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Effect of Age, Tenure and Education level on the Organizational Commitment of Faculty Members in the Indian Higher Education Context

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Abstract: Academic institutions are significantly influenced by the commitment of their faculty members. Various studies have confirmed that high organizational commitment is associated with better productivity, greater job satisfaction and many other positive outcomes for the institution. There are limited studies on the effect of demographic variables on the commitment of faculty members to the institution. This study explores the effect of age, tenure and educational level on the organizational commitment of the faculty members in the Indian higher education context. The research is done in the city of Bangalore from the state of Karnataka, India. The sample is drawn from the faculty members teaching in different Universities and affiliated institutions in Bangalore. The tool used to measure organizational commitment is the Three Component Model of organizational commitment created by Allen and Meyer (2004). It measures the organizational commitment in three dimensions – affective, normative and continuance commitment. The study has found that there is varying levels of effect by different demographic variables with organizational commitment. Age is found to have significant difference among different groups in relation to commitment whereas tenure and educational level gave contrasting results. The outcome of the study is significant for the higher education leadership and administration in managing the commitment of their staff and positively contribute to the knowledge in this field.

Key Words: Organizational Commitment, Demographic, Age, Tenure, Education level, Higher education

INTRODUCTION

Committed employees make significant difference in an organization through their performance and contribution in achieving the organizations' goals. They are happy and proud being the members of the organization, believe in the values of the organization and intend to do what is good for the organization (George & Jones, 1996). Organizational commitment is positively correlated with various preferred outcomes

such as job satisfaction (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982), motivation (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979), and negatively related to different undesirable outcomes such as absenteeism and turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Organizational commitment can also enhance the productivity as stronger commitment leads to less absenteeism and increased motivation (Schuler & Jackson, 1996). As various studies overwhelmingly support the positive impacts of organizational commitment, it is safe to assume that an increased organizational commitment in the higher education institutions would result in a corresponding increase in their overall quality.

Bressler (2010) and Colquitt, LePine, and Wesson (2010), defines organizational commitment as the bond between an employee and an organization which compels the employee to continue in the organization and work towards achieving the objectives of the organization. The most comprehensive understanding of organizational commitment was developed by Allen and Meyers (1990), which included affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment relates to the emotional attachment towards the organization, normative commitment relates to the feeling of obligation an employee feels towards his organization whereas continuance commitment relates to the desire of the member to stay with the institution due to the cost of leaving (Mexiner & Kruck, 2010).

Research indicates a positive relationship between higher levels of all three components organizational commitment with the productivity and the effectiveness of faculty members (Umbach & Wells, 2009). The presence of committed faculty members is extremely significant for the sustainability of a higher educational institutions as students tend to associate their overall satisfaction with their relationship and perception of faculty members (Vance & Aaron, 2009).

Though there are various studies about a number of antecedents and their impact on organizational commitment, very little research on the influence of demographic variables on organizational commitment is found. Current study intends to explore the effect of demographic variables age, tenure and educational level on the organizational commitment of faculty members.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To measure the self-reported organizational commitment of the faculty members to the colleges/ universities they belong
- To explore the effect of demographic variables age, tenure and educational level on the organizational commitment of the faculty members
- To suggest measures to increase organizational commitment.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A study conducted among the commercial banks in Ghana found that majority of the employees reported moderate to high levels of organizational commitment. The study further indicated that, there is evidence of significant relationship between organizational commitment and demographic variables (gender, age, qualification, experience and marital status). It was suggested that some of the organizational policies should be geared towards the improvement of employees' commitment in order to enhance their performance (Affum-Osei, Acquaah, & Acheampong, 2015).

The effect of demographic variables on organizational commitment was investigated among 240 shift workers at five ferroalloy companies in Odisha, India. It was found that both age and tenure positively influences affective commitment and normative commitment. The did not find any correlation between these factors and continuance commitment (Jena, 2015).

