



Professional ethics and organizational commitment among the education department staff of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences

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Article info

Article Type:

Original Research

Article History:

Received: 29 Aug. 2016

Accepted: 17 Jan. 2017

published: 29 June 2017

Keywords:

Professional ethics,
Organizational
commitment,
Tabriz University of Medical
Sciences

Abstract

Background: Concepts such as organizational commitment and employees' and managers' ethics provide decision-makers and policy makers with potentially useful information which can result in increasing organizational efficiency and effectiveness. This study aimed to explore the relationship between professional ethics and organizational commitment among the staff working in the education departments of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2015. The study population consisted of all staff working as educational experts in the education departments of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences (N=65). Data collection instruments used in this study were two standard questionnaires on professional ethics and organizational commitment. SPSS software version 21 was used to analyze the data.

Results: According to the results, mean scores obtained for professional ethics and organizational commitment were (91.57 ± 9.13) (95% CI, 89.23-93.91) and (64.89 ± 10.37) (95% CI, 62.23-67.54), respectively. A significant relationship was observed between professional ethics and organizational commitment among the educational experts working in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences (correlation coefficient = 0.405) ($P=0.001$) (at 95% confidence level). Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between professional ethics and work experience ($P=0.043$). The highest level of professional ethics observed was associated with those participants having a work experience of ranging from 6 to 10 years. Individuals with full-time employment scored the highest in organizational commitment.

Conclusion: Educational experts possessed a high level of professional ethics. The finding provides the grounds for promoting organizational commitment, which will lead to higher levels of organizational effectiveness.

Please cite this article as: Imani A, Saadati M, Rezapour R, Bashirzadeh A. Professional ethics and organizational commitment among the education department staff of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. Res Dev Med Educ. 2017;6(1):51-55. doi: 10.15171/rdme.2017.009.

Introduction

Organizations consist of groups of individuals who collaborate and are interrelated to achieve a predetermined goal. Most scientists believe that organizations shape the basic of modern societies.¹ Universities, as organizations, are in charge of various educational, research, and cultural objectives and social services. Universities comply with the objectives of higher education in training experts and intellectuals to develop society. They also play a critical

role in responding epistemic needs, including training, research, and learning, as well as non-epistemic needs, including liquidity, patience, fulfillment of obligations, respect for persons, and commitment to values.²

Human resources is considered a strategic resources in each organization; employment can dramatically affect individual and organizational decisions and the success of the organizations depends upon the efficient use of human resources.²⁻⁴ The main sources of competitive advan-

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tage for organizations include self-sacrifice, commitment quality, and human potential in the form of employees. Employees are committed to organizational objectives and values. Not only are they a factor for the increasing the value of one organization relative to others, but they are also considered a sustainable competitive advantage for numerous organizations at an international level.⁵⁻⁷ Considering their distinguished role in training students, educational experts can play a vital role in promoting professional ethics and organizational commitment.⁸ Appropriate professional ethics prepare the ground to increase employees' accountability and organizational commitment.⁹ Organizational commitment indicates individuals' attitudes toward the whole organization. Typically, it is considered to be a wider and more coherent construct than job satisfaction over time.¹⁰

It is believed that the most common method for dealing with organizational commitment is enhancing emotional dependence on an organization.^{9,11-13} Previous studies have shown that management performance and behavior dramatically and positively affect organizational commitment.¹⁴ A study conducted in Malaysia by bin Salahudin et al concerning the effect of Islamic professional ethics on organizational commitment showed that Islamic professional ethics increased staff organizational commitment.¹⁵ The results of another study in Australia concerning part-time employees' commitment levels indicated that personality traits (gender, marital status, family responsibilities, and level of education), work-related features (supervisor's support, colleagues' support, role clarity, and accessible resources), and work-involvement features such as having a second job, all had an impact on the organizational commitment of part-time and contracted staff.¹⁶ Studies conducted by Schwepker et al¹⁷ and Weeks et al¹⁸ showed that ethical behavior in work places affected job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Schwepker et al¹⁷ also suggested a positive relationship between a positive ethical environment and job satisfaction as inseparable parts of a job. Peterson found a significant relationship between lack of ethics and lower levels of organizational commitment with higher levels of willingness to leave the organization.¹⁹ Further, the results of the study by Okpara and Wynn indicated a positive significant relationship between professional ethics, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction among Nigerian managers.²⁰

