



THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON THE ATTITUDINAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG THE ACADEMIC MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SCIENCE FACULTIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of demographic characteristics on the degree of attitudinal organizational commitment of the academic members of the public sector universities in Sri Lanka. A quantitative method was employed to collect data using a structured questionnaire from academics. A representative sample based on multi-stage stratified random sampling method, where 277 questionnaires were distributed and 198 questionnaires deemed to be used. The data analysis were performed by using of descriptive statistics, correlation, analysis of variance, and regression analysis. In terms of findings, mean values of the job commitment of the academic members of the public sector universities in Sri Lanka were found to be 3.68 (in a 1-5 Likert scale) and in addition, the mean value was also found to be higher than the neutral value 3. This means that the academic members are generally committed to their jobs in the Sri Lankan context. Further, the multiple regression analysis indicated that the attitudinal organizational commitment was significantly positive affected by academics' gender, civil status, and tenure. However attitudinal organizational commitment insignificantly differed based on demographic characteristics such as age, occupational level and educational level. These findings are also expected to have significant policy implications.

KEYWORDS: Attitudinal Organizational Commitment, Demographic Characteristics, Academic Members, Public Sector Universities

1. Introduction

Organizational commitment (OC) has been a widely studied topic in the organizational behavior due to its implications for effectiveness, performance, personnel turnover and organizational citizenship. It is the bond or the employee's experience with their institution. Most of the higher educational institutes are labour intensive and the major portion of their budgets are predominantly devoted to employees both academic and non-academic and their effectiveness [1]. Higher education plays a vital role in the socio-economic deployment of the country. As a result, there has been a growing interest in OC in higher education over the past decades. The objectives of the higher education cannot be achieved if there is a lower degree of OC among academicians. Thus organizational commitment should be understood and constantly monitored for the welfare of any organization for sustainable future.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between demographic factors and attitudinal organizational commitment (AOC) in higher education sector in Sri Lanka. The literature suggested that there was a relationship between demographic and OC but the relationships, between demographic factors and AOC have not been adequately discovered. In addition, some research had been conducted to establish the relationship between demographic factors and OC in Sri Lankan context and none of the research was found to be conducted in the academic context. Hence, this study seeks to fill the gap by investigating the impact of demographic characteristics (age, gender, civil status, tenure, occupational level and level of education) on the AOC of the academic members of the public sector universities in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Objectives

- I. To analyze the demographic characteristics which influence on the attitudinal organizational commitment of the academic members
- II. To investigate the impact of demographic characteristics on attitudinal organizational commitment of the academic members
- III. To offer possible recommendations to the managers and policymakers in relevant organizations based on the research findings

3. Hypothesis

H1: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and positively associated with age

H2: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and positively associated with gender

H3: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and positively associated with civil status

H4: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and positively associated with occupational level

H5: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and negatively associated with tenure

H6: Academics attitudinal organizational commitment is significantly and positively associated with level of education

H7: Demographic characteristics has a significant positive impact on attitudinal organizational commitment.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Organizational Commitment

Porter et al [2] describe organizational commitment as ‘an attachment to the organization, characterized by an intention to remain in it; an identification with the values and goals of the organization; and a willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf’. Furthermore, Mowday, Porter, and Steers [3] defined organizational commitment as ‘the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization’. Organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and wants to continue actively participating in it [4].

Two distinct perspectives on the concept of organizational commitment have emerged: behavioral and attitudinal. The behavioral perspective focuses on the behaviour of an individual by identifying the conditions where behavior tends to be changed along with its effects on changes in attitudes. Early researchers [5]-[7] have explained organizational commitment as a binding of the individual to behavioural acts. Whereas the attitudinal perspective focuses on identifying the events that contribute to the development of commitment. Moreover, attitudinal organizational commitment can be identified as the ‘the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization’ [8].

Meyer and Allen [9] developed “Three-component model of commitment” to measure the attitudinal organizational commitment. Those component are ‘Affective commitment’, ‘Continuous commitment’, and ‘Normative commitment’.

4.2. Diminutions of attitudinal organizational commitment

4.2.1. Affective commitment

Meyer and Allen [10] defined affective commitment as “positive feelings of identification with attachment to and involvement in the work organization”. Affective commitment relates to the emotional attachment of an employee to the organization. It shows how much employees want to stay at their organization. When an employee affectively committed to their organization, then they want to stay in their organization for a long period of time. Zanagro [11] stated that employee who affectively committed would identify the goals and values of the organization and the level of their involvement. Employees who are affectively committed are great assets for organizations. Hence they act as ambassadors for their organization and promote the goodwill of the organization.

