



Review of Commitment Theories and Models: Application to an Emerging Profession

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to explore if traditional explanations of organizational and professional commitment and conflict, which have been developed through research of older and more established professions such as the Accounting profession, also apply to the Human Resource profession. Survey data gathered from HR practitioners are used to examine the correlates of organizational and professional commitment and conflict. Study results indicate the models explain a significant portion of the variation in both organizational and professional commitment, and that the two types of commitment have different antecedent factors. Results also indicate that organizational and professional conflict is lowest when both levels of organizational and professional commitment are high. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Professional Commitment, Organizational Commitment, Organizational-Professional Conflict

Introduction

Today the discipline of Human Resources (HR) is widely recognized as a profession. The professionalization of HR occurred entirely within the twentieth century (Haigley, 1984; Kaufman, 1999) making HR a relatively new profession when compared to established professions such as the accounting, legal, and medical professions.

The goal of professional status for HR appears to have been reached by the 1980s: Haigley noted that the debate over whether or not personnel was a profession was seldom heard by the mid-1980s, and in 1986 Archer stated that "Professional status for the human resource discipline has reached the point of practical reality" (p. 97).

There is a tremendous incentive for an occupation to professionalize. Professionalism strengthens the extent of legitimated occupational control over the provision of services performed by members of the profession. Typically, by screening entrance into a profession and limiting who can legally perform certain services, current members of the profession are assured of maintaining income and work opportunities. Further, identification as a profession can allow the occupation to influence the future development of professionalism as an institution (Torres, 1991). Professionalism is also significant to

occupations because it helps to legitimate both what professions do and how they do it (Abbott, 1988).

Today HR is a profession because it possesses traits that are generally considered necessary for an occupation to be recognized as a profession. These traits include a defined body-of-knowledge, availability of testing and certification, continuing professional education, a code of ethics, university programs, and professional associations (Archer, 1986; Haigley, 1984).

The main reason it took until the 1980s for HR to be recognized as a profession was the difficulty of defining competencies that demarcated the requisite areas of knowledge for HR professionals. Brockbank, Ulrich, and Beatty (1999) identified five defining competencies for HR professionals which included: knowledge of business, delivery of HR practices, ability to manage change, culture management, and personal credibility.

Although HR is generally considered to be a profession, the research literature on professionalism has not focused significant attention on HR. The professionalism literature has been rather tightly focused on one specific profession, the accounting profession. A meta-analysis of studies investigating professional and organizational commitment found that over half of the studies used accountants as subjects (Wallace, 1993). This is due in



part to a long-held belief that occupation cannot develop into a profession from within an organization because its ability to exercise professional autonomy is compromised. Hall (1969) stated that professional autonomy “involves the feeling that the practitioner ought to be allowed to make decisions without external pressures from clients, from others who are not members of his profession, or from his employing organization” (p.82). Braude (1975) also noted the importance of autonomy, stating that “To the degree that a worker is constrained in the performance of his work by the controls and demands of others, that individual is less professional” (p. 105). Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) suggested that occupations whose members lacked autonomy over their tasks belonged to a type of profession referred to as a mimic profession. They also warned that “Mimic professions may have a code of ethics and other trappings of professions, but they have no power. They have taken on the coloration but not the substance of the profession.

Personnel administration and funeral direction might be examples of this phenomenon” (pp. 64-65). This statement was especially damaging to HR since it came at a time when members of the HR profession seemed to believe that their professional status was beyond dispute.

The need for an occupation to exercise complete autonomy over its work to qualify as a profession has come into question. Abbott (1988) noted that professionalization can occur within workplaces made up of multi-professional bureaucracies and that professions such as engineering and information sciences support this conclusion. Wallace (1995) examined the impact of different types of work settings on the organizational and professional commitment levels of lawyers.

Wallace found that professional departments in nonprofessional organizations were able to preserve autonomy and discretion over their work and that they continued to perform highly skilled and complex tasks. However, even though the possibility of a profession originating and/or functioning within a bureaucracy has been acknowledged, the vast majority of research on professionalism has continued to focus on the established professions of accounting and law in their traditional work setting of the professional organization.

It is important to investigate if our understanding of professionalism, which has been developed through

the study of established professions, can be applied to HR, a modern profession.

