Integrating The Three Domains Of Employee Commitment: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Previous research examining employee commitment has focused primarily on organizational commitment, with a limited number of studies investigating professional and professional association commitment. In the present study, the effects of satisfaction with human resource practices and employee empowerment on organizational, professional, and professional association commitment were examined. Overall, the findings support the distinctiveness of each domain. Satisfaction with human resource practices and employee empowerment exhibited a strong relationship with organizational commitment. Employee empowerment was more strongly related to professional association commitment than satisfaction with human resource practices. Professional commitment more closely resembled the pattern of results found with organizational commitment, but fewer significant relationships existed. Several avenues for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Businesses moving into the 21st century are faced with ever-increasing competition, both at home and abroad. As companies prepare for these new environmental challenges, one key component to survival is maintaining and upgrading the organization's ability to effectively and efficiently use human resources. In addition to attracting quality employees, it is critical that management retains its best workers and keep them committed to the organization (Scarpello, Ledvinka, & Bergmann, 1995). Thus, it is essential that researchers continue to broaden their understanding of the con-

cept of commitment—what it is, how it operates, and how to foster it.

Employee commitment is defined as the individual's desire to remain as a member of his or her work-related interest groups. Employee commitment encompasses the domains of organizational commitment, professional commitment, and professional association (union) commitment. In their comprehensive review of commitment in the workplace, Meyer and Allen (1997) offer several directions for future research. First, they suggest that additional research is needed to identify the antecedents that are associated with the multiple domains of employee commitment. To date, previous research

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on commitment has predominantly focused on an employee's commitment to his or her organization (e.g., Levy & Williams, 1998; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Significantly fewer studies have examined commitment to other work-related entities such as a professional association/union or one's profession. Although limited in number, studies examining whether employees can have multiple loyalties to an organization, profession, and professional association (union) have found support for the distinctiveness of each of these commitments (Martin, Magenau & Peterson, 1986; Angle & Perry, 1986; Gordon & Ladd, 1990; Wallace, 1993; Korabik & Rosin, 1995). Thus, there is a need to investigate this multidimensionality of employee commitment in order to gain a better understanding of how the three domains of employee commitment may be inter-related.

Meyer and Allen (1997) believe that the relationship between human resource practices and employee commitment should be examined more fully. They assert, "by understanding how commitment develops, practitioners will be in a better position to anticipate the impact of a particular policy or practice even if it has not yet been the subject of empirical research" (p. 110). The dynamic nature of human resource management in recent decades also affirms the need for more research in this area.

The present study responds to these research recommendations. The first objective is to identify the antecedents of each facet of employee commitment, especially the less frequently discussed domains of professional and professional association (union) commitment. Interest in professional commitment has grown over recent decades as the ranks of professionals have increased due to shifting labor force composition and an increase in the number of individuals who are going back to school (Scarpello, et al., 1995). Although union membership in the United States has declined (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1997), recent strikes by strong, established unions have had a significant impact on large com-

panies and their customer base (e.g., UPS, Caterpillar, and Northwest Airlines). In the context of the health care industry, the American Nursing Association (professional association) speaks for nurses and can impact the decisions of administrators. Thus, it is important to obtain a better understanding of nurses' commitment toward the American Nursing Association (ANA) because of its influence in shaping the perceptions of its members.

A second objective of this study is to examine how human resource practices affect employee commitment. In the past, companies secured the loyalty of their employees by guaranteeing job security. However, many businesses in the 1980s and 1990s responded to competitive pressures by downsizing and thus created a less secure company climate (De Meuse, Bergmann, & Vanderheiden, 1997). A growing number of employees perceive that they are victims of broken promises (Rousseau, 1995). This series of events has raised questions about the keys to maintaining employee commitment in the current business environment (Jaffe & Scott, 1998; De Meuse, et al., 1997). Jaffe & Scott (1998) suggest that a "new work contract" has evolved that has important implications for human resource strategies. In today's workplace, employees face more ambiguity in their daily activities and decreased job security. Jaffe and Scott believe that with no assurance of continued employment, workers now have raised their expectations in other areas. For instance, employees expect supervisors to keep them informed of upcoming changes; they want performance appraisal criteria to be clearly identified; and they desire ample opportunities for self-development and professional growth. Consequently, this study investigates components of human resource management that go beyond the issue of job security.

