

An Empirical Investigation of Organizational Commitment and Its Correlates in Korean Professional and Non-Professional Employees*

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Cross-cultural researchers have long been interested in transferability of U.S. organizational concepts and measures to another culture. "A major concern in cross-cultural studies is that concepts and measures developed for organizational research in the United States may be culture bound" (Sekeran, 1981: p.409).

Comparative management has been a battle field among scholars for illuminating this issue. For example, Farmer and his colleagues (Farmer and Richman, 1964; Farmer, 1973) argued for significance of cultural constraints on managerial behavior while Negandhi and his colleagues (Negandhi and Estafen, 1965; Negandhi and Prasad, 1971) advocated that uniculturally-developed theories can apply other culture.

However, there have been more arguments and quick conclusions regarding this issue than empirical investigations. It has been primarily due to methodological complexities and difficulties inherent in empirical research (Ronen, 1986), which once caused prevailing pessimism in the field.

A major problem in cross-cultural research has been due to the concept of

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culture. Dossett and Lee (1988) attempted to illuminate the enigmatic aspect of culture in operational terms. Their major contribution was recognition of controllability of residuals in empirical research, residuals which were once unsoundly treated as culture (e.g., Whitely and England, 1977; England and Negandhi, 1979). Culture and cultural response bias are two different things in a sense that when one speaks of culture he or she has a vague idea, whereas when one speaks of cultural response bias he or she has an intention of control of it in his or her mind.

Transferability assumes nullity of uncontrolled parts in residuals in cross-cultural research. In other words, cultural response bias in empirical research should be none or minimal at most. Otherwise, empirical relationships of theoretical interest once found in the United States may not be statistically significant in another culture, even when the relationships are substantial in that culture (Dossett and Lee, 1988).

The present paper attempts to shed an additional light on transferability issue with an empirical investigation in Korea. Basically, the present study is a replication of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). This study predicts that the three subconstructs of organizational commitment and their relationships with other variables found in O'Reilly and Chatman's study will be shown in the Korean sample.

I. Organizational Commitment

A great deal of research has been conducted concerning organizational commitment, but in many cases, the bulkiness of existing concepts and their measures deters a precise analysis of the construct with other related variables. Staw (1977) noted that the value of commitment as a separate construct distinct from other psychological concepts such as motivation, involvement, or behavioral intention remains to be demonstrated. Several other researchers (e.g., Kanungo, 1979; Scholl, 1981; Wiener, 1982; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986) advocated

for need of theoretical and operational definitions that clearly differentiate commitment and its components from other related concepts.

To overcome a problem in existing instruments which measure commitment globally, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) developed a new measure which distinguishes three dimensions of organizational commitment, specifically focusing on psychological attachment to an organization. The three facets of commitment are as follows: (a) compliance or instrumental involvement for specific, extrinsic rewards; (b) identification or involvement based upon a desire for affiliation; (c) internalization or involvement predicted on congruence between individual and organizational values.

Although operationally the measure is somewhat refined compared to other existing measures, little research has been done to verify existence of three commitment facets. "Beyond O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) initial report, no known work has been published on their compliance and internalization scales" (Vandenberg and McCullin, 1989). Some empirical studies using this measure explored relationships of three commitment facets exclusively with outcome variables such as turnover intention and extrarole behavior (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986; Vandenberg and McCullin, 1989), but relationships of those facets with antecedents have not yet been much tapped into. Further evidence obtained in quite different settings and in different sample groups (professional and non-professional separately) remains to be demonstrated to validate the measure broadly, and an empirical investigation of its theoretical relationships with untapped antecedents would provide valuable additional evidence concerning the construct validity of O'Reilly and Chatman's measure.

In summary, the purpose of the present study is threefold. First, it is to examine the applicability of U.S. organizational concepts and measures to Korean culture. However, this is not a genuine comparative study because data were gathered in only one country, Korea. This kind of research, what is called "ethnocentric research" in Adler's term (Adler, 1983), is more convenient and less costly than comparative research. However, the present author believes

that the easiness of this type of research motivates more researchers to conduct empirical research, and that more research activities will ultimately develop a systematic body of panhuman knowledge which otherwise may not be possible.