4.2.2. Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment relates to the willingness of employees to stay at their organization as a result of perceived economic value. Meyer and Allen [10] stated Continuance commitment as “the extent which employees feel committed to their organization by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving”. Herbiniak&Alluto [12]noted that continuance commitment depended on the cost that an employee associated with leaving the organizations, such as reduction in pay, pension, benefits, or facilities.

4.2.3. Normative commitment

Normative commitment relates to employees’ feelings of obligation to stay in their organization due to moral or ethical reasons. Employees that are normatively committed may continue employment due to the work culture and other socially accepted norms [13]. Allen and Meyer [14] noted normative commitment as “the employee’s Feelings of obligation to remain with the organization”. Thus, normatively committed employees feel a sense of guilt about the about leaving their organization.

4.3. Organizational Commitment and Demographic Characteristics

Many researchers have associated demographic factors with organizational commitment [15]-[18]. Previous studies have shown that the age, tenure, and education level have been associated with organizational commitment [19] - [23], [16]; on the other hand, [15],[24]and [16] found that demographic factors were not significant predictor of organizational commitment.

4.3.1. Age

Baron and Greenberg [25] stated that "older employees, those with tenure or seniority, and those who were satisfied with their own levels of work performance, had a tendency to report higher levels of organizational commitment than others". This implies that older employees tend to be more committed to the organization than other age groups, hence older employees realize that leaving their organization may cost them rather than staying. Mathieu & Zajac [15]; Sommer, Bae & Luthans [26] found a significant and positive relationship between age and employees' commitment. However, some researchers have emphasized negative relationship among age and commitment.

4.3.2. Gender

Mathieu & Zajac [15] argued that gender differences in commitment were due to different work characteristics and experiences that were linked to gender. The relationship between gender and organizational commitment has mixed results. There are some authors who have suggested that women are less committed to their work than men [27]-[30] and some suggest that men are less committed to organizations than women [31]-[32]. However, some researchers have found that there are no gender differences in organizational commitment [33]-[35]

4.3.3. Civil status

Many scholars have shown that civil status of employees significantly predicts organizational commitment [16], [21]. They have suggested that employees who are married, show much more commitment to their organizations with compared to employees who are unmarried.

4.3.4. Organizational tenure

It has been found that there is a significant and positive relationship between organizational commitment and Organizational tenure [16]. Newstrom [4] stated that commitment was usually stronger among longer an employee works in an organization. Further researchers have noted that longer the tenure, the feelings of responsibility toward the organization has also increased [36].

4.3.5. Occupational level

Ojha & Pradeep [37] found a positive correlation with organizational commitment; i.e., employees at higher occupational levels were found more committed towards their organization.

4.3.6. Level of education

Labatmedi et al [38] found that level of education was significantly correlated with organizational commitment. Level of education negatively associated with the organizational

commitment [39], [15]. Thus, highly-educated employees may have other opportunities for employment as well as they may have greater expectations of the organization which cannot always be met. Labatmedién et al. [38] found that level of education to be significantly correlated to organizational commitment.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Population & sample

The population consisted of the all science faculty academic members [40] of the public sector universities in Sri Lanka. The sample consisted of male and female academic members, professors, senior lecturers and lecturers of all the science faculties. Since the population was more or less homogenous with similar organizational structure and working force, multi-stage stratified random sampling was used in this study. Thus, two hundred and seventy-seven questionnaires were administered out of which one hundred and ninety-eight questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of above 71.8%. According to Sekaran [41], a response rate of thirty percent (30%) is regarded as acceptable for most research purposes.

5.2. Measurement instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the views of the respondents. It consisted two parts. Section-A deals with the demographic characteristics. The participants were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, civil status, occupational level, tenure and level of education. In addition to that, the Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) (Meyer & Allen, 1993) was used to measure the attitudinal organizational commitment. This study used a five-point Likert scale in the questionnaire, and five-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”. The Cronbach alpha for the whole organizational commitment scale was 0.711.

5.3. Mode of Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to measure the central tendency of the data. Correlations were used to ascertain the connection between demographic characteristics and attitudinal organizational commitment. Multiple linear regression was then executed to estimate the value of the dependent variables based on the independent variables. Model assumptions were checked for accuracy.

