A Model of Voluntary Turnover in Male Canadian Forces Recruits

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This study of voluntary turnover was conducted on Canadian Forces (CF) recruits (N = 459) undergoing basic military training. In response to growing voluntary attrition concerns, a model of early voluntary turnover was tested. The model included pre-entry individual characteristics (pre-entry normative commitment, desire for military career, and mental toughness), postentry work attitudes and intentions (normative CF commitment, affective commitment, and turnover intentions), and actual turnover behavior. Ten of the 13 specified paths were supported, and the model yielded an overall good fit, providing empirical evidence for the influence of pre-entry characteristics on the development of commitment and subsequent turnover.

Early voluntary turnover can be a concern for organizations as investments made into the recruitment, selection, and training of newcomers are effectively lost and not recoupable (Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Although some turnover may be considered desirable (i.e., when poor performers leave), voluntary turnover is generally considered negative for the organization (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000).

The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not reflect an endorsement by the Canadian government.

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Two-thirds of the total attrition in the Canadian Forces (CF) is voluntary. Hom, Robertson, and Ellis (2008) found that voluntary turnover rates are highest during the first several years of employees’ tenure. Increasing early voluntary turnover rates approaching 25% have resulted in significant loss of CF recruiting efforts and financial resources. There is also a human cost associated with voluntary turnover, in the form of impact on the individuals who leave (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). The increasing turnover trend and associated organizational costs indicate that the current recruitment, selection, and socialization practices require closer scrutiny.

There has been much research dedicated to voluntary turnover (e.g., Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Kinicki, 2001), but there has been less focus on early voluntary turnover models detailing how individual characteristics influence work attitudes and adjustment processes, which consequently influences voluntary turnover. This study aimed to bridge this gap in the literature by investigating the relationships between relevant voluntary turnover factors, such as organizational commitment, in a controlled environment.

Commitment within a military context has received increased attention over the last several years (e.g., Allen, 2003; O’Shea, Goodwin, Driskell, Salas, & Ardison, 2009) and, according to Gade (2003), the military is an ideal organization in which to demonstrate this construct. In an unstable global security climate and an uncertain economic environment, the military requires committed service members. Strong organizational commitment is expected to yield better performance, good citizenship behavior, and lower attrition (Gade, 2003).

Lee, Ashford, Walsh, and Mowday (1992) noted that pre-entry personal characteristics may influence individuals’ initial work attitudes which can subsequently influence later postentry attitudes, such as commitment. Building on this concept, a model of early voluntary turnover was developed and tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The model generally followed organizational commitment theory (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002), with the inclusion of several new individual characteristics and attitudinal variables (i.e., pre-entry normative commitment, desire for military career, and mental toughness measured prior to entry) and newcomer adjustment (measured post entry). Furthermore, in an effort to better understand the development of commitment, the study distinguishes between pre-entry normative commitment focused on any general organization and postentry normative commitment focused specifically on the CF. The findings of this study were generally consistent with those of previous research (e.g., Lee et al., 1992; Meyer et al., 2002) in demonstrating the relationships between individual characteristics as antecedents to organizational commitment components, turnover intentions, and actual turnover behavior.

Extensions to these previous findings feature the inclusion of unique personal characteristic variables. Mental toughness showed a positive relationship with all
three postentry factors. Desire for military career, one of the original commitment propensity components, proved to be a useful predictor of both normative CF commitment and affective commitment, a finding not previously made clear in commitment propensity research (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Results also provide preliminary support for Bergman’s (2006) and Cohen’s (2007) postulations that normative commitment develops prior to organizational entry.

Organizational Commitment Theory

The development of organizational commitment theory has had three main influences: a) side-bet theory; b) psychological attachment; and c) the multi-dimensional approach, dominated by Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three-component model (Cohen, 2007). There is relative agreement in the literature that organizational commitment is multi-dimensional (Allen, 2003), with three components (Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; Allen & Meyer, 1990, 1996), or psychological bases, that bind an individual to an entity. These psychological bases are affective, normative, and continuance commitment.

Affective commitment or the “want to stay” component is characterized by identification and involvement with the organization, and enjoyment in being a member (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It is the most widely studied component of the model (Bergman, 2006) resulting in strong evidence for antecedents, correlates, effects, and cross-cultural generalizability (Meyer et al., 2002).