Second, this study pursues to search for relationships of internalization, identification, and compliance with other variables somewhat unexplored in the area of commitment research. Although the basic design of this study is similar to that of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), this study extends its foci into antecedents of the three constructs.

In addition, this study is concerned with difference in relationships of theoretical interest between professional and non-professional employees. In the literature, professionals as "cosmopolitans" in Gouldner's term (1957), have been considered a distinctive group, whose work attitudes and behaviors are quite different from those of other employees. For example, Gouldner proposed that experts (or professionals) are less likely to be "locals" (those high on loyalty to the employing organization, low on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an inner reference group) because of the skills acquired through extensive training. It has been posited that professional's primary commitment is to the occupation rather than to the employing organization (e.g., Shore and Martin, 1989). It seems valuable to investigate difference in work attitudes and behaviors between professionals and non-professionals by using the refined instrument of commitment, the three-facet measure of O'Reilly and Chatman.

In this study, most of hypotheses are drawn from the postulations that were verified in previous empirical studies in the United States. The present study is interested in whether those postulated relationships also appear beyond the cultural boundary.

Specifically, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: Factor analyses of organizational commitment and citizenship behavior will generate, in the Korean sample, factor structures similar to the ones O'Reilly and Chatman identified in the American sample (In their study, three clear factors of

commitment—internalization, identification, and compliance—emerged, and two factors of citizenship behavior appeared to represent extrarole behavior and in-role behavior.)

- H2:** Commitment rooted in identification and internalization will be related to extrarole behavior whereas compliance-based commitment will not (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986: p. 493).
- H3:** It is expected that intention to turnover is positively related to compliance (Vandenberg and McCullin, 1989: p. 234), while it is negatively correlated with identification and internalization (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986: p. 493).
- H4:** Work attitudes among professionals may be much less predictive of intentions to remain (or quit) in the organization than among nonprofessionals (Shore and Martin, 1989: p. 635).
- H5:** Employment opportunity will be negatively associated with compliance which is instrumental or calculative involvement for extrinsic rewards.
- H6:** It is expected that non-professional employees are more susceptible in their value to the influence of work situations than professional employees. In other words, internalization of non-professionals will be largely affected by cognitive variables such as job cognition, while that of professionals, whose orientations are already formed through extensive professional training, will not be affected much.
- H7:** It is predicted that professionals are less committed to employing organizations than non-professionals. Especially, internalization and identification in non-professionals will be stronger than those in professionals, while there will be no significant difference in instrumental (or calculative) involvement between the two groups.

II. Method

1. Subjects and Procedure

The sample for the present study was 275 Korean employees of 14 different organizations located in Seoul, Korea. The sample consisted of 169 non-professional employees (either managerial or clerical) and 106 researchers who had received at least two year professional training (i.e., Master and Ph.D.).

Questionnaires were administered on company time with assistance of members of each organization, resulting in a response rate of approximately 82.1%. The mean age of respondents was 28.0 year ($SD=4.4$), and their mean tenure

Table 1. Sample Size by Type of Firm

Type of Firm	N	%
Air Line	25	9.1
Banking	23	8.4
Communications	36	13.1
CPA Firm	5	1.8
Electronics	64	23.3
Research Institutes	45	16.4
Retailer	11	4.0
Chemical	66	24.0
Total	275	100

with their organization is 3.3 year ($SD=2.6$). About one fifth (19.3%) of the sample was female.

2. Measure

2.1. Organizational Commitment

The present study used a ten-item short form of O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) commitment. Items were anchored with a seven-point Agree-Disagree Likert response format. The reliability of the measure in the present sample (coefficient alpha) was .63 (The measure supposedly consists of three subscales—internalization, identification, and compliance, of which reliabilities are .79, .81, .46 respectively).

2.2. Cognitive Variables

As cognitive variables (or antecedent variables) work-group cohesion (adapted from Price and Mueller, 1986), pay cognition and job cognition (Scholl, Cooper, and Mckenna, 1987), promotional opportunity (three items adapted from Curry, Wakefield, Price, and Mueller, 1986), and employment opportunity (Curry et al., 1986) were included. Reliability coefficients of these items excluding a single-item measure, employment opportunity, were .70, .91, .88, and .80 respectively. In addition, the three-item organizational prestige specifically developed for the purpose of the present study was included. The items are as follows: "my organization is highly reputed outside"; "if I tell

other people that I work for this organization, they tend to trust me"; "my friends are envious of the fact that I work for this organization". The coefficient alpha of this measure was .76. All items of cognitive variables were anchored with a seven-point Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree Likert response format.

