

Organizational commitment and performance among guest workers and citizens of an Arab country

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Abstract

The relationships among affective organizational commitment, guest workers status, and two dimensions of individual performance (overall and helping) were explored in a unique international setting. Employees and supervisors ($N=226$) at two commercial banks in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) participated in the study. With a dissonance perspective as a backdrop, it was predicted that U.A.E. nationals, with substantial economic security and choice, would maintain more attitude–behavior consistency than guest workers, employed under highly restrictive work visas. Organizational commitment–guest worker status interactions were significant predictors of overall performance and helping, and partially supported the dissonance perspective. Implications are discussed and future research directions identified.

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1. Introduction

Interest in the determinants and consequences of organization commitment has increased rapidly in the past several years. Much of this research was aimed at establishing the link between organizational commitment and employee turnover, a relationship that receives considerable empirical support (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1989; Morrow, 1993). Interestingly, there is comparatively little research that examines the organizational commitment–performance relationship (Meyer et al., 1989). This is likely attributable, in part, to the fact that several early studies failed to demonstrate a significant organizational commitment–performance relationship (Angle and Lawson, 1994; Randall, 1990). Indeed, Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis indicated only a weak direct relationship ($r=.05$) between commitment and measures of individual performance. However, design shortcomings and other ambiguities may have contributed to null findings in several studies, leading some to suggest that the commit-

ment–performance relationship may still be an important component of organizational dynamics. Several guidelines for future commitment–performance research have been proposed. Researchers suggest that our understanding of this relationship will be enhanced by the identification and investigation of potential moderators (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), examination of specific, in addition to general, performance dimensions (Angle and Lawson, 1994), and by investigation in various types of organizational settings (Brett et al., 1995).

We follow these suggestions in this study. Specifically, we further research on the relationship between organizational commitment and performance by examining the relationship between commitment and two dimensions of employee performance. We conduct this investigation in a unique international setting, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). The dynamics of organizational commitment outside of North America has received only scant attention (Alvi and Ahmed, 1987; Luthans et al., 1985) and is a pressing need (Leong et al., 1994). In doing so, we use a dissonance perspective to explore the moderating role of “guest worker” or expatriate status between commitment and performance. The majority of the residents of the U.A.E. and the majority of the working population (>90%) are guest workers, from countries such as India

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and Sri Lanka, seeking financial opportunity (*Gone Away*, 1993). U.A.E. nationals receive different treatment, including substantial job and financial security, under the law. Conversely, guest workers in several Arabian Gulf countries, including the U.A.E., are employed under restrictive work visas that often stipulate deportation if the employment contract is ended (Bhuian and Abdul-Muhmin, 1997; Yavas et al., 1990). These conditions suggest that the relationship between organizational commitment and performance is likely to be quite different for U.A.E. nationals and guest workers, which provides a unique opportunity to explore guest worker status as a moderator of the commitment–performance relationship.

In the following section, the relevant organizational commitment literature is briefly reviewed. Next, a theory tying organizational commitment to individual performance is developed. Finally, a hypothesis regarding the moderating role of guest worker status (i.e., the guest worker commitment hypothesis) between commitment and performance is explored.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Summary of organizational commitment literature

Researchers have taken many strides in delineating different types of commitment. Morris and Sherman (1981) proposed that most theorists either favor an exchange approach, in which commitment is the result of investments or contributions to the organization, or a psychological approach, in which commitment is depicted as a positive, high-involvement, high-intensity orientation (Mayer and Schoorman, 1992) toward the organization. The latter is the predominant view of commitment, one of identification with the organization and commitment to organizational goals (Hackett et al., 1994; Mowday et al., 1982). This psychological commitment to the organization has been dubbed *affective* commitment (Gregersen and Black, 1992; Mayer and Schoorman, 1992; McGee and Ford, 1987).

Another major view of commitment evolved from Becker's (1960) work, which conceptualized commitment as an accumulation of interests (side bets) or sunk costs with the organization (Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1972; Ritzer and Trice, 1969). Several empirical studies have demonstrated the existence of this factor (e.g., Allen and Meyer, 1990; Angle and Perry, 1981; McGee and Ford, 1987; O'Reilly and Chapman, 1986). The dimension is usually referred to as *continuance* commitment, or an individual's bond to the organization because of extraneous interests (e.g., pensions, seniority, family concerns) rather than a general positive feeling or affect toward the organization (Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1972; McGee and Ford, 1987; Ritzer and Trice, 1969). Allen and Meyer (1990) further developed the idea of normative commitment or commitment arising from the

internalization of normative pressures and organizational socialization.

Of these commitment dimensions, *affective* commitment shows the most promise as a predictor of individual performance (Brett et al., 1995; Angle and Lawson, 1994) and it is this dimension that is the focus of our study. There is some evidence of a positive correlation between affective commitment and performance, i.e., employees who are affectively committed to the organization tend to perform better than those who are not (e.g., Meyer et al., 1989; Mowday et al., 1974; Steers, 1977). This link is usually theoretically justified with a motivational argument. Those committed to organizational goals are likely to work harder (Chelte and Tausky, 1986; Leong et al., 1994; Zahra, 1984) and more consistently with organizational expectations (Leong et al., 1994; Sujun, 1986; Weitz et al., 1986) than those who are not. Assuming a minimum ability level is met (Campbell et al., 1993; Porter and Lawler, 1968), high levels of organizational commitment should result in higher levels of performance (Angle and Lawson, 1994).

Although some significant relationships have been found, the magnitudes of the direct relationships between affective commitment and performance are generally small (Larsen and Fukami, 1984). This fact led researchers to explore the dynamics of different performance dimensions (Angle and Lawson, 1994; Meyer et al., 1989) and to investigate moderators of the commitment–performance relationship (Brett et al., 1995; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Indeed, identifying substantive constraints that diminish the observed relationship between attitudes and behavior is considered a critical need in organizational research (Johns, 1991). Each of these issues is discussed in the following sections.

2.2. Affective commitment and dimensions of employee performance

Despite difficulties in the measurement of individual performance (Austin and Villanova, 1992; Campbell et al., 1993; Dunnette, 1963; Ostroff, 1992) and small observed correlations between attitudes and performance (Angle and Lawson, 1994; Bateman and Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988; Puffer, 1987), researchers continue theoretical and empirical pursuit of these relationships. In this research, we examine two dimensions of performance, commonly studied in the management and psychology literature. These dimensions are not meant to run the gamut of all possible dimensions, but are meant to sample from the relevant dimensions of job performance. We examine in-role or formal job performance (Williams and Anderson, 1991) and helping or citizenship behavior (Organ, 1994; O'Reilly and Chapman, 1986). Although distinctions among different types of performance were made decades ago (e.g., Katz, 1964), only recently have empirical examinations confirmed the quasi-independence of these dimensions (e.g., O'Reilly and Chapman, 1986; Smith et al., 1983; Williams and Anderson, 1991).

Overall or formal job performance includes completion of assigned duties, performance of assigned tasks, and other formal performance aspects of the job (O'Reilly and Chapman, 1986). Theory suggests that individuals affectively committed to the organization are characterized by high involvement in the organization and commitment to its goals (Angle and Lawson, 1994; Meyer et al., 1989), activities likely to result in better job performance. Thus, a positive relationship between organizational commitment and overall job performance is predicted.

Helping behavior (sometimes also called prosocial behavior) is frequently studied in the management and social psychology literature (see Batson, 1995; Morrison, 1994 for thorough reviews). These behaviors are forms of contributions to work organizations that are not contractually required or (monetarily or otherwise) rewarded (Organ, 1994; Organ and Ryan, 1995). Helping behavior has received a great deal of attention as a dimension of citizenship behavior (Organ, 1994; Williams and Anderson, 1991). Podsakoff et al. (1997) described helping as the broadest citizenship construct and as having deep roots in the literature. Helping reduces friction and increases efficiency in the organization (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Smith et al., 1983) and thus is usually considered a critical aspect of individual performance. The commitment models of Weiner (1982) and Scholl (1981) propose that organizational commitment is partially responsible for behaviors, such as helping, that reflect a personal sacrifice to the organization and do not depend on formal rewards or punishments. Thus, a positive relationship between organizational commitment and helping behavior is predicted.

2.3. The guest worker commitment hypothesis

This study was conducted in the U.A.E. The U.A.E. has experienced a substantial standard of living increase in the past 30 years, a boon primarily attributed to windfall oil revenues. National regulations, such as the requirement that foreign business enterprises wishing to do business in the country partner with a U.A.E. national, provide citizens substantial financial security (Alnajjar, 1996). Dubai, one of seven emirates, is a busy international trading port and is a major gateway to the Middle East. International trade, combined with substantial oil reserves, has made the U.A.E. one of the wealthiest countries in the world (*How They Stack Up*, 1994). U.A.E. nationals enjoy an expensive list of perquisites and other benefits such as nearly universal health care at the government's expense (including trips overseas for certain types of operations), which provide substantial fiscal security.

Guest workers, on the other hand, face a much different environment. Foreign employees make up the majority of the working population of the U.A.E., with the labor pools in many privately owned organizations being composed nearly entirely of foreign labor. The majority of the population are guest workers, who have come to the U.A.E.

seeking economic opportunity (Ali and Azim, 1996; Alnajjar, 1996). Most guest workers are permanent residents of U.A.E. (in the data set we use, guest workers had resided in the U.A.E. for an average of 13 years), but their residence is generally contingent on restrictive work visas. Many work visas stipulate that if the employment contract is dissolved (either by quit or discharge) the employee will be deported from the country (Bhuian and Abdul-Muhmin, 1997). Thus, given the contrast between the security and working conditions provided to citizens and the foreign labor force, the U.A.E. represents an ideal setting to examine the dynamics of the commitment–performance relationship.

Although the moderating role of guest worker status between commitment and performance has not yet been examined, some related theory and empirical evidence hints at its importance. Johns (1991) noted that the observed relationship between attitudes and behavior is often attenuated by constraining factors. For example, several researches have found that the relationships among job attitudes and consequent behaviors were stronger for those with low financial requirements than those with high financial requirements (e.g., Brett et al., 1995; Doran et al., 1991; George and Brief, 1990). Brett et al. (1995) evoked Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance framework to guide this hypothesis. An individual's pressure to stay on the job can be construed as the presence or absence of choice from a dissonance perspective. According to the dissonance theory, freedom of choice is necessary for dissonance arousal to occur (Brehem and Cohen, 1962; Brett et al., 1995; Festinger, 1957). Those with freedom of choice feel pressure to maintain cognitive consistency between attitudes and behaviors. U.A.E. nationals have considerable financial security and are usually guaranteed alternative employment opportunities; i.e., they have many choices. From a dissonance perspective, these individuals will likely attempt to maintain consistency between their attitudes and behaviors. Those strongly committed will be high performers whereas those not committed will perform poorly.

Guest workers, on the other hand, are severely constrained in their freedom of choice and, thus, the relationship between commitment and performance is not likely to be strong. For these individuals, the pressure to reduce inconsistent cognitions is reduced since they have less choice in their current situation. Many guest workers migrate to the U.A.E. seeking better financial opportunities and often support large families at home. In addition, guest workers must maintain a minimum standard of job performance or face severe consequences (Yavas et al., 1990). Losing their current assignment likely means revocation of their work visa and a complicated process for re-entry into the U.A.E. In summary, guest workers must maintain an acceptable standard of performance or face deportation from the country, but are not likely to feel pressure to maintain cognitive consistency between their attitudes and behaviors.

Empirical support for the cognitive consistency idea has been found in two other studies. Brett et al. (1995) found

that organizational commitment was positively related to performance only for those with low financial requirements. Moreover, Doran et al. (1991) found that job attitudes predicted intention to quit *only when* economic freedom of choice was high.

