

Relationship Between Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among Undergraduate Volunteers

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Abstract: Organizational commitment is an important topic having both practical and theoretical implications. The vast majority of studies in this area have looked at the commitment of employees and few studies have examined organizational commitment of volunteers. This study extends the prior research to a different sample undergraduate volunteers and investigates the relation of satisfaction and organizational commitment. This study aims to investigating the relationship between satisfaction and organizational commitment among undergraduate volunteers. A quantitative correlation research method was used to collect data. A self-administered questionnaire that comprised of a demographic, an adaptation of Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) was administered to 350 samples from four universities in Peninsular Malaysia. They were proportionately and randomly selected in the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis. The results revealed that overall satisfaction, leader/leadership, task, position opportunities and co-volunteers subscale were positively correlated to organizational commitment. The implications for undergraduate volunteers' managerial practices are discussed and put forward.

Key words: Organizational commitment, satisfaction, volunteers, undergraduates, leader, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment is an important topic having both practical and theoretical implications. It is relevant to volunteers (Dailey, 1986) in particular because it can be shaped independently from material rewards and plays a positive role in retention of members in the organization. Past literatures have highlighted the importance of retaining committed employees as an aspect of survival for the organization. Organizations also need a committed workforce because organizational commitment leads to important outcomes such as decreased turnover (Meyer and Allen 1997; Phillips and Edwards, 2008). According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990) if organizational commitment is intact then there will be relatively no turnover. Employees with a sense of organizational commitment are less likely to engage in withdrawal behavior (Iverson and Buttigieg, 1999). Indeed, organizational commitment has been found to be related to intentions to remain or leave among paid workers (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 2002), volunteers (Miller *et al.*, 1990). However, the vast Majority of studies in this area have looked at the

(Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). A few studies have examined organizational commitment of volunteers rather than employees (Dailey, 1986; Pearce, 1993). This study extends the prior research to a different sample-undergraduate volunteers and investigates the relation of satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Volunteering is referred to any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person or group. Volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance but narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends (Wilson, 2000). According to Snyder and Omoto (1992), the term is usually restricted to describe unpaid work that is done for formal organizations and public. Undergraduate volunteers in this study refer to undergraduate students who are members of a volunteer club at university level and give their time freely to benefit another person, group or organization. However, this definition does not preclude undergraduate volunteers from benefiting of their work.

Previous research: The investigation of commitment has been conceptualized and measured differently and

remains a contested construct. However, measures based on the affective commitment approach have most frequently been validated and used in previous research (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986; Meyer and Allen, 1997). An influential conceptualization of affective commitment was proposed by Mowday *et al.* (1979, 1982). Based on this conceptualization, organizational commitment is defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. It is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of organizations' goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Satisfaction has been discussed in many different contexts in the fields of sociology, psychology, human resource management, organizational behavior (Finkelstein *et al.*, 2005; Nelson *et al.*, 2004) and volunteers (Dailey, 1986). Early organizational theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg stated that job satisfaction is caused by individuals' desires to fulfill personal needs. Satisfaction has been defined as a fulfillment of someone needs (Finkelstein *et al.*, 2005), a reaction on the job in terms of cognition, affection and evaluation (Baron *et al.*, 1994). Based on Herzberg's theory, there are two categories of factors, causes of satisfaction and causes of dissatisfaction which influence job attitude (Melvin, 1993). One set of factors is referred to as hygiene, referencing external circumstances that affect job satisfaction and the other set is motivational, referring to internal factors within a worker.

According to Steers (1977), there are four categories of factors influence organizational commitment. They are personal factors, role-related characteristics, structural characteristics and work experiences. In this research, satisfaction factor is classified under work experience category. Volunteer satisfaction and job satisfaction in this study will share the same meaning generally that is the feelings a worker or volunteer has about his work (Smith *et al.*, 1969) but limited to its context which excluded pay dimension.

Findings supported the relationship between satisfaction and organizational commitment among volunteers. The findings encompass diverse contents of satisfactions and individuals' linkage involvement and commitment with organizations. Dailey (1986)'s study of volunteer political campaign workers found that task characteristics exerted major influences on job satisfaction which in turn affected organizational commitment, the greater degree of job autonomy, the higher the level of commitment. Jenner (1984) also found strong positive correlations between satisfaction with the feelings of commitment and level of involvement in the program.

Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) results indicated strong connection between job satisfaction and a volunteer's personal commitment to providing high-quality services in a helping and caring charitable organization.

Other related studies of volunteer satisfaction and commitment in terms of retention found that job satisfaction (participation efficacy and group integration) were predictors of intent to remain (Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley, 2002). Starnes and Wymer Jr. (2001) also supported that people continue volunteering their services when they experience job satisfaction such as finding it is interesting and challenging, experiencing new learning opportunities, allowing for independence and achieving personal or professional growth. A study among social work volunteers also found that satisfaction would be the best predictors of service duration (Chacon *et al.*, 2007).

Other study found life satisfaction of volunteers is negatively related to burnout (Moreno-Jimenez and Villodres, 2010). A study among volunteers serving victims of sexual assault found overall satisfaction was positively related to the intent to stay (Hellman and House, 2006). Similar outcome has been reported by Macdonald *et al.* (2009) that overall satisfaction was a predictor of intention to continue tutoring in a new public health workforce in the United Kingdom. Vecina *et al.* (2011) reported volunteer satisfaction is the key variable in explaining intention to continue in samples of volunteers from different non-profit organizations.