Organizational and Professional Commitment

Organizational commitment is one of the most thoroughly researched aspects of work commitment. A survey instrument developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) has become the most widely used measure of organizational commitment. The instrument developed by Mowday et al. is called the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire and it is largely concerned with measuring an individual’s attitudinal commitment to an organization.

Mowday et al. defined organizational commitment as “A state in which an individual identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership to facilitate these goals” (p. 225). Mowday et al. also suggested that high levels of organizational commitment should be associated with low turnover, limited tardiness, low absenteeism, and enhanced job performance. Ongoing research in this area tends to support the importance of organizational commitment to understanding many aspects of employee behavior at work (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnystsky, 2002; Dwivedula and Bredillet, 2010; Singh, Zhang, Wan, and Fouad, 2018). For example, several studies report consistent negative correlations between organizational commitment and both employee intention to leave the organization and actual turnover (Allen and Meyer, 1996; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Tett and Meyer, 1993).

Commitment has also been found to impact the way employees respond to dissatisfaction with events at work (Cannon and Herda, 2016). For example, Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) found that affective organizational commitment was positively correlated with willingness to suggest improvements and to accept things as they are and negatively correlated with the tendency to withdraw passively from dissatisfying situations. It is organizational commitment’s presumed relationship with many desirable outcomes that continues to make it such a popular research topic (Jorgensen and Becker, 2015).

Commitment to one’s profession has not been studied as extensively as organizational commitment. This is probably due to the number of people who work in organizations as compared to professions (Kaldenberg, Becker, and Zvonkovic, 1995).



There has, however, been an abundance of research conducted which emphasizes the need to understand the interactions of professionals and the organizations in which they work (see for example, Aranya and Ferris, 1984; Berk and Gundogmus, 2018; McManus and Subramaniam, 2014; Rhee, Park, and Hwang, 2011).

Organizational and Professional Conflict

Much of the early research that investigated the relation between organizations and professionals within them seemed to assume that there must be conflict between professional and organizational forces (see for example, Blau and Scott, 1962; and Scott, 1966). More recently, research appears to be reexamining the assumed inherent conflict between the bureaucratic and professional forms of work organization (Rahman and Hanafiah, 2002; Shafer, 2009). For example, Guy (1985) noted that "Professionals are dependent on bureaucracies to employ them and bureaucracies are dependent on professionals to fulfill the organizational mission. Neither can achieve its ends without the other, so they join forces in a collective effort to achieve their goals" (pp. 177-178). Wallace (1993) used meta-analysis to empirically assess the nature of the relation between professional and organizational commitment.

Wallace found that "The early belief that professional and organizational commitments are inherently conflicting, and therefore negatively correlated, is not at all supported by the empirical findings" (p. 339). Aranya and Ferris (1984) studied the organizational-professional conflict (OPC) of accountants and found that the level of OPC experienced by an individual might depend on the interaction of organizational and professional commitments:

Accountants who are highly committed to both organization and profession may tend to overlook possible incompatibility between the two and therefore perceive lower OPC. . . . On the other hand, individuals who experience low commitment to both profession and organization may tend to perceive higher conflict. This situation is symptomatic of occupational maladjustment and hence the perception of OPC may be just a reflection of this vocational difficulty. (pp. 5-6)

Past research, focused on accounting environments, also suggested that OPC might vary inversely with organizational level (Schroeder and Imdieke,

1977). Aranya and Ferris (1984) offered as an explanation: "Longevity in both professional and organizational service may reflect a psychological ability (or effort) to reconcile conflicting demands. Another reason may be that partners tend to have more at stake than employees at other levels" (p. 5).

As noted earlier, the vast majority of research investigating organizational and professional commitment and conflict has focused on established professions. An area that has not been fully explored is the relation between professional and organizational commitment in administrative personnel. By administrative I am referring to individuals who are engaged in professions that developed entirely within an organizational setting, such as HR, as compared to the pattern of development that occurred in the established professions such as medicine, law and accounting. Wiley (1995) raised the issue of conflict between the HR professional and the organization by suggesting that "Because professionals place a premium on expertise, specialization, and objectivity, they are often appalled when they observe managers making decisions based on a seat-of-the-pants approach" (p.285). A finding that the two forms of commitment are complimentary rather than oppositional might encourage organizations to help their HR employees obtain professional training and credentialing, and to view these activities as enriching to the overall organization.

