

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG WOMEN VOLUNTEERS: MEANING AND MEASUREMENT¹

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Summary.—A 2-yr. follow-up of a mail survey of 250 women volunteers gave evidence that relationships among Organizational Commitment Questionnaire score and single item measures of involvement and satisfaction were stable. The attitude measures were related to the number of volunteer hours per month reported at the time of measurement, but not two years later. Hours reported on the first survey were the best predictor of hours reported on the second survey, and the best predictor of continued membership was expressed intentions.

In recent years organizational commitment has been explored in a wide variety of work settings. Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) report an extensive review of the literature and define commitment as: "The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 43). They indicate three related factors: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Commitment, behavioral and attitudinal, may be even more important to voluntary organizations than to employing organizations. The difficulties of recruiting and motivating volunteers are persistent topics in the not-for-profit sector. Leaving a volunteer job does not involve loss of pay, and positions are relatively available, so there is high potential mobility within the volunteer labor pool.

Most volunteer organizations have two critical personnel concerns: to recruit and retain members and to involve them in the organization. Research indicates that volunteers tend to emphasize moral considerations such as belief in organization purpose and the desire to be of service as primary reasons for volunteering, but personal development and preparation for future employment are also conscious goals for some (Gidron, 1978; Jenner, 1981; Mueller, 1975; Schram & Dunsing, 1981). One might assume that, whatever the motivation for joining, the volunteer whose expectations are met will maintain the relationship, as is generally the case with employees (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

A fundamental question is the meaning of volunteer membership. Volunteers may take an active role or simply pay dues. The latter provide a financial

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base for an organization, and also may lend an aura of wide-spread representation to an organization which is actually controlled by a small number of people (Bolduc, 1980). Still, it is long-term, active, volunteers who are critical because they provide the leadership pool, the main work force, and are the best recruiters of new members. Accordingly, this research focused on membership in and relationship to the one organization an individual identified as her primary volunteer commitment.

In an effort to create an accurate and reliable measure of commitment, Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) developed the 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire which was given to 2563 employees in a wide variety of work settings. The first phase of this study showed that total scores on the 15-item commitment questionnaire were related to volunteer hours reported worked as well as to single-item measures of satisfaction, involvement, and plans for maintaining membership (Jenner, 1981).

The purpose of this follow-up study was to examine factors or measures which might be used to predict maintenance of membership and active participation. Mowday, *et al.*'s 15-item questionnaire and one-item measures of satisfaction, involvement, and plans for membership were tested for stability and predictive power. Because people tend to maintain activity levels, hours reported worked was also tested for stability and predictive power.

Hypotheses were that (1) the 1979 scores on Mowday, *et al.*'s questionnaire, involvement, satisfaction, and hours reported worked for main organization, will be significantly and positively related to hours reported worked for the same main organization in 1981. (2) The 1979 values for scores on Mowday, *et al.*'s questionnaire, involvement, satisfaction, and plans for membership, will be significantly and positively related to maintenance of the same main organization from 1979 to 1981.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 250 female volunteers whose ages in 1981 ranged from 25 to 46 yr. They were selected at random from the national active membership of the Association of Junior Leagues, which requires volunteer participation in at least one organization for members in that age-related category.

Instruments

Data were gathered by use of a self-administered questionnaire developed in 1979 (Jenner, 1981). Open-ended items asked for: name of main volunteer commitment; total volunteer hours worked per month; hours worked for main commitment only; years of membership in main organization. A multiple choice item assessed plans for continuing membership. Organizational commitment was measured by the 15 items on commitment (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Likert-type single-item measures of satisfaction and involve-

ment were worded as follows. "In general, how involved are you in this organization? Please circle (7) if you care deeply about the organization—if its ups and downs are your ups and downs. Please circle (1) if you are not involved at all in the fate of the organization. The numbers in between are for more or less involvement." "In general, how satisfied are you with your membership in the organization? Please circle (7) if you are very satisfied, and (1) if you are not at all satisfied. The numbers in between are for more or less satisfaction."

Procedure

A random sample of 700 names was selected from the total active membership (approximately 52,000) of the Association of Junior Leagues; 41 states and the District of Columbia were represented. The response rate to the 1979 survey was 50.2% of those delivered; invalid questionnaires were deleted, leaving 292 available for analysis. A post-card survey of non-respondents gave evidence that they were similar to respondents in geographic distribution, age, marital status, and career role assigned to volunteer work.

In October, 1981, the second questionnaire was mailed to 284 of the 1979 subjects (8 of the 292 were anonymous) and to 10 women who responded too late to be included in the 1979 analysis. Of the 294 surveys mailed, 10 were undeliverable. A total of 253 surveys were returned, 86% of all mailed. Comparison of marital status, employment status, age, hours of volunteer work reported, and career role assigned to volunteer work indicated that the 1981 respondents were representative of the 1979 respondents. A telephone survey of the 31 non-respondents reached 19; they did not differ from respondents on role of volunteer work, marital status, age, employment, or changes in main organization.

