

INSIDE LOGISTICS



EXPLORING THE HEART OF LOGISTICS

Using Leadership to Increase Commitment for Civil Servants and Air Force Personnel in Times of Conflict

Donald S. Metscher, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF Ret, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

William A. Lowe, Jacksonville State University (AL)

F. Barry Barnes, Nova Southeastern University

Leanne Lai, Nova Southeastern University

Introduction

Over the past two decades, recruiting and retention has become an enormous concern for the all-volunteer military service. The commitment level required of Air Force employees and government employees continues to be an important issue as well. Following the terrorist events on 11 September 2001, an increase in patriotism coupled with a declining economy allowed recruiting and retention goals to be met. Individuals seemed to be more willing to commit to a career in the military. However, as the war on terrorism continues, retention rates are expected to decline.¹ General D. L. Peterson, the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, testified to the United States (US) Senate Subcommittee on Personnel that, “Although we will continue to have a challenging recruiting and retention environment, the Air Force is committed to developing the right programs to recruit and retain America’s best and brightest.”² More recently “service officials point to the hard work by recruiters as the key to the success, but they also say increased patriotism as a result of the war on terror and a bleak economic picture in many areas also play a role in attracting young people into the military.”³ Retention rates of military members are still up but officials are concerned about how long it will last.

This study examines the influence of leadership practices on active duty (military) Air Force personnel and government civil service (civilian) employees concerning their organizational commitment using a model developed by Steers⁴ and refined by Mowday, Steers, and Porter⁵ as the theoretical foundation. This research seeks to measure the different elements of organizational commitment of Air Force employees and how those levels are related to employees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ leadership styles.

Background of the Problem

The nature of the jobs associated with the US military requires a higher level of commitment than most other civilian jobs since the American people look to their men and women in uniform as symbols of America’s strength, power, and determination.⁶ Men

and women in the US Air Force are trained to expect dangerous assignments requiring a higher level of commitment than most other employees in the private sector. Government civil service employees may not experience the dangers associated with military service or time separations away from home that their active duty counterparts do, but they do require increased dedication to support the active force. General Peterson says, “We recognize the increasingly important role of civilians to our Armed Forces. They are our leaders, scientists, engineers and support force that provides reachback for deployed and forward-based forces.”⁷ Civilians play an important role in support jobs within the US, allowing deployed forces to reachback for needed logistical support from the forward areas. Civilians can be found at all levels within the Department of Defense (DoD) and within military units.

The United States Air Force and DoD continue to examine the recruiting and retention statistics of Air Force employees and to make program changes as necessary.⁸ Although deployments continue to remain high, recruiting and retention statistics for the active and reserve components remain high.⁹ “People don’t come here to make money...there is something else that motivates people to serve. Retention is not driven purely by when the economy is hot and when it is not.”¹⁰ Although climate assessment surveys look at many factors affecting commitment, no studies were found which have directly examined the relationship between leadership and organizational commitment of Air Force employees.

Commitment is now considered a central concept in military motivation. This is in contrast to an earlier emphasis on compliance through obedience.¹¹ Commitment to the military organization, which could involve combat operations, creates an unlimited liability clause for members of the military.¹²

Leaders can have a significant impact on people, communities, and organizations. For a leader to make a difference, he or she should invest in becoming the very best leader possible.¹³ Getting others committed and keeping them that way is important to leaders because commitment to one behavior has implications for several other behaviors. Providing people with choices, making choices visible, and making

choices hard to back out of will help ensure that the future matches the leader's vision.¹⁴

The single most important element of success in war is leadership. Leaders can inspire their subordinates to go *above and beyond*, and the expectations of the leader and subordinate play key roles in the development of leadership. Just as important are the leader's vision, the working environment, and the example the leader sets to his or her followers.¹⁵

As the number of military engagements of US Armed Forces around the world continues to increase (without an increase in the total number of military personnel), it is critical for military leaders to understand the specific leadership practices that will result in high levels of employee commitment and attainment of organizational goals. The purpose of this study is to examine the specific leader behaviors as perceived by Air Force personnel and civilian employees, and its effects on their organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment

According to Gal, commitment is a powerful motivator, greater than a paycheck, especially when military service activities involve high risk, extreme demands, and severe stress.^{16,17} Commitment is the backbone of the military profession. Belonging to the Armed Forces is not merely a question of a place to work, a job, or an occupation. It is a way of life and often a lifetime commitment. The nation's Armed Forces have a long and proud history of serving our country in peace and war. Each of these times in our history has different levels of involvement and different levels of commitment. In times of peace it may involve time away from home and family during training. In war, it may involve increased danger. Our government and military leaders must seek to understand what will affect their subordinates' commitment during times of peace and war, in good times and difficult ones.

Over the last 40 years, the interest in organizational commitment has grown in both the public and private sector. Within the subject of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement are among the more popular and widely studied employee attitudes.¹⁸ According to Lowe, the consequences of the research are the establishment of linkages among numerous personal values, role states, and work environment aspects ranging from job characteristics to organizational structure dimensions.¹⁹

The Volcker Commission suggested that organizational commitment is a key to increasing public service motivation and recommended more empirical studies of employee commitment.²⁰ Previous studies have helped us to understand the motivational base of public service and government service employees at all levels.^{21, 22}

Article Acronyms

ANOVA—Analysis of Variance
CPA—Certified Public Accountant
DoD—Department of Defense
LPI-O—Leadership Practices Inventory: Observer
OCQ—Organizational Commitment Questionnaire
US—United States

Military Perspective on Organizational Commitment

Sarkesian suggests there are three types of commitment in the military: organization, career, and moral. Organizational commitment aligns with the organization's goals, purposes, and norms.²³ Career commitment results in one's own success, and moral commitment is related to the moral codes that each person believes in and for which one will sacrifice. Gal also suggests commitment derives from one's own sense of duty, responsibility, and conviction.²⁴ Finally, Bass proposes that all three types of commitment need to be in alignment for military professionals to be in harmony with their organization.²⁵

For military commanders and many others in leadership positions, there is commitment to one's personnel, the unit, and the task.²⁶ Bass believes that transformational leadership can develop, maintain, and enhance this alignment. When the leaders' commitment to their personnel, unit, and the task are not aligned, leaders may fall back on demanding obedience, serve their most important commitment, or rationalize their actions as matters of obedience and professional loyalties.²⁷ "Transformational leaders ask their followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or society."²⁸ Kouzes and Posner do this by having leaders exemplify the leadership practices described in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. "Transformational leaders closely resemble the leaders we describe in this book, inspiring others to excel, giving individual considerations to others, and stimulating people to think in new ways."²⁹

The nature of the jobs associated with the military requires a higher level of organizational commitment than most civilian jobs. Jobs associated with the military first require taking the enlisted or officer oath. The *Air Force Promotion and Fitness Study Guide*, says the oath is a solemn promise to do one's duty and meet one's responsibilities. Implied in that oath is the responsibility to lead others in the exercise of one's duty.³⁰

In addition, men and women in the Air Force are trained to expect dangerous assignments requiring a higher level of commitment than most employees in the private sector. Each active duty member is expected to memorize and abide by the *Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces of the United States*.³¹ The code contains six articles, which require the highest commitment anyone can be expected to give to their country. The first two articles require the highest sacrifice. Article I states that the member will "serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense." Article II states that the member will never surrender of "my own free will. If in command I will never surrender my men while they still have the means to resist." Finally, the code demands dedication to the principles that "made my country free."³² The Code of Conduct clarifies the commitment level required of all Service members in different situations they may encounter. It includes basic information useful to US prisoners of war in their efforts to survive honorably while resisting their captor's efforts to exploit them to the advantage of the enemy's cause and their own disadvantage.³³

Mowday, Steers, and Porter: Organizational Commitment Core Theory

In 1982 Mowday, Steers, and Porter suggested the following integrated definition of organizational commitment.

The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Conceptually, it can be characterized by at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.³⁴

The central theme of this definition is the identification with the organization. For the Air Force, it is being part of the team. The strong belief in, and acceptance of, the goals and values means accepting the higher level of commitment which includes taking the oath, signing a contract, and abiding by the Code of Conduct. Exerting considerable effort on behalf of the organization means accepting the fact that Air Force employees must work long hours and spend time away from home on temporary duty. Finally, career Air Force employees have a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.^{35, 36}

Commitment is the linkage between the employee and the organization. This linkage helps identify the outcomes or consequences of organizational commitment: absenteeism, job performance, tardiness, and turnover.³⁷ All of these are important to organizations, especially the Air Force concerning both its active duty and civil service employees. The linkage is also the bond and involvement the employee has with the organization.

Mowday, Steers, and Porter include three stages or time elements of organizational commitment.³⁸ The first is pre-entry, which can be compared to the recruitment stage of employment. It represents anticipation and job choice influence on commitment. The second is the early employment stage. This is similar to the training stage and first few years or first term of enlistment for Air Force employees. It represents initiation or the development of commitment during the first few months of employment. Last is the middle or late career stage. This stage is similar to the career Airman or employee who plans on staying in the organization until reaching retirement eligibility. In this stage, there is continuing development and maintenance of commitment. Mowday, Porter and Steers' research indicates that different factors will influence commitment in the different stages.

Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory Model

The Air Force has recently adopted Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices for leadership training at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.³⁹ According to Patton, Kouzes and Posner's five dimensions of leadership provide a better explanation of successful leadership behavior than alternative theoretical frameworks with fewer dimensions.^{40, 41}

Kouzes and Posner first introduced the leadership practices theory in their book *The Leadership Challenge* in 1988.⁴² Their research determined what extraordinary leaders did when they were at their "personal best" in leading others rather than managing. In the second edition of that book (1997) they concluded that leadership is a set of behaviors that can be learned and applied by supervisors and managers, at all levels of leadership, and regardless of seniority, experience, and education.⁴³

As a result of the personal-best cases, Kouzes and Posner developed a model of leadership identifying five key practices, each having strategies or commitments.⁴⁴ The five key leadership

practices, which are most important for effective leaders, are as follows.

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision
- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart

People who use these practices create higher performance teams, inspire loyalty and commitment, reduce absenteeism and turnover, and demonstrate a high degree of credibility. Kouzes and Posner also created a quantitative instrument called the *Leadership Practices Inventory* to measure leadership behaviors pertaining to their model.

The first key leadership practice for the model is to challenge the process.⁴⁵ This means encouraging people to search for opportunities to change the status quo, experiment, take risks, and learn from mistakes. The two required commitments are: (a) search out challenging opportunities to change; and (b) experiment, take risks, and learn from the resulting mistakes.

The second key leadership practice is to inspire a shared vision.⁴⁶ Leaders who inspire a shared vision convey a clear image of the future and develop a general understanding of the vision to members of the organization. The two commitments are: (a) creating a vision by envisioning an uplifting and ennobling future, and (b) enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams.

The third practice for leaders is to enable others to act.⁴⁷ "Without trust, you cannot lead."⁴⁸ The first required commitment is to foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. The second is to strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.

The fourth key leadership practice is for leaders to model the way by demonstrating high standards and establish clear expectations for individual performance.⁴⁹ A leader who models the way demonstrates the commitments of: (a) setting the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values, and (b) achieving small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment. "People become the leaders they observe."⁵⁰

The final practice is for leaders to encourage the heart.⁵¹ The two commitments are: (a) recognize individual contributions to the success of every project, and (b) celebrate team accomplishments regularly. This is done by setting high expectations, recognizing individuals for their progress and contributions, providing rewards for exceptional performance, and celebrating the accomplishments of the work group.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions.

- What is the influence of leadership practices on employee organizational commitment of active duty Air Force and government civil service employees working for the Air Force? This research question was directed at identifying the specific leadership behaviors that will aid in developing a strategy for increasing the organizational commitment of Air Force employees.

- Is there a relationship between certain personal characteristics (rank, time in service, age, education level, and gender) and organizational commitment of Air Force members? The answers can help identify specific leadership behaviors that are most likely to result in an increase in organizational commitment among Air Force members. They also could help to develop a strategy to increase military and civilian motivation, as well as job effectiveness and efficiency.
- Is there any difference between active duty military and government civil service Air Force employees' perceptions on the leadership practice of their leaders?

The three research questions led to 35 hypotheses for testing the relationship between the five perceived leadership practices, the elements of organizational commitment, and the demographic characteristics.

Research Design

This study surveyed 430 civil service and active duty employees working for the US Air Force. The objective was to examine the relationship between the perceived leadership practices and organizational commitment of Air Force employees. All respondents were students, faculty, and staff of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, and students on-site at Ogden, Utah and Warner-Robins, Georgia. The courses taught at these locations were for logistics personnel. Most civilian respondents work at one of the three Air Force air logistics centers performing maintenance or supervising major maintenance and aircraft overhaul. All respondents volunteered to participate in the survey with anonymity being assured.⁵²

Survey Instruments

The survey instrument for this research contains the following three components: (1) the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter;⁵³ (2) the Leadership Practices Inventory: Observer (LPI-O) published by Kouzes and Posner;⁵⁴ (3) a Personal Characteristics/Demographic Questionnaire.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) consists of 15 questions.⁵⁵ This previously validated organizational commitment instrument has been selected to ensure data reliability and validity, as well as consistency with previous research. Mowday et al., originally used a sample population of 2,563 employees working in nine different organizations, including both public and private organizations, for the OCQ's validation.⁵⁶ The OCQ was selected to measure organizational commitment because of its high levels of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, convergent validity, discriminate validity, and predictive validity. Past studies that demonstrate reliability and validity of the OCQ include research by Lowe,⁵⁷ Stonestreet,⁵⁸ Sturges, Guest, Conway, and Mackenzie-Davey,⁵⁹ Parnell and Crandall,⁶⁰ and Peterson and Puia.⁶¹

Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer Questionnaire

The Leadership Practices Inventory: Observer (LPI-O) instrument was developed by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner and provides 30 descriptive statements for the respondents to rate the extent their

leader engages in specific leadership practices or behaviors.⁶² The LPI-O was selected because extensive research confirms the Leadership Practices Inventory model's reliability and validity ratings and extensive use in related research.^{63, 64, 65}

Personal Characteristics Questionnaire

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were determined by answers to Part III of the survey instrument. This data was requested to establish the characteristics of the sample population including position in the Air Force or civil service, years of service, gender, age group, and highest education completed.

Results

Questionnaires were distributed to 430 students and faculty. The respondents consisted of both active duty (military) and government civil service (civilian) Air Force employees. Of 430 surveys distributed, 328 were returned providing an acceptable response rate of 76.3 percent. Total active duty (military) Air Force respondents were 215 (65.5 percent of total respondents) and government civil service (civilian) Air Force employees were 113 (34.5 percent of total respondents).

Results of Hypothesis Testing

The statistical methods used in this study included both descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. Descriptive univariate analysis was performed to check the frequency distribution, means, and standard deviation. The inferential statistics include analyzing data obtained from Independent t-test, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), Pearson Correlation, and Post Hoc test with a .05 alpha significance level.⁶⁶ The study included reviewing the demographic profiles of the respondents' position in the Air Force (civilian service or active military), years of service (tenure), gender, age, and education level. Furthermore, the data analysis for the OCQ analysis and the LPI-O was completed and discussed.

The research questions suggested 35 hypotheses that were tested. The results in Table 1 indicate there is a relationship between all Air Force employees, the combined and individual leadership practices (of challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, or encouraging the heart) in employees' self-reported commitment to the organization.

In addition, the results supported separately, the relationship for active duty Air Force (military) and government civil service employees (civilian), and the combined sum of the individual leadership practices and individual leadership practices in employees' self-reported commitment to the organization (see Tables 2 and 3). However, active duty Air Force employees reported higher levels of commitment when compared to government civil service employees.

In a test of the perceived leadership practices of supervisors of the active duty (military) employees, government civil service (civilian) employees, and the combined and individual leadership practices, only the individual leadership practice of modeling the way was found significant (see Table 4). In this test the military group reported a higher mean than the civilian group. The leadership dimension of modeling the way shows a significant difference ($p = .025$) and the military group mean (43.38) is greater than the civilian group (39.89).

All the other respondents' demographic characteristics were tested using the ANOVA with only the respondents' employee position supporting a statistically significant relationship in commitment to the organization (see Tables 5 and 6).

As a result of the ANOVA for the sum of organizational commitment in Table 5 indicating a significant difference among positions in the Air Force, a Post Hoc test was conducted. This is shown in Table 6, indicating personnel in senior positions, colonels and above, and GS-15 and above, as the top two groups having the highest levels of organizational commitment. The other active duty personnel fell below them in rank order with E-1 through E-3 at the bottom. Of note was that the three remaining civilian groups comprising GS-5 through 14 fell just above the bottom in reverse rank order with the GS-13 through GS-14 group being the lowest. It is recommended that additional research be conducted in just the civilian ranks to determine if this remains valid and what reasons can be surmised for the GS 5-9 group showing higher commitment level than the GS 13-14 group. None of the other demographic characteristics were found significant.

Summary of Findings

Leadership Practices and Organizational Commitment Relationship

The findings show a positive relationship between pairs of all five dimensions of leadership practices (challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart) and organizational commitment for Air Force active duty and civilian personnel using surveys developed by Kouzes and Posner,⁶⁷ and Mowday, Steers and Porter.⁶⁸ In addition, a positive relationship was found between the combined sum of Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices and organizational commitment. The study results

Pearson Correlations							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	1.000	0.398*	0.376*	0.374*	0.408*	0.406*	0.336*
Sum LPI-O		1.000	0.952*	0.960*	0.932*	0.967*	0.947*
Challenge			1.000	0.837*	0.911*	0.876*	
Vision				1.000	0.837*	0.911*	0.876*
Enable					1.000	0.899*	0.873*
Model						1.000	0.889*
Heart							1.000
Pearson Probabilities							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	0.000	0.963	0.890	0.978	0.713	0.874	0.895
Sum LPI-O		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Challenge			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Vision				0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Enable					0.000	0.000	0.000
Model						0.000	0.000
Heart							0.000

Sig. (2-tailed)

* indicates significant (p < 0.05)

Table 1. Pearson Correlations and Probabilities. Compares the five leadership dimensions With the Organizational Commitment Summary

Pearson Correlations							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	1.000	0.419*	0.406*	0.373*	0.453*	0.398*	0.362*
Sum LPI-O		1.000	0.951*	0.960*	0.919*	0.966*	0.943*
Challenge			1.000	0.934*	0.810*	0.906*	0.853*
Vision				1.000	0.826*	0.908*	0.875*
Enable					1.000	0.883*	0.849*
Model						1.000	0.884*
Heart							1.000
Pearson Probabilities							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sum LPI-O		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Challenge			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Vision				0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Enable						0.000	0.000
Model						0.000	0.000
Heart							0.000

Sig. (2-tailed)

* indicates significant (p < 0.05)

Table 2. Pearson Correlations and Probabilities for Active Duty (Military) Air Force Employees

showed that the leadership practice of *enabling others to act* had the strongest positive relationship to the respondents' self-reported levels of organizational commitment. We conclude this is a reflection of the Air Force's continued efforts to empower their military employees and allow them a great deal of responsibility. Many recruiting posters and commercials show young active duty members responsible for highly technical and expensive equipment.

The study also found the weakest positive relationship of the respondents' self-reported levels of organizational commitment corresponded to the leadership practice of encouraging the heart. When divided between military and civilian, the results were similar except that the civilians showed inspiring a shared vision

Pearson Correlations							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	1.000	0.337*	0.302*	0.352*	0.312*	0.384*	0.266*
Sum LPI-O		1.000	0.955*	0.959*	0.951*	0.969*	0.953*
Challenge			1.000	0.947*	0.862*	0.901*	0.867*
Vision				1.000	0.854*	0.916*	0.876*
Enable					1.000	0.926*	0.911*
Model						1.000	0.896*
Heart							1.000
Pearson Probabilities							
Statistic	Sum OCQ	Sum LPI-O	Challenge	Vision	Enable	Model	Heart
Sum OCQ	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sum LPI-O		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Challenge			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Vision				0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Enable					0.000	0.000	0.000
Model						0.000	0.000
Heart							0.000

Sig. (2-tailed)

* indicates significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 3. Pearson Correlations and Probabilities for Government Civil Service (Civilian) Employees

LPI-O Five Dimensions of Leadership	Military Group (n = 215) Mean (Std Dev)	Civilian Group (n = 113) Mean (Std Dev)	Sig (2-tailed) P-value
1. Challenge the Process	39.09 (13.651)	36.89 (13.539)	.165
2. Inspiring a shared vision	38.87 (14.157)	36.24 (14.496)	.113
3. Enabling others to act	44.20 (12.826)	41.82 (13.975)	.123
4. Modeling the way	43.38 (13.109)	39.89 (13.843)	0.25
5. Encouraging the heart	41.30 (14.362)	38.68 (15.343)	.126
Total	206.85 (64.562)	193.52 (68.148)	.082

Sig. (2-tailed) equal variances assumed

* indicates significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 4. Leadership Practice Inventory, Survey Part II, T-Test of Military versus Civilian

as the strongest positive relationship rather than enabling others to act.

Military versus Civilian Organizational Commitment Relationship

This study compared the relationship between active duty (military) and government civil service (civilian) Air Force employees in commitment to the organization (Table 7). Of the 15 OCQ questions, 8 showed a statistically significant difference in p-value where $p < .05$, including the totals between the military and civilian group where the military group showed consistently higher levels of the mean. The total mean for military (89.07) was found to be higher than the total civilian mean (85.95) and p-value ($.031 < 0.05$) shows a significant difference, indicating a higher level of commitment among military employees. This

is likely due to the nature of the jobs associated with the military requiring a higher level of organizational commitment than most civilian jobs.

Jobs associated with the military first require taking the enlisted or officer oath of office. In addition, military abide by a set of core values that stem from the higher level of commitment required and directly relate to the oath of office that all military people take prior to entry on active duty. The Air Force core values for active duty military are Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do. These core values set the common standard of conduct across the Air

Force and inspire the trust, which provides the unbreakable bond that unifies the force.⁶⁹

The results from the individual demographic questions indicate that military employees are more willing to talk up the Air Force to their friends as a great organization for which to work; feel more loyalty to the Air Force; find that their values and the Air Force values are very similar; are more proud to tell others that they are part of the Air Force; would not work for a different organization even if the type of work was similar; are extremely glad that they chose the Air Force over other organizations; agree with Air Force policies on important matters relating to its employees; and they do not regret their decision to work for the Air Force. Finally, military personnel reported higher levels of commitment than civilian employees.

Military versus Civilian Leadership Practices Relationship

The study sought to compare the relationship between active duty (military) and government civil service (civilian) Air Force perceptions of the leadership practices of their leaders. The leadership practice of *modeling the way* was the only practice found significantly different, with the results showing the military group had a higher mean than the civilian group. The resulting degree of commitment from modeling the way indicates that the military personnel have a stronger belief in setting the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values and achieving small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment.⁷⁰ Leaders motivate their people by more than just words. Setting the example is just as important as what a leader says and how well the leader manages the work.⁷¹ Since government civil service employees are found at all levels of the DoD and within military units, it is not unusual for a military member to work for or lead a civilian and vice versa.

Demographic Characteristics and Organizational Commitment Relationship

The findings of this research found no significant relationship between the demographic characteristics of years of service (tenure), gender, age, education, and organizational commitment.

The findings do show a significant difference in employees' position or rank and their organizational commitment, however. A Post Hoc test (Table 6) showed the highest level of commitment first among the senior level military (colonel or above) and second senior civilians (GS-15 and above) who responded to the survey. The lowest level of commitment was found among the lowest enlisted level of military employees (E-1 through E-4). According to Brown, commitment reflects the current position of an individual.⁷² Higher level supervisors can make the greatest impact on an organization by the authority of their position. They are not only considered part of the company or organization but are considered *the organization* because of the impact of their decisions on the organization. Their goal and values are often reflected in their decisions.

Research Implications for Air Force Leaders

Although military personnel showed higher levels of commitment than civilian Air Force employees, leaders can still accomplish extraordinary achievements through their military and civilian personnel by using the following leadership practices.

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision
- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart

Leaders using these five practices can turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.⁷³ The results support previous research by Stevens, Beyer and Trice which show that organizational tenure, positional tenure, seniority, and perceptions concerning the importance of performance and technical skills in promotion, positively related to higher levels of commitment.⁷⁴ Air Force leaders can obtain higher levels of commitment of both active duty (military) and government civil service (civilian) Air Force employees by following the leadership practice strategies of Kouzes and Posner.

Conclusion

This article explores the practices and behaviors of Air Force leadership on organizational commitment, specifically of Air Force employees. The results may also be applicable to

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Sum OCQ	Between Groups	3476.205	9	386.245	2.970	0.002*
	Within Groups	41362.157	318	130.070		
	Total	44838.363	327			
Sum LPI-O	Between Groups	38473.784	9	4274.865	0.980	0.456
	Within Groups	1386840.700	318	4361.134		
	Total	1425314.500	327			

* indicates significant (p < 0.05)

Table 5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) by Position in the Air Force

Post Hoc	
Sum OCQ	6>10>5>3>4>2>7>8>9>1
Survey position numbers and position name in descending order of commitment	
6.	Colonel or above
10.	GS-15 or above
5.	Major through Lt Col
3.	E-7 through E-9
4.	Lieutenant through Captain
2.	E-5 through E-6
7.	GS-5 through GS-9
8.	GS-10 through GS-12
9.	GS-13 through GS-14
1.	E-1 through E-4

Note: Numbers correspond to position number in Part III of survey

Table 6. Post Hoc Test for Sum Organizational Commitment by Position in the Air Force

Survey Question Number	Military Group (n=215) Mean (Std Dev)	Civilian Group (n+113) Mean (Std Dev)	Sig. (2-tailed) P-value
1. Effort to be successful	6.36 (.819)	6.26 (1.016)	0.329
2. Talk up as a great	5.99 (1.074)	5.62 (1.160)	0.005*
3. Loyalty	6.06 (1.638)	5.56 (2.018)	0.015*
4. Accept any job to remain	4.18 (1.796)	4.07 (1.893)	0.603
5. Similar values	5.92 (1.141)	5.40 (1.264)	0.000*
6. Proud to tell others	6.64 (.742)	6.12 (1.062)	0.000*
7. Change for similar work	4.13 (1.693)	3.65 (1.757)	0.015*
8. Inspires best performance	5.22 (1.302)	5.00 (1.302)	0.149
9. Change in circumstances	5.00 (1.697)	4.96 (1.727)	0.858
10. Glad selected the organization	6.13 (1.190)	5.65 (1.280)	0.0001*
11. Gain by staying	5.21 (1.756)	5.20 (1.582)	0.977
12. Agreement with policies	4.55 (1.687)	3.98 (1.631)	0.003*
13. Care about Air Force	6.46 (.931)	6.27 (1.037)	0.099
14. Best organization to work	5.44 (1.288)	5.34 (1.320)	0.485
15. Decision to work for Air Force	6.65 (.782)	6.27 (1.269)	0.001*
TOTAL	83.9488 (11.34144)	79.3628 (11.86009)	0.001*

Table 7. Organizational Commitment Survey (OCQ), T-Test for Military versus Civilian

other organizational situations. Furthermore, the results here are consistent with those found in other studies including a large music company,⁷⁵ multinational corporations,⁷⁶ CPA firms,⁷⁷ the fire service,⁷⁸ and the North American automobile industry.⁷⁹ This study extends the research to the military and government civil service employees who support the military, thereby expanding the organizational commitment research knowledge base.

The results show a positive relationship between the five leadership practices developed by Kouzes and Posner and organizational commitment.⁸⁰ High levels of organizational commitment are statistically correlated to a decrease in turnover and the intention of turnover behaviors. Higher levels of organizational commitment are also linked to higher levels of individual, group, and organizational performance.⁸¹

With the exception of an employees' position, the effect of demographic characteristics on organizational commitment was not established. However, leaders should understand organizational commitment as it impacts effectiveness, performance, and turnover of Air Force employees. The results did show personnel in senior positions having the highest levels of organizational commitment. According to Brown, commitment reflects the current position of an individual.⁸² This is significant because higher level supervisors can make the greatest impact on an organization by the authority of their position and are considered *the organization* because of the impact of their decisions on the organization.

Finally, the results show that active duty Air Force employees reported higher levels of commitment when compared to government civil service employees. This is not surprising since the nature of the jobs associated with the active duty military requires a higher level of organizational commitment than most civilian jobs. Active duty members are required to take an enlisted or officer oath, and abide by a set of core values that stem from the higher level of commitment required.

The leadership challenge today is in providing trained, motivated, and committed employees for the defense of this country in the current dynamic environment. The real and perceived leadership practices of Air Force supervisors directly influence the organizational commitment of their employees. Although accomplishing the mission is the primary task of every organization and everything else must be subordinate, a successful leader recognizes that people perform the mission, and without their support, the unit will fail.⁸³

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Donald S. Metscher, DBA, is a retired United States Air Force lieutenant colonel. The research for this article was completed during his last duty assignment while teaching logistics courses at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. He is currently an Associate Professor of Applied Aviation Sciences at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida.

William A. Lowe, DBA, is a Professor of Emergency Management at Jacksonville State University, Alabama.

F. Barry Barnes, PhD, is a professor at the Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Leanne Lai, PhD, is a professor and Director of International Program, Pharmaceutical, and Administrative Sciences at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



It will not do to leave a live dragon out of your plans if you live near one.

—John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

Tomorrow's warriors will have to relearn the things that today's warriors have forgotten.

—Gen Billy M. Minter, USAF

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.

—Samuel Johnson