Education departments located at universities are of essence due to their educational roles, accessibility to a set of personal and educational information, and mostly because of dealing with students. Therefore, appropriate professional ethics would bring universities as an accountable organization by making staff become accountable and committed toward students and even societies. This article aimed to study the relationship between professional ethics and organizational commitment among the experts working in education departments in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was carried out in 2015. The study population included all staff (N = 65) working as educational experts in education departments of the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. Due to the small population size, all were included in the study sample. The inclusion criteria were as follows: employment as an educational expert, having more than 2 years of work experience, and informed consent to participate in the study.

To collect data, 2 standard questionnaires, Petty's Professional Ethics Questionnaire and Porter's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, were used. The items of the questionnaires were scored based on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5). In addition, their reliabilities and validities had been confirmed in previous studies.^{21,22} Moreover, the reliabilities of both questionnaires were reevaluated by Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = 0.85$ for both questionnaires). Porter's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire contained items on demographic information (namely, age, gender, education, work experience, employment status, and level of education) and items relevant to the assessment of organizational commitment. Petty's Professional Ethics Questionnaire consisted of items on 4 dimensions of professional ethics (namely, interest in the work, perseverance, working relationships, and participation). The possible mean scores ranged from 0 to 100. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics (mean and frequency) and inferential statistics (independent *t* test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient). Additionally, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to study the normality of the data. SPSS software version 21 was used to analyze the data.

Results

A total of 65 participants (56.7% females and 43.3% males) were included in the study. Concerning the work experience, a majority of participants (63.9%) had more than 15 years of work experience. In terms of the academic level, 59.3% of the participants were dealing with bachelor students' educational concerns. Most of the participants were full-time status employees (54.1%). Most of the participants (55.7%) had associate degree as education level. According to the results, the mean score of professional ethics was high (91.57 ± 10.37) (95% CI, 89.23-93.91) for educational experts working in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The mean scores obtained for the 4 dimensions of professional ethics are reported here: *interest in the work* (89.07 ± 13.27) (95% CI, 85.67-92.46), *perseverance* (93.99 ± 9.24) (95% CI, 91.62-96.35), *working relationships* (92.46 ± 10.98) (95% CI, 89.64-95.27), and *participation* (90.92 ± 10.44) (95% CI, 88.24-93.59). The mean score of organizational commitment was also above average (64.89 ± 9.13) (95% CI, 62.23-67.54). Considering the variable normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($P > 0.05$), Pearson correlation coefficient was employed in order to evaluate the correlation between the dependent and independent variables and to test the hypotheses. The results indicated

a direct, positive, and significant relationship correlation between professional ethics and organizational commitment (correlation coefficient = 0.405 and $P=0.001$).

A significant difference was found among the participants considering the work experience and professional ethics so that staff with 6-10 years of work experience obtained the highest mean scores for the professional ethics. Concerning the demographic variables (age, gender and level of education), no significant difference was found among the participants in terms of professional ethics and organizational commitment. Table 1 shows the results of ANOVA concerning the comparison between work experience and professional ethics.