A study was conducted among the University lecturers in Vietnam to understand the effect of demographic variables on organizational commitment. The results showed that there was low correlation between years of work and continuance commitment; between gender and affective commitment; between highest degree earned with normative commitment. There was a moderate correlation between position hold and affective commitment. There was a low negative correlation between age and normative commitment (Viet, 2015).

In a survey study done on a total of 247 academicians from four Malaysian Private Universities, it is found that intrinsic motivation is significantly correlated with the three components of commitment namely; affective, continuance and normative commitment. Apart from the significant correlation, the study found that the intrinsic motivation of staff members of universities positively predicted their commitment to the institution. The study recommended the leadership of higher education to take note of these findings and strategize to enhance the motivation of faculty members through methods such as adequate training, seminars and conferences related to their domain of expertise, and socialization programs. Those efforts would in turn contribute to greater organizational commitment and increase performance (Choong, Lau, & Wong, 2011).

In a study done among university teachers in the public sector in Pakistan, it was found that factors such as satisfaction with work, supervision and pay have significant positive influence on organizational commitment. The study emphasizes the importance of intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards in increasing the faculty members' organizational commitment (Malik, Nawab, Naeem, & Danish, 2010). In another study done in Beijing among 188 academic participants using mixed method of survey and interviews, which resulted in these conclusions: normative commitment helped to promote faculty performance and effectiveness, surprisingly affective commitment observed to be dysfunctional in faculty work, economic interest did not present significant impact to performance and effectiveness. These relationships could be partly explained with the individual and interactive contributions of faculty member's personal goals, available resources, and perceptions of cost/benefit balance (Jing & Zhang, 2014).

Organizational commitment of Physical Education teachers has been researched upon in the city center of Kenya in the 2011 to 2012 academic year randomly selecting the respondents. This study analyzed whether teachers' commitment levels differ by their gender, age and seniority. Statistical analyses showed that teachers mostly displayed affective commitment to a large extent. It was found that the female teachers had more continuance commitment as compared to the male teachers and the male teachers had more normative commitment than the female teachers (Demir, 2013).

In an extensive research with a sample of 4550 respondents from Carnegie Institutions in Unites States, the results largely supported that strongest direct effects on organizational commitment of faculty members came from social interactions that promoted faculty perceptions of support and responsiveness from campus leaders and colleagues along with alignment in personal and campus values. However, the findings did not support the assumption that this commitment directly affects faculty engagement in

institutional service. In this study, gender and years of employment did not predict faculty organizational commitment (Lawrence, Ott, & Bell, 2012).

The analysis of the above studies reveals that organizational commitment of faculty members in higher educational institutions is dependent on a number of factors like positive relationship with supervisors, experience of equity, organizational climate, and support received from relevant authority. Majority of faculty members are reported to have highly committed to the institution they work, affective commitment being the highest aspect of commitment depicting their emotional bond to the institution. Only a few studies have explored demographic variables and their effect is not adequately investigated. This study focuses into the organizational commitment of faculty members and the effect of demographic variables on the commitment in the Indian higher education context.

The following null hypotheses are tested in this study

- H1o:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the faculty members' self-reported organizational commitment and the demographic variable age.
- H2o:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the faculty members' self-reported organizational commitment and the demographic variable tenure with the institution.
- H3o:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the faculty members' self-reported organizational commitment and the demographic variable educational level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs the quantitative descriptive research method to understand the effect of demographic variables on the organizational commitment of the faculty members. Organizational commitment is measured through Three Component Model of employee commitment survey developed by Allen and Meyer (2004) which measured the affective, normative and continuance commitment of the faculty members.

Population consists of faculty members from the Universities and affiliated colleges in Bangalore. The population is divided into four subgroups/strata and the sample represented data from each of these subgroups, the faculty members belonging to departments of Government Universities, Private & Deemed Universities, affiliated autonomous colleges and affiliated non-autonomous colleges. The inclusivity criteria for sample consideration for the study were to have a minimum of 15 faculty members in the department and considering a maximum of 2 departments from an institution. 750 questionnaires were printed and distributed among the faculty members of chosen departments in various Universities and affiliated colleges in Bangalore. 308 faculty members filled and returned the questionnaires. Analysis is done using SPSS version 22. Anova is used to understand the influence of various demographic variables on the organizational commitment of the faculty members.

