage the incorporation of organizational membership and role status into the employee's self-identity and thereby increase prosocial acts carried out on behalf of the organization (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Buchanan, 1974, 1975; Etzioni, 1961; Hrebiniak, 1974; Kelman, 1961; Levinson, 1965; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Mowday et al., 1979, 1982; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Steers, 1977). Perceived organizational support would also enhance calculative involvement by creating trust that the organization will take care to fulfill its exchange obligations of noticing and rewarding efforts made on its behalf (cf. Blau, 1964; Cook & Wall, 1980; Organ & Knonvsky, 1989). Employees may use perceived organizational support to judge the potential gain of material and symbolic benefits that would result from activities favored by the organization. The relationship between perceived support and effort-reward expectancies may be bi-directional. Expected reward for high effort could strengthen and, in turn, be influenced by employees' perception that the organization valued their contributions.

For the majority of organizations that stress diligence in conventional job activities, increasing one's job attendance and performance would provide approved and publicity identifiable ways of reciprocating perceived high support. Innovation and spontaneous problem solving may additionally be associated with perceived support. The employee's strong involvement in the organization has been noted to include performance that goes beyond the call of duty (Mowday et al., 1982, p. 15), including actions for which "the individual receives no immediate reward and which benefit the larger organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 495; see also Bateman & Organ, 1983; Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Puffer, 1987). Extrarole activities carried out on behalf of the organization play a major influence in organization's success (Katz, 1964) and have been studied as a type of citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988).

Because perceived support should strengthen affective attachments to the organization, employees with high perceived support would be predicted to express stronger feelings of affiliation and loyalty. Perceived support should also be associated with expectancies that high performance would produce material rewards, such as pay and promotion, as well as social rewards, including approval and recognition. Social-exchange processes may also play an important role in calculative involvement. Perceived support would create trust that the organization will fulfill its exchange obligations of noticing and rewarding employee efforts

made on its behalf (cf. Blau, 1964; Cook & Wall, 1980; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). Employees with high perceived support would be more committed to fulfilling the role requirements of their jobs and would be less inclined to seek and accept jobs in other organizations (Becker, 1960; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Koslowski et al., 1988; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). Perceived support would also establish a trust in the long-term fairness of the organization to recompense extrarole performance (Organ & Konovsky, 1989).

7. Statement of the Problem

A Study of Occupational Commitment of IX standard teachers in relation to their Work Ethics, Job Involvement and Perceived Organizational Support.

8. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been formulated

1) To find out the relationship between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and their work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support.

2) To find out whether differences in work ethics of IX standard teachers would account for significant differences in their occupational commitment

3) To find out whether differences in the job involvement of IX standard teachers would account for significant in their occupational commitment

4) To find out whether differences in the perceived organizational support of IX standard teachers would account for significant in their occupational commitment

5) To find out whether differences in biographical variables viz., sex, type of management, age, experience of IX standard teachers would account for significant in their occupational commitment

9. Methodology of the Study

Variables chosen for the study

I. Dependent Variable

    1. Occupational Commitment

II. Independent Variables

    1. Attitudinal and Organizational Variables

       a. Work Ethics

       b. Job Involvement

       c. Perceived Organisational Support

    2. Biographical Variables

       a. Sex/Gender

       b. Type of Management

       c. Age

       d. Experience

10. Major Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between occupational commitment of IXth standard teachers and their work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support.

2. There is no significant difference in the occupational commitment of IXth standard teachers as per differences in their levels of work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support.

3. There is no significant difference in the occupational commitment of IXth standard teachers as per differences in the biographical variables namely sex, type of management, age, and teaching experience.

11. Tools

The following tools were used to measure the selected variables

1. **Occupational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ):** This tool was adapted and standardized by the investigator. The original tool consisted of eight items from Blau's (1985) scale and two items from Landy and Guion's (1970) scale. The present investigator included 18 items from Allen and Meyer's Commitment Scale. The present Occupational Commitment scale consists of 28 items which is a combination of the above mentioned 3 scales. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements using a seven-point Likert scale (from "strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree").

2. **Work Ethics (MEWP)** was measured by using Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth's Work Ethics Scale (2002). This scale was adapted and standardized by the investigator. It consists of 65 items distributed over 7 areas namely self reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time and delay of gratification. The investigator has analysed the data taking the total Work Ethic Scores.

3. **Job Involvement Scale (JIS)** by Lodahl and Kjener adapted and standardized by Umme Kulsum and was used in the present study to assess an individual's psychological identification with their job (i.e., the extent to which a person's work performance affects their self-esteem). Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (*strongly agree to strongly disagree*).

4. **Perceived Organizational Support:** by Eisenberger Robert et al. To measure the extent to which employees perceived that the organization valued their contribution and cared about their well-being. A short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support was adapted and standardized by the investigator. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*)

5. **Proforma** was used to measure the biographical variables.