A direct, significant relationship was observed between demographic specifications and organizational commitment for educational department experts. The results of the ANOVA concerning mean scores of demographic characteristics and organizational commitment revealed that, except for employment status was of a significant difference in the group, no other significant difference was appeared. Full-time employees had the highest level of organizational commitment. Table 2 represents the ANOVA results on the comparison between employment status and organizational commitment.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that the scores of professional ethics and its 4 dimensions obtained by educational experts working in the education department of the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences are high. Of the 4 afore-mentioned dimensions, the scores obtained for the interest in work and perseverance ranged from 89.07 to 93.98, respectively. The mean scores of the organizational

commitment also showed that the organizational commitment is above the average level for educational experts in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The results were consistent with those suggested by Enayati et al study on 148 nurses working in Fatemeh Zahra hospital in Sari, Iran.²³ The findings of Elizur D, Koslowsky,²⁴ Oliver²⁵ and Saks et al²⁶ were also in a similar vein. Some studies on organizational commitment among health professionals in developing countries showed that organizational commitment was at a low level.²⁷⁻²⁹ The high score of professional ethics highlights an appropriate context to promote organizational commitment. This issue demonstrates the necessity of creating appropriate policies for university policy makers to motivate staff, in particular educational department experts. However, because the results were obtained based on a self-reported questionnaire, overestimation by respondents is also possible.

The results of our study showed that professional ethics had a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment. The same finding was obtained by Rajabi Pour and Dehghani et al³⁰ and Khosravi et al.³¹ However, a study conducted by Dargahi et al at Tehran Medical University revealed no significant relationship between professional ethics and organizational commitment.³² Professional ethics and organizational commitment are 2 complicated concepts in organizations, affected by multiple factors such as age, gender, level of education, quality of organization management, inappropriate evaluation of staff, unfulfilled expectations, and sense of social justice.³³⁻³⁵ Demographic specifications have a direct and significant relationship with professional ethics so that employees with six to ten years of work experience had the highest level of professional ethics (Table 1). The results of

Table 1. Results of ANOVA concerning the comparison between working experience and professional ethics

Statistical coefficient ^a		Professional ethics				P value
		Mean	Standard deviation	95% CI		
				Upper	Lower	
Working experience	5 years or less	81.08	13.567	97.93	64.24	0.043 ^b
	6 to 10 years	94.24	10.210	100	86.93	
	11 to 15 years	93.94	4.060	97.69	90.18	
	More than 15 years	91.81	8.221	94.56	89.14	

^a Test of homogeneity of variances: $P = 0.06$.

^b Significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2. Results of ANOVA concerning the comparison of employment status and organizational commitment

Statistical coefficient ^a		Organizational commitment				P value
		Mean	95% CI		Standard deviation	
			Upper	Lower		
Employment status	Formal	67.47	71.50	63.44	11.36	0.026 ^a
	Projective (<i>Tarh</i>)	51.67	-	-	0	
	Contractual	63.54	66.65	60.42	7.37	
	Covenantal	51.67	69.71	33.61	7.26	

^a Test of homogeneity of variances: $P = 0.34$.

^b Significant at the 0.05 level.

studies conducted by Sanjar in government-owned organizations in Kerman, Iran and those of Asadi in state universities in Tabriz, Iran, were consistent with our study.^{36,37} A direct, positive, and significant relationship was found between demographic variables and organizational commitment, so that full-time staff displayed the highest level of organizational commitment (Table 2). Studies conducted by Yaghoubi et al on nursing managers in Isfahan training hospitals showed a significant, direct relationship between job status and organizational commitment,³⁸ indicating the importance of job security in creating organizational commitment in staff. This would increase organizations' efficiency and productivity.

Limitations

As the data used in the study was self-reported, it might be a point of potential bias (like other self-reported questionnaire studies) for the participants to over or under-estimate. Moreover, as a matter of generalizability, the context and sample of the study must be considered.

Conclusion

Considering the study findings, professional ethics indicates a high commitment of experts toward their job and organization. High organizational commitment shows the acceptance of organizational values and objectives by the education department staff. Committed employees have better occupational performance in organization. It is, therefore, recommended to periodically evaluate professional ethics and organizational commitment in experts working in education departments. Professional ethics and organizational commitment could be sustained and enhanced by identifying individuals, job, and organizational factors affecting them. Further studies with larger sample size to identify determinants of organizational commitment among staff working in various departments of universities are recommended.

Ethical approval

Informed consent was received from the study participants.

Competing interests

There was no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all education department staff participating in the study.

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