RESULTS

Summary of the demographic distribution of the sample is presented in figure 1. In the case of gender, the female faculty members outnumber their male counterparts on a ratio of 3:2. Regarding age, majority are the age bracket of 30 – 45. About tenure, more than 60% have less than 7 years in their respective institutions. Finally, only less than 50% have any research qualification.

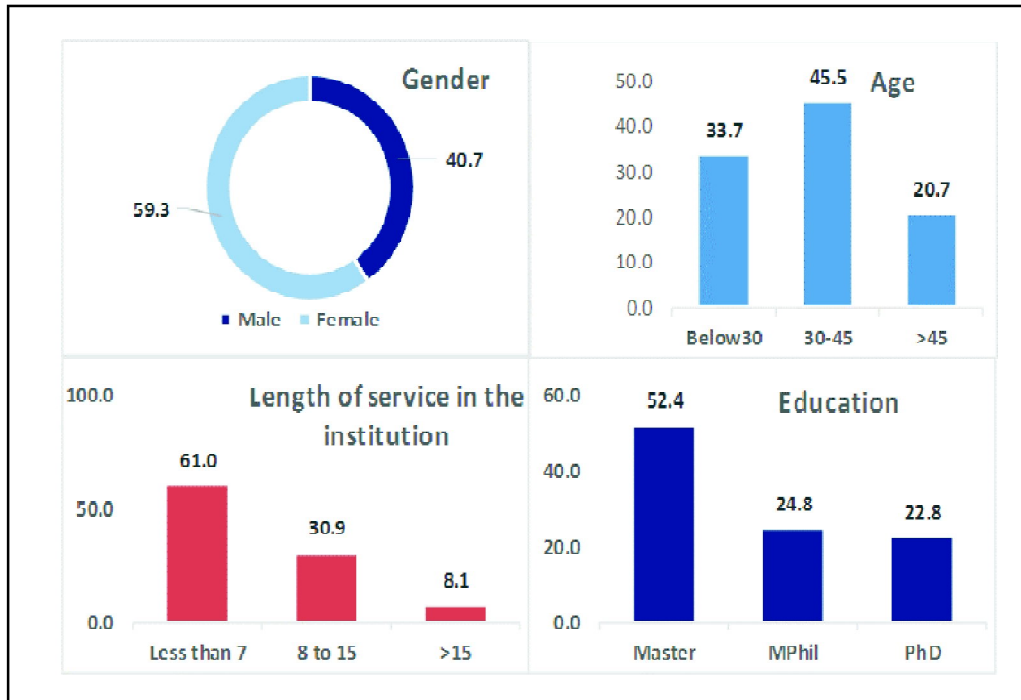


Figure 1: Summary of demographics data of the sample

Organizational commitment scores presented in the table 1 shows the self-reported values of three dimensions of commitment by faculty members. The mean scores of both affective and normative commitments as 5.70 and 5.53 in a 7-point scale indicate rather high level of commitment on these dimensions. The continuance commitment is reported as 4.02.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Commitment

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Affective commitment	306	5.70	1.08
Continuous commitment	306	4.02	1.19
Normative commitment	306	5.53	1.00
Overall Organizational Commitment	306	5.08	1.09

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND AGE

The effect of demographic variable age is significant for both affective ($F = 3.31, p = 0.04$) and normative commitment ($F = 3.98, p = 0.02$). It is insignificant for continuance commitment ($F = 1.60, p = 0.20$).

Hence alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a significant difference among faculty members of different age groups with regard to affective and normative dimensions of commitment. In the case of continuance commitment, null hypothesis is accepted to show that there is no statistically significant difference in continuance commitment among the different age groups of faculty members.