Thus, in addition to main effect predictions, this study tested the prediction that guest worker status moderates the relationship between organizational commitment and performance. The argument here concerns the different situations that U.A.E. nationals and guest workers find themselves in, rather than an individual difference or personality argument. For example, social identity theory suggests that social classification or categorization engenders similar attitudes and behavior among members of the same group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). As such, guest worker status is a *situational* moderator in this instance, rather than a reflection of characteristics of U.A.E. national and guest workers. The form of the predicted interaction is such that the relationship between commitment and performance is stronger for U.A.E. nationals than for guest workers.

3. Method

3.1. Sample

Data for this study came from employees and supervisors at two commercial banks in the U.A.E. A member of the research team contacted the top management of the bank and was granted permission to distribute questionnaires to bank employees and their corresponding supervisors. Respondents were guaranteed complete confidentiality and assured that supervisors or bank management would not have access to their individual data. Employees were assigned a code number and a member of the research team matched employee and supervisor questionnaires. Participation in the study was voluntary and questionnaires were completed during work time. In all, 277 employees completed usable questionnaires (94% of those distributed). Of these, 16 foreign participants from the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were dropped from the analyses. Guest workers from these countries are granted less restrictive work visas that allow them to seek alternative employment in the U.A.E., if desired, and to travel more freely to and from the U.A.E. (Analyses were run with and without foreign participants from the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand in the equations. The results of these analyses were substantively identical to those reported in the body of the text.) Missing data reduced the analysis sample size to 226. Of these, 27% were U.A.E. nationals and 73% were guest workers. Of the guest workers, 41% were from India, 20% were Pakistani, and the remaining 39% were from other countries (e.g., Sri Lanka, Bangladesh).

3.2. Measures

Existing items were used to measure each of the key constructs in the study where available. Some minor modifications were made in some of the items in an attempt to make them more understandable for the participants. The questionnaire was in English. Bank employees are required to be fluent in English, as it is the business language in the U.A.E. The participants in the study were highly educated. The modal level of education for U.A.E. nationals and guest workers was an undergraduate college degree. We expected (and found) some reductions in the internal consistency of the scales compared to use in native English-speaking samples. While the minor reductions in reliability may result in a diminishment in measurement sensitivity and ability to detect significant effects, it should not bias the results.

3.2.1. Organizational commitment

Affective commitment to the organization was measured using Cook and Wall's (1980) organizational commitment questionnaire. The scale is a shortened version of commitment scales created by Mowday et al. (1979) and Buchanan (1974) and has shown strong psychometric properties in previous research (Cook et al., 1981). The items had seven response options from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are: "I am quite proud to tell people who I work for" and "I feel like I'm part of this organization."

3.2.2. Performance

The performance measures were collected from the immediate supervisor of the employees participating in the study. *Overall job performance* was measured using two items in a semantic differential format with seven response options. The items were: "How would you rate the *overall* performance of this employee?" and "Compared to your other employees, how would you rate this employee?" *Helping* was measured with a five-item scale adapted from previous work (Williams and Anderson, 1991; O'Reilly and Chapman, 1986; Organ, 1988). Sample items are: "This employee helps other who have been absent," and "This employee help others who have heavy work loads."

3.2.3. Guest worker status

This variable was coded 1 if the participant was a citizen of the U.A.E. and 0 if the participant was a guest worker.

3.2.4. Control variables

Job satisfaction was included as a control variable in all equations. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are highly correlated (Brooke et al., 1988), making its inclusion in organizational commitment studies, and vice versa, critical. Williams and Anderson (1991) state that many times "obtained significant findings for either of these variables is spurious, representing the fact that the other was not included in the study" (p. 604). We measured job

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations among all study variables

	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Age	32.88	10.37								
2. Gender	.25	.44	-.19**							
3. Tenure	7.40	5.83	.54**	-.24**						
4. Job satisfaction	5.76	.96	.12	-.03	.15*	(.61)				
5. Guest worker status ^a	.27	.44	.28**	.14*	-.21**	-.14*				
6. Organizational commitment	5.28	1.11	.26**	-.22**	.18**	.50**	-.41**	(.73)		
7. Overall performance	5.16	1.06	.20**	-.02	.17**	.11	.05	.05	(.87)	
8. Helping	5.02	1.06	.11	.04	.06	-.00	.18**	-.19**	.42**	(.72)

N=226. Coefficient alpha reliabilities on the main diagonal where appropriate.

^a U.A.E. citizens coded 1.

* P < .05.

** P < .01.

satisfaction using the three-item facet-free job satisfaction scale (Camman et al., 1983). Each item had seven response options from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are: “In general, I don’t like my job” (reverse scored) and “All in all, I am satisfied with my job.” In addition, we control for the other type of performance in all equations; that is, helping is a control variable in the overall performance equation and overall performance is a control in the helping equation. Since the concept of performance is often confusing and difficult to disentangle (e.g., Angle and Lawson, 1994; Morrison, 1994), interpretability of the findings is enhanced when shared variance from other performance dimensions is removed (see also Dobbins et al., 1993; Freeman et al., 1996). Three personal characteristics (age, gender, and tenure), collected on the employee questionnaire, were also included as controls.

3.3. Analysis strategy

Zero-order correlations were computed and reported for all study variables. Of greater interest were multiple regressions that allowed us to look at the predictors simultaneously. Hierarchical regressions (Cohen and Cohen, 1983) were used to enable us to enter the variables as blocks and to assess the *incremental* explanatory power of each block. The first block consisted of control variables (job satisfaction, the alternate performance measure, and personal characteristics). The second block contained the organizational commitment and guest worker status variables. The third block consisted of the organizational commitment–guest worker status interaction. Increases in explained variance for each block and standardized regression coefficients for each variable were examined.

Table 2
Hierarchical regression results with overall performance and helping as the dependent variables

	Overall performance			Helping		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Block 1</i>						
Age	.11 [†]	.10	.11	.04	.11	.10
Gender	.00	.01	.01	.08	.04	.04
Tenure	.09	.09	.09	.00	.00	.00
Job satisfaction	.09	.05	.05	-.07	.06	.01
Overall performance	–	–	–	.42**	.40**	.41**
Helping	.41**	.42**	.43**	–	–	–
<i>Block 2</i>						
Guest worker status ^a		.02	.07		.13 [†]	.07
Organizational commitment		.08	.01		-.22**	-.15*
<i>Block 3</i>						
Guest worker status–organizational commitment			.16*			-.15*
R ²	.22**	.22**	.24**	.19**	.25**	.26**
	.22**	.00	.01*	.19**	.06**	.01*

N=226. Standardized regression coefficients are shown for each model.

^a U.A.E. citizens coded 1.

* P < .05.

** P < .01.

[†] P < .10.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement check

Given that the guest workers in this study varied in their nation of origin, it was important to establish that there were no subgroup differences on the key variables in this study. The large majority of guest worker participants (80%) were from India or Pakistan. After coding (0 = Indian and 1 = Pakistani), we conducted mean differences tests on all of the variables included in the study. No significant differences were found.

4.2. Hypothesis tests

Correlations and descriptive statistics for all study variables are reported in Table 1. Coefficient alpha reliabilities are reported in the main diagonal in Table 1 where appropriate.

As Table 1 shows, overall performance and helping were strongly correlated ($r=.42, P<.01$) as were organizational commitment and job satisfaction ($r=.50, P<.01$). These correlations give credence to the practice of using them as controls in this context.

More interesting were the regression equations that allowed an examination of the predicted relationships in context (see Table 2). In the overall performance equation, neither guest worker status ($\beta=.02, n.s.$) nor organizational commitment was a significant predictor ($\beta=.08, n.s.$). However, the interaction term was significant as predicted, explaining an additional 1% of the variance in the equation. The form of this predicted interaction was also as expected. The plot of the interaction term is shown in Fig. 1. The

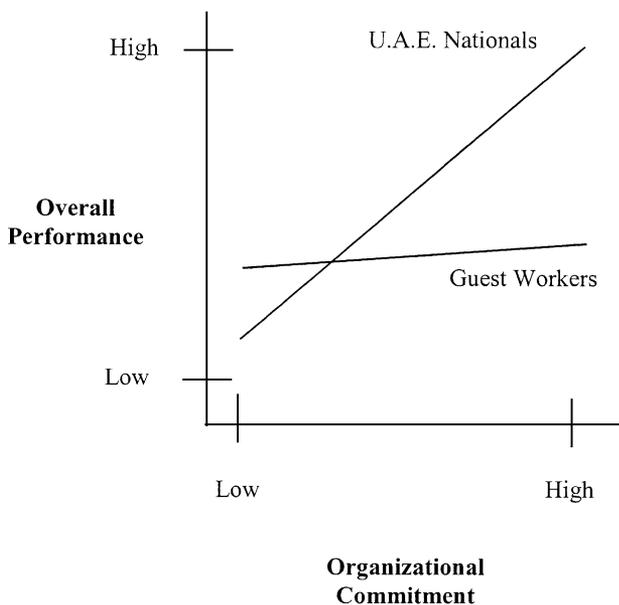


Fig. 1. Interaction between guest worker status and organizational commitment in predicting overall performance.

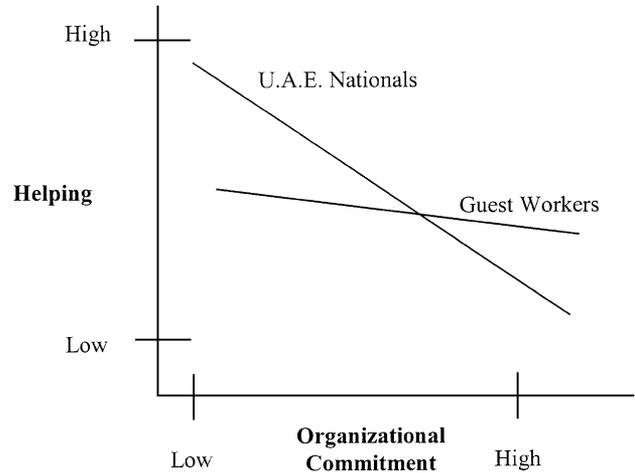


Fig. 2. Interaction between guest worker status and organizational commitment in predicting helping.

organizational commitment–performance relationship is plotted separately for U.A.E. citizens and guest workers. The relationship between organizational commitment and performance was strong and positive for U.A.E. nationals, but was much weaker among guest workers. The nature of this interaction supports the dissonance perspective prediction.

The relationship between organizational commitment and helping behavior was significant, but in the opposite direction from that predicted ($\beta = -.22, P < .01$). The guest worker status variable was marginally significant in predicting helping ($\beta = .13, P < .10$) with U.A.E. national status associated with more helping behavior.

Again the interaction term was significant—this result is depicted in Fig. 2. As expected, there was no strong relationship between commitment and helping for guest workers, although the relationship was negative. The results for U.A.E. citizens unexpectedly indicate a strong negative relationship between commitment and helping. Thus, although the main effect result suggests that U.A.E. nationals, on balance, help more, highly committed U.A.E. nationals help less than those with low commitment.

In summary, these results provide strong support for the interactive dynamics between organizational commitment and guest worker status in predicting performance dimensions, but there was only partial support for the dissonance perspective. Each interaction was significant, but only the organizational commitment–guest worker status interaction for overall performance conformed to the expected pattern.

5. Discussion

This study adds to the developing commitment literature by enhancing our knowledge of the relationship between organizational commitment and performance under different types of employment contracts. These results expand on findings by Doran et al. (1991) and Brett et al. (1995) that

the consistency of the relationship between workers' attitudes and behaviors is contingent upon situational factors, in this case, guest worker status in the U.A.E. The results of this study are mixed, supporting theoretical predictions from the dissonance perspective for overall performance, and highlighting a more complex pattern of relationships in the helping behavior equation.