Past Research And Current Hypotheses

The following paragraphs review the extant literature for the three domains of employee

commitment: (a) organizational commitment, (b) professional commitment, and (c) professional association (union) commitment. To provide a meaningful comparison, satisfaction with human resource practices and employee empowerment are discussed for each domain. Hypotheses are presented at the end of each section.

Organizational Commitment

A number of researchers have investigated the concept of organizational commitment (Leong, Furham, & Cooper, 1996; Levy & Williams, 1998; Mayer & Schoorman, 1998; Mueller, Wallace, & Price, 1992; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of an organization, a willingness to work hard on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to remain in an organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Increased organizational commitment has been positively associated with valuable organizational outcomes; including increased job performance ratings, decreased intent to search for new jobs, decreased intent to leave the organization, and reduced turnover. Previous research also supports a positive relationship between organizational commitment and satisfaction with selected human resource practices (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982). The present study will attempt to replicate these findings within the health care industry. This industry has experienced a number of changes in recent years. Because many health care professionals are operating in a new work environment, an updated examination of the significant influences on their organizational commitment will be valuable.

Due to the nature of their work, professionals are very concerned with the level of influence they have in decisions regarding organizational policies. Thus, the extent to which an organization empowers professional employees is an important consideration in any examination of commitment in the health care industry.

McCloskey (1974) found that most nurses want the opportunity to continue to grow and advance within their organization. Shore and Wayne (1993) found that employees who feel supported over time also feel a greater obligation to the organization and thus tend to be more committed. Further, in a study conducted by McDermott, Laschinger-Spence, and Shamian (1996), the results strongly suggested that nurses who have access to resources, information, opportunity, and support in their work environment are more likely to be committed to their jobs. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 1: An employee's satisfaction with opportunities for advancement and growth, salary, organizational policies, supervision, and levels of empowerment will be positively related to organizational commitment.

Professional Commitment

Previous researchers have made a distinction between an employee's commitment to an organization and his or her commitment to a profession (Blau, 1985; Hall, 1972). Professional commitment is defined as an individual's belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of a profession, a willingness to work hard on behalf of the profession, and a strong desire to remain in a profession.

Employees' satisfaction with different types of human resource practices may relate to professional commitment. Some human resource practices tend to be more uniform across organizations in a professional field, while others can vary considerably from one organization to the next (Scarpello, Ledvinka, & Bergmann, 1995). Those components of a human resource program that are more stable across organizations (within a given profession) can be expected to exhibit a stronger influence on professional commitment than human resource components that are highly variable. For example, an individual's salary is commonly determined by what the market is

willing (and able) to pay for an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Professions that require extensive training or advanced degrees prior to entering the field will tend to compensate individuals for that by offering larger salaries and more opportunities to develop and use a variety of skills. Riehl and Sipple (1996) found that teachers who were satisfied with their salaries reported greater commitment to the profession. In another study, Wallace (1995) found task variety in professional organizations was positively related to professional commitment.

In contrast, it is not anticipated that satisfaction with organizational policies will be significantly related to professional commitment, because organizations within a profession may vary greatly in the effectiveness of their implementation of human resource policies. Singh and Billingsley (1998) recently observed that teachers who perceived greater amounts of leadership and support from their principals expressed higher levels of professional commitment. However, no comparison of the relationship between satisfaction with supervision and professional commitment was made. Because supervisors can vary greatly across organizations, satisfaction with supervision should have a greater impact on organizational commitment than it will on professional commitment.

Past research has found organizational climate variables to be strong predictors of professional commitment (Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Wallace, 1995). More specifically, support was found for positive relationships between autonomy, social influence and professional commitment (Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Wallace, 1995). Thus, employee empowerment should be related to professional commitment. Based on the discussion above, the following hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 2a: An employee's satisfaction with salary, advancement and growth opportunities, and levels of empowerment will be positively related to professional commitment.

