

The Influence of Academic Organizational Climate on Nursing Faculty Members' Commitment in Saudi Arabia

Nazik M.A. Zakari
King Saud University

This study explored organizational climate and its effects on organizational commitment in the setting of Saudi academic nursing. A cross-sectional design was employed. Seventy-two faculty nurses at three universities were surveyed. The Organizational Commitment, Organizational Climate, and Academic Index were used for data collection. A descriptive analysis was used. The mean age of the faculty nurses was 36.86 years, and the majority was international expatriates. The results revealed that faculty commitment is obligation-based rather than desire-based. Of the parameters analyzed, the faculty nurses reported experiencing disengagement and an emphasis on production, while intimacy received the lowest mean score. These findings have implications for the recruitment and retention of nursing faculty.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established to enhance the nation's growth and the well-being of Saudis. For example, the mission of the oldest university, King Saud University, is to provide students with a quality education, to conduct valuable research, to serve the national and international communities and to contribute to Saudi Arabia's knowledge economy through learning, creativity, the use of current and developing technologies and effective international partnerships (King Saud University [KSU], 2009). Nursing education is one of the achievements of the Ministry of Higher Education. There is a movement toward advanced nursing education to keep pace with today's health care demands. The mission statement of the nursing faculty in Saudi universities and colleges encompasses three areas: teaching, research, and community service.

Literature Review

Efforts have been made to investigate organizational climate and its effects on organizational commitment to the academic setting. Most of the literature on organizational climate and organizational commitment relates to studies conducted in academic settings in western nations.

International Studies Relating to Organizational Climate and Organizational Commitment

Academic settings emphasize reputation, image, and the pursuit of research-level status. Because of the need to maintain a significant link between faculty work and the discipline of nursing, nursing faculty members are required to prioritize their work role.

The concept of organizational climate has different definitions. According to Pritchard and Karasick (1973), organizational climate is a consequence of the interaction between individuals in an organization and their external environment. Kaczka and Kirk (1978) defined organizational climate as a set of

attributes that can be perceived within a particular organization, department or unit. In addition, organizational climate results from the organization's routine practices and influences its members' attitudes and behaviors. Borrevik's (1972) published work divides organizational climate into four domains. The first is consideration, in which organization leaders create a supportive working environment. The second is intimacy, in which social fulfillment is not required for task achievement. The third is disengagement, which is related to fractionalization within the faculty. The fourth is production emphasis, which is characterized by a micromanagement leadership style. The interaction of these factors may influence the organizational commitment of academic faculty.

Past research has shown that associations exist between organizational climate and certain factors, including motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction (Katz & Kahn, 2004; Schneider, 2008). A study conducted by Liou and Cheng (2010) showed that although Taiwanese nurses were satisfied with the organizational climate of their hospital, their commitment to the hospital was low, as was their intention to leave. The authors showed that this contradiction rises mainly because of nurses' loyalty towards one another, and the high regard to the staff's benefits as a whole. The nurses' marital status had some effect on their level of satisfaction. Generally, single nurses were more satisfied; they had a stronger commitment to their employers and a lower intention to leave compared with married nurses. The overall study results showed that a well-fitted organizational climate that addresses employee needs will increase commitment and decrease turnover.

Meyer and Allen (1993) defined organizational commitment as a multidimensional psychological circumstance that characterizes an individual's connection with an organization and has implications for his or her decision to remain involved in the organization. Organizational commitment consists of distinguishable components: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional connection and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment refers to an employee's awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Finally, an employee's sense of responsibility to the organization reflects their normative commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Reichers, 2006).

In addition, affective, continuance, and normative commitment each affects predicted outcomes. Allen and Meyer's work in the 1990s showed a positive relationship between commitment and work experience in terms of promoting comfort and personal competence. The Meyer and Allen's (2001) study revealed a positive correlation between affective commitment and supervisory ratings and a negative correlation between continuance commitment and supervisory ratings. Leadership, justice and organizational support were found to be positively correlated with affective and normative commitment and negatively correlated with continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2001). Furthermore, job involvement, overall job satisfaction and pay satisfaction were negatively related to continuance organizational commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Lum, 2006; Meyer & Allen, 2001).

