Identifying Members’ Expectations of Professional Associations: A Cross-Validation Study

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Introduction

- Declining membership impacts many professional associations.
- Many associations are concerned with how to attract new members, and retain existing members.
- Research has been focused on exploring individuals’ motivations to join associations.
- Relatively few studies, however, have examined the factors that affect existing members to remain in associations.
- Members’ willingness to renew membership can be understood by identifying their expectations of associations (Markova et al, 2013).
- This study aims to understand underlying factors of members’ expectations of professional associations.

Data

- Data from five professional associations was collected by the ASAE Decision to Give study in April 2009.
- Only current members who consider the association to be their primary association (Sample 1 = 1,439 and Sample 2 = 1,440).
- The data was split into two small samples for cross-validation (Sample 1 = 1,439 and Sample 2 = 1,440).

Items

- The 11-item derived from a question asked the respondents “How important is it to you that [the name of association] delivers the following types of programs, benefits, and services to you or your profession?” (Table 1)
- 6-point Likert-type scale was used, with 1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important, and 6 = can’t say.

Methods

Exploratory factor analysis

1. Parallel Analysis to decide the number of factors
2. Promax method to rotate the extracted factors
3. WLSMV estimator to develop the factor structure
4. Mplus Version 7.4. to run the analysis on Sample 1

Confirmatory factor analysis

1. WLSMV Estimator to analyze the ordered categorical data
2. Missing data was handled by pairwise deletion
3. Mplus Version 7.4. to run the analysis on Sample 1 and 2
4. Three criteria to evaluate model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999): • Model chi-square test of exact fit • RMSEA (<.06 for good fit and <.10 for adequate fit) • Comparative fit index (CFI > .90 – .95)

Table 1. Factor Loadings (Pattern Matrix) for the 11 items based on Exploratory Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation (Sample 1; N = 1,432)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Personal Career Development</th>
<th>Association Mission</th>
<th>Professional Identification and Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Providing you access to career information and employment opportunities</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Giving you opportunities to gain leadership experience</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Offering professional development or education programs</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Providing access to the most up to date information in your field</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Attracting competent people into the field</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Certifying those who meet critical competency standards</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conducting research on significant issues affecting the field</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Influencing legislation and regulations that affect the field</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maintaining a code of ethics for practice</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Promoting a greater appreciation of the role and value of the field among practitioners</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Promoting greater public awareness of contributions in the field</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Factor loadings > .40 are in boldface.

Results

Model Development: Exploratory factor analysis

1. The three-factor EFA conducted with the 11 items accounted for 66.99 % of the variance in the measures (Table 1).
2. Factor 1, personal career development, consisted of 3 items (48.24% variance).
3. Factor 2, association mission, consisted of 6 items (11.22% variance).
4. Factor 3, professional identification and recognition, consisted of 2 items (7.54% variance).

Model Evaluation: Confirmatory factor analysis

1. The global fit indices for the original model suggested adequate fit to the data, Sample 1, χ²(41) = 584.98, p < .001, CFI = .945, RMSEA = .096.
2. Modification indices were examined, and the residual covariance between item 1 and item 2 was freed.
3. The residual covariance suggests that the two items have something in common that cannot be accounted for by the three-factor model: first-hand personnel change information in the fields (Starlckii et al, 2000).
4. The global fit indices for the final CFA model conducted on Sample 1 indicated a better fit to the data, χ²(40) = 508.87, p < .001, CFI = .952, RMSEA = .090.
5. The final CFA model conducted on Sample 2 also indicated adequate fit to the data, χ²(40) = 590.31, p < .001, CFI = .951, RMSEA = .098. (Figure 1)

Conclusions

- The present study offers solid empirical evidence for the model structure of the three interdependent member expectation factors.
- Personal career development, association mission, and professional identification and recognition are the three main factors (Figure 2).
- This model can be useful for professional associations in understanding their members’ expectations, and can be a valuable tool for other researchers further examining members’ intentions to retain in professional associations.

References


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Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis model for members’ expectations scale. All parameters were statistically significant at the a = .05 level.

Figure 2. Members’ Expectations of Professional Associations