Hypothesis 2b: An employee's satisfaction with organizational policies and supervision will not be significantly related to professional commitment.

Professional Association (Union) Commitment

The American Nursing Association (ANA) is used as a proxy for unionization because it is the most common professional association to which nurses belong. There are a few traditional unions representing nurses but there is no one common union representing a large cross section of the nursing profession. The American Nursing Association, even though not a true union, engages in many of the traditional union activities (e.g., lobbying, surveying members' needs) and thus would provide the best focus point for this sample. Since little to no research has focused on commitment to a professional association, it is necessary to review the union commitment literature to develop these hypotheses.

Professional association/union commitment is an important dimension for study due to the power that the professional association or the union can have on employees' perceptions (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1997). What makes employees rally behind their professional association or union in some instances and refuse to join or to support these groups in others? Identification of the antecedents of professional association commitment would be valuable to the ANA as well as health care administrators. Empirical literature to some extent has examined the relationship of demographic variables to union commitment, but few researchers have studied the relationship between human resource practices, employee empowerment and professional association (union) commitment.

Past studies have shown demographic variables such as age, gender, and company experience are significantly related to union commitment (e.g., Aryee & Debrah, 1997; Gallagher & Strauss, 1991; Martin, Magenau, & Peterson, 1986). Aryee and Debrah (1997) found a posi-

tive relationship between union participation and intrinsic satisfaction with human resource practices. However, they also found a negative relationship between union participation and extrinsic satisfaction with human resource practices.

Martin, Magenau, and Peterson (1986) examined the relationship of organizational and union commitment to personal, role-related, work experience and structural characteristics. Of the 19 variables analyzed, 12 were significantly correlated with organizational commitment and 11 significantly correlated with union commitment. However, only seven variables were significantly correlated to both measures of commitment and in three of these cases, the correlations were in opposite directions. They concluded that the antecedents of union and organizational commitment are primarily different.

Although slightly different from the measures used in the present investigation, several of the variables in the Martin et al., (1986) study relate to satisfaction with human resource practices (e.g., promotion, supervision) and employee empowerment. They found that satisfaction with the level of influence on one's employer was positively correlated with union commitment. In contrast, they found satisfaction with income to be negatively related to union commitment. Neither satisfaction with supervision nor promotional opportunities had a significant relationship with union commitment.

Wages and other company policies (e.g., vacation time, hours worked, safety regulations and grievance procedure) are topics of significant importance to employees. It is reasonable to believe that dissatisfaction with organizational policies and wages would raise an employee's desire to belong to a professional association or to seek out union representation. Drawing on the preceding paragraphs, the following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis 3a: An employee's level of perceived level of empowerment will be positively related to professional association commitment.

Hypothesis 3b: An employee's level of satisfaction with salary and organizational policies will be negatively related to professional association commitment.

Hypothesis 3c: An employee's level of satisfaction with advancement and growth opportunities, and supervision will not be significantly related to professional association commitment.

In summary, this study will contribute to the research on commitment in the workplace by examining the relationship between satisfaction with human resource management practices, employee empowerment and employee commitment to the organization, profession, and professional association (union). A unique contribution of this study is that it explores all three domains of employee commitment in the same investigation.

Methodology

Sample

A questionnaire was distributed to 700 nurses who participated in a national educational workshop as part of their continuing education program. Four hundred and fifty usable questionnaires were returned (64% response rate). Participation in the study was voluntary; each respondent was guaranteed anonymity. Respondents returned their completed questionnaires directly to the researchers by mail. Discussion with the marketing manager of the organization conducting the workshops indicated that keeping accurate mailing labels was one of his most difficult and time consuming tasks. Due to the high mobility of the sample, he suggested that a longitudinal research design would not be feasible.

The respondent profile was primarily female (96%), had a mean age of 41.2 years (SD = 9.93), and had 8.8 years of organizational ex-

perience ($SD = 6.6$). Fifty percent of the sample had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, 68% were married, and 30% belonged to the American Nursing Association.