2.3. Behavioral Variables

To assess behavioral tendencies and behavioral intention with regard to organizational commitment, the thirteen-item measure of organizational citizenship behavior (Smith, Organ, and Near, 1983) and the three-item measure of intention to turnover (Michaels and Spector, 1982) were included. All items were anchored with a seven-point Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree Likert response format. Reliability Coefficients were .80 and .82 respectively.

3. Translation Procedure

All the aforementioned questionnaire items except organizational prestige were developed in the United States. To reduce possible cultural response bias (Malpass, 1977; Dossett and Lee, 1988), the present study put considerable efforts on scale translation. Brislin(1870) once noted problems of simple back-translation. Recently, Hulin (1987) noted that high-quality back-translations do not ensure that scores based on the two different language versions are psychometrically equivalent and can be compared legitimately. Two Korean bilinguals translated the items, which were then reviewed by another Korean. The pre-format questionnaires composed of translated items were distributed to several employees, who were asked to find out strange or nonsensical expressions while responding to each item. Then, those strange expressions checked or unexpected responses to items (inconsistent response within the same measure) were modified with consultation with those respondents, and a modified version was given to different employees. These iterative processes were executed until no problem was found out. The process stopped after the third stage, and 20 employees were involved in this pilot study. Thus, it is believed that the problems in simple translation and back-translation identified by Hulin and

Mayer (1986) would have been minimized.

III. Results

Table 2 and 3 present principal component analyses with varimax rotations of U.S. developed measures—organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. The first hypothesis regarding the cross-construct generality is demonstrated here. As was the case in O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), three factors out of the ten-item measure of commitment and two factors out of the thirteen-item measure of citizenship behavior emerged in the Korean sample. As hypothesized, the three factors of commitment represent internalization, identification, and compliance, and the two factors of citizenship

Table 2. Varimax Factor Loadings for Commitment Dimensions

Items	Varimax Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
1. If the values of this organization were different I would not be as attached to this organization.	<u>.67</u>	-.25	-.08
2. Since joining this organization, my personal values and those of the organization have become more similar.	<u>.71</u>	.26	-.07
3. The reason I prefer this organization to others is because of what it stands for, its values.	<u>.77</u>	.32	-.09
4. My attachment to this organization is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by the organization.	<u>.78</u>	.23	.03
5. What this organization stands for is important to me.	.62	.37	.05
6. I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization.	.21	<u>.86</u>	-.09
7. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	.23	<u>.81</u>	-.08
8. Unless I'm rewarded for it in some way, I see no reason to expend extra effort on behalf of this organization.	-.06	-.33	<u>.67</u>
9. How hard I work for the organization is directly linked to how much I am rewarded.	-.04	-.02	<u>.78</u>
10. In order for me to get rewarded around here, it is necessary to express the right attitude.	-.01	.06	<u>.57</u>
Percentage of variance explained	58.2%	23.9%	17.9%
Eigen value	3.51	1.44	1.08

Table 3. Varimax Factor Loadings for In-role and Extrarole Dimension

Items	Varimax Factor Loadings	
	1	2
1. Helps others who have been absent.	.59	-.10
2. Volunteers for things that are not required.	.60	.07
3. Takes undeserved breaks.	-.08	.61
4. Orients new people even though it is not required.	.68	.04
5. Helps others who have heavy work loads.	.76	.04
6. Coasts towards the end of the day.	.21	.64
7. Great deal of time spent with personal phone conversation.	.04	.62
8. Does not take unnecessary time off work.	.22	.77
9. Assists supervisor with his or her work.	.64	.12
10. Makes innovative suggestions to improve department.	.71	.21
11. Does not take extra breaks.	.03	.77
12. Attend functions not required but that help company image.	.61	.25
13. Does not spend time in idle conversation.	.14	.77
Percent of variance explained	63.3%	36.7%
Eigen value	3.94	2.28

behavior appear to represent "in-role" and "extrarole" behaviors. These results are quite consistent with those of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986).