Antecedents of Organizational and Professional Commitment

Because organizational commitment is a key construct for examining the match between individuals and organizations, a great deal of research has been conducted investigating the predictors of organizational commitment (Major, Morganson, and Bolen, 2013). Generally, the wide range of variables that have been studied can be grouped.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) noted that variables relating to personal characteristics, job characteristics, and organizational characteristics have generally been considered to be antecedents of commitment. Parasuraman and Nachman (1987) noted that "Theoretical models of commitment have proposed that organizational and professional commitment are the product of personal and role-related variables, work experiences, and organizational factors" (p. 288). Morrow and Wirth (1989) studied organizational and professional commitment and included



education, age, position level, years in the position, years in the organization, and years in the profession as important variables for understanding commitment.

Another category of variables that informs the discussion on commitment is socialization characteristics. It has long been suggested in the professional literature that professional commitment is developed during the process of socialization into a chosen profession (Aranya and Ferris, 1984; Goode, 1957; Larson, 1977; and Wilensky, 1964). Socialization can be defined as the process through which individuals are molded by the society to which they seek full membership (Fogarty, 1992). The more established professions tend to have very defined and rigorous programs both for academic preparation and professional credentialing.

The programs provide ample opportunities for individuals entering these professions to become well informed of the goals and objectives of the profession and to internalize them.

Historically, the HR field did not have a well-established or required educational and credentialing system in place, although this condition has recently changed (Kaufman, 1999; and Wiley, 1995). Formal education and credentialing in a field are tangible indications that an individual has been exposed to forces of occupational socialization. In HR, these forces have recently acquired more significant influence, and should, therefore, be included as potential predictors of organizational and professional commitment.

The purpose of this study is to determine if relations which have been found to exist between commitment and other factors in prior research are applicable to the HR profession. Previous studies have tended to involve members of a few, well-established professions. It cannot be known with certainty if relations detected between factors in these studies will be active in a profession, such as HR, that has professionalized in a different environment and in a different era. Given the significance of commitment to a number of job performance factors, it is important to understand if antecedents of commitment that have been observed in other professions are relevant to the HR profession.

Method

Sample

The data were collected from an online survey of HR practitioners. A request to participate was sent to a

random sample of 1000 HR practitioners who were members of a professional HR association. Twenty-nine percent (N=294) of the practitioners responded to the survey.

This response rate was acceptable for an email survey (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). Respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 74 years of age (M=42.3), and 56 percent of the respondents were female. Most (70%) respondents were married or living with a partner.

Average organizational tenure ranged from less than one to 32 years (M=8.7), and HR tenure ranged from less than one to 38 years (M=14.3). Most (95%) respondents had undergraduate or advanced degrees and 46% had degrees with concentrations in HR. However, only 15% were professionally certified in HR.

Measures

The survey included the following parts: (a) scale of organizational commitment, (b) scale of professional commitment, (c) scale of organizational-professional conflict, (d) organizational characteristics, (e) job characteristics, (f) personal characteristics, and (g) socialization characteristics.

Organizational and Professional Commitment

Each of the organizational and professional commitment measures was based on an 8-item scale. Included in this instrument were items about the subject's belief in and acceptance of the organization's values. The wording of two items was reversed in an attempt to reduce response set bias. Each item was rated on a seven-point scale with anchors at 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither disagree or agree, and 7 = strongly agree. Taking the mean score across all items derived a measure of overall commitment for each subject. By replacing the word "organization" with "profession" the same 8-item scale was used to determine the measure of professional commitment.

Morrow and Wirth (1989) investigated the reasonableness of utilizing Mowday et al.'s (1979) OCS to measure professional commitment.

Their evaluation of professional commitment was conducted from a convergent and discriminant validity perspective. Factor analysis results indicated that organizational and professional commitment loaded on different factors. This supported the discriminant validity of the work commitment measures. Morrow and Wirth developed a modified multitrait-multimethod correlation



matrix to assess the convergent validity of professional commitment. Overall, they concluded that the evidence indicated the convergent validity of professional commitment was adequate, and that professional commitment was distinguishable from organizational commitment.

The reliability and validity of Mowday et al.'s (1979) OCS have been well-established in the research literature. Wallace's (1993) summary of studies that were included in her meta-analysis listed 16 studies that used Mowday et al.'s (1979) scale.