Instrument Development

Previous research indicates there is no best way to measure employees' satisfaction with organizational application of human resource practices and policies (Bergmann, Grahn, & Wyatt, 1986). In order to avoid situational and personal factors adversely affecting responses, it is essential that items meaningfully relate to occupation and demographic composition of the sample being measured. The researchers for this study carefully constructed an instrument designed to fit the needs of the sample. Based on interviews with health care professionals in the nursing field, the researchers developed the questionnaire utilizing appropriate syntax and terminology. The completed instrument was pretested on a small sample of nurses and colleagues who were experienced in the field of health care.

All of the scales in this study, with the exception of satisfaction with human resource practices, consisted of four-point Likert-type items with anchors ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree." The instrument measured the following set of variables.

Measures

Satisfaction with human resource management practices. Items measuring employees' satisfaction with human resource practices were modeled after the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The employees responded regarding their satisfaction with their current job based on a six-point scale ranging from 1 = "extremely dissatisfied" to 6 = "extremely satisfied." The questions addressed satisfaction with opportunity for advancement and growth (six-item scale with reliability of .90), salary (six-item scale with reliability of .90), supervision (four-item scale with

reliability of .95), and organization policy (six-item scale with reliability of .86).

Employee empowerment. A three-item empowerment measure was created for this study (e.g., "I have a lot of influence in how work-related problems are solved"). This measure had a reliability of .86.

Organizational commitment. The 15-item Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) organizational commitment measure was used and had a reliability of .89.

Professional commitment. A three-item professional commitment measure (e.g., "I am seriously considering getting out of the nursing profession") was created (reliability = .70).

Professional association (union) commitment. A three-item measure assessed professional association (union) commitment. It was adapted from a measure developed by Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, & Spiller (1980) and had a reliability of .99. It measured the employee's commitment to the American Nursing Association, which represents many nurses with their health care employer. (e.g., "I have a great deal of loyalty to the American Nursing Association").

The final section of the questionnaire contained demographic items, including education, ages, and gender. It also included the three control variables in this investigation: nursing experience, organizational tenure, and supervisor status. By including these control variables, we had the ability to replicate findings from previous studies regarding the distinctiveness of each domain of commitment.

Results

Table 1 depicts the variable means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations for all the variables examined in this study.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for All Variables

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
1 Advancement Opportunities	3.88	0.88	(.90)										
2 Satisfaction with Salary	3.15	0.97	.48*	(.90)									
3 Organizational Policies	3.39	0.82	.61*	.50*	(.86)								
4 Satisfaction with Supervision	3.73	1.13	.56*	.35*	.58*	(.95)							
5 Employee Empowerment	2.59	0.69	.43*	.28*	.49*	.39*	(.86)						
6 Nursing Experience	17.08	10.28	.02	.05	.01	-.01	-.06	(--)					
7 Tenure with Company	8.75	6.63	.07	.07	.07	.02	-.03	.44*	(--)				
8 Supervisory Status	1.45	0.52	-.18*	-.08	-.15*	-.16*	-.13*	-.19*	-.17*	(--)			
9 Organizational Commitment	2.86	0.51	.55*	.42*	.59*	.46*	.43*	.06	.15*	-.25*	(.89)		
10 Professional Commitment	2.13	0.73	.40*	.32*	.34*	.31*	.25*	.13*	.13*	.12*	.56*	(.70)	
11 Union Commitment	0.91	1.41	.09	-.01	.01	.01	.08	.10*	.08	-.02	.04	.01	(.99)

Note. Cronbach alphas are listed in parentheses across the diagonal of the matrix. * $p < .05$.

Hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analyses. The hypothesized antecedents were entered into the regression equation in three steps (or blocks). The control variables were entered first. The satisfaction with human resource management measures was entered second, and employee empowerment was entered in the final step.

The first set of regression analyses was conducted with organizational commitment as the dependent variable. The results provide support for most the relationships in Hypothesis 1 (Overall Model: $F = 46.42$, $p < .001$; Adjusted R-square = .45). As expected, tenure with company and supervisory status were positively re-

lated to organizational commitment, while nursing experience did not exhibit a significant relationship. Satisfaction with advancement and growth, salary, and organizational policies all were positively related to organizational commitment. The only human resource component that did not exhibit a significant relationship with commitment was supervisory satisfaction. Employee empowerment was also positively related to organizational commitment. The results of these analyses are reported in Table 2.