To examine the relations of work attitudes (three facets of commitment) with self-reported behaviors, correlations among measures were computed. Table 4 presents correlations in professional and non-professional employees separately. As hypothesized (H2), commitment rooted in internalization and identification are significantly related to extrarole behavior whereas compliance-based commitment is not much related in professionals, and it is even negatively related to extrarole behavior in non-professional employees. Internalization and identification are negatively correlated with turnover intention while compliance is positively correlated with it. This supports hypothesis 4. Again, these results are consistent with findings of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and Vandenberg and McCullin (1989). Hypothesis 4 predicted that work attitudes among professionals may be much less predictive of intentions to remain (or quit) in the organization than among non-professionals. If it is the case, then at least correlations of work attitudes (three facets of commitment) with

Table 4. Correlations of Commitment with Outcome Variables

Self-reported Behaviors	Professionals (N=104)			Non-professionals (N=163)		
	Basis for Commitment			Basis for Commitment		
	INT	ID	COM	INT	ID	COM
intention to turnover	-.21*	-.45**	.17*	-.41**	-.53**	.25**
extrarole behavior	.23**	.28**	-.06	.42**	.36**	-.30**
in-role behavior	.04	.19*	-.07	-.05	.10	-.07

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

INT=internalization, ID=identification, COM=compliance.

turnover intention are smaller in professionals than in non-professionals. As shown in table 4, all the three correlations regarding turnover appear lower in professionals than in non-professionals. This result partially supports hypothesis 4.

Table 5 presents regressions for organizational commitment. As independent variables, six cognitive variables—organizational prestige, perceived work-group

Table 5. Regression Results: Predicting Organizational Commitment

Independent Variables	Professionals (N=104)			Non-professionals (N=163)		
	Basis for Commitment			Basis for Commitment		
	INT	ID	COM	INT	ID	COM
Cognitive:						
organizational prestige	-.03	.43***	-.00	.18*	.43***	-.00
work-group cohesion	.09	.09**	-.10*	.18*	.09**	-.10*
pay cognition	.04	.10*	-.06	.00	.10*	-.08
job cognition	.12	.21***	-.19***	.20**	.21***	-.19***
promotional opportunity	.17	-.07	-.00	.06	-.07	-.00
employment opportunity	-.0	-.02	-.13**	.07	-.02	-.13**
Demographic:						
education	.05	-.09	.08	-.05	-.09	.08
tenure	-.06	-.11**	.01	-.10	-.11**	.01
actual pay	-.19	.06	.04	.02	.06	.04
kinship responsibility	-.15	.08	-.06	.03	.00	-.06
F	1.1	22.5***	3.8***	3.8***	22.5***	3.8***
Adjusted R ²	.01	.36	.07	.16	.36	.07

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients.

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

INT=internalization, ID=identification, COM=compliance.

cohesion, pay cognition, job cognition, perceived promotional opportunity, and perceived employment opportunity—were entered. In addition, demographic variables which frequently appear in the literature were also included in the analysis. Several things are worth noting here. Identification is predicted by organizational prestige, job cognition, tenure, work-group cohesion, and pay cognition. Beta coefficients both in the professional sample and the non-professional sample are almost identical. Regression results indicate that tenure with organization negatively affects identification as contrary to the finding of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986: p.495). As shown in adjusted R^2 (.36), cognitive variables, especially organizational prestige and job cognition (partial R^2 of .30 and .05 respectively in either of the two samples) highly affect identification.

Compliance attitude is predicted by job cognition, perceived employment opportunity, and work-group cohesion. Again, the regression figures in both sample groups are identical. Especially job cognition and employment opportunity strongly affect compliance. Here, hypothesis 5 is supported.

In regard to the hypothesis 6, internalization in the professional sample is poorly predicted by independent variables included, while in the non-professional sample, it is nicely predicted ($R^2 = .16$ at $p < .01$) by job cognition, organizational prestige, and work-group cohesion.