5.4 Profile of Respondents

In the selected sample, most of the academics were in the middle age .2.5% academics who were less than 30, 51.0% in between the age of 30 to 45 and 46.5% lecturers were more than

45years above. 55.6%respondents were males and females represented 44.4% of the total respondents. Furthermore, 91.9% of academics were married and 8.1% were unmarried. The sample included 20.7% Professor, 64.1% senior lecturers and 15.2%lecturers. 14.1%of the academics were employed less than 5 years, 28.8% academics were employed between 5 years to 10 years, and 57.1%are employed for more than 10 years. In addition, 71.2% of academics holding the Ph.D., 25.8% holding the Master's or MPhil and 3%of of the academics had Bachelor's degrees.

6. Results & Analysis

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 6.1.1. Descriptive Analysis

		Commitment			
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	Less than 30 years	2.86	4.14	3.60	.53
	Between 30 -45 years	2.29	5.00	3.71	.75
	More than 45 years	2.14	5.00	3.67	.64
Gender	Male	2.14	5.00	3.60	.69
	Female	2.43	5.00	3.80	.68
Civil status	Married	2.14	5.00	3.72	.69
	Unmarried	2.43	4.14	3.34	.61
Organizational tenure	Less than 5 years	2.29	4.57	3.20	.63
	Between 5 -10 years	2.29	5.00	3.98	.70
	More than 10 years	2.14	5.00	3.66	.63
Occupation level	Professor	2.29	5.00	3.71	.68
	Senior Lecturer	2.14	5.00	3.71	.71
	Lecturer	2.29	5.00	3.58	.65
Level of Educational	Ph.D.	2.14	5.00	3.72	.71
	Master/MPhil	2.29	5.00	3.59	.65
	First Degree	2.86	4.43	3.71	.61

The descriptive statistics depicted that female academic members were more committed than the male academic members in the public sector universities. However, the level of commitment did not varied with the age of the academic members. Further, it revealed that

the married academic members were less committed than the unmarried academic members'. The descriptive statistics showed that the academics less than 5 years of tenure were less committed than the academics with longer tenure. The table showed that professors and senior lecturer were more committed than the lecturers. The commitment of the Ph.D. holder and first-degree holders were higher than the academics who hold the Master/MPhil.

6.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 6.2.1 Pearson Correlation Result

		Continuous	Affective	Normative
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.242**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
Normative	Pearson Correlation	.699**	.453**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.730**	.691**	.911**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

Table 6.2.1 showed the results of Pearson correlations that measure the relationship between overallattitudinalorganizationalcommitment anddimensions of AOC.Continuous affective, normative factors have a positive relationship with organizational commitment with a correlation coefficient of (0.731, 0.691 and 0.911 respectively). Thus there is a significant association between the AOC and dimensions of AOCat 1% level.

Table 6.2.2 Correlation between Organizational Commitment,Dimensions of Attitudinal Organizational Commitment and Demographic Characteristics

		Age	Gender	Civil status	Organization al tenure	Occupation level	Level of Education
Continuous	Pearson Correlation	-.011	.109	-.202**	.062	.006	-.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.882	.128	.004	.389	.932	.648
Affective	Pearson Correlation	-.009	.042	-.102	.100	-.082	-.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.905	.561	.155	.162	.249	.464
Normative	Pearson Correlation	-.009	.154*	-.157*	.080	-.047	-.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.902	.031	.027	.262	.510	.377
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	-.015	.142*	-.150*	.109	-.055	-.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.836	.046	.035	.127	.446	.477

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.2.2 showed that gender (.142) and organizational tenure (.109) have a positive relationship with AOC. On the other hand age (.015), civil status (.150), occupation level (.055) and level of education (.051) have a negative relationship with AOC. In addition to that, there is a positive relationship between gender (.109), organizational tenure (.062), occupation level (.006) and negative relationship between academic age (.011), civil status (.202), and level of education (.033) with continuous commitment. Furthermore, affective commitment and gender (.042) and organizational tenure (.100) have a positive relationship. However, age (.009), civil status (.102), occupation level (.082) and level of education (.052) have a negative relationship with affective commitment. It is revealed that normative commitment and gender (.154) and organizational tenure (.080) have a positive relationship and age (.009), civil status (.157), occupation level (.047) and level of education (.063) have a negative relationship. Table 6.2.2 further deduces that gender and civil status have a notable positive linear correlation with the AOC and normative commitment at 5% significant level. Lastly, continuous commitment and civil status have a significant negative association.