In these studies, the reliability of the scale ranged from .74 to .92. Wallace's summary also indicated that 11 studies included in her meta-analysis used Mowday et al.'s scale to measure professional commitment. In these studies, the reliability of the professional commitment scale ranged from .72 to .89. For the present sample, the coefficient for organizational commitment and professional commitment was .93.

Organizational-Professional Conflict

The level of OPC was assessed with a measure developed by Aranya and Ferris (1984). Subjects were asked to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "My employment situation allows me to fully express myself as a professional;" and, "In my organization, there is a conflict between the work standards and procedures of the organization and my ability to act according to my professional judgment." Each item was rated on a seven-point scale with anchors at 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither disagree or agree, and 7 = strongly agree. The two items were significantly correlated ($r = .37$ $p < .001$), and an eigenvalue greater than one and scree test criteria for factor retention indicated that the two items loaded on one factor, which accounted for 69% of the total variance.

Organizational Characteristics

Subjects were asked what types of businesses their organizations were engaged in. Eighteen categories were provided which corresponded with the major industrial groupings of the Standard Industrial Classification. These categories were then generalized into two broad groupings coded 1 for manufacturing (manufacturing, construction, and agricultural) industry and 0 for nonmanufacturing (services, education, finance, health, insurance, retail trade, transportation, communication, and utilities) industry. These groupings are very similar to the industry groupings used by Blum, Fields, and Goodman

(1994). The organizational size was measured by the number of employees.

Job Characteristics

The occupational level was assessed by ordinally scaling 11 categories of jobs. Subjects were asked to indicate the most appropriate title from a list. This process enabled the use of a common measure of occupational level across organizations. Position and organization tenure were measured in years.

Income level was measured by an eleven-point interval scale ranging from "less than \$30,000" to "more than \$200,000." The non-response rate for the income item was surprisingly low.

Only 2.4% of the respondents chose not to answer this item.

Subjects were asked what functional areas their present positions included. Sixteen functional areas were provided, which included labor and industrial relations. Subjects were also asked if they had worked in managerial functions other than HR.

Personal Characteristics

Gender was coded 1 for men and 0 for women, and age was measured in years. A five-point ordinal scale ranging from "high school" to "doctorate" assessed the level of education. For race-ethnicity, subjects were asked to identify themselves as African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, White, or other. Due to the small number of minority respondents, all non-white categories were condensed into one category labeled "minority." Subjects were

asked the number of children living with them and their current marital status.

Socialization Characteristics

Subjects were asked if their Bachelor and/or Graduate degrees included a concentration in HR and if they were professionally certified in the area of HR. Professional tenure was measured in years.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of all the variables in the study are shown in Table 1. Subjects who worked in the manufacturing industry were significantly more likely to have labor relations experience and formal HR education. Job level was positively correlated to professional tenure but negatively related to having a formal HR education. Males were significantly



older and more likely to have labor relations experience HR education than women. However, males were less than women. Males also occupied higher job levels, likely to hold a professional certification in HR. earned higher levels of income, and had more general and

Table 1 (continued)
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Organization Size	10623.92	25814.97						
2. Manufacturing Industry	.31	.46	.08					
3. Job Level	6.49	2.17	.04	-.11				
4. Position Tenure	4.06	3.51	-.06	-.06	.14*			
5. Organization Tenure	8.72	6.97	.16**	.02	.25***	.43***		
6. Income Level	6.87	2.60	.23***	.06	.72***	.21***	.41***	
7. Labor Relations Experience	.20	.40	-.01	.25***	.02	-.01	.05	.13*
8. Other Work Experience	.42	.49	.07	-.19***	.21***	.07	.03	.15**
9. Educational Level	3.57	.68	.07	.03	.15**	.04	-.00	.29***
10. Minority Status	.08	.27	-.02	.01	-.18**	-.15**	-.17**	-.19***
11. Marital Status	.70	.46	.08	.05	.23***	.13*	.16**	.35***
12. Children	.69	1.02	.12*	.09	.03	-.06	.09	.16**
13. Sex (Male)	.44	.50	.12*	.10	.30***	.12*	.22***	.49***
14. Age	42.27	9.39	.03	.01	.45***	.42***	.35***	.52***
15. HR Education	.46	.50	-.09	.23***	-.13*	-.09	-.11	-.02
16. Professional Tenure	14.33	8.19	.07	.13*	.45***	.40***	.36***	.56***
17. Certification	.15	.36	.03	.09	-.03	-.02	.02	-.00
18. Conflict	2.95	1.33	-.07	-.02	-.17**	-.03	-.04	-.22***
19. Prof. Commitment	5.69	.98	.02	.00	-.04	.06	-.11	-.02
20. Org. Commitment	5.60	1.01	.06	.00	.16**	.03	.06	.25***
21. Prof. Com. X Org. Com.	32.11	8.60	.05	.00	.08	.07	-.02	.15**