Hypothesis 7 stated that psychological attachments (internalization and identification) in non-professional employees are stronger than those in professional employees, while there is no significant difference in instrumental commitment or compliance between the two groups. As shown in hypothesis 2, highly committed employees show higher extrarole behavior. This means that citizenship behaviors (either in-role or extrarole behavior) should be stronger in non-professional than in professional employees. Table 6 presents t-test of commitment and citizenship behavior between the two groups. As hypothesized, no significant difference in compliance between professional and non-professional employees was found while each of the t-values of internaliza-

Table 6. T-test of Attitudinal and Behavioral Differences between Professionals and Non-professionals

Scale	Professionals	Non-professionals	t	df
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)		
Organizational Commitment:				
Compliance	3.86(.95)	3.69(1.19)	1.20	273
Internalization	3.35(.87)	4.09(1.21)	−5.41**	269
Identification	4.57(1.24)	4.92(1.38)	−2.13*	273
Prosocial Behavior:				
In-role	4.61(.92)	5.07(.94)	−3.98**	272
Extrarole	4.68(.78)	4.97(.77)	−3.10**	271

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

tion, identification, in-role, and extrarole behavior shows significance at $p < .01$.

IV. Discussion

In general, results of the present study support the central research questions addressed. Especially, the postulated factor structures outlined by O'Reilly and Chatman are demonstrated to be relevant in the Korean sample beyond the cultural boundary. With other verifications in this study, this result provides cross-cultural support for the construct validity of O'Reilly and Chatman's measure of commitment.

In addition, most of postulated relationships of commitment with other variables are supported across culture. As consistent with findings of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), internalization is positively related to extrarole behavior, while it is negatively related to turnover intention in both professionals and non-professionals. Interestingly, internalization of non-professionals, which is predicted on value congruence between person and organization, is substantially affected by job factor, co-worker relations, and reputation of their organization. This may tell that values in non-professionals would be somewhat malleable as opposed to professionals who had received extensive professional training

and whose internalization is not influenced by the same cognitive variables entered in the regression analysis.

Second, the results appear to indicate that identification is a powerful index for commitment-related behaviors, for its relationships with either antecedents or outcome variables are much higher than those of the other two constructs. It is positively associated with extrarole behavior, but negatively related to turnover intention. This result is again consistent with the previous research in the United States, and thus supports the concept of transferability. It is also shown that one's identification with his organization is strongly predicted by the reputation of his organization. One's desire for affiliation with an organization seems significantly influenced by whether others recognize the organization.

Third, the results indicate that compliance or instrumental involvement is predicted by job factor and existence of alternatives for the present job one holds. However, as opposed to common sense, pay cognition appears insignificant in explaining compliance. It may be because seniority-based wage system in Korea does not make much difference in pay between high performers and low performers, which may cause small variance in pay cognition among employees, and this in turn probably cannot contribute substantially to total variance in compliance.

Overall, those relationships found in the United States are shown to be significant in Korea as well. So, our results indicate that there may be more similarities than differences in attitudes or behaviors of employees in both cultures. At least, our study does not support those who are in favor of cultural determinism.

In this study, compliance, of which Cronbach Alpha was .81 in Vandenberg and McCullin's study (1989), is not shown to be internally consistent (Cronbach Alpha = .46). To find out the reasons for this inconsistency in mind, the present author asked several employees how they interpreted those three items used in the questionnaire. It was found that some employees interpreted the

items in an unexpected fashion. Thus, it is believed that the inconsistency of the three items in compliance was caused by inept translation, which might distort some of true relationships with other measures.

Also, the present author believes that many more reports in cross-cultural research may distort true score or relationship when error variance is substantially large. For example, Dossett and Lee (1988) criticized the study of Luthans, McCaul, and Dodd (1985) on the ground that they inadvertently identified a measurement artifact that would confound their attempt to meaningfully interpret cross-cultural difference in their data.

One of the key factors generating measurement artifacts seems to lie in translation, and when those artifacts occur, researchers tend to attribute these unknown effects to culture. Thus, without cross-cultural validation of U.S. developed measures, any attempt to conduct empirical research with those measures would be dangerous. And, the suggested translation procedure in this study may help reducing unwanted error variance.

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