Normative commitment is the feeling of obligation to stay with the organization, or “ought to” stay. It is the least studied of the three components (Allen, 2003; Bergman, 2006), but has been found to be positively correlated with job performance, work attendance, and organizational citizenship, albeit to a lesser extent than affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Given that the sense of duty and moral obligation toward the organization is expected to be strong in a military environment, it is an ideal situation in which to study this commitment component. Gade (2003) noted that, if normative commitment cannot be effectively demonstrated in military service, it is unlikely that it can be demonstrated anywhere.

The final component, continuance commitment, is related to the perceived cost associated with leaving the organization. It is the “have to stay” component found to be strongest in employees who have few employment alternatives or who have made significant investments in the organization. As new recruits will not have had sufficient opportunity nor tenure to develop significant continuance commitment, this construct was not included in the model.

Organizational commitment is central to most models of turnover (Meyer et al., 2002). In addition to its connection to important organizational behaviors, commitment, predominantly normative commitment, has specific significance in the military (Gade, 2003). Its role is principally in relation to how soldiers are
socialized to exercise loyalty. When a soldier joins the military, he or she accepts the contract of unlimited liability:

Unlimited liability is the fundamental condition under which all members of the CF serve. They are required to accept, without reservation, that they must carry out their missions and tasks regardless of personal discomfort, fear, or danger. Unlimited liability is the cornerstone of military service and distinguishes CF members from their civilian counterparts (Department of National Defence, 2009, pp. 4–5).

Military members adapt collective standards that contribute to the common good and undertake to fight for a purpose in which they may have no personal interest (Holmes, 2005). Integral to the CF training and socialization process, and indeed to military culture itself, are the values of duty, loyalty, integrity, and courage. A commitment to these values and to the organization is essential in order for the soldier to function effectively in a military environment.

More current commitment research has demonstrated that individuals form different strengths of attachment among multiple foci of entities (i.e., organization, supervisor, workgroup), rendering this an important avenue to consider when investigating organizational commitment (Allen, 2003; Clugston, Howell, & Dorfman, 2000; O’Shea et al., 2009).

Pre-Entry Personal Characteristics

Pre-entry commitment. Cohen (2007) posited that commitment is actually a process that unfolds over time. The pre-entry commitment stage deals with commitment propensity prior to any socialization experiences, and the postentry stage is specific to actual commitment once already employed by the organization. He therefore proposed that normative commitment should be examined prior to organizational entry and this has been supported by Bergman (2006). Based on this premise, the present study distinguishes the concept of normative commitment into two related constructs. The first is considered as pre-entry normative commitment focusing on a more general pre-entry sense of obligation to any organization (the focus in generalized to any organization). The second is a postentry normative commitment (labeled normative CF commitment), which is developed after entry into the organization and specific to obligations to the current organization (the focus is on the CF). This individual difference is expected to be positively related to postentry affective responses to the organizational environment and gives rise to the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: Pre-entry normative commitment will positively predict:

a. Normative CF commitment;

b. Affective commitment; and

c. Newcomer adjustment.
Desire for military career. This is one of the facets of commitment propensity proposed by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982). They integrated several variables thought to be involved in the entry process calling them commitment propensity. It is defined as the “aggregation of specific personal characteristics and experiences, which individuals bring to the organization, such that a stable attachment to the organization more likely develops” (Lee et al., 1992, p. 17). Higher levels of commitment propensity are expected to lead to higher levels of actual commitment after entry. The aspect that captures a strong desire for a career in the organization and familiarity with core values of the organization should lead the individual to develop stronger commitment. Support for this claim was found in a sample of 840 new U.S. Air Force cadets entering the Air Force Academy. Lee et al. (1992) found that commitment propensity measured prior to organizational entry was positively related to initial and subsequent organizational commitment. Criticisms of commitment propensity research noted that it was not clear which of the four components contributed to correlations with commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The present study addressed this criticism by incorporating only one of the components, desire for a military career, in the overall turnover model.

It was expected that desire for a military career would be positively related to the three postentry work attitudes.

Hypothesis 2: Desire for a military career will positively predict:
   a. Normative CF commitment;
   b. Affective commitment; and
   c. Newcomer adjustment.

Mental toughness. Clough, Earle, and Sewell (2002) used the theoretical work of Kobasa (1979) and Kobasa, Maddi, and Khan (1982) on the hardiness personality as a theoretical foundation for mental toughness. Hardiness is defined as a “set of personal characteristics that helps people turn stressful circumstances from potential disasters to opportunities for enhanced performance” (Maddi, 2007, p. 61). Over 600 studies have been conducted on hardiness worldwide with findings connecting hardiness to performance, leadership, conduct, and health using such diverse samples (Maddi, 2007; Maddi, Harvey, Resurreccion, Giatras, & Raganold, 2006; Westman, 1990). In a study of public accountants, Law (2005) also found hardiness to be positively correlated with affective commitment and inversely correlated with intent to turnover.

Mental toughness is a trait-like personality dimension comprised of a “4C” model. The first 3 Cs come from Kobassa’s (1979) model of hardiness (control, commitment, and challenge), with confidence added as the fourth “C” (Clough et al., 2002). Control is the predisposition to feel and act in an influential manner. It provides the tenacity to “incorporate stressful events into an ongoing life plan using knowledge, skill, and choice” (p. 35) to influence how situations are
perceived. Commitment is the tendency to become involved in a situation, rather than become alienated from it. Through cognitive appraisal, the individual is able to identify and give meaning to a new situation and makes the person more proactive rather than passive. Challenge is the belief that change is normal in life and to view this as an opportunity to grow rather than as a threat. Confidence speaks to the individual’s high sense of belief in the ability to achieve success and an unshakable faith that they control their own destiny.

Mental toughness is a relatively common concept in the sports psychology literature (Crust, 2007). The underlying premise of the construct is to differentiate those who deal with stressful situations and are capable of exceptional performance in those circumstances, such as Olympic athletes, from those who cannot deal with such pressures. Its relationship with performance is sparking interest in a variety of research domains, including organizational and personality psychology (Horsburgh, Schermer, Veselka, & Vernon, 2009; Marchant et al., 2009). A recent review has also called for its expansion into domains other than sports, such as the military (Crust, 2007).

Given the physically and mentally demanding aspects of basic recruit training, mental toughness is expected to capture and differentiate between recruits’ personal characteristics with respect to responses to intense physical and mental stressors, and may be beneficial to the prediction of attitudes toward the organization. Thus, it is proposed that:

Hypotheses 3: Mental toughness will positively predict:
   a. Normative CF commitment;
   b. Affective commitment; and
   c. Newcomer adjustment.

Postentry Work Attitudes

Consistent with previous organizational commitment research (Meyer et al., 2002), it is expected that levels of affective and normative commitment will negatively predict turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 4: Normative CF commitment will negatively predict turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Affective commitment will negatively predict turnover intentions.

Newcomer adjustment. Organizational culture is the deep-rooted values and assumptions shared by members of an organization. The military, in particular, has a very strong and specific organizational culture that distinguishes it from civilian organizations. Organizational socialization is the process by which
newcomers make the transition from being outsiders to becoming insiders to the organization (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007) and become part of the culture. Socialization is a vital component in military service, especially during the early stages of organizational entry.

Newcomer adjustment is the result of the socialization process. It measures the extent to which the individual accepts organizational goals and values and successfully navigates new tasks and the social transition (cf. Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003). Effectively, newcomer adjustment speaks to the success of the socialization process. For new recruits, the culture shock and social transition requirements can be challenging. By measuring their relative newcomer adjustment, it is possible to infer the effectiveness of the socialization process.

Socialization tactics and newcomers’ early work experiences have been found to predict turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 2007). As socialization and training help build employees’ positive workplace attitudes, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 6: Newcomer adjustment will negatively predict turnover intentions.

Turnover Intentions and Turnover

Intentions to quit are seen as the culmination of the decision process concerning voluntarily leaving the organization and correspond to the transitional link between thought processes and behavioral action (Mobley, 1977; Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). Numerous turnover literature reviews and meta-analyses have confirmed that quit intentions are superior predictors of turnover than any attitudinal variables (Griffeth et al., 2000; Steel & Griffeth, 1989; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009; Van Breukelen, Van Der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). However, it is suggested that the intentions-turnover relationship differs based on circumstances and populations (Allen, Weeks, & Moffitt, 2005). As such, an investigation of the relationship between turnover intentions and voluntary turnover in CF recruits undergoing basic training socialization processes may prove useful. Based on previous research findings, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 7: Turnover intentions will positively predict voluntary turnover.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were new military recruits at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School undergoing basic military training. The sample consisted of
459 male noncommissioned members with an average age of 23.52 (SD = 5.05). Eighty-four percent were single, 8% were married, and 8% did not report their marital status. The majority (93%) had a high school education, 5% had a post-secondary education, and 8% did not report their educational status. In terms of military elements, 67% were in the Army, 20% were in the Navy, and 13% were in the Air Force. A total of 24 recruits (5%) voluntarily turned over during the study.