* p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 1 (Continued)
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables

Variables	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Organization Size									
2. Manufacturing Industry									
3. Job Level									
4. Position Tenure									
5. Organization Tenure									
6. Income Level									
7. Labor Relations Experience									
8. Other Work Experience	-.11								
9. Educational Level	.06	.04							
10. Minority Status	.02	-.02	.03						
11. Marital Status	.06	.05	.11*	-.07					
12. Children	.15**	.05	.12*	.02	.39***				
13. Sex (Male)	.23***	.10	.33***	.03	.26***	.30***			
14. Age	.15*	.19**	.11	-.13*	.30***	-.01	.44***		
15. HR Education	.12*	-.08	.28***	.04	-.05	.11	.12*	-.10	
16. Professional Tenure	.22***	-.05	.14*	-.10	.28***	.04	.46***	.74***	.06
17. Certification	-.05	-.10	.03	-.01	-.02	.04	-.11*	-.06	.08
18. Conflict	-.04	.01	.04	.05	-.13*	-.01	-.07	-.15**	.01
19. Prof. Commitment	.20***	.06	-.05	-.02	.12*	-.02	-.06	.02	.05
20. Org. Commitment	.11	.04	-.03	-.01	.13*	.07	.08	.18**	-.02
21. Prof. Com. X Org. Com.	.20***	.04	-.07	-.01	.15**	.03	-.00	.13*	.03

* p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001



Table 1 (concluded)
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables

Variables	16	17	18	19	20
1. Organization Size					
2. Manufacturing Industry					
3. Job Level					
4. Position Tenure					
5. Organization Tenure					
6. Income Level					
7. Labor Relations Experience					
8. Other Work Experience					
9. Educational Level					
10. Minority Status					
11. Marital Status					
12. Children					
13. Sex (Male)					
14. Age					
15. HR Education					
16. Professional Tenure					
17. Certification	-0.00				
18. Conflict	-.15**	-.02			
19. Professional Commitment	.09	.11	-.25***		
20. Organizational Commitment	.13*	-.05	-.63***	.22***	
21. Prof. Com. X Org. Com.	.14*	.03	-.59***	.76***	.79***

* p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001

Commitment and Organizational-Professional Conflict

The correlation between organizational and professional commitment was significant and positive. Organizational commitment was positively related to job level, income, age, and professional tenure. The professional commitment was strongly related to labor relations work experience.

The organizational-professional conflict was negatively related to job level, income, age, professional tenure, professional commitment, and organizational commitment.

The correlation coefficient between OPC and the interaction of organizational and professional commitment was significant and negative. This interaction was further investigated by calculating the mean value of OPC based on the levels of organizational and professional

commitment. Levels of organizational and professional commitment were determined by comparing the commitment scores for each subject to the mean score of each commitment.

Subjects were then identified as being either above or below the mean for both organizational and professional commitment. Table 2 summarizes the findings and indicates that the mean conflict value was lowest when both levels of organizational and professional commitment were high. Low levels of either organizational or professional commitment were related to larger mean conflict values, and the greatest level of conflict resulted when both dimensions of commitment were low. Bamber and Iyer (2002) studied auditors and had similar findings. Table 3 shows that the mean levels of OPC differ significantly between the groups.



Table 2

Summary of Organizational-Professional Conflict and Organizational and Professional Commitments
Organizational Commitment

Professional Commitment	High	Low
HIGH	Organizational-Professional Conflict M=2.2672	Organizational-Professional Conflict M=3.6711
LOW	Organizational-Professional Conflict M=2.6864	Organizational-Professional Conflict M=3.8814

Table 3

Results of One-Way ANOVA of Organizational-Professional Conflict by Level of Organizational and Professional Commitment

Variable, subsets	Mean	S.D.	F
Commitment			
1. Low Professional, Low Organizational	3.8814	1.1866	35.1063***
2. Low Professional, High Organizational	2.6864	1.1814	
3. High Professional, Low Organizational	3.6711	1.3621	
4. High Professional, High Organizational	2.2672	.9878	

***p<.001

Table 1 indicates that the level of OPC tends to be inversely related to job level. To further investigate this relationship job titles administrative assistant through director were grouped and jobs titles assistant vice president through owner were grouped. Table 4 reports the results of ANOVA on the significance of the difference in the mean values of the dependent variables.

As expected, the level of OPC tends to be inversely and significantly related to job level (F =14.39, p<.001). Organizational commitment is significantly stronger in the upper job levels (F = 8.04, p<.01). Professional commitment does not appear to vary significantly between the two job levels.

Table 4

Results of One-Way ANOVA of Organizational and Professional Commitment and Conflict by Organizational Level

Variable, subsets	Mean	S.D.	F
Conflict			
1. Lower Job Levels	3.1304	1.2991	14.3936***
2. Upper Job Levels	2.4941	1.3150	
Professional Commitment			
1. Lower Job Levels	5.7258	.9867	.7921
2. Upper Job Levels	5.6131	.9631	
Organizational Commitment			
1. Lower Job Levels	5.4973	1.0277	8.0435**
2. Upper Job Levels	5.8618	.9238	

***p<.001

**p<.01



Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relative influence of each predictor variable on organizational commitment (see Table 5) and professional commitment (see Table 6). The results show

that the study variables as a whole explained 44% ($p < .001$) of the variation in organizational commitment and 20% ($p < .001$) of the variation in professional commitment.

Table 5

Multiple Regression of Organizational Commitment on Variables Measuring Characteristics of Work and Other Affiliations

<u>Explanatory Variables</u>	<u>Standardized Regression Coefficients</u>
Organizational Characteristics:	
Size	.0367
Manufacturing	-.0174
Job Characteristics:	
Job Level	-.0541
Position Tenure	-.0256
Organization Tenure	-.0128
Income Level	.2697**
Labor Relations Experience	.0590
Other Work Experience	-.0771
Personal Characteristics	
Educational Level	-.0637
Minority Status	.0806
Marital Status	.0008
Number of Children	.0715
Gender	-.0936
Age	.2988**
Socialization Characteristics:	
HR Education	.0486
Professional Tenure	-.2066*
Certification	-.1139*
Commitment:	
Professional Commitment	.0153
Organizational-Professional Conflict	-.6005***
R ²	.4903
Adjusted R ²	.4410
F	9.9543***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$



Table 6

Multiple Regression of Professional Commitment on Variables Measuring Characteristics of Work and Other Affiliations

<u>Explanatory Variables</u>	<u>Standardized Regression Coefficients</u>
Organizational Characteristics:	
Size	.0628
Manufacturing	-.1159
Job Characteristics:	
Job Level	-.1072
Position Tenure	.0293
Organization Tenure	-.2256**
Income Level	-.0765
Labor Relations Experience	.2812***
Other Work Experience	.1930**
Personal Characteristics	
Educational Level	-.0758
Minority Status	-.0008
Marital Status	.1677*
Number of Children	-.1286
Gender	-.1101
Age	.0719
Socialization Characteristics:	
HR Education	.0491
Professional Tenure	.1299
Certification	.1111
Commitment:	
Organizational Commitment	.0218
Organizational-Professional Conflict	-.2433**
R ²	.2734
Adjusted R ²	.2032
F	3.8940***

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001

Further examination of the results revealed a distinct difference between the variables that influenced commitment to the organization and those that affected commitment to the HR profession. The dominant variables that strengthened organizational commitment were income level ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$) and age ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$), whereas professional tenure ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$), certification ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$), and OPC ($\beta = -.60$,

$p < .001$) all diminished organizational commitment. In comparison, the main determinants of professional commitment were labor relations experience ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$), other work experience ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$), and marital status ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$). The variables that diminished professional commitment were organizational tenure ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$), and once again OPC ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$).



Discussion

There has been a great deal of research conducted that has investigated the predictors of commitment as well as the relationship between organizational and professional commitment and any resulting conflict.

However, administrative professions in general, and HR specifically, have rarely been included in this research.

Therefore, this study attempted to analyze if relations which have been found to exist between commitment and other factors in established professions apply to the HR profession. In general, the present findings indicate that the guidance provided by prior research was very helpful in understanding the organizational and professional commitments of HR professionals.

Organizational commitment appeared to be positively related to the level of investment individuals had in their organizations.

