

**FACTORS AFFECTING PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT OF
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES**



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the factors affecting the professional commitment of account executives in Thailand. Moreover, related factors that could lead to professional commitment were also identified in order to find the relationship between each variable and independent variable.

The research began with the review of pervious study, setting hypotheses including ethical commitment, individual self-belief, job performance, innovation orientation, and personal satisfaction. This research used the quantitative approach, convenience sampling methods. 100 surveys were completed by respondents who are account executive in advertising agency in Thailand. The questionnaires were adapted from previous studies of others in order to suit the research objective.

The findings revealed that individual self-belief and innovation orientation are positively related to professional commitment.

KEY WORDS: Professional Commitment / Individual Self-Belief / Innovation Orientation

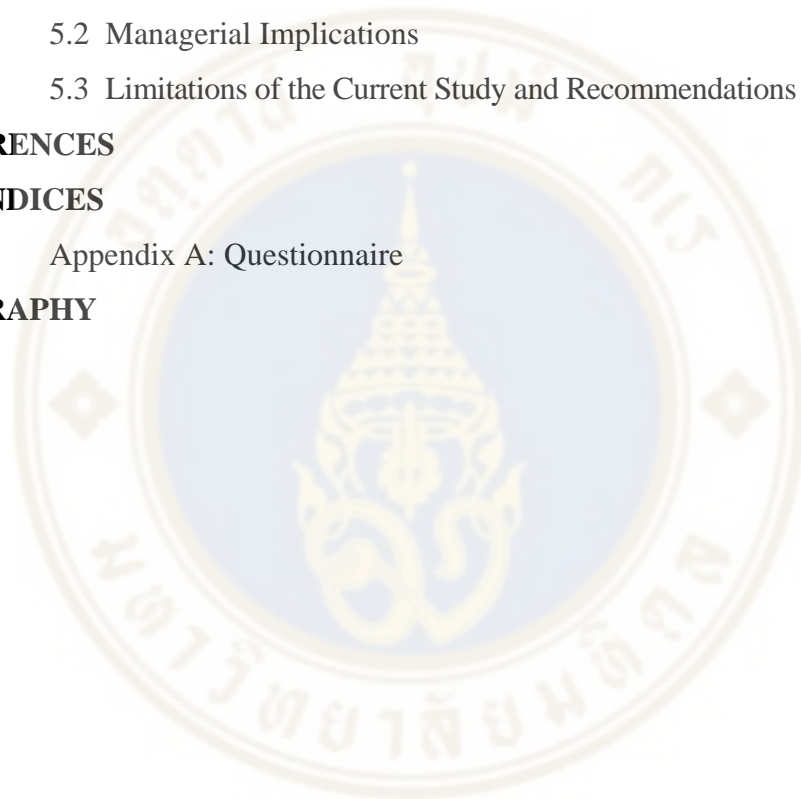
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance of Professional Commitment

This study investigated the professional commitment of account executives. Professional commitment encompasses a range of complex attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold about their profession, for example their commitment to the ethical and performance obligations of the profession (Greenfield, Norman, & Wier, 2008), or an affective response to their profession and a desire to support its norms and principles (Swart & Kinnie, 2012). Professional commitment is distinct from organizational commitment which refers to an employee's intention to remain at a particular organization or employer instead of changing their profession or particular job (Martín, 2008). However, organizational commitment and professional commitment share some of the same cognitive and affective sources. That may be related, particularly when a professional identity is highly important in the organizational culture (Baruch & Cohen, 2007). This leads to a positive relationship between professional commitment and organizational commitment, especially in workplaces that encourage horizontal communication (Bartels, Peters, Jong, Pruyn, & Melon, 2010; Dwivedula & Bredilet, 2010; Cho & Huang, 2012). In some cases, especially where organizations are porous, indeterminate, or cross borders, professional commitment may be a far stronger force in employee retention than organizational commitment (Swart & Kinnie, 2012).

A number of case studies have proven that higher professional commitment reduces turnover intention. Bline (1991) finds a negative relationship between professional commitment and turnover intention. It can be concluded that if employees have high professional commitment, the turnover intention of a company will be low (Awalina, Saraswati, & Roekhundin, 2015). Given the importance of professional commitment in the workplace, previous studies have identified antecedents of professional commitment, including organizational commitment (Bartels, Peters, Jong, Pruyn, & Melon, 2010; Dwivedula & Bredilet, 2010; Cho & Huang, 2012), other job attributes (Elias, 2008;

Hsu, Wang, & Lin, 2015), personal demographics (Hsu, Wang, & Lin, 2015; Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016), cognitive beliefs such as innovation orientation, personal satisfaction, burn out, and competency beliefs (Hsu, Wang, & Lin, 2015; Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016; Teng, Shyu, & Chang, 2007; Tsai, Tsai, Chen, & Lee, 2014; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007), and external factors such as the service environment (Yeh, 2009). The majority of these studies were conducted in the United States and Taiwan, which leads to the question of whether the findings can be generalized across different cultures. Additionally, to the researcher's knowledge, no studies included advertising personnel as participants, raising the question of whether such norms persist across professional boundaries.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this study is to identify the potential factors affecting the professional commitment of account executives

1.3 Significance of the Study

Professional commitment is particularly important in the advertising profession since ethics and principles are both extremely important and often overlooked in research and practice (Drumwright & Murphy, 2009). Through studying professional commitment and its antecedents in this environment, it will be possible to understand how professional commitment forms in organizations. Advertising agencies may use the results of this study to improve the professional commitment of their employees.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes, discusses, and critiques the existing academic literature on the topic of professional commitment in various professions. The chapter begins with a brief overview of different definitions of professional commitment. The chapter then discusses some theoretical concepts of professional commitment from a variety of authors, noting the similarities and differences between these concepts. The chapter then ends with a summary of empirical studies on the antecedents of professional commitment and discusses the factors affecting professional commitment.

2.1 Definitions of Professional Commitment

There are several definitions of professional commitment in the literature. One definition of professional commitment is that it refers to an individual's belief in, and their desire to uphold the ethical, conduct, and performance obligations of their chosen profession. Under this definition, professional commitment is established through professional training and education, which teaches the conduct and performance requirements alongside the technical tools and knowledge of the profession (Greenfield, Norman, & Wier, 2008). Emotional commitment is a further aspect of professional commitment. Emotional commitment includes, for example, a belief in the norms and values of the profession and their importance, and a desire to uphold the profession both within and outside the organization (Swart & Kinnie, 2012).

Professional commitment includes some aspects of organizational commitment such as affective and normative commitment. However, it is different from organizational commitment because it extends beyond the boundaries of the organization. In other words, individuals have a clear commitment to their profession that is distinct from their commitment to the organization (Swart & Kinnie, 2012). Organizational identities and organizational commitment can influence professional commitment, particularly under poor working

conditions. For example, individuals experiencing burnout, morale loss, or loss of interest and effectiveness due to organizational conditions may also lead to a reduction in professional commitment. Professional commitment is therefore a part of a set of layered identities and perceived obligations the individual holds, and which can be affected by their other identities (Lammers, Atouba, & Carlson, 2013). Based on the aforementioned definitions, professional commitment can be defined as a sense of obligation and emotional connection toward the ethics and practices of the individual's profession.

2.2 Theoretical Concepts of Professional Commitment

Several researchers have made contributions in establishing theoretical models of professional commitment. Classical theoretical concepts of professional commitment typically focus on psychological commitment models, such as used in a classic study of professional commitment among accountants. These researchers largely conceptualize professional commitment as an intellectual and emotional adherence to the ethical and practice norms of the accounting profession as a whole, which influenced their organizational and job-related actions (Aranya, Pollock, & Amernic, 1981). This relatively simple model of professional commitment emphasizes only the ethical aspect of professional commitment, but it does not consider other possible aspects. This gap shows that organizational factors such as the type of organization and opportunities for enhancement affect an individual's professional commitment (Baugh & Roberts, 1994; Wallace, 1995). The earlier isolated psychological concept of professional commitment is therefore too limited.

A further theoretical perspective is derived from a study of professional commitment among lawyers (Frow, 2007). Frow (2007) noted that the psychological concept of professional commitment used by earlier studies sat uneasily with the fundamental buyer/supplier relationship at the heart of many professional relationships. Frow () notes that in addition to the ethical and practice norms of the profession, lawyers had a number of other types of commitment that played a role in their professional identity, including personal, partnership, and impression management commitments. Professional commitment can therefore be considered as a mix of both professional norms and personal and

organizational factors (Frow, 2007). This perspective helped to fill some of the gaps left by the classical model of professional commitment.

Nevertheless, gaps remain in the understanding of professional commitment. For example, one long-standing argument concerns the extent to which professional commitment influences organizational or job performance (Baugh & Roberts, 1994). It is also unclear to what extent organizational commitment and professional commitment interact, although there are certainly interactions between organizational and professional commitment (Swart & Kinnie, 2012; Lammers, Atouba, & Carlson, 2013). One of the biggest gaps in the literature is that there remains no formalized theory or model that defines professional commitment or identifies a model of antecedents and consequences. This was established as a research gap in the mid-2000s (Frow, 2007), and has still not yet been tackled through theoretical work.

2.3 Empirical Studies: Antecedents of Professional Commitment

Professional commitment is an important subject which many scholars in various industries and countries have paid attention to. Previous studies have identified a number of factors that may influence professional commitment (see Table 1). These studies were conducted using samples of project management professionals (Dwivedula & Bredilet, 2010), information technology professionals (Cho & Huang, 2012), auditing students (Elias, 2008), nurses (Hsu, Wang, & Lin, 2015; Teng, Shyu, & Chang, 2007; Tsai, Tsai, Chen, & Lee, 2014), scientists and engineers (Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016), teachers and principals (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007), and flight attendants (Yeh, 2009). Such studies were undertaken in countries ranging from Australia (Dwivedula & Bredilet, 2010) to Hong Kong (Cho & Huang, 2012), as well as the United State. (Elias, 2008; Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007) and Taiwan (Hsu, Wang, & Lin, 2015; Teng, Shyu, & Chang, 2007; Tsai, Tsai, Chen, & Lee, 2014; Yeh, 2009). It is noticeable that most of these studies were conducted in the United State. and Taiwan. None of these studies were conducted in Thailand, and none of them examined account executive professionals. A research gap therefore exists on the antecedents of professional commitment in Thailand, especially for account executive professionals. This study

aims to explore this research gap. The summary of antecedents of professional commitment is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Antecedents of Professional Commitment

Authors	Sample	Results
Bredilet and Dwivedula (2010)	Project management professionals in Australia (n= 141)	Affective organizational commitment affected affective professional commitment; Continuance organizational commitment affected continuance professional commitment; and Normative organizational commitment affected normative professional commitment.
Cho and Huang (2012)	Information technology professionals in Hong Kong (n = 265)	Organizational affective commitment affected professional commitment.
Elias (2008)	Auditing students in the US (n = 128)	Experience affected professional commitment.
Hsu, Wang, Lin, Shih, and Lin (2015)	Nurses in Taiwan (n = 132)	Marital status, job level, and inner satisfaction affected professional commitment.
Lu, Chang and Wu (2007)	Nurses in Taiwan (n = 268)	Professional commitment had a positive relationship to job satisfaction, and job satisfaction had a negative relationship to work stress. Work stress was a mediating variable.
Perry, Hunter, and Currall (2016)	Scientists and engineers in the US (n = 255)	Age (older), gender (female) and innovation orientation affected professional commitment.
Tsai, Tsai, Chen, and Lee (2014)	Nurses in Taiwan (n = 762)	Career self-efficacy (self-belief that the nurse was effective in her job) and nursing competency had a positive correlation to professional commitment.

Table 2.1 Antecedents of Professional Commitment (cont.)

Authors	Sample	Results
Ware and Kitsantas (2007)	Teachers (n = 26,257) and principals (n = 6,711) in the US Schools and Staffing Survey (2000-2001)	Individual teacher efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs affected professional commitment.
Yeh (2009)	Flight attendants in Taiwan (sample undisclosed)	Service climate affected professional commitment.

As shown in Table 2.1, previous studies have explored a wide range of organizational and professional environments. Based on previous findings, the current study investigated five antecedents of professional commitment, namely, ethical commitment, individual self-belief, job performance, innovation orientation, and personal satisfaction.

2.3.1 Ethical Commitment

A limited number of studies identify personal factors as the antecedent of professional commitment. One such factor is ethical commitment (Cho & Huang, 2012; Elias, 2008; Greenfield, Norman, & Wier, 2008; Swart & Kinnie, 2012). Individuals with a high level of belief in the ethics and practices of their profession are more likely to engage in ethical behavior based on these practices, such as reporting malfeasance or avoiding other unethical behaviors (Cho & Huang, 2012; Elias, 2008).. A study of managers in Singapore found that managers who valued ethics tended to create an ethical culture in their organizations. These cultures then lead to professionalism, successful career paths, and greater commitment for the managers in their chosen professions (Koh & Boo, 2004). Accordingly, the current study proposed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Ethical commitment is positively related to professional commitment.

2.3.2 Individual Self-Belief

Individual self-belief is defined as an individual's judgement of their capabilities and abilities to organize and execute a process in order to complete an assigned task. It can be developed through the experiences and events that have occurred in an individual's life and results in more complex human beings (Bandura, 1986). Individual self-belief may also play an important role in professional commitment. A study of teachers showed that their self-efficacy beliefs, or beliefs about how effective they are as teachers, had a positive effect on their professional commitment (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Meanwhile, Bogler and Somech (2017) reported a positive relationship between individual self-belief and the professional commitment of secondary teachers. There is therefore well-founded evidence that professional commitment is influenced by individual self-belief and professional influences. The current study proposed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Individual self-belief is positively related to professional commitment.

2.3.3 Job Performance

Job performance is defined as the total value that individuals produce in a certain period of time (Schmitt, Weiner, & Highhouse, 2012). It is also a result of workplace behavior that has a strong relationship to professional commitment. Referring to studies conducted over 25 years in 14 different countries, sales employees were committed to their jobs when they had positive performance. This resulted in continuous career advancement and enhanced their commitment to their position or chosen profession (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Marshall, 2005). The current study therefore proposed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Job performance is positively related to professional commitment.

2.3.4 Innovation Orientation

Innovation orientation is defined as a trend to create new unique ways to complete tasks using new methods and approaches which lead to successful results (Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016; Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, & Hunt, 1991). Innovativeness is the "willingness to discard old beliefs and explore new alternatives" (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Interpersonal skill and resourcefulness are beneficial in the account executive profession. They focus on doing whatever they need to do to complete their tasks in

the most effective way, and innovativeness may sometimes play an important role. Using a sample of scientists and engineers, Perry, Hunter and Currall (2016) indicate that an innovation orientation was positively related to professional commitment. Therefore, the current study proposed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: An innovation orientation is positively related to professional commitment.

2.3.5 Personal Satisfaction

Another important factor is personal satisfaction, which refers to the sense of fulfillment of a need or want, and the quality of satisfaction at that moment. A study of nurses in Taiwan (Chang, Lu, & Wu, 2007) found a positive relationship between self-satisfaction and professional commitment. This finding showed that individuals with more personal satisfaction tended to have greater commitment to their profession compared to those with less personal satisfaction. Another study was conducted to investigate the relationships between turnover intentions, professional commitment, and personal satisfaction using a sample of female nurses (Lu, Lin, Wu, Hsieh, & Chang, 2002) The results indicated that personal satisfaction was positively correlated with professional commitment. The current study proposed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Personal satisfaction is positively related to professional commitment.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Five independent variables were chosen based on the literature review, including ethical commitment, individual self-belief, job performance, innovation orientation, and personal satisfaction. Five hypotheses were developed to investigate how these variables affect the professional commitment of account executives in Thailand. The conceptual framework is detailed in Figure 2.1.

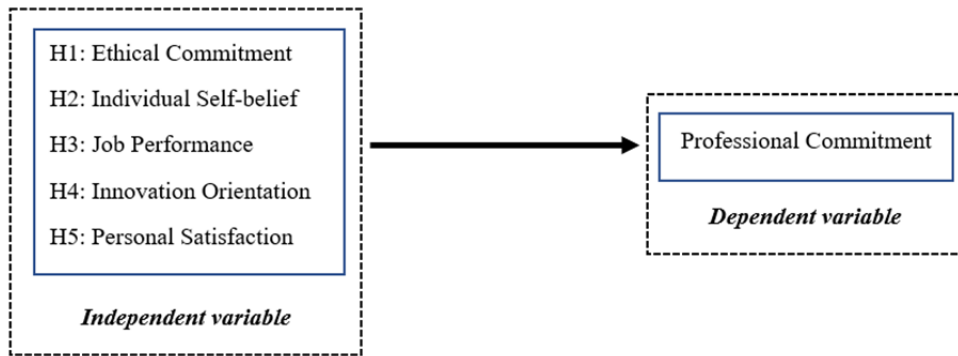


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the research methodology chosen for the study. A research methodology is a logical sequence of philosophical, logical, and practical choices made for the study to provide reliable and valid findings for the research questions (Zikmund, Babin, & Griffin, 2013). The chapter begins by discussing research design, which is a survey, one kind of quantitative research. Then, the chapter explains the population and sampling and discusses data collection and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

The current study employed a quantitative research design to collect standardized data from a wide and ideally representative sample of a given population and analyze it by using techniques such as statistical analysis in order to draw conclusions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). This contrasts to qualitative research, which uses non-standardized data and analysis methods (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach was chosen for this study because it is the only way to prove relationships between variables (Zikmund, Babin, & Griffin, 2013). While qualitative research could be used to explain such relationships, it could not be used to prove them and findings could not be generalized (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The current study was also cross-sectional, with all data collected at one time.

The questionnaire includes two sections (see Appendix A). The first section was the demographic information. The second section consisted of 18 questions to measure all studied variables of this study. These items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. This scale is one of the well-known methods to get the level of accordancy of each question (Malhotra, 2010).

The items used in the current study were adapted from previous research to fit the studied context. Table 3.1 shows the original questions, adapted questions and sources.

Table 3.1 Measures

Variables	Sources	Original questions	Adapted questions
Ethical commitment	(Greenfield, Norman, & Wier, 2008)	A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.	People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm others even to a small degree.
		One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.	People should never psychologically or physically harm others.
		If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done.	If my action could harm an innocent person, then it should not be done.
Individual self-belief	(Rhee, Kim, & Ryu, 2009)	I feel confident handling virus infected files.	I feel confident in handling my company's account.
		I feel confident understanding terms/words relating to information security.	I feel confident in understanding terms/words relating to my company's work.
	(Greenfield, Norman, & Wier, 2008)	It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to work in areas that are not associated with this profession.	I would need only little change in my present circumstances if I want to work in areas that I am not familiar with.
Job performance	(Yenhui, Hao, & Chi, 2009)	I take the initiative in collecting the information or learning skills for my job.	I take the initiative in gathering information or skills needed for my job.
		Before carrying on my job, I must plan the schedule in advance.	I normally plan the schedule in advance before working on my job.
		When I meet the difficulties, I will try to process properly as soon as possible.	I normally try to process properly as soon as possible when I encounter difficulties.
Personal satisfaction	(Younes, 2012)	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	I am being paid a fair amount for my job.
		I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.	I am satisfied with the benefits I receive at work.
		I like the people I work with.	I like my colleagues.

Table 3.1 Measures (cont.)

Variables	Sources	Original questions	Adapted questions
Innovation orientation	(Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016)	Most of my time is spent working on several ideas at the same time.	I normally spend time working on several ideas for improving my work.
		I usually delegate routine tasks after only a short period of time.	I usually assign routine tasks to others after only a short period of time.
		I usually take control in unstructured situations.	I can handle unstructured situations without panic.
Professional Commitment	(Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016)	Belong to the professional community of others in my field.	I belong to the professional community of others in my field.
		Building my professional reputation in my field.	I am building my professional reputation in my field.
		Improve my knowledge in my field.	I am improving my knowledge in my field.

Respondents were recruited through personal connection and were provided a brief explanation of the study's purpose. The brief was also explained in the information letter which were appeared on the landing page of the survey link. All respondents were anonymous and all information was confidential.

3.2 Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population of this study was account executives (sometimes called client service managers) at firms in Bangkok, Thailand. The population size of this group is unknown, but is likely to be large. Therefore, this study used a formula recommended by Cochran (1977) to determine the appropriate sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where;

n = Recommended number of sample size

p = Sample size proportion of the population (used at 0.50 use as default value when population proportion is unknown)

Z = value at given confidence level

Z value at 90% confidence level = 1.65

Z value at 95% confidence level = 1.96

D = Margin of error

D value at 90% confidence level = 0.10

D value at 95% confidence level = 0.05

The current study allowed margin of error to be 10% (90% confidence level). Therefore, the appropriate sample size for this study is;

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{0.5(0.5)1.65^2}{0.10^2} \\ &= 68.06 \end{aligned}$$

A total of 102 questionnaires were distributed, 100 were completed and able to use for further analysis, which exceeds the recommended sample size of 68

The sample was selected using convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is not ideal for quantitative research as it is not a probabilistic method and does not provide a representative sample (Zikmund, Babin, & Griffin, 2013). However, there are a number of situations where it can be used, including in situations with no clear understanding or listing of the sample (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

3.3 Data Collection

This study used the questionnaire to collect the data from participants in Thailand. The online survey was chosen to prevent geographical dependences, capable of collecting data from a large number of respondents, received anonymous participants, easy to administer and cost effective (Malhotra, 2010). Also, questionnaire is better

than experiment method because experiments in organizational settings and surrounding established attitudes are rarely effective

3.4 Data Analysis

SPSS were used to analyze the dataset because of the completeness of available analysis procedures. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the variables, including mean and standard deviation (numeric variables) and frequency distributions (categorical variables). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution and spread of the variables and examine trends in the study (Black, 2011). Next, inferential statistics were conducted. Inferential statistics are those that allow the researcher to infer or draw conclusions about relationships in the population (Black, 2011). Specifically, multiple linear regression was employed in this study in order to examine the relationships between the studied variables. The significant level was set to be at .05 or lower ($p < .05$) (Malhotra, 2010). Also, the reliability of the questionnaires was tested using Cronbach Alpha which set to be > 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents analysis and findings in the study of determinants of professional commitment. The chapter is structured in the following sections. The first section presents the demographic data of the sample to show the characteristics of the respondents who are the account executives. The next section is the results of the reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha scores for the consistency validation of the items in the questionnaire. The next section reports the correlation coefficients. The last section is hypothesis testing results.

4.1 Demographic Data of Sample

Demographic characteristics of respondents in this study is shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
1. Gender		
Male	32	32
Female	68	68
Total	100	100
2. Age		
18-30 years old	66	66
31-40 years old	23	23
41-50 years old	8	8
51-60 years old	2	2
> 60 years old	1	1
Total	100	100

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (cont.)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
3. Marital Status		
Single	87	87
Married	13	13
Total	100	100
4. Work Experience		
< 1 year	3	3
1-3 years	33	33
4-6 years	38	38
7-9 years	14	14
10 years or more	12	12
Total	100	100

Of 100 respondents, 68 are females (68%) and 32 are males (32%). Majority of the respondents (66%) age between 18-30 years. Respondents in the age group 31 - 40 years accounted for 23% of the sample, while older respondents (41 and above) accounted for a total of 11%.

In terms of marital status, 87% of the respondents are single and 13% are married. Most respondent has 4 -6 years of experience (38%), followed by respondents with less than a year of experience (33%), 7 - 9 years (14%), and over 10 years (12%). Only 3% has less than a year of experience.

4.2 Reliability Results

The reliability of research is an important aspect of methodology. Therefore, the reliability of the research instrument must be measured by testing each item in the questionnaire with the Cronbach Alpha formula (Noble & Smith, 2015). The Cronbach Alpha formula is used for establishing that the variables tested in the study are indeed independent, therefore being suitable for inclusion in linear relationships. The cut off

value for Alpha was taken as > 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The testing result of all variables were ranged between 0.74 - 0.88 which means the measures are reliable (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Reliability of Measures

Measure	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Ethical commitment	0.74
Individual self-belief	0.81
Job performance	0.81
Personal satisfaction	0.74
Innovation orientation	0.75

4.3 Correlation Coefficients

Multicollinearity was tested by conducting a Pearson's bivariate correlation test. Ethical commitment was positively correlated with individual self-belief ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$), job performance ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), personal satisfaction ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), and professional commitment ($r = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$). Individual self-belief was positively correlated with job performance ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). Job performance was positively correlated with innovation orientation ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$) and personal satisfaction ($r = 0.81$, $p < 0.001$). Innovation orientation was positively correlated with professional commitment ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) and personal satisfaction was positively correlated with professional commitment ($r = 0.86$, $p < 0.001$). These correlations shown in Table 5 are below the recommended cut off value of 0.90 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006). It indicates that there was no multicollinearity problem in this research

Table 4.3 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients Between Variables

Variable	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ethical Commitment	3.91	.737					
2. Individual Self-belief	3.82	.638	.46**				
3. Job Performance	4.04	.582	.75***	.51**			
4. Innovation Orientation	3.67	.746	.03	.18	.57**		
5. Personal Satisfaction	3.61	.608	.65***	.37	.81***	.55	
6. Professional Commitment	3.41	.763	.85***	.43	.51	.67***	.86***

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

4.4 Regression Analysis Results

Regression analysis was conducted in order to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable, which is professional commitment. Table 4.4 shows the regression analysis results. The results indicate that two of the independent variables, individual self-belief and innovation orientation, are positively related to professional commitment.

Table 4.4 Regression Analysis Results

Professional Commitment	
Variable	
Ethical Commitment	0.06
Individual Self-belief	0.31**
Job Performance	0.18
Innovation Orientation	0.24*
Personal satisfaction	0.16
df	(5, 94)
F	6.99***
R ²	.232

Note: N = 100, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

The multiple linear regression was used to examine that relationships between ethical commitment, individual self-belief, job performance, innovation orientation, personal satisfaction and professional commitment of account executives in Thailand. The results of the analysis indicated that these five independent variables accounted for 23.2% variance of the model ($R^2 = .232$, $F(5, 94) = 6.99$, $p < 0.001$).

H1: Ethical commitment is positively related to professional commitment.

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 6 indicated that ethical commitment was not related to professional commitment ($\beta = 0.06$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H1 was not supported.

H2: Individual self-belief is positively related to professional commitment.

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 4.4 indicated that individual self-belief was positively related to professional commitment ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, H2 was supported.

H3: Job performance is positively related to professional commitment.

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 4.4 indicated that job performance was not related to professional commitment ($\beta = 0.18$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H3 was not supported.

H4: Innovation Orientation is positively related to professional commitment.

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 6 indicated that innovation orientation was positively related to professional commitment ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, H4 was supported.

H5: Personal satisfaction is positively related to professional commitment.

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 6 indicated that Personal satisfaction was not related to professional commitment ($\beta = 0.16$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H5 was not supported.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter presents the key findings and discussion, practical implications, and limitations of this study and recommendations for future study. The first section is the discussion of differences and similarities of results of previous studies and the current study. The second section presents the managerial implications. The last section highlights the limitation of this study and recommendations for the future study.

5.1 Key Findings and Discussion

The research objective was to investigate the antecedents of professional commitment of account executives. The study intended to test the following five hypotheses;

H1: Ethical commitment is positively related to professional commitment.

H2: Individual self-belief is positively related to professional commitment.

H3: Job performance is positively related to professional commitment.

H4: Innovation orientation is positively related to professional commitment.

H5: Personal satisfaction is positively related to professional commitment.

Based on the significant level, the result of the study accepted two of the hypotheses and rejