

The Influence of Calling and Perceived Organizational Support on Commitment across Ecclesial and For-profit Organizations

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Abstract

The article adds to an understanding of organizational commitment (OC) by examining how the construct varies between church volunteers ($N = 89$) and for-profit ($N = 218$) employees in Norway. The study used a non-experimental field-based methodology to analyze data collected cross-sectionally through self-administered questionnaires. A series of two-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test whether OC differed by type of organization, reporting higher levels of normative commitment (NC) and affective commitment (AC) in ecclesial organizations than in their for-profit counterpart. In addition, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether calling and perceived organizational support (POS) were predictors of OC in both types of organizations. The results confirm previous research showing that POS is an antecedent of NC and AC in for-profit organizations, and expand current commitment theory by showing that this is also the case for AC among church volunteers. The predictive power of calling on commitment was found to be weak in both types of organizations. The limitations of the study are indicated, and suggestions for practice and future research are provided.

Keywords: organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, calling, volunteer, church, Norway

Introduction

In a world of rapid changes, the organization with the most committed members has the upper hand. Research on Organization Commitment (OC) has shown that commitment correlates with behavioral indicators, such as attendance, turnover, absenteeism, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002), implying that the committed worker is willing to go the extra mile for the organization. Previous research has detected that OC varies across different types of organizations (Goulet & Frank, 2002), and the present article provides an original contribution by comparing for-profit organizations with ecclesial organizations, thus shedding light on both differences and similarities between religious and secular organizations. Churches are a dis-

tinct form of volunteer organization, and perspectives on commitment in local ecclesial settings is an under-examined area (Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Moore, 2012). Previous research has addressed commitment among pastors (Zondag, 2001), commitment to congregations (Bond, 2001; Ghorpade et al., 2012), and commitment in relation to communication and church growth (Wilson, Keyton, Johnson, Geiger, & Clark, 1993), but little has been done about examining how OC operates in ecclesial settings compared to for-profit organizations.

Over the last decades, research has indicated a profound change in voluntary work, toward a double goal of benefitting others *and* oneself (Schnell & Hoof, 2012, p. 36). Observers of voluntarism in Norway report a similar shift from cause to interest, with increasing individualization and short-term commitment accompanied by decreasing ideological commitment among members of voluntary organizations (Gulbrandsen & Ødegård, 2011, pp. 13–16, 101–102). In general, Norwegians are more inclined to participate in organizations that meet their personal needs or interests rather than those which address overarching values or societal needs, and individual ties to collective groups are weaker than previously. These changes have serious implications for religious organizations that rely on volunteers for most of their work, and further highlight the importance of exploring sources of commitment in ecclesial settings.

The goal of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of OC by addressing the following research questions: First, are volunteers in ecclesial organizations more committed to their organization than are employees in for-profit organizations? The term “ecclesial organizations” is used interchangeably with churches in this study, and refers to local Christian congregations. I frequently refer to churches as ecclesial organizations to underscore the organizational vantage point of this paper. Second, to what degree might calling and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) explain the difference in commitment between the two types of organizations? Before these questions are answered by means of empirical data, the literature on OC, calling, and POS will be reviewed, and hypotheses proposed.

Literature Review

Organizational Commitment

The recognition that OC takes different forms is arguably one of the most significant developments in commitment theory over the last decades (Wasti & Can, 2008). It is generally accepted that OC is a multidimensional construct (Allen & Meyer, 1997) involving a sense of identification with organizational goals, involvement in the organization’s duties, and a sense of loyalty toward the organization. Research indicates that people who are committed are less likely to quit and find other jobs, while lack of commitment can reduce the organization’s effectiveness (Ivancevich, Matteson, & Konopaske, 2011). OC is also related to the intention to remain over the long term in volunteer organizations (Vecina, Chacón, Marzana, & Marta, 2013).

Although there are many definitions of commitment, Meyer and Allen (1991) noted that there appear to be at least three general themes, namely, an affective attachment to the

organization, a perceived cost related to leaving the organization, and a sense of obligation to remain in the organization. Based on these common characteristics found in the literature, Meyer and Allen proposed that commitment is a psychological state that has three separate components reflecting (a) desire (affective commitment; AC), (b) need (continuance commitment; CC), and (c) obligation (normative commitment; NC). Allen and Meyer (1990) further argued that commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and influences whether the employee will remain in the organization. These characteristics are common to all three aspects of commitment, making it possible for the individual to experience all three forms of commitment to varying degrees.

Within the above framework, AC is defined as an "employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization" (Meyer, Irving, & Allen, 1998, p. 32). It is thus a form of psychological attachment to the organization characterized by belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, as well as a willingness to contribute on behalf of the organization (Reid, Riemenschneider, Allen, & Armstrong, 2008). CC, on the other hand, refers to perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, meaning that people are motivated to remain in the organization because they need to. Finally, members with high levels of NC remain in the organization because they feel that they ought to, hence describing commitment in terms of duty and obligation.

Since little has been written on OC in church settings, research on commitment in volunteer organizations may provide clues as to how commitment works in ecclesial organizations. After all, the church is, at least for the vast majority of its members, a volunteer organization. As voluntary work is neither paid nor obligatory, it is easy for volunteers to leave the organization if they wish to do so, and their relationship to the organization rests primarily on psychological and non-material attachments. It is thus likely that OC will take different forms in ecclesial organizations than it will in for-profit organizations. To verify this empirically, the following hypotheses were tested:

- H1: OC differs by type of organization.
- H1a: NC differs by type of organization.
- H1b: AC differs by type of organization.
- H1c: CC differs by type of organization.

Calling

The notion of calling has traditionally been associated with religion, but recent streams of organizational research claim that religious beliefs or orientation are neither necessary nor sufficient to have a calling (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Hall & Chandler, 2005). On the contrary, the term is increasingly being used to describe people's attitude and fulfillment in the workplace regardless of spiritual orientation or religious affiliation. No census regarding the construct currently exists, but calling typically refers to some sense of purpose, meaningfulness, and service to others. The term may or may not be used with any reference to God or the divine and is not limited to any specific sphere of work, as calling may be pursued in all occupations (Dik & Duffy, 2009) – albeit more typically so in public and non-profit

work than in the for-profit sector (Word, 2012, p. 149). The conceptualization used in the present work follows Dik and Duffy's working definition, which explains calling as

a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 427)

Church attendance is known to be a strong general predictor of voluntarism (Driskell, Lyon, & Embry, 2008; Johnston, 2013), and Garland, Myers, and Wolfer found that a "call to serve" was the most common phrase used to describe motivation for long-term voluntary work among Christian volunteers (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2009, pp. 28–29). Yet previous research has not directly addressed calling as a predictor of OC in ecclesial and for-profit organizations. The two constructs are found to be related, however (Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011; Markow & Klenke, 2005; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015; Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2015).. To explore whether calling is an antecedent of OC in both types of organizations, the following hypotheses were suggested:

- H2: Calling is a predictor of OC in both types of organizations.
- H2a: Calling is a predictor of NC in both types of organizations.
- H2b: Calling is a predictor of AC in both types of organizations.
- H2c: Calling is a predictor of CC in both types of organizations.

Perceived Organizational Support

While OC describes how individuals feel about and commit to an organization, POS addresses how people perceive an organization's care and commitment toward them. The construct suggests that when employees interpret support from the employer as a demonstration of the organization's commitment to them, they are likely to return this support in terms of commitment to the organization (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986).

There are at least two reasons to include this variable in the study. First, a body of research has depicted a positive relationship between POS and OC, especially of the affective type (Aubé, Rousseau, & Morin, 2007; Bryan, Barnett, Hester, & Relyea, 2003; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; McBey, Karakowsky, & Ng, 2017; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), but little is known about how the construct plays out in ecclesial organizations. It is thus of theoretical and practical interest to explore how perceived support from the organization influences volunteers' commitment to their church. Second, the use of POS as a variable that is known to predict OC in comparison to calling, a newcomer in commitment studies, provides a reference point for the relative influence of calling in both types of organizations. Consequently, a third set of hypotheses is proposed:

- H3: POS is a predictor of OC in both types of organizations.
- H3a: POS is a predictor of NC in both types of organizations.
- H3b: POS is a predictor of AC in both types of organizations.
- H3c: POS is a predictor of CC in both types of organizations.

Method

Sample and Participant Selection

The study used a non-experimental field-based methodology to examine OC in ecclesial and for-profit organizations. Data were collected cross-sectionally through self-administered questionnaires where all items were assembled into one form. All data were collected over a period of three weeks in March 2014. The for-profit sample was recruited among 1353 employers in the retail banking department of a Norwegian bank. An internal HR-representative sent an invitation with a link to the online survey by e-mail. The invitation included a brief explanation of the study, a description of the associated benefits for the organization, and a guarantee of anonymity. Of the 294 responses, 218 were complete and could be used for the analyses. Of the people who returned usable questionnaires, 50.5% were men and 49.5% were women. The mean tenure was 19.7 years ($SD = 14.5$). The non-profit sample was recruited from one Baptist and two Pentecostal churches located in three different locations in southern Norway. Responses were collected randomly among volunteers who have a ministry or responsibility in the church at least once a month. 89 people completed the survey either online ($N = 55$) or on paper ($N = 34$) from a population of 179 volunteer workers. 47.2% of the participants were men and 52.8% were women. The mean tenure was 8.5 years ($SD = 11.3$).

Measures

All of the measures described below were administered in Norwegian after being translated and adapted from existing English scales (see appendices) by using the subject matter expert method. In short, two bilingual experts, whose native language is Norwegian, individually translated the original scales into Norwegian and adapted them to this cultural context. They then compared their translations and corrected minor discrepancies before a third expert reviewed both the original and adapted versions of the scales to ensure semantic and conceptual equivalence. Permission for use and translation of all instruments was granted by the authors.

Demographic variables

In addition to the instruments described below, demographic variables were controlled, as prior research indicates that gender and organizational tenure influence commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Tenure was measured as years of service to the organization, gender by using a dichotomous variable with two levels.

Organizational Commitment

OC was measured using the revised version of Meyer and Allen's (1997) measurement of NC, AC, and CC (Appendix A). This is the most dominant conceptualization of OC (Ruokolainen, 2011) and has been successfully used in volunteer settings (Dawley, Stephens, & Stephens, 2005). Using a questionnaire consisting of a total of 18 items (e.g., "I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization"), responses are obtained on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Calling

Calling was measured using the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ, Appendix B), a recently developed scale that conceptualizes calling in line with Dik and Duffy's (2009) definition of calling mentioned above. The instrument is the first to assess calling in a manner linked with a clear definition of the construct (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012). Only the items assessing presence of calling will be used in this study, leaving a total of 12 items on a 4-point Likert scale (e.g., "My work helps me live out my life's purpose") where 1 = not at all true for me and 4 = absolutely true for me.

Perceived Organizational Support

POS was measured using the short form of Survey of POS (SPOS, Appendix C), consisting of 16 items on a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., "Help is available from the organization when I have a problem") where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The score for seven of the items should be reversed. Short versions of the test have been successfully used in previous studies (Aubé et al., 2007; Bishop, Scott, Goldsby, & Cropanzano, 2005).

Since the same measures were used in both for-profit and volunteer organizations, context-dependent terms were altered in all instruments when appropriate (e.g., "church" was used for "organization" and "employer" in ecclesial organizations). The rendering of words was approved by the authors. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all scales, showing high levels of reliability (AC: 0.86; NC: 0.84; CC: 0.75; CVQ: 0.90; SPOS: 0.96).

Results

All data in the study were analyzed using SPSS version 21. Intercorrelations among study variables for the two types of organizations are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Intercorrelations among Study Variables in For-profit Sample

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.50	.50								
2. Tenure	19.66	14.52	.14*	.66**						
3. POS	4.52	.97	.14*	.18**	.19**					
4. Calling	2.09	.43	.02	.03	.00	.34**				
5. NC	3.81	1.23	.08	.08	.15*	.62**	.40**			
6. AC	4.82	1.16	.15*	.35**	.37**	.75**	.33**	.68**		
7. CC	3.94	1.16	-.02	.32**	.45**	-.04	.04	.14*	.11	

Note. N = 218. *p < 0.05 (2-tailed); **p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 2
Intercorrelations among Study Variables in Non-profit Sample

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.53	.50								
2. Tenure	8.47	11.25	-.15	.67**						
3. POS	5.53 ^a	.59	-.06	.04	.10					
4. Calling	3.17 ^b	.54	.04	.19	.17	.50**				
5. NC	5.14 ^c	.93	-.12	.26*	.32**	.29**	.26*			
6. AC	6.13 ^d	.78	-.02	.10	.24*	.48**	.48**	.42**		
7. CC	3.61 ^e	1.15	.03	.05	.15	-.17	-.02	.42**	.05	

Note. N = 89. ^aN = 82; ^bN = 84; ^cN = 85; ^dN = 88; ^eN = 79 due to missing values.

*p < 0.05 (2-tailed); **p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

To test whether OC differs by type of organization (Hypothesis 1), a series of two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted, one for each type of commitment. Tenure was

treated as covariate, and found to be significant for NC ($F(1, 290) = 5.62, p = 0.02$), AC ($F(1, 293) = 10.23, p = 0.00$), and CC ($F(1, 285) = 26.94, p = 0.00$). Gender was entered as an independent variable, but did not generate significant results for any of the dependents. There was a significant effect by type of organizations on NC after controlling for the effect of tenure, $F(1, 290) = 35.50, p = 0.00$. This was also the case for AC, $F(1, 293) = 83.14, p = 0.00$. Mean scores for NC in for-profit and non-profit organizations were 3.86 and 5.35 respectively. Thus, NC differs across organizations and Hypothesis 1a is supported by the data. Additionally, AC mean-scores differed between the two types of organizations (4.61 in for-profit compared to 6.28 in non-profit), showing support for Hypothesis 1b as well. The results for CC, however, were not significant ($F(1, 285) = 0.45, p = 0.50$), and hypothesis 1c must thus be rejected.

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, stating that calling (Hypothesis 2) and POS (Hypothesis 3) were predictors of OC in both types of organizations, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses was performed, one for each type of commitment. Gender and tenure were entered as control variables in step 1 of the regression analyses, then the two independents (calling and POS) in step 2. Data were split, and output was organized by type of organization to depict differences between the for-profit and non-profit samples. Missing values were handled by excluding cases list-wise. The results of the analyses are summarized in Table 3.

POS and calling contribute to 40 and 47% of the unique variance for NC and AC in the for-profit sample, respectively. For the volunteer group, POS and calling only explain 24% of the unique variance in AC. There is only a weak correlation between calling and NC in the for-profit sample, but no significant correlation between the two constructs in the ecclesial organizations. Hypothesis 2a is thus only partially supported. There is correlation between calling and AC in both types of organizations, with a slightly stronger relationship in the ecclesial sample. Hypothesis 2b is therefore supported. Both regression coefficients are rather low, however, and the predictive power of the analysis is limited. Finally, there is no significant support for the proposal that calling is a predictor of CC in any of the organizations. It follows that Hypothesis 2c must be rejected.

Furthermore, the data indicate that POS is a relatively strong predictor of NC in for-profit organizations. For ecclesial organizations, however, there are no significant results indicating any correlation, hence Hypothesis 3a is only partially supported. Hypothesis 3b, stating that POS is predictor of AC, is supported in both types of organizations, although the magnitude of the relationship is more than twice as strong in the for-profit sample. Finally, there is a weak negative correlation between POS and CC in the for-profit organization, yet tenure is the strongest predictor of CC in this sample. The regression analysis revealed no significant correlation between CC and any of the independent variables in the ecclesial sample. Hence, there is only weak and partial support for Hypothesis 3c.

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Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Organizational Commitment in For-profit and Non-profit Organizations.

Variables	NC					Non-profit				
	Beta	R ² change	df	F	Beta	R ² change	df	F		
Step 1:		-	2, 215	2.86		-	2, 74	6.19**		
Gender	-.01				-.03					
Tenure	.05				.34**					
Step 2:		.40**	4, 213	39.85**		0.7	4, 72	4.77**		
POS	.54**				.22					
Calling	.21**				.07					
Total R ²	.43**				.21**					
N	218				77					
AC										
Step 1:		-	2, 215	18.80**		-	2, 76	4.41*		
Gender	.02				-.04					
Tenure	.25**				.22*					
Step 2:		.47**	4, 213	87.90**		.24**	4, 74	9.84**		
POS	.66**				.32**					
Calling	.11*				.26*					
Total R ²	.62**				.35**					
N	218				79					
CC										
Step 1:		-	2, 215	28.51**		-	2, 72	1.24		
Gender	-.07				.11					
Tenure	.49**				.17					
Step 2:		.02	4, 213	15.92**		.04	4, 70	1.39		
POS	-.15*				-.23					
Calling	.09				.06					
Total R ²	.23**				.07					
N	218				75					

Note. Beta is the standardized regression coefficient. *p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Discussion

This study sought to answer two questions. First, whether volunteers in ecclesial organizations are more committed to their organization than are employees in for-profit organizations. The results indicate that this is the case. The mean scores of NC are 38.6% higher in ecclesial organizations than in the for-profit sample. Mean scores for AC are of the same magnitude, showing a difference of 36.2% between the two organizations. No significant results were generated in order to dispute or confirm previous studies, indicating that CC is less relevant for volunteer organizations (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dawley et al., 2005). The results also indicate that AC is the dominant type of commitment in ecclesial settings and that AC will be higher in voluntary ecclesial organizations than among professional employees in for-profit organizations. The second research question addressed whether there are any differences in how POS and calling influence OC in the two types of organizations. To answer that question, I will examine the constructs separately before closing with some overarching conclusions and perspectives.

Perceived Organizational Support

This work has revealed that POS is a predictor of AC in volunteer ecclesial organizations, as it is for-profit organizations. This is in line with previous research (Aubé et al., 2007; Bryan et al., 2003; Casper, Martin, Buffardi, & Erdwins, 2002; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009; Rhoades et al., 2001) and it is not surprising, as POS strengthens affective bonds to the organization, leading to higher levels of affiliation and loyalty (Makanjee, Hartzer, & Uys, 2006; Riggie, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). Notably, however, the regression coefficients are significantly lower in the ecclesial sample. This is quite interesting, as the total AC level is significantly higher in ecclesial settings. Hence there is a mismatch between the reported mean scores and the regression coefficients between the two organizations. Although the study has confirmed the assumption that AC would be higher in ecclesial organizations, what causes the high mean scores remains an enigma. The total R^2 value shows that the variables in the equation account for only 21% of the variance in AC; hence the study is unable to explain why the average level of AC is higher among volunteers in ecclesial organizations than among for-profit employees. As for NC, it is evident that POS was the most important contributor to NC in the for-profit organization. In contrast, the regression analysis generated no significant results for this variable in the volunteer sample, leaving tenure as the only significant predictor of NC in the ecclesial setting.

In short, the study has not revealed what predicts the high levels of normative and affective commitment in ecclesial settings. However, it confirms the stream of research that describes POS as an antecedent of OC and extends this understanding into the domain of unpaid church workers, thus adding to our knowledge of how commitment operates in volunteer organizations. Lastly, it confirms Boezeman and Ellemers' (2007) claim that NC, not only AC, is crucial for volunteer commitment to an organization.

Calling

Taking calling as the second independent variable in the regression, the analyses reveal that this construct was a predictor of NC only in the for-profit sample. Furthermore, calling is a predictor of AC in both types of organizations, the highest regression coefficients being in the volunteer sample. This is expected, as calling has, at least in Norwegian, clear religious connotations.

What is more surprising, however, is that POS is a stronger predictor of AC than is calling even among church volunteers. Moreover, the low coefficient value for the for-profit sample and the low R^2 square value for ecclesial organizations imply that one should be cautious in concluding that calling is a predictor of AC in any type of organization. A look at the central tendency of the calling variable, aside from the regression analyses, reveals that the scores are much higher in the volunteer organizations ($M = 3.17$, $Mo = 3.5$, $SD = 0.54$) compared to the for-profit sample ($M = 2.09$, $Mo = 2.00$, $SD = 0.43$). This does not fully translate into commitment to the organization, however, and we are left to look for other reasons for commitment to ecclesial organizations.

One explanation for the lack of influence on commitment among church volunteers may be that calling, as it is operationalized in this study, is an attribution of the individual, not of the organization. Consequently, a sense of calling may produce commitment to a career, ministry, vocation, or office, but not necessarily turn into commitment to the organization in which the ministry or job is currently performed. From this perspective, calling generates commitment to a cause rather than to an organization, and in free-church ecclesiology it is possible to separate the two. The above-mentioned change in volunteer motivation lends support to this assertion, as volunteers are now more committed to the work they do than the organization they do it in (Wollebæk & Sivesind, 2010, pp. 93–94). The activity is more important than the institutional frame, and volunteers may thus easily migrate to similar organizations.

There are studies refuting this suggestion, however, as research on organizational spirituality indicates that people relate their spirituality not only to personal life meanings but also to the organizational contexts in which these are enacted (Lips-Wiersma, 2002, p. 386). In addition, workplace spirituality has been found to cause greater OC (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008). Yet current research indicates that calling alone, while located in the greater scheme of organizational research, cannot predict commitment to an organization. This is in line with Markow's (2007) findings, suggesting that there is no automatic connection between having a deep sense of calling to the ministry and satisfaction and commitment to one's current role and ministerial work (pp. 89–90).

This study proposed – and partly supported – calling as an antecedent of OC. It is not clear, however, that the causal relationship goes in that direction. One may also suggest that organizations that express spirituality may be defined by certain cultures and values that, in turn, may lead to a sense of calling (Rego & Cunha, 2008, p. 61), or that calling contributes to commitment only as a mediator of personal meaning (Markow & Klenke, 2005). A more controversial explanation for the relatively weak predictive power of calling on commitment is

that church volunteers are not primarily motivated by service at all. Ghorpade et al. (2012) found that spiritual gains, operating efficiency, programs and services, and attendance and participation influence AC to congregations, the first two being the most significant predictors. In contrast to calling as studied in the present work, these factors emphasize what the organization does or gives to the individual, not the reverse. Hence one may ask whether volunteers in ecclesial organizations are motivated more by what they can get than by what they can do, by self-interest more than altruism. Are people called in the sense of having “a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self” (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427) – or are they simply happy with the support they receive from their organization and return the favor by committing to it? If so, the results confirm the shift in voluntarism from cause to interest described above – “we organize to an increasing extent with the purpose of meeting our own needs and interests. It is a form of *organized individualism*” (Selle & Øymyr, 1995, p. 241; see also Wollebæk, Sætrang, & Fladmoe, 2015, Chapter 3). Although this assertion cannot be answered from the current data, it worth noting that POS, that is, the individuals’ sense that the organization cares and commits to them, is the strongest predictor of NC and AC in both types of organizations.

Summary

As OC is a key motivational factor in volunteer organizations (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007), it is important to understand what causes commitment in ecclesial organizations. The present study has examined how POS and calling contribute to commitment among church volunteers by comparing and contrasting them with employees in a banking company. Its main contributions can be summarized in two points. First, it has revealed that both NC and AC are higher among volunteers in ecclesial organizations than among employees in for-profit (banking) organizations. It is also evident that AC is the most important form of commitment in both types of organizations. These findings add to commitment theory, as comparison across these types of organizations has been seldom explored. Second, the study has compared the predictive power of calling and POS as antecedents of OC in both types of organizations. The results confirm POS as an antecedent of OC, but suggest that calling generally has a limited influence on commitment in volunteer church settings as well as in the banking sector.

As an overall observation, it is very interesting that despite the substantially higher levels of NC and AC in ecclesial organizations, the regression coefficients for all predictors (except for calling on AC) had stronger influence on OC in the for-profit sample. This might be caused by the small ecclesial sample size and the uneven distribution between the types of organizations. In any case, this discrepancy leads to the conclusion that the present study has not been able to detect the strongest predictors of NC and AC in ecclesial organizations. Clearly, POS and calling do contribute to AC in the volunteer sample, yet the regression coefficients or the total R^2 values are not strong enough to account for the relatively high mean scores in the ecclesial settings. Consequently, commitment in ecclesial organizations must stem from other sources than the variables examined in this study. Previous research has shown that an individual’s relationship and attachment to God may influence his or her com-

mitment to the organization – as may religious teachings or institutions (Kent, 2017, pp. 487–489). Additionally, there seems to be a connection between theology – in the form of a specific understanding of vocational identity – and OC (Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015). As such, some religious traditions experience higher levels of voluntarism or commitment than others (Driskell et al., 2008; Kent, 2017). Although such intra-religious differences were neither the focus of nor a unit of analysis in this study, they serve as a reminder that there may be confounding variables at work that are not accounted for in the present analysis.

Implications for Practice

Although this study shows higher levels of OC among volunteers in ecclesial organizations than among banking employees, the changing landscape of voluntary organizations and volunteer motivation should deter churches from resting on their laurels. In contrast, congregations who want congregants to contribute in the long haul should work deliberately to increase their commitment to the organization. In line with the argument thus far, a logical implication would be to ensure that church volunteers perceive the organization's care and commitment toward them.

On an interpersonal level, church leaders may increase POS by providing volunteers with praise and approval. For such symbolic benefits to be perceived as a token of the organization's support, however, the sincerity of the giver is important; unselective praise given to all volunteers, independent of their contribution, will backfire and reduce the sense of organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986, p. 504). It follows that ecclesial leaders should aim at being attentive to volunteers and co-workers in their congregation, and flexible in meeting the needs of the individual. In a similar vein, they should exercise transformational leadership with individual consideration and strive to develop relationships with followers characterized by mutual trust and respect (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

On an organizational level, POS is likely to increase if volunteers are given room to serve in activities or roles that offer an outlet for the person's interests, abilities, or talents (McBey et al., 2017, pp. 995–996). In contexts with strong egalitarian ideals, participative decision-making processes, and a highly educated population—such as in Scandinavia—it is especially important for ecclesial leaders not only to give people responsibility but also to provide them with flexibility and autonomy to shape the way they perform these roles or activities. When the congregation trusts the volunteer to wisely carry out his or her obligations, the individual is likely to perceive support from the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 700) and, in turn, commit more fully to it.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the above discussion, future research must continue to investigate reasons for and antecedents of OC in general, and among volunteers in ecclesial organizations in particular. Given the critical role played by committed volunteers in local congregations, this is an area that deserves increased attention among scholars and church leaders alike, because such organizations must attract and retain workers without the monetary benefits associated with professional workplaces.

The banking company comprising the for-profit sample was reorganizing at the time of the data collection, and there is a chance that this turbulence may have affected the results. To detect such confounding factors, the mean scores of the dependent variables were compared to another financial organization ($N = 28$), revealing only minor differences ($< +/- .20$) between the samples. It is therefore unlikely that contextual circumstances had any major influence on the results. Still, due to a low response rate in the for-profit organization, the present sample may consist of a small subset of particularly committed employees. Future research should strive for a higher response rate and address the temporal relations among the constructs to better illustrate how calling interacts with commitment over time. Since calling as a phenomenon is assumed to span long periods of time (Dobrow, 2004, p. B4), it might be beneficial to use longitudinal designs with data collection at different times to reduce the risk related to the collection of dependent and independent variables from the same source simultaneously.

Finally, future research should probe deeper into the use of calling language to describe attitudes toward work and organizations in secular settings. Reviewing this study, I am not convinced that terms and phrases from the CVQ such as “calling” and “force/something beyond myself,” because of their religious undertones, are fortunate in non-religious organizations in secular environments such as Norway’s. More secular conceptualizations of calling as originating from within the individual omit references to external sources (Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2015, p. 501; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). In retrospect, I believe this could have been a better option, since the study sought to compare the influence of the variable across two very different contexts. Data appear to support such an assertion, as scores in the for-profit sample were extremely low for items containing explicit calling language. Notably, the individual administering the survey among the for-profit sample reported strong reactions from some employees regarding the wording of the questions in the CVQ, especially its religious connotations. One might speculate that people who are more religious are more comfortable about describing their work in calling phraseology (Duffy, Reid, & Dik, 2010, p. 212), and if so, semantics represents a major threat to the reliability of studies such as this one.

Appendix A: OC Scales (Allen & Meyer, 1997)

AC Scale Items

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. (R)

CC Scale Items

1. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
2. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization right now.
3. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
4. I believe that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
5. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.
6. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice; another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.

NC Scale Items

1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)
2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
3. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
4. This organization deserves my loyalty.
5. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
6. I owe a great deal to my organization.

Appendix B: Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (Dik et al., 2012)

1. I believe that I have been called to my current line of work.
2. My work helps me live out my life's purpose.
3. I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career. (R)
4. The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others.
5. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.
6. Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career.
7. I see my career as a path to purpose in life.
8. My work contributes to the common good.
9. My career is an important part of my life's meaning.
10. I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others.
11. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so.
12. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work.

Appendix C: Survey of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986)

1. The organization values my contribution to its well-being.
2. If the organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.
(R)
3. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
4. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.
5. The organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
6. The organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me.
(R)
7. Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.
8. The organization really cares about my well-being.
9. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice. (R)
10. The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
11. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
12. If given the opportunity, the organization would take advantage of me. (R)
13. The organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
14. The organization cares about my opinions.
15. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
16. The organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.

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