Objective of the research: This study aims to investigating the relationship between satisfaction and organizational commitment among undergraduate volunteers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and procedure: This study used a quantitative correlation research method. Data was obtained through a set of self-administered questionnaire comprised of demographic, satisfaction scale and organizational commitment. Satisfaction scale is an adaptation of Job Descriptive Index (Smith *et al.*, 1969) to measure satisfaction using 63 items that are rated on a numerical value to yes, no and undecided/unsure responses. Aspects of satisfaction addressed are: task, leader/leadership, position opportunities and co-volunteers. Organizational commitment questionnaire (Mowday *et al.*, 1979) was used to measure organizational commitment using 15 items which are rated on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging strongly disagree, moderately disagree, slightly disagree, neither disagree nor agree,

slightly agree, moderately agree and strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha of all constructs showed a high reliability for overall satisfaction instrument (0.81), task (0.80), position opportunity (0.80), leader/leadership (0.84), co-volunteers (0.88) and organizational commitment (0.82). The samples were chosen by stratified random sampling. About 350 questionnaires were administered to the undergraduate volunteers who are studying in four universities in Peninsular Malaysia. The participants were asked to anonymously and voluntarily complete the questionnaire and return it to the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' background: The mean age of the participants was 21.86 years with an average of 13.55 months of involvement in the current volunteer club and more than half were female (68.4%). The majority of them were Malays (93.5%) and Muslims (95.5%). Out of the 350 participants, ordinary members were (81%). The average time contributed to the club was 7.35 h month⁻¹.

The correlation coefficient between satisfaction and organizational commitment was examined using the Pearson's correlation. As hypothesized, there was a positive correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment ($r = 0.42$; $p < 0.01$). The data was further analyzed for each subscale of satisfaction using Pearson's correlation. Results showed a positive correlation between task and organizational commitment ($r = 0.303$; $p < 0.01$), position opportunities and organizational commitment ($r = 0.217$; $p < 0.01$), leader/leadership and organizational commitment ($r = 0.433$; $p < 0.01$), co-volunteers and organizational commitment ($r = 0.309$; $p < 0.01$) (Table 1). These positive correlations indicated that the undergraduate volunteers who are more satisfied (overall/each subscale) are also more committed to the club. This study revealed a moderate significant positive correlation among overall satisfaction and leader/leadership with organizational commitment and a weak significant positive correlation among task, position opportunities and co-volunteers with organizational commitment. These findings indicated that satisfaction is important for the organizational commitment among

Malaysian undergraduate volunteers. Results showed positive relationship among overall satisfaction and its subscales with organizational commitment as stated in the research hypotheses. The findings are consistent with previous studies among volunteers (Dailey, 1986; Jenner, 1984; Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005) and employees (Hall and Schneider, 1972; Potter *et al.*, 1974).

In terms of satisfaction and commitment (retention) among volunteers, the same results were also reported by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2002), Chacon *et al.* (2007), Moreno-Jimenez and Vilodres (2010), Hellman and House (2006), Macdonald *et al.* (2009) and Vecina *et al.* (2011). Based on the previous studies, researchers found that satisfaction was related to organizational commitment either among workers or volunteers. This study indicated that the relationships also exist among undergraduate volunteers. Despite of the contributions of this study, there are several potential limitations and compelling needs for further research. First, there is a limitation of external validity. Since, the data of this study were collected from a single volunteer club, the generalization of the findings is limited. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the data sources to include various types of Malaysian undergraduate volunteer's societies. It may be worthwhile to extend this study to include undergraduate volunteers' societies across other countries with different cultures. Second, the instrument used to measure organizational commitment in this study addressed to the overall of organizational commitment. Therefore, the findings should be confirmed in further research on specific component of organizational commitment to reach conclusions regarding the relationship among the specific components of the variable. Third, the research method and the statistical tools used in this study are not sufficient to confirm cause and effect between the variables. Thus, more empirical research using advanced research methods and statistical analyses should be conducted to examine satisfaction and organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study has theoretical and practical importance. The findings supported the theory of Maslow (1954) which stressed on the existence of humans' needs. In this study, satisfaction was considered as a need that must be fulfilled by undergraduate volunteers. It also supported Two-factor Theory of Herzberg *et al.* (1959) which stressed on the causes of satisfaction and causes of dissatisfaction that influence attitude and behavior. However, the study found that hygiene factors in Herzberg's theory as motivational factors for

Table 1: Pearson's correlations among overall satisfaction, satisfaction of task, position opportunities, leader/leadership and co-volunteers with organizational commitment among Malaysian undergraduate volunteers

Parameters	Organizational commitment
Task	0.303**
Position opportunities	0.217**
Leader/leadership	0.433**
Co-volunteers	0.309**
Overall satisfaction	0.417**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

undergraduate volunteers. It might be due to the different samples used in both studies. The same result was also reported by Malinovsky and Barry (1965) in their study with different samples of blue-collar workers that hygiene variables were found to be positively related to job satisfaction, contrary to the predictions from the Herzberg's theory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results also provide valuable information for student affairs, development division of the higher public educations of Malaysia and volunteer's professionals to understand the relationships between satisfaction and organizational commitment among Malaysian undergraduate volunteers.

They should recognize that satisfaction and its subscales are positively related to organizational commitment. Therefore, they should facilitate, provide and encourage satisfaction among undergraduate volunteers to improve organizational commitment. Chancellors' of universities as well as related officers and advisors should pay attention to establishing systems and programs that encourage satisfaction at the individual and society level. The findings of this research can create an avenue for future research that will lead to improvements in this critical area of undergraduate volunteers practice.

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