12. Sample

The sample comprised 120 ninth standard teachers giving equal representation to gender and to type of management namely private aided, private unaided and government schools. The sampling frame is as follows:-

Type of Management	Male Teacher	Female Teacher	Total
1. Private aided	20	20	40
2. Private unaided	20	20	40
3. Government	20	20	40
			120

13. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation and t-test.

Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 showing the N, different and Coefficient of Correlation between Occupational Commitment of IX standard teachers and attitudinal-organizational variables

Sl. No.	Variable	N	Df.	'r' level of significance
1.	Work Ethics	120	118	0.792**
2.	Job Involvement	120	118	0.729**
3.	Perceived Organizational Support	120	118	0.197**

*Significant at/beyond 0.05 level
**Significant at/beyond 0.01 level

t-test

Table 2 showing the Mean, SD, and 't'-value of the occupational commitment scores of the IX standard teachers as per their levels of Work Ethics, Job Involvement, Perceived Orgn. Support and biographical variables.

Sl. No.	Variable	N	X	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
1.	Work Ethics					
	a) High	34	148.94	17.99	6.39	**
	Low	31	121.58	16.54		
	b) Middle	55	122.41	11.78	0.25	NS
	Low	31	121.58	16.54		
	c) High	34	148.94	17.99	7.64	**
	Middle	55	122.41	11.78		
2.	Job Involvement					
	a) High	30	152.33	13.42	13.04	**
	Low	46	118.43	5.88		
	b) Middle	44	126.09	18.90	2.57	*
	Low	46	118.43	5.88		
	c) High	30	152.33	13.42	6.98	**
	Middle	44	126.09	18.90		

Sl. No.	Variable	N	X	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
3.	Perceived Orgn. Support					
	a) High	49	136.26	13.26	9.29	**
	Low	34	116.82	4.99		
	b) Middle	37	132.89	27.08	3.54	**
	Low	34	116.82	4.99		
	c) High	49	136.26	13.36	0.70	NS
	Middle	37	132.89	27.08		
4.	Gender					
	a) Male	60	129.40	18.43	0.18	NS
	b) Female	60	130.03	20.11		
5.	Type of Management					
	a) Private Aided	40	129.17	19.67	0.01	NS
	Government	40	129.15	19.68		
	b) Private Aided	40	129.17	19.67	0.38	NS
	Private Unaided	40	130.82	18.70		
	c) Private Unaided	40	130.82	18.70	0.39	NS
	Government	40	129.15	19.68		
6.	Age					
	a) Younger	50	129.64	19.48	0.04	NS
	b) Older	70	129.77	19.16		
7.	Experience					
	a) More	97	129.77	19.05	0.06	NS
	b) Less	23	129.47	20.32		

*Significant at/beyond 0.05 level
** Significant at/beyond 0.01 level

14. Findings of the Study

1. Table 1 reveals that there is a highly significant and positive correlation between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and their work ethics (r =0.792)

2. There is a highly significant and positive correlation between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and job involvement (r = 0.729)

3. There is a highly significant and positive correlation between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and their perceived organizational support (r = 0.197)

4. Table 2 reveals the teachers with high level ethics (M=148.94) have higher levels of occupational commitment than teachers with moderate (M=122.41) and low levels of work ethics (M=121.58)

5. Highly job involved teachers were more committed to their occupation (M=152.33) than moderately (M=126.09) and low job involved teachers (M=118.43)

6. Teachers with higher levels of perceived organizational support (M= 136.26) had higher levels of occupational commitment than teachers with low perceived organizational support (M=116.82)

7. Biographical variables namely gender, type of management, age and teaching experience didn't have any impact on occupational commitment of IX standard teachers.

15. Conclusions

The study has pinpointed some relevant conclusions. It has identified a significant relationship between occupational commitment of IX standard teachers and their work ethics, job involvement and perceived organizational support. The study reveals non-significant results with reference to sex, type of management, age and experience of IX standard teachers and their occupational commitment.

16. Implications of the Study

The present study has far reaching implications for pre-service teacher education programmes. It is necessary to introduce value oriented programmes for teacher trainees so as to inculcate in them the value of work and commitment to their

occupation. Industriousness, self-reliance and constructive use of time should be emphasised in teacher training institutions. In service teacher training programmes should include topics that emphasise the need for occupational commitment and concern for the well-being of the students. The study emphasise the importance of job involvement of secondary school teachers and their significant relationship with their occupational commitment. Therefore educational managers should increase job involvement of teachers through motivational strategies such as priase, reward, recognition, opportunities for professional growth through refresher courses, orientation programmes, conferences and workshops. Job security, adequate salary and balanced work load increase the job involvement of teachers. Similarly benefits such as increases in pay, health insurance, rank, job enrichment, and decentralization of decision making would be predicted to enhance perceived support to the extent that these signified positive evaluations.

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