Table 2
Summary of ANOVA study of organizational commitment and age

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Affective commitment	Below 30	104	5.49	1.13	3.31	0.04
	30 - 45	140	5.76	1.04		
	Above 45	63	5.90	1.03		
Continuous commitment	Below 30	104	3.99	1.21	1.60	0.20
	30 - 45	140	3.93	1.16		
	Above 45	63	4.25	1.22		
Normative commitment	Below 30	104	5.36	1.01	3.98	0.02
	30 - 45	138	5.52	1.07		
	Above 45	63	5.81	0.76		

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND LENGTH OF SERVICE

Table 3 presents the analysis of variance across different groups based on length of service about three dimensions of organizational commitment – affective, continuance and normative commitment. In the case of affective commitment, the analysis brings out that the F value is 1.01 and significance is 0.37. Since the significance value is more than 0.05, the mean difference existing across different age group for affective commitment is not significant at 5% level. Hence null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference among faculty members of different length of service with regard to affective commitment. The analysis of continuance commitment across different groups brings out that the F value is 0.75 and significance is 0.47. Here the significance value is more than 0.05; the mean difference existing about the perception of this factor is not significant at 5% level. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted to show that there is no statistically significant difference in continuance commitment among the different groups of faculty members based on their length of service.

Table 3
Summary of ANOVA study of organizational commitment and tenure

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Affective commitment	Less than 8	188	5.64	1.06	1.01	0.37
	8 - 15	94	5.83	1.09		
	Above 15	25	5.60	1.14		
Continuous commitment	Less than 8	188	3.95	1.17	0.75	0.47
	8 - 15	94	4.12	1.20		
	Above 15	25	4.14	1.33		
Normative commitment	Less than 8	185	5.51	1.03	0.24	0.79
	8 - 15	94	5.58	1.01		
	Above 15	25	5.44	0.79		

With regard to normative commitment also there is no significant difference between the groups differing tenure with $F = 0.24$; $p = 0.79$, resulting the acceptance of null hypothesis.

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND EDUCATION

Table 4 presents the analysis of variance across different groups based on educational qualification about three dimensions of organizational commitment – affective, continuance and normative commitment. In the case of affective commitment, the analysis brings out that the F value is 2.54 and significance is 0.08. Since the significance value is more than 0.05, the mean difference existing across different education group for affective commitment is not significant at 5% level. Hence null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference among faculty members of different educational qualification with regard to affective commitment.

Table 4
Summary of ANOVA study of organizational commitment and Educational level

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Affective commitment	Master	160	5.67	1.08	2.54	0.08
	MPhil	76	5.91	1.02		
	PhD	70	5.52	1.11		
Continuous commitment	Master	160	4.00	1.21	0.15	0.86
	MPhil	76	4.08	1.06		
	PhD	70	3.98	1.30		
Normative commitment	Master	158	5.54	0.97	0.38	0.68
	MPhil	76	5.45	0.99		
	PhD	70	5.58	1.08		

The analysis of continuance commitment across different groups brings out that the F value is 0.15 and significance is 0.86. Here the significance value is more than 0.05; the mean difference existing about the perception of this factor is not significant at 5% level. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted to show that there is no statistically significant difference in continuance commitment among the different groups of faculty members based on their educational status. With regard to normative commitment, the analysis brings out that the F value is 0.38 and significance is 0.68. Since the significance value is more than 0.05, the mean difference existing about the perception of normative commitment is not significant at 5% level. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted that at 95% confidence interval, different faculty groups in terms of educational status have similar amount of normative commitment.

DISCUSSION

The demographic distribution of the sample of the study is indicative of the present situation in the Indian higher education field. Number of women faculty members outnumber their male counterparts suggest women entering into teaching profession in tertiary education is noteworthy. This situation is in contrast to other business careers where men outnumber women significantly. It is observed that about 80% of the

faculty members in the sample are less than 45 years old. More and more young people are open to a career in higher education is a positive trend provided institutions consciously nurture this young teachers.

The short tenure with the current institution for more than 60% of the sample might be due to the overall large number of young faculty members. The institutions covered under the study are skewed towards staff with less number of years with them. Another challenging statistic for institutions are the presence of more than half of the staff members with just a post-graduate qualification. The number of PhD holders are 22% which does not augur well for a University.

The self reported organizational commitment of faculty members present high scores for both affective and normative dimensions of the commitment. The fact that faculty members have high emotional attachment to the institution and great sense of obligation to it is positively significant. The opportunity for institutions is to capitalise on it and build a proactive and productive organizational culture.

Demographic variable age have significant impact on the self reported organisational commitment of the faculty members. It is found that both affective and normative commitment increases as the age of the faculty members increases and the difference is statistically significant as well. The senior faculty members are found to be more emotionally engaged with the organisation. Results shows that they have greater feelings of obligation towards the institution as well. Continuance commitment which indicates the “not so positive” aspect of the commitment is same across all age groups. The fact that it doesn’t increase along with age reinforces the positive impact of overall commitment of the senior faculty members to the institution.

The second demographic variable chosen for the study, the length of service within an institution, is observed as not making any significant difference with regard to commitment. Faculty members irrespective of their tenure in the institution report similar levels of commitment though greater levels of commitment is expected as one stays longer with the organisation. Institutions fail to increase the commitment of their senior faculty members is not a promising situation for the progress of these institutions. This finding contrasted with the earlier findings that long tenured faculty members have greater commitment (Cohen, 1993).

Educational qualification is the third demographic variable considered for the study. As revealed in the Anova study, the difference in commitment across groups with different educational level is not very significant. In fact the mean score for affective commitment of PhD holders (5.52) is found to be lesser compared to the two other groups with lesser educational qualification (5.67; 5.91). It is necessary to find the reasons for the inability of higher education institutions to emotionally engage the staff with higher qualification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A positive factor emerging from the current study is the relatively high scores of organizational commitments reported by the faculty members. Two dimensions of organizational commitment that stands out with higher scores are affective and normative components of commitment. Institutions of higher education should be able to leverage on the emotional connect and feeling of obligation by the faculty members by translating them into greater organizational effectiveness and proactive organizational culture. Leadership need to ideate specific strategies to translate this affective commitment dimension into greater organizational performance opportunities.

The influence of demographic variable age is significant in the case of affective and normative commitment. As the age increases, faculty members report to be more committed in terms of the affective and normative dimensions of organizational commitment. It is recommended that the higher educational institutions to maintain a good balance between junior and senior faculty members than being skewed towards a large number of young faculty members as it is the case in many institutions. Presence of adequate number of committed senior members can nurture a positive organizational culture and role model for younger faculty members.

As observed in the study, the number of young faculty members outnumber the senior members in a large way as well as the commitment level of young staff is low compared to the senior members indicate the importance necessary HR strategies for the institutions to respond to this situation.

Though faculty members increase their commitment as age increases, surprisingly the study reveals that there is no corresponding increase in commitment for the faculty members in relation to the number of years spent in the organization. The finding that institutions fail to command the loyalty of long term serving staff suggests the importance of employee engagement programs and career development opportunities for them to enhance their loyalty and commitment.

Indian higher education institutions should focus on the research capability of its staff urgently as a mere 22% of the sample holds the PhD degree. In many countries, PhD is the minimum eligibility to apply for the Assistant Professor position.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study is done drawing the sample from the universities and affiliated colleges in the city of Bangalore, the results may not be completely generalizable in other parts of the country. It is recommended to have future comparative studies in other cities and states to determine whether there are significant differences in other geographical contexts.

The approach deployed in this study was quantitative in establishing the relationship of demographic variables on dimensions of organizational commitment. The findings can be complemented and extended further through qualitative approaches. Techniques like in-depth interviews and focus group discussions among faculty members can provide deeper and more credible information relevant to the higher education context.

Finally, there are diverse results on the question whether differences in departments or institutions affect the relationship and commitment. Luton (2010) observed that department or institutional differences influence the relationship between the variables. But there are also studies which negate such differences as well (Yitters, 2009). It could be further examined whether differences in department or institution affect the staff's commitment to the institution.

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