For example, being successful at work (indicated by title and income) enhanced organizational commitment, as well did age, marriage, and professional tenure. These factors suggest that as individuals find it more difficult to uproot their careers they bond more closely with their organizations. In comparison, the professional commitment was strongly influenced by the presence of labor relations work experience. This specific type of HR experience was also positively related to the sex (male) of the individual. This finding suggests that females might be finding it difficult to obtain work experience in an important area of HR.

The organizational and professional commitment demonstrated a strong, positive relationship. The finding that these two forms of commitment are complimentary will hopefully motivate organizations to encourage their HR employees to become more occupationally socialized through education, professional training, and credentialing.

Organizations should not be concerned that HR professionals interpret commitment as a "zero-sum" game, requiring different dimensions of commitment to yield to one another. Quite to the contrary, in the present study, the two dimensions of commitment appear to be mutually encouraging of each other.

The strength of association observed in the present study between organizational and professional commitment is also similar to the degrees of the association noted in other studies (Aranya and Ferris, 1984; Lachman and Aranya, 1986; Morrow and Wirth, 1989; and

Wallace, 1993). This is important because Wallace (1993) found that the degree of professionalization in occupation was an important moderator of the degree of association between the two dimensions of commitment. In her study, she included personnel managers in the samples characterized by low professionalization. The strong correlation between organizational and professional commitment observed in the present study may be an indication that the HR profession is maturing as a profession.

As anticipated, the correlation coefficient between OPC and the interaction of organizational and professional commitment was significant and negative.

This finding is in agreement with other research on professionals and conflict and serves to support the notion that attitudes of commitment to one's profession and organization work together to diminish negative feelings of conflict about an organization.

Table 2 corroborates the correlation statistic by indicating that the mean conflict value is lowest when both levels of commitment are high. Low levels of both organizational and professional commitment result in an increased mean conflict value. These findings are in agreement with Aranya and Ferris (1984) who found that low levels of commitment were indicative of general occupational maladjustment and that OPC would be a logical outcome of such vocational difficulty.

The level of OPC is also inversely related to the job level. An explanation for this finding might be that individuals who occupy higher-level jobs tend to be older, earn more income, have significantly more work experience in non-HR positions, and lack formal education in HR. These characteristics suggest that these individuals might tend to align themselves more with their organizations' goals because they are realizing the benefits of organizational membership. In contrast, their lack of formal knowledge regarding the HR profession, coupled with their exposure to the field in its infancy when it did not command much attention, could combine to make the importance of professional goals weaker and less compelling. Therefore, it could be that lack of conflict is related to a weak sense of professional commitment, and thus there is little for organizational commitment to conflict with.

The results of the multiple regression analyses presented in Tables 5 and 6 indicate that the models



explain a significant portion of the variation in both organizational commitment and professional commitment. The ability of the commitment models to explain more of the level of organizational commitment as compared to professional commitment might be an indication of the greater efforts that have gone into research on organizational commitment as compared to professional commitment. Unexpectedly, none of the socialization characteristics were significant predictors of professional commitment. This might be an indication that professional HR associations still need to demonstrate to practitioners the relevance of professional training and credentialing.

Practitioners lack the motivation to secure formal education and/or credentials in HR because they do not perceive a strong connection between formal accreditation and their affective commitment to the HR profession. Another important finding is that, except for OPC, none of the independent variables have a significant effect on both dependent variables.

This finding builds upon the research conducted by Chelte and Tausky (1987), and Wallace (1995). Chelte and Tausky examined organizational commitment, antecedents, and consequences among three distinct groups of employees. They found no shared consistent

pattern of antecedents or outcomes of organizational commitment among the three groups.

Wallace (1995) studied the legal profession and found that organizational commitment was highly dependent on perceived opportunities for career advancements and the criteria used in the distribution of rewards, whereas few of the structural characteristics accounted for professional commitment.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that in general, traditional explanations of organizational and professional commitment and conflict, which have been developed from the research of older and more established professions, also apply to the HR profession. Organizations should not anticipate rivalry between the two forms of commitment, but rather strive to encourage the professional development of their HR professionals since there is a strong, positive relationship between organizational and professional commitment. The present findings also indicate a need for research that investigates the unique antecedents of professional commitment. Research should not continue to assume that both organizational and professional commitments are the product of similar antecedent factors.

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