Procedure

Recruit training is a 13–week intensive training and socialization program with high levels of physical and mental challenge designed to teach new recruits basic military procedures and values. Participants were recruited on day 1 of training by the researcher or an administrative delegate and those volunteering for the study signed an informed consent form detailing the study process and requirements. Participants from 12 course serials completed the computerized questionnaires at time 1 (day 1 of training) and time 2 (4.5 weeks into basic training). Time 2 was deliberately selected, as recruits are not allowed to leave the organization until completing at least 5 weeks of basic training.

To track the participants across administrations, participants reported their service numbers at the start of each survey session. The service number allowed the gathering of relevant turnover and demographic data from personnel records. Ethics approval from the appropriate agencies was granted for this study.

Measures

Responses to all items were on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of the construct of interest.

Pre-entry normative commitment (time 1). The original normative commitment scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) that references general organizational loyalty (i.e., not specific to any one organization), less one item that did not correspond to attitudes prior to entry, was used to measure commitment proclivity as suggested by Cohen (2007). An example of the seven items is, “I think that people these days move from company to company too often.”

Desire for a military career (time 1). This was measured using an 8-item scale by Lee et al. (1992) that was adapted for the purposes of this study specifically focusing on the CF. The original measure consisted of several aspects of commitment propensity, including the desire for a CF career. A sample item is, “I have a strong desire to be a soldier, sailor, or airman/airwoman.”
Mental toughness (time 1). Clough et al. (2002) used the hardness and sports psychology literature, opinions of athletes, coaches, and sport psychology practitioners, to develop a 48-item mental toughness questionnaire and concurrently an abridged 18-item questionnaire. In order to keep the length of the surveys to an acceptable length and to avoid survey fatigue, the shorter survey was used. An example includes, “Even when under considerable pressure I usually remain calm.”

This measure is comprised of four dimensions as proposed by Clough et al. (2002): control, commitment, challenge, and confidence. A principal axis factor analysis was conducted specifying four factors to be extracted and using a varimax rotation. The item’s highest loading determined the factor to which it was assigned. The four factors corresponded to these dimensions and the items and thus formed four factor-based scales. These were used as parcels in the SEM as Little, Cunningham, Shahar, and Widaman (2002) have argued that parcels need to be structured as unidimensional to be effective.

Normative CF commitment (time 2). This construct was measured with six items from the Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) model that explicitly deal with loyalty and obligation to a specific organization, namely to the CF in the present study. Thus, the measure is comprised of items different from those in the preentry normative commitment scale. A sample item is, “Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave the CF now.”

Affective commitment (time 2). This construct was measured with eight items from the Meyer et al. (1993) model. A sample item is, “I really feel as if the CF’s problems are my own.”

Newcomer adjustment (time 2). The Organizational Socialization Inventory (OSI) (Haueter et al., 2003) was used to measure socialization success and affective newcomer adjustment. Dimensions on the scale measured with five items each include (a) training: “The CF has provided excellent training for me”; (b) understanding: “I have a full understanding of my duties in the CF”; (c) co-worker support: “My peers and trainers have done a great deal to help me adjust to the CF”; and (d) future prospects. The future prospects dimension was not included in the study as the recruits were so new to the organization as to not clearly understand what their future prospects would be. Thus, the three dimensions of training, understanding, and co-worker support were used as parcels in the SEM.

Turnover intentions (time 2). A five-item measure of turnover intentions developed for the CF was used in the present study, and included items such as, “I intend to leave the CF as soon as another job becomes available,” “I intend to
leave the CF as soon as I complete Basic Training,” and “I intend to stay in the CF as long as I can.”

**Voluntary turnover.** Actual voluntary turnover behavior was captured at the end of each course serial from official personnel records.

**Demographics.** The demographic variables of gender, age, and marital status were collected from personnel records.

## RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas of all multi-item variables, as well as the zero-order correlations between all variables, are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

The model in Figure 1 was analyzed using the LISREL 8.72 program with the zero-order correlation matrix. Those paths that were significant are shown with a solid line with the path coefficient noted thereon, and those that were not are shown with a dashed line. Single indicators were used to assess the underlying constructs of pre-entry normative commitment, desire for a military career, normative CF commitment, affective commitment, and turnover intentions, with the measurement error terms set to 1-reliability as per Bollen (1989). As has been suggested by Coffman and MacCallum (2005), parcels were used as multiple indicators for the constructs of mental toughness and newcomer adjustment. These two measures were comprised of items having specific dimensions, whereas

![Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Continuous Variables](image-url)
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Note. 1 = pre-entry normative commitment; 2 = desire for a military career; 3 = mental toughness (control); 4 = mental toughness (commitment); 5 = mental toughness (challenge); 6 = mental toughness (confidence); 7 = normative CF commitment; 8 = affective commitment; 9 = newcomer adjustment (training); 10 = newcomer adjustment (understanding); 11 = newcomer adjustment (co-worker support); 12 = turnover intentions; 13 = voluntary turnover.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
the constructs with the measurement error terms set to 1-reliability are short and non-multidimensional.

In addition to the structural paths of interest, correlations between all exogenous variables were specified. These three paths are not shown on Figure 1, due to their lack of relevance to the hypothesized model as well as making the figure unwieldy. Only the path between commitment proclivity and desire for a military career was significant. All paths linking the construct to the observed variables were significant.

The nine hypotheses linking the pre-entry characteristics of recruits to postentry attitudes were supported in seven instances. Both pre-entry normative commitment and desire for a military career significantly predicted normative CF commitment and affective commitment. Mental toughness significantly predicted all three attitude measures: normative CF commitment, affective commitment, as well as newcomer adjustment. Of the three workplace attitudes, normative and affective commitment were negatively related to turnover intentions. Finally, turnover intentions positively predicted the behavior of voluntary turnover.

From an overall standpoint, all indicators suggested that the model fit the data well (see Table 3). Although the minimum fit $\chi^2$ value was significant ($224 (55), \ p < .01$), the $\chi^2$ to degrees of freedom ratio was four to one. In addition, the goodness of fit, comparative fit, and normed fit indices were all higher than .90.
The adjusted goodness of fit index was 89, standardized root mean square residual was .05, and root mean square error of approximation was .08. All of these indicate a well-fitting model (Kline, 1998).

While the proposed model was supported, there are alternative models that can also fit the data. We tested two competing models. One model allowed the endogenous attitude constructs of normative CF and affective commitment as well as newcomer adjustment to directly predict voluntary turnover, rather than be mediated through turnover intentions. With the addition of these three paths, the $\chi^2$ value dropped to 222 (a drop of 2), with a loss of three degrees of freedom. This model, then, did not significantly improve the fit of the model. The second model tested allowed the exogenous variables of pre-entry normative commitment, desire for a military career, and mental toughness to directly predict voluntary turnover, rather than be mediated through the work attitudes and turnover intentions. With the addition of these three paths, the $\chi^2$ value dropped to 214 (a drop of 10), with a loss of three degrees of freedom. This drop is statistically significant at $p < .05$. The path that contributed most to this improvement was that between mental toughness and turnover, which was significant and negative ($\gamma = -.15$, $p < .05$).

As the outcome variable of turnover is a true dichotomy, a logistic regression analysis was conducted using turnover intentions as the predictor variable so as to explicate this relationship further. The results continued to support the usefulness of turnover intentions as a predictor over the null model: $\Delta \chi^2 (1, N = 459) = 34.57, p < .001 (b = 1.55, SE = .28, Wald = 30.28 p < .001)$. A one-unit increase on the turnover intentions scale corresponded to a 4.72 times increase in the likelihood of recruit voluntary turnover.

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate an early voluntary turnover model featuring the contributions of several pre-entry individual characteristic
factors and postentry work attitudes on the prediction of turnover cognitions and behavior in CF military recruits. The overall model was supported, as well as 10 of the 13 individually specified paths.

Pre-entry normative commitment focused on an unspecified organization measured prior to CF entry was hypothesized to predict normative CF commitment (Hypothesis 1a) and affective commitment (Hypothesis 1b) and were supported, demonstrating pre-entry normative commitment as a distinct pre-entry individual characteristic linked to the development of later normative CF commitment and affective commitment. This study is the first to provide results to support Cohen’s (2007) and Bergman’s (2006) postulations that normative commitment unfolds over time and that the point at which commitment is measured (prior to entry) is an important factor in commitment research. These results provide a noteworthy contribution to the organizational commitment literature by supplying empirical evidence based on a large field sample. Despite these initial findings, additional research and replication is required with more diverse samples and across longer periods of time in order to draw more confident and lasting conclusions about the development of commitment at the point of organizational entry and throughout the socialization process.

The predictive utility of the individual facet of desire for a military career on normative CF commitment and affective commitment (Hypotheses 2a and 2b) was supported in that both paths were significant. No relationship was found, however, with newcomer adjustment. This particular variable played an integral role in the development of positive workplace commitment. Practical implications at the recruiting and selection stages may include more concentration by selection officers on gauging applicants’ motivation towards serving in the CF. The model suggests that the identification and selection of individuals with a strong desire for employment in the military is advantageous for the CF with respect to subsequent commitment development and voluntary turnover. Additional research might also consider this variable as a predictor of training performance.

The present study was the first to employ mental toughness as a predictor of workplace attitudes in CF recruits. Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c were all supported, demonstrating that mental toughness predicts all three workplace attitudes. In our alternative model testing, it was found that mental toughness also had a direct path to voluntary turnover. These results have both theoretical and practical implications for commitment, adjustment, turnover, and future recruit research in the CF. Mental toughness has not been previously considered as an important construct in the development of commitment, nor in adjustment to basic military training. Based on these preliminary findings, additional investigation is warranted to determine its continued utility in military research. As a viable predictor of work attitudes and work behavior outcomes, future studies might examine the relationship between mental toughness and practical and academic performance on basic training, as well as physical fitness and endurance. Given the sound relationship
between mental toughness and newcomer adjustment, additional research is warranted on the benefits of newcomer adjustment to military performance outcomes. Once these benefits are clear, military selection models might consider including mental toughness as a screening measure.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted that normative CF commitment and affective commitment would negatively predict turnover intentions, respectively, and were supported. The data were in line with past affective commitment/turnover research (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995), providing continued support for the importance of normative and affective commitment in voluntary turnover models (Griffeth et al., 2000; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), as well as highlighting its value in early voluntary turnover cognitions and behavior of CF recruits. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, the results point to the possibility that affective and normative CF commitment develop and are present fairly early on in the socialization process and influence subsequent turnover intentions and turnover behavior.

In order to investigate the impact of the military basic training socialization process, the predictive validity of newcomer adjustment on turnover intentions (Hypothesis 6) was investigated, but was not supported. Alternative outcome variables for future investigation may include military training performance and involuntary turnover.

Finally, consistent with past research and reviews (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009) Hypothesis 7 was supported, where those recruits with higher intentions to turnover had a higher probability of actually voluntarily leaving the organization. Although demonstrating the durable link between turnover intentions and turnover behavior is a worthwhile one, future voluntary turnover research might want to investigate the specific reasons for turnover intentions and voluntary turnover (e.g., Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999), especially given that the relationship is not 1.0. A natural extension of the present research is to include the reasons recruits provide for quitting the organization and investigate potential predictors of those reasons, as well as elucidating reasons why recruits do not leave. Furthermore, examining the point in time that recruits quit may provide additional valuable insight into when and what retention strategies may be necessary to diminish early voluntary turnover behavior.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the major strengths of the present study is the longitudinal design based on a sizable field sample, allowing for the evaluation of the pre-entry individual characteristic predictors and postentry attitudes across time. As well, the collection of accurate voluntary turnover data from personnel records made possible the analysis of personality characteristics and attitudes against actual turnover behavior in addition to turnover intentions, which do not always translate into
behavior (Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). Several limitations exist in the present research. First, despite the large sample size, only 24 recruits voluntarily turned over. Second, the sample and context limits the study’s generalizability to populations other than to military or para-military organizations such as firefighters, police, search and rescue, coastguard, etc. In addition, common method variance (e.g., Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) is a potential issue in this study as all the survey data was gathered from the same source (i.e., the recruits themselves). However, the longitudinal method used in the study, introducing a temporal lag between survey administrations, helps alleviate some of these concerns. Furthermore, one of the main criteria of interest, voluntary turnover, was gathered from official records, further reducing the common method bias. Finally, only voluntary turnover was used as the primary outcome variable of interest. In addition to voluntary turnover, some involuntary turnover occurred when recruits were removed from training and released from the CF and some recruits were required to repeat basic training. These examples of organizational leaving, however, would have meant incorporating a different model, including different variables (e.g., Donoghue & Castle, 2007; Schneer, 1993; Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998), and is beyond the scope of the present study.

CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding the aforementioned limitations, as research primarily concerned with identifying potential predictors of CF recruit voluntary turnover, the study has achieved its aim. The majority of hypotheses were supported, bolstering several existing commitment and turnover theoretical premises, providing some additional bearings and focus for policy makers and future recruitment, selection, and organizational socialization strategies, as well as new directions for future turnover research in the military. Finally, given the significant findings, this study provides a strong foundation for the development and testing of additional voluntary turnover models for CF members, an endeavor, which can only benefit the CF in its battle against attrition.

REFERENCES