Commitment research has typically focused on many members of a single organization. The women in this study, however, were a national sample, and, although all were Junior League members in 1979, their main organizational affiliations were diverse. It also was expected that some would report a different main organization in 1981 than in 1979. Relationships among constructs were expected to remain the same (e.g., the association between commitment and involvement) regardless of organization, or of change in organization and these were analyzed using data from all respondents to have as large a sample as possible. The examination of predictive relationships, however, focused on respondents who reported the same main organization both years, to replicate previous research.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, Pearson correlations among scores on commitment, satisfaction and involvement were significant ($p \leq .01$) in both 1979 and 1981. However, correlations of scores for commitment and satisfaction with

hours reported worked were significant in 1979 but not in 1981. This suggests that the relationships among the attitudinal measures are stable, but that relationships between the attitude and behavioral measures may not be. All correlations were also computed using only those subjects who named the same main organization in both years; results were similar to the ones reported here, and may be obtained from the author.

TABLE 1
PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES AND OTHER VARIABLES IN 1979 AND 1981

	Satisfaction		Involvement		Hours Wkd. Month	
	1979	1981	1979	1981	1979	1981
<i>n</i>	299	232	299	238	293	223
Organizational Commitment						
1979 (<i>n</i> = 299)	.66		.53		.19	
1981 (<i>n</i> = 231)		.64		.59		.09
Satisfaction						
1979			.53		.24	
1981				.57		.11
Involvement						
1979					.41	
1981						.31

Note.—All correlations of .19 or greater are significant ($p = .01$).

Hypothesis 1. The 1979 values for Mowday, et al.'s questionnaire, involvement, satisfaction, and hours reported worked for main organization, will be significantly and positively related to hours reported worked for the same main organization in 1981.

As predicted, Pearson correlations of hours reported worked for the main organization in 1981 with 1979 values for commitment scores ($r = .17$), satisfaction ($r = .16$), involvement ($r = .31$), and hours reported worked ($r = .46$) were significant ($p < .02$). Stepwise regression analysis indicated that hours reported worked in 1979 explained 20% of the variance in hours reported in 1981. Adding involvement to the model increased the level to 21%. Satisfaction and commitment scores did not add even 1% to the adjusted R^2 , and they were dropped from the equation. The final regression is shown below (t statistics are in parentheses); hours reported worked for main organization in 1979 was labeled HRM, 1981 hours were labeled HRM2, and response to the single-item measure of involvement was labeled INV. The model has an F value of 23.49 ($p < .001$) and an adjusted R^2 of .21.

$$\text{HRM2} = -4.26 + .53 \text{ HRM} + 2.75 \text{ INV}$$

(5.15) (1.75)
 $p < .000$ $p < .10$

Hypothesis 2. The 1979 values for Mowday, et al.'s questionnaire, involvement, satisfaction, and plans for membership, will be significantly and positively related to maintenance of the same main organization from 1979 to 1981.

To permit the use of contingency table analyses, the independent variables were recoded. Scores on Mowday, et al.'s questionnaire were computed as the sum of responses to 15 seven-point Likert-type items; scores were collapsed into four groups as follows: 0—59 (average scores less than 4), 60—74 (average scores 4 to 4.9), 75—89 (average scores 5 to 5.9), 90—104 (average scores 6 to 6.9). Satisfaction and involvement were collapsed into four groups as follows: 0—4, 5, 6, and 7. Plans for maintaining membership were categorized as: 2 years or less, 3 to 5 years, or "indefinitely."

TABLE 2
EXPRESSED PLANS AND MAINTENANCE OF MEMBERSHIP: PERCENT

<i>n</i>	Plan to Remain Working Member		
	2 yr. or less	3—5 yr.	Indefinitely
<i>n</i>	69	68	116
Reported different main organization 1979 and 1981	81	45	24
Reported same main organization 1979 and 1981	172	55	77

Note.— $\chi^2 = 7.93$, $p < .02$.

The chi-squared test of association indicated no significant difference between the distributions of women who did and who did not maintain one main organization across commitment score ($\chi^2 = 2.09$, $n = 276$, $p = .55$), satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 3.77$, $n = 273$, $p = .29$), or involvement ($\chi^2 = 5.12$, $n = 273$, $p = .16$). However, as shown in Table 2, women who planned to maintain active membership less than 2 yr. were significantly ($\chi^2 = 7.93$, $n = 253$, $p < .02$) more likely to report a new main organization than women who planned to remain active 3 yr. or longer. Note that the woman was asked only if she planned to remain a working member, not if the organization would remain her primary volunteer commitment; the relationship might have been stronger had the question been posed more precisely.

DISCUSSION

Organizational commitment as defined by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) involves three attitudes: goal congruence, willingness to exert effort, and desire to maintain membership. Satisfaction and involvement are also

attitudes, and the data suggest that they are related to commitment as measured by their 15-item questionnaire. Hours actually spent doing volunteer work for an organization are a behavioral measure which one might expect to be related to the attitude measures. However, the results suggest that, although the attitudinal measures may be related to behavior at the time of measurement, they should not be expected to predict behavior at a later time. On the other hand, the respondents tended to maintain their level of activity, and their expressed plans for membership were related to what they actually did. It seems reasonable to expect that if volunteers were asked outright what their volunteer career plans were, the answer would be accurate in most cases.

There appear to be three important implications for the management of volunteer organizations. First, commitment is not necessarily permanent, even when it is high, and the wise leader will make conscious efforts to maintain positive attitudes. Second, positive attitudes are not necessarily related to the amount of time a volunteer will contribute. Finally, the best way to predict what people will do in the future may be to ask them what their plans are.

Future research should explore the effect of multiple membership on commitment. Volunteers may be committed to several organizations and divide their time among them, or work for one one year and a different one another year. The critical question is, what will motivate a volunteer to devote time year after year to one cause, as the key leadership must?

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Accepted May 9, 1984.

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