Consistent with previous research, organizational commitment was not strongly related to performance dimensions in this study. Notably, the relationship between commitment and overall performance was not significant. Several researchers have noted the paucity of evidence to support a relationship between commitment and generalized employee performance (e.g., Angle and Lawson, 1994; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). It is possible that the lack of consistent significant findings across studies is due to measurement error. For example, performance ratings are often political undertakings rather than meaningful differentiations among employees. This diminishes researchers' ability to demonstrate meaningful relationships among variables (Longnecker et al., 1987). It is likely, however, that the findings of this study are more substantive than methodological. The performance ratings collected were specific to this study and not part of the formal employee assessment process of the organization. Since pay raises, promotions, and reprimands were not contingent upon these performance ratings, the possibility that the measure was contaminated by these factors is diminished. Another threat is restriction of range in the performance measure. Although *comparative* performance was a part of the overall performance measure to facilitate differentiations in the performance ratings, 70% of the respondents were rated above the midpoint in overall performance.

Commitment was *negatively* related to helping behavior, contrary to expectations and some empirical work (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Although there is evidence that affective commitment increases helping and other citizenship behaviors (Organ and Ryan, 1995), others have suggested that affective commitment results in some positive and some negative consequences for the organization (Leong et al., 1994). For example, Randall (1987) argues that high levels of commitment stifle growth and flexibility. Highly committed individuals are intent on pursuing organizational objectives, and may not consider helping others solve problems and catch up on work as a part of those objectives. These results support these arguments. Helping behavior, as well, is likely to have positive and negative aspects as far as performance is concerned. On the one hand, helping behavior may increase internal efficiency and may result in more highly skilled and knowledgeable work groups. On the other hand, there is likely to be a threshold effect for helping beyond which are diminishing marginal returns and deleterious effects on organizational functioning. Certainly, identifying conditions under which organizational commitment and helping have positive and negative consequences in the organization would be an interesting and potentially fruitful area for future research.

Taken together, these results illuminate the rather complex nature of the relationship between commitment and different aspects of performance. The results also highlight the usefulness of examining different dimensions of performance when possible, especially given that there is no consensus on how organizational commitment influences different aspects of employee behavior (Jaros et al., 1993; Mayer and Schoorman, 1992; O'Reilly et al., 1991).

The interaction results are some of the more interesting findings in the study. The results with respect to overall performance conformed exactly to the hypothesized form. Organizational commitment and performance were not strongly related among guest workers, reflecting from a dissonance perspective, the lack of choice available in their current situation. The relationship for U.A.E. citizens was significant and positive, perhaps since the multitude of opportunities available to them apply pressure to maintain a consistent attitude–behavior relationship. Although it is possible that alternative theories can also explain this relationship, this is among a series of studies that provide some support for the dissonance perspective.

Helping behaviors decreased as affective commitment levels increased across the sample, although the relationship was much stronger for U.A.E. citizens than guest workers. As previously mentioned, the consequences of helping or altruism are generally considered to be positive from an organizational standpoint (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). However, in some circumstances, highly committed individuals may consider helping others in the organization to be separate and apart from the direction of organizational goals. To the extent that helping takes away from the pursuit of organizational objectives, a negative relationship would be expected.

Another post hoc explanation for this unexpected finding can be taken from the work of Ali and Azim (1996) and Ali et al. (1997). Ali et al. note that loyalty to organizations among citizens of Arab countries like the U.A.E. is often exhibited to clarify the potentially divergent and contradictory loyalties to the country and one's local, regional, or tribal group. As such, Ali (1992) found that Arab executives often placed a stronger importance on organizational loyalty than to personal loyalty. Moreover, a general sense of distrust often exists between U.A.E. citizens and nonwestern guest workers. Since the majority of the workforce (greater than 70% in this sample) were nonwestern guest workers, U.A.E. citizens with a high level of commitment to the organization may be strongly committed to task performance (e.g., see the results of Ali, 1992), but may not be willing to extend *extra-role* help to the other workers given that they are primarily guest workers. In this sense, the observed results with regard to helping behavior in this study dovetail nicely with the findings of Ali and colleagues.