The nature of faculty work and the requirements for faculty to engage in research, teaching, and service have been considered (Hershberger et al., 2005; Middaugh, 2002; Miller & Anderson, 2002). A study conducted by Hinshaw (2001) showed that 45 percent of nursing faculty were dissatisfied with their work role. The number one reason for dissatisfaction was the lack of motivating factors in the workload. Thornton (1970) published work exploring the relationship between organizational involvement and commitment to an educational facility. He found that professional rank influences faculty members' level of commitment to both their profession and their academic organization.

Gormley and Kennerly (2010) explored the ways that organizational climate and faculty work roles influence commitment in educational settings. Their study, which used Meyer and Allen's Multidimensional Model of Organizational Commitment, found significant differences between work roles, unclear roles, conflict and organizational climate. Negative relationships between affective organizational commitment and unclear role and between continuance organizational commitment and conflict were discovered.

Multiple factors affect the organizational commitment of nursing faculty in academic settings; therefore, the variables chosen for this study were based on organizational climate, organizational commitment, nursing academics and demographic data. In Saudi Arabia, few studies have explored

organizational climate and its effect on organizational commitment to the academic setting. Organizational commitment has not previously been well studied in academic nursing settings. Knowledge of how the dimensions of nursing faculty organizational commitment are influenced by organizational climate can be used to more effectively recruit and retain nursing faculty.

Purpose

This study aims to examine how the dimensions of organizational commitment are influenced by organizational climate in academic nursing settings in Saudi Arabia. This study primarily focuses on the following objectives:

1. Assessing the demographic characteristics of nursing faculty in Saudi Arabia;
2. Describing the work roles of nursing faculty, their organizational climate, and their organizational commitment; and
3. Examining the relationships among study variables with respect to the dimensions of organizational commitment and organizational climate.

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a nonexperimental, descriptive, cross-sectional correlation study. The three oldest and largest universities under the Ministry of Higher Education were selected. Full-time faculty nurses who held professional ranks ranging from full professor to clinical specialist, had academic degrees ranging from PhDs to nursing bachelor's degrees and were employed in the selected universities were recruited to participate in the study. Seventy-two nursing faculty members participated in the study.

Instruments

Four questionnaires were sent to the nursing faculty participants: (1) The Meyer and Allen Organizational Commitment Instrument (Meyer & Allen, 1993), (2) the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire-Higher Education (OCDQ-HE; Borrevik, 1972), (3) the Nursing Academic Index Questionnaire, and (4) a demographic questionnaire. Approximately 15 to 20 minutes were needed to complete the questionnaires.

The Meyer and Allen Organizational Commitment Instrument (Meyer & Allen, 1993) consists of 18 items scored on a seven-point Likert scale. These items (statements) pertain to employees' awareness of their relationship with the organization and their reasons for staying. After reading each item, respondents indicate the degree to which they agree with it by selecting a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). There are six statements for each of three commitment scales: an affective commitment scale (ACS), a continuance commitment scale (CCS), and a normative commitment scale (NCS) (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Reverse-keyed statements in the scale were recoded (i.e., 1 = 7, 2 = 6, 7 = 1) before scoring. The scores range in value from 1 to 7 with higher scores indicating stronger commitment. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the AC, CCS, and NCS subscales were 0.61, 0.73, and 0.77, respectively. John Meyer granted permission to use the commitment scales for this study.

The 42-item form of the OCDQ-HE contains four subsets addressing the organizational climate domains. Items 4, 5, 10, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 34, 35, and 40 measure consideration. Consideration subscale scores, ranging from 12 to 66. Items 8, 16, 18, 23, 26, 27, 36, 38 and 41 measure Intimacy, with Intimacy subscale scores ranging from 9 to 45. Items 3, 6, 7, 12, 17, 22, 29, 30, 33, 37, and 42 measure disengagement, and disengagement subscale scores range from 11 to 55. Items 1, 2, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 31, 32, and 39 measure production emphasis, with subscale score ranging from 10 to 50. The total possible organizational climate score ranges from 42 to 210. In the current study, the Cronbach's alphas for the climate domains were 0.84 for consideration, 0.75 for intimacy, 0.70 for disengagement, and 0.77 for production emphasis. The nursing faculty members used a five-point Likert scale to rate the extent to which the survey items occur in their academic organization (1 = almost never, 5 = always). The means were calculated for each climate domain examined in the survey.