The overall model also was significant when professional commitment was entered as the dependent variable ($F = 14.88$, $p < .001$; Adjusted R-square = .20). In the full model, the

Table 2
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Proposed Antecedents of Organizational Commitment

<u>Antecedent Variable</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>
Nursing Experience	-.05	-.02	-.01
Tenure with Company	.14**	.10*	.10*
Supervisory Status	-.23**	-.12**	-.11**
Advancement Opportunities		.23***	.21***
Satisfaction with Salary		.11*	.11*
Organizational Policies		.32***	.27***
Satisfaction with Supervision		.09+	.07
Employee Empowerment			.14***
Overall F	12.09***	50.43***	46.42***
Adjusted R-square	.07	.44	.45
Change in R-square	—	.37	.01

Note: Table values are standardized beta coefficients. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$

Table 3
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Proposed Antecedents of Professional Commitment

<u>Antecedent Variable</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>
Nursing Experience	.08	.10*	.10*
Tenure with Company	.07	.05	.05
Supervisory Status	-.09	-.02	-.01
Advancement Opportunities		.24***	.23***
Satisfaction with Salary		.13*	.13*
Organizational Policies		.07	.05
Satisfaction with Supervision		.09	.08
Employee Empowerment			.06
Overall F	4.73**	16.77***	14.88***
Adjusted R-square	.02	.20	.20
Change in R-square	—	.18	.00

Note: Table values are standardized beta coefficients. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

expected relationships between the control variables and professional commitment were supported. Nursing experience was positively related to professional commitment, while tenure with company and supervisory status were not. Satisfaction with salary and satisfaction with advancement and growth opportunities were positively related to professional commitment. Contrary to expectation, employee empowerment was not related to professional commitment. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was partially supported. The human resource components that were organization specific (e.g., satisfaction with organ-

izational policies, satisfaction with supervision) did not relate significantly to professional commitment, supporting Hypothesis 2b. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.

The overall model was not significant when professional association commitment was entered as the dependent variable ($F = 0.91$, $p > .05$; Adjusted R-square = .01). Although Hypothesis 3a was not supported, employee empowerment approached significance in its relationship with professional association commitment ($B = .20$, $p < .10$). The relationships between professional

association commitment and both satisfaction with salary and satisfaction with organizational policy were not significant; therefore, Hypothesis 3b was not supported. However, it should be noted that the regression coefficients for both of these human resource variables were in the hypothesized direction ($B = -.08$ for satisfaction with salary; $B = -.12$ for satisfaction with organizational policy). As proposed in hypothesis 3c, no significant relationships were found between satisfaction with advancement and growth opportunities, satisfaction with supervision, and professional association commitment. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.

Discussion

The results of this investigation provide support for the distinctiveness of organizational commitment, professional commitment and professional association commitment. Upon examining the control variables, company tenure and supervisory status were positively related to organizational commitment; whereas, experience in the nursing profession was positively related

to professional commitment. None of the control variables were related to professional association commitment. Three of the human resource practices were significantly related to organizational commitment, whereas, two were significantly related to professional commitment. Lastly, none of the human resource practices were significantly related to professional association commitment. Employee empowerment was significantly related to organizational commitment, marginally related to professional association commitment, and unrelated to professional commitment.

All of the human resource practice variables was positively related to organizational commitment, except for satisfaction with supervision. The strongest correlate of organizational commitment was satisfaction with organizational policies. This suggests that as employees face an increasingly dynamic and turbulent workplace, they should be very concerned about how an organization's policies meet their needs. Since organizations are less able to offer employees lifetime employment guarantees, other benefits may

Table 4
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Proposed Antecedents of Professional Association Commitment

<u>Antecedent Variable</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>
Nursing Experience	-.15	-.15	-.12
Tenure with Company	.02	.02	.05
Supervisory Status	-.03	-.02	.01
Advancement Opportunities		.09	.07
Satisfaction with Salary		-.08	-.08
Organizational Policies		-.05	-.12
Satisfaction with Supervision		.03	.00
Employee Empowerment			.20+
Overall F	0.96	0.57	0.91
Adjusted R-square	.00	.00	.01
Change in R-square		.00	.01

Note: Table values are standardized beta coefficients

.** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$.

take on greater importance. If an employer desires to foster organizational commitment, management needs to be very sensitive to current employee preferences for various employee benefits and corporate policies. Consequently, the results of this study suggest that keeping up to date with employee needs could be vital to attracting, motivating, and retaining employees.

Advancement and growth opportunities and employee empowerment also were strongly tied to organizational commitment. The results reveal that employees who were satisfied with their ability to grow and develop professionally, and to advance professionally, were more committed to their employers. Nurses, like other professionals who invest years in training to perform their jobs have a strong desire to be deeply involved in the operations of their unit. Therefore, nurses that have high involvement at their current place of employment are likely to develop an increased level of commitment to their current employer. As the health care industry goes through increased reorganization due to the need to control costs, it should take additional effort to maintain a work force that is highly committed to the organization. This finding suggests that employee empowerment may be one area that will foster higher commitment.

In contrast, professional commitment demonstrated a slightly different pattern of relationships with the independent variables. As hypothesized, this domain of commitment was positively related to satisfaction with those human resource components that were relatively stable across organizations within the profession (e.g., salary and opportunities for advancement and growth). Nursing is a relatively low paying occupation and most competent nurses need to be able to distinguish themselves through advancement in the organizational structure (Gaertner, 1984). Other organizational policies (e.g., vacation, hours, shifts, and working conditions), as well as supervision, will vary across health care providers. Consequently, these organization-

specific variables did not relate to commitment to the profession at large.

One of the most surprising results in the study was the lack of a relationship between employee empowerment and professional commitment. Although these health care professionals had to go through extensive training to prepare for their positions, the results suggested that being empowered was not related to commitment to the nursing profession. It should be noted that much of the previous research on professional commitment has focused on the teaching profession (e.g., Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Riehl & Sipple, 1996). It is possible that the widespread norm of autonomy in the classroom does not transfer to the health care industry. It appears that levels of empowerment vary to a great extent across health care organizations. Examining the relationship between employee empowerment and professional commitment across industries is clearly an area for additional research.

The findings for professional association commitment were quite different from the other two domains. None of the satisfaction with human resource practices variables had a significant relationship with professional association commitment, and employee empowerment was only marginally significant.

The current study has some limitations. First, the findings are based on a sample of nurses and may not be generalizable to the total work population. However, they may be relevant to a significant subset of the population, namely professional and technical occupations. Secondly, the self-reporting nature of the data collection, although traditionally used, may have resulted in some unknown method bias. Another limitation may be the generalizability of the findings to union settings. Although the American Nursing Association strives to meet the needs of its membership, it does not actively engage in collective bargaining. Satisfaction with human resource practices may not have significantly related to professional association commitment,

because the American Nursing Association does not have as its primary emphasis the role of negotiating wages, hours, and working conditions.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Findings regarding the variables of advancement and growth, empowerment, and organizational policies would seem to indicate that employees want to be included in appropriate levels of organizational decision making. Because escalating costs have led to the current restructuring in the health care industry, satisfaction with organizational policies may be particularly salient to attracting and retaining quality employees. In addition to raising salaries, other ways to enhance organizational commitment may be to set up employee development programs, to identify career paths where appropriate, and to look toward self-managed work teams as a possible organizational structure.

The results of this investigation imply that those human resource practices that are fairly uniform across a given profession are going to have the greatest impact on professional commitment. Because this investigation was limited to a single profession, the continued examination of these relationships would be a fruitful area for future research. The pattern of relationships between professional commitment and the proposed antecedents in this study, particularly employee empowerment, may fluctuate greatly across different professions.

This study was an initial attempt to simultaneously investigate the three domains of employee commitment. Future research should try to replicate the findings. Obtaining similar results with a cross section of employees from a variety of occupations and industries would contribute to a better understanding of employee commitment and help organizations to manage their employees more effectively. □

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