The dissonance perspective can help explain the helping behavior dynamic for guest workers, as the relationship was not substantial. Interestingly, though, if committed U.A.E. nationals perceived helping others to be *dysfunctional* for

the organization (i.e., they are not inclined to give extra-role help to guest workers), then highly committed citizens are maintaining attitude–behavior consistency by reducing the amount of helping in the organization. It is beyond our capabilities in this study to examine how U.A.E. nationals and guest workers perceive the utility of helping coworkers in the organization. However, this issue may point out situational contingencies that alter perceptions of performance from the employees' perspective (Eisenberger et al., 1990). More generally, identifying when and why employees see extra-role behaviors as advantageous and disadvantageous will take organizational researchers a long way toward understanding the relationship between organizational commitment and various dimensions of performance, especially in different cultural settings. These issues would certainly be fruitful areas for future study.

The limitations of the study should be acknowledged. Whereas this study did examine two performance dimensions, the dimensions were obtained from supervisory evaluations. The validity of performance evaluations is a subject of much debate in the management literature (e.g., Bernardin and Beatty, 1984; DeNisi and Williams, 1988; Landy and Farr, 1980; Murphy and Cleveland, 1991; Wexley and Klimoski, 1984) and the study is limited to the extent that the evaluations are not an accurate reflection of employee performance. Counteracting this limitation is the fact that the appraisals were collected specifically for this study. This reduces the possibility that the evaluations were purposefully biased for one or more organizational uses of performance evaluations (Cleveland et al., 1989).

The study was conducted in a unique international setting. Although this serves as a strength of the study, the generalizability of the results can also be questioned on this basis. However, the business and cultural environment of the U.A.E. is similar to that in many other Arab and African countries, and, thus, the results may have substantial and direct practical value for organizations in these regions. With respect to other settings, the direct relationships between organizational commitment and performance were somewhat similar in magnitude to those reported in many studies in North America. This finding corroborates the idea that the examination of moderator variables is critical. The specific guest worker interactions may not be generalized to U.S. samples, for example, but are important nonetheless. The patterns of results were somewhat similar to those found using financial requirements as a contingency factor (e.g., Brett et al., 1995; Doran et al., 1991; George and Brief, 1990). It is likely that financial requirements also played a large role in this study. This study cannot identify whether the commitment–performance relationship is different for U.A.E. citizens and guest workers because of differing financial states, preferential treatment, job security, or a combination. An interesting area for future research would be to attempt to disentangle these complex dynamics.

This was a cross-sectional investigation; therefore, causality cannot be shown. Conceptually, it is often unclear what

the causal direction of the relationship between organizational commitment and performance actually is. In many cases, the relationship is likely to be reciprocal (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Certainly longitudinal designs and studies, which employ methodologies that can tease apart these causal mechanisms, are needed. It is of clear importance to design future studies that enable testing causal and reciprocal relationships.

Finally, it could be argued that the respondents (although required by the banks to be fluent in the English language) did not understand the questionnaire items in the same fashion as might native English speakers. That the respondents were generally college graduates and that the questionnaire items were very straightforward (e.g., “In general, I don't like my job”) reduce this possibility. Furthermore, other research has supported the idea that job attitudes are similar among guest worker populations in the region (e.g., Alnajjar, 1996; Bhuian and Abdul-Muhmin, 1997). However, the results and conclusions should be circumscribed by this possibility. Certainly, future research that addresses this limitation or includes multilingual questionnaires (e.g., Abdulla and Shaw, 1999) would be useful.

In conclusion, this study adds to our knowledge of the commitment–performance relationship. It shows the utility of examining potential moderators of the commitment–performance relationship, guest worker status in this case, and partially supports the dissonance perspective.

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