6.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 6.3.1. The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Attitudinal Organizational Commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.062	.505		8.044	.000
Age	-.257	.139	-.203	-1.842	.067
Gender	.220	.098	.158	2.248	.026
Civil Status	-.423	.180	-.167	-2.346	.020
Organizational Tenure	.224	.094	.236	2.388	.018
Occupation Level	-.050	.115	-.043	-.434	.665
Level of Education	-.041	.090	-.038	-.456	.649
R-square 0.08		Adjusted R-Square 0.05		F-statistics 2.78	

Table 6.3.1 shows that there is strong model significance between Demographic Characteristics and AOC ($p=0.013$). Thus, 5% of the variance in AOC is due to the variances in Demographic Characteristics ($R^2 = 0.05$). Additionally, the regression coefficient results of each individual predictor show a significant positive relationship among relationship with gender and organizational tenure with AOC ($\beta = 0.220, 0.224$ and $p = 0.026, 0.018$) and a

significant negative relationship among civil status with AOC ($\beta = 0.423$ and $p = 0.020$). However, there is an negligible negative connection among age, occupation level, level of education with AOC with ($\beta = 0.257, 0.050, 0.041$ and $p = 0.067, 0.665, 0.649$).

7. Conclusion

The Present study revealed that there was statistically significant positive the association between demographic characteristics and AOC. The findings depicted that 5 % variance in AOC (dependent variable) is caused by demographic characteristics (independent variable) in the sample data set. Hence, it showed that there were other factors that influenced the AOC in the academic members in the public sector universities. It could mean that other factors such as interpersonal relationships among academics, Job characteristics, organizational flexibility, institutional brand, work-life balance, job characteristics, congruence with personal values and perceptions of institutional values, organizational culture, and social factors could have an impact on AOC.

The findings of the present study indicated that continuous, affective and normative factors have a significant positive influence on AOC. This result is consistent with previous research and [9] the results of the multiple regression analysis also revealed that gender, civil status, and organizational tenure are statistically more significant predictors of AOC. In addition, it has been found that there is a significant positive relationship between gender and organizational tenure with AOC which has supported by Werner [13] and Mathieu & Zajac [15]; and a significant negative relationship between civil status and AOC [16]. In addition to above, there is a slight negative association among age, occupation level, level of education with AOC.

It was discovered that fact female academic members were more committed than the male academic members and married were less committed than the unmarried academic members in the public sector universities. This was due to the fact that ,the married female academic members have more personal responsibilities and need more steadiness and security in their jobs ;they were likely to be more committed to their current organization than their unmarried counterparts. Further, it has identified that academics with short tenure were less committed than the academics with longer tenure. On the other hand, the findings indicated that the academic members in higher occupation level were generally more committed to their organization than their lower-ranking once. The most of the obtained results of the present study were consistent with previous research findings [4], [16], [37]. This finding is

inconsistent with those of Mathieu and Zajac [15]; Dixon et al. [32]; Angle and Perry [17] and Ojha and Pradeep [38]. Lastly, results indicated that the commitment of the Ph.D. holder and first-degree holders were higher than the academics who hold the Master/MPhil.

A high level of organizational commitment among the academic members reflects a strong acceptance of the university's values and willingness to exert efforts to remain in the same university. This was closely related to the affective dimension of commitment; however, the present findings disclosed a moderate level of AOC. Hence academic members in the public sector universities have a reasonable level of acceptance regarding the university goals and values as well as they stay in the university because they morally should. Thus, this partial commitment is significantly associated with the normative dimension of commitment [9].

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study can be useful for academic members not only in the public sector universities but also for other higher educational institutes in Sri Lanka to enhance the AOC. As a developing country, Sri Lankan government should offer fair and competitive wages for the academics to satisfy their higher order needs in order to boost their commitment level. Further, the academics should provide a comfortable working environment with up-to-date facilities to exert more performance. The public sector universities have to attract, select and promote talented academics whose belief and values which are similar to the organization. Furthermore, universities have to develop an organizational culture with good ethical standards and proper communications channels. Also, the university administration should review their existing HR practices to encourage academics commitment through intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. In addition, the university policies and procedures should facilitate academics professional learning opportunities and academic prospects to enhance the organizational commitment.

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