In addition, the Nursing Academic Index and a demographic questionnaire were developed by researcher to collect information about the faculty members. This index elicits the percentage of the participants' responsibilities and time that is devoted to teaching, research, and community service. A faculty demographic form was developed to assess participant characteristics, including age, gender, nationality, highest degree earned, academic rank, and years employed in baccalaureate nursing education.

Procedures

Self-reported survey procedures were used to collect the study data. Faculty members were contacted upon receipt of the college's agreement to participate. The study participants received data collection packets. Each packet contained (1) a cover letter explaining the purpose and procedure of the study and outlining the participants' rights and confidentiality and (2) a set of self-administered questionnaires. The data were collected on site. There was no identifying information requested on any of the data collection forms.

Data Analysis

The data were managed and analyzed with SPSS 14.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive analyses were used to examine demographic information and the levels of the measured variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were used in this study. An alpha level of .05 was the criterion of significance, and alpha levels of .01 were also reported.

Ethical Considerations

The study's protocol was approved by the deanship of research at King Saud University, and ethical approval was obtained from an administrator at each academic university. Throughout the study, the protection of human rights was assured, and adherence to ethical principles was secured. Thus, the researcher ensured that each individual's autonomy was supported. Participation was voluntary, and there was no penalty for withdrawal from or termination of the study. In addition, the research methodologies were noninvasive, and little or no risk to the participants was anticipated. A written consent form was obtained from all participants.

RESULTS

In the present study, 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 72 were returned, for a total response rate of 60%. Table 1 presents the participants' demographic data. The ages of the nursing faculty range from 23 to 45 years, with a mean of 36.86 years and a standard deviation of 10.57. The majority (62.5%) are international expatriates. Female gender dominates (as expected) at 89%. The most common academic degree is a Ph. D (44%). Of those who have earned a doctoral degree, only 2.6% are Saudi nationals. Faculty ranks are distributed across assistant professor (29%), associate professor (14%), and professor (1%). However, 31% of the participants are ranked as clinical specialists. The participants' nursing faculty experience ranges from 1 to 24 years, with a mean of 5.97 years.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF NURSING FACULTY MEMBERS (N= 72)

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percent	
Age group			
23-32	32	44.4	
33-42	17	23.6	
43 +	23	31.9	
Mean Age	36.61	S.D.*	10.475
Nationality			
Saudi	27	37.5	
Non-Saudi	45	62.5	
Gender			
Male	8	11.1	
Female	64	88.9	
Academic Degree			
PhD	32	44.4	
Master's	18	25.0	
Bsc	22	30.6	
Professional Rank			
Professor	1	1.4	
Assoc. Prof.	10	13.9	
Assist. Prof.	21	29.2	
Lecturer	18	25.0	
Clinical Specialist**	22	30.6	
Years of Experience			
0-5	43	59.7	
6-10	16	22.2	
11+	13	18.1	
Mean Years of Experience	5.97	S.D.*	5.64

* Standard deviation

** Baccalaureate degree

The percentage of time devoted to various faculty work roles is presented in Table 2. The majority of faculty nurses (64%) have never conducted research during their tenure at their current academic organization. This is reflected by the number of publications per faculty member. In addition, 57% of the faculty never participates in community service, and 49% spend 100% of their time teaching.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF TIME DEVOTED TO VARIOUS FACULTY WORK ROLES (RESEARCH, COMMUNITY SERVICE, TEACHING) AND NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS (N=72)

Academic Work Role	Frequency	Percent
Research		
0%	46	63
5% to 50%	26	36
Community Service		
0%	41	57
5% to 40%	31	43
Teaching		
100%	35	48.6
25% to 90%	37	51.4
Number of Publications		
0	46	64
1-8	18	25
9+	8	11

Table 3 shows that the highest mean nursing faculty commitment score was for normative commitment (28.42; SD 6.0); continuance commitment followed (26.75; SD 6.6), and affective commitment received the lowest mean score (23.73; SD 5.7). Thus, the nursing faculty experienced a sense of responsibility toward their academic organization. In addition, the table shows that many faculty nurses experience consideration in the academic organizational climate; the highest mean score was 42.18 (SD 9.4). Intimacy received the lowest mean score (28.60; SD 6.0). However, the nursing faculty also experiences disengagement (mean score 33.58; SD 6.6) and a production emphasis (mean score 33.56; SD 6.9).

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF COMMITMENT DOMAINS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE DOMAINS

Domains	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organizational commitment domains		
Affective Commitment	23.7361	5.76046
Continuance Commitment	26.7500	6.68981
Normative Commitment	28.4167	6.09260
Organizational climate domains		
Consideration	42.18	9.441
Intimacy	28.60	6.065
Disengagement	33.58	6.643
Production Emphasis	33.56	6.948

Statistically significant relationships between organizational climate domains and organizational commitment were found at the .05 and .01 levels. The disengagement climate domain correlated with both affective commitment ($r = 0.31, p = < 0.01$) and normative commitment ($r = 0.25, p = < 0.05$). A production emphasis climate correlated with normative commitment ($r = 0.29, p = < 0.05$) and continuance commitment ($r = 0.25, p = < 0.05$). Unexpectedly, affective commitment was not correlated with either the continuance or normative commitment domains (Table 4).

TABLE 4
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE DOMAINS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT DOMAINS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Consideration	1	0.594**	0.373**	0.627**	0.001	0.079	0.144
2. Intimacy		1	0.313**	0.592**	0.070	0.052	0.185
3. Disengagement			1	0.520**	0.314**	0.128	0.252*
4. Production Emphasis				1	0.097	0.255*	0.295*
5. Affective Commitment					1	0.405**	0.156
6. Continuance Commitment						1	0.432**
7. Normative Commitment							1

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

This is the first study to explore how the dimensions of organizational commitment are influenced by organizational climate in nursing colleges in Saudi Arabia. It describes nursing faculty members' experiences with regard to their organizational climate and their organizational commitment. Although the impact of commitment on performance is only speculative, the results reveal that nursing faculty members' commitment to their organization is obligation-based (i.e., normative commitment; they *have to do so*), but not desire-based (i.e., affective commitment; they *want to do so*). From a cultural perspective, obligation to an organization, whether motivated by necessity or one's choosing, is a bond of moral duty. Continuance commitment is established when an individual is faced with the loss of a perceived investment and the only alternative available is to pursue a specific course of action. In contrast, normative commitment is established through socialization, and it is evident when an individual receives benefits and needs to reciprocate as part of the social contract. In addition, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment and a belief about one's responsibility to the organization. Employees remain because they feel that they ought to (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Meyer and Allen (2001) show that individuals with high affective commitment scores tend to have higher performance levels. This shows a direct relationship between score and performance level. The discrepancy between their results and ours can be attributed to differences in sample characteristics and demographics. Saudi citizens might place a different emphasis on achieving and excelling than members of other populations due to cultural and/or environmental factors. In contrast, employees who feel an obligation to maintain their employment and cannot afford to lose their jobs have little incentive to perform beyond what their job description states.

The academic field of nursing in Saudi Arabia is diverse; international expatriates dominate the workforce. This diverse composition is likely to affect the development of affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment development approaches need to be altered to address the new desires and concerns of the international workforce (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001).

Zakari, Al Khamis, and Hamadi (2010) studied perceptions of conflict and professionalism among international expatriate nurses. Their findings point to a low opinion among the participating nurses regarding their professionalism, which includes their personal interest in the nursing profession. They conclude that the nurses' views of their profession may have an impact on their commitment level. Suggestions for more systematic primary research concerning cultural differences in professionalism and commitment are warranted (Bentein, Stinglhamber, & Vandenberghe, 2002; Bhuian, Al-Shammari, & Jefri, 2001).

The current study revealed that faculty members' perceptions of their role differ from what their role actually requires. Many faculty nurses experience high consideration in the academic organizational climate. This finding may reflect the fact that the nurses are expatriates who have had a limited period of employment. Therefore, they establish working relationships with authorities, such as deans and chairpersons, in order to be recognized.

In addition, the faculty members experience deliberation, disengagement, and lack of intimacy in the academic setting. These results can be explained at least in part by the diversity of the nursing workforce and the faculty members' educational backgrounds. This finding may be attributed to the imbalance noted in faculty roles, which affects the relationships among faculty and negatively affects their enjoyment of the social environment. Gormley and Kennerly's (2010) study supports the finding that faculty members experience fractionalization amongst each other; this disengagement decreases productivity, promotes inefficiency and increases role ambiguity. It is important to promote balance between teaching, research, and community service, as described in the studies of both Hinshaw (2001) and Miller and Anderson (2002). Furthermore, the creation of a bridge between the official and unofficial roles of faculty members can help to restore role balance among faculty members' roles.

However, our findings show that the distribution of teaching, research, and community service work for faculty members is out of balance. This imbalance is reflected in the percentage of actual work time spent on each role per academic year. Professional development is very important for nursing faculty. They should be active in research that develops and maintains their competence in academic activities (Fairweather & Beach, 2002). A study by Miller and Anderson (2002) supports this result. Additionally, faculty members receive mixed messages about work expectations, and there is a lack of mission clarity.

In Saudi Arabia, the nursing profession is facing a serious shortage of qualified Saudi faculty. Faculty teaching in baccalaureate and higher degree programs must have doctoral training (Hinshaw, 2001). The majority of qualified Saudi faculty have baccalaureate or master's degrees. Because there are no doctoral nursing programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the scientific knowledge base of the profession will be compromised. Most Saudi nursing faculty earn scholarships to attend doctoral nursing programs abroad (Zakari, 2006).

This current study shows that normative commitment is significantly related to disengagement and production emphasis, while affective commitment is significantly related to disengagement only. Affective and normative commitment are likely necessary to ensure a willingness to work cooperatively with others and to exert extra effort to achieve the organization's objectives (Chen & Francesco, 2003; Wasti, 2003, 2005).

The new environment and the advances in higher education in Saudi Arabia will make the roles of faculty nurses more complex. A transformation from the role of educator to the role of learning process manager is required. There is a need to improve the higher education climate in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, King Saud University (KSU) has developed specific initiatives to promote an academic climate of excellence in all teaching and research fields. Furthermore, KSU has established a deanship of skills that aids in the development of faculty, lecturer, and teaching assistant skills to achieve teaching excellence (KSU, 2009). A focus on efficiency, flexibility and productivity is important to achieving this objective.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, organizational climate is an important area of research; it provides evidence of the relationships between different organizational factors. Organizational climate is a vital part of the organizational development of colleges, and it has been linked to faculty motivation and behavior (Christmas & Hart, 2007). It is important to understand how organizational commitment affects nursing faculty. The current nursing faculty shortage in Saudi Arabia persists as the number of nursing colleges increases. This will create an increase in the workload of full-time nursing faculty members. According to Kaufman (2007), the average weekly workload of nurse educators has increased to 56 hours.

The results of this study have important implications for the recruitment and retention of faculty nurses through the development of effective strategies that address both affective and normative commitment. For example, commitment can be improved by designating places for faculty socialization. The deans of universities should be able to better match faculty goals with those of the institution. This can be accomplished through interactive dialogue between those parties.

Furthermore, other aspects of this study raise questions that can be answered by future research. First, additional research could examine how the different commitment components interlink with higher education behavior over an extended time. Second, research could examine how these commitment components change based on employee relevancy and how commitment affects the quality of work roles.

Limitations

The findings from the current study offer an initial exploration of organizational climate, organizational commitment, and nursing faculty roles in the Saudi academic setting. However, the generalizability of the study's findings is limited because of the sampling method, which was based on responses from nurses working in three universities in Saudi Arabia.

To obtain more generalizable results, future investigations should include nurses working in other universities, both government and private. An additional limitation of this study was the use of a cross-sectional design. A one-time measure does not permit cause-and-effect relationships to be tested.

FUNDING

The author acknowledges the Deanship of Research and the College of Nursing Research Center at King Saudi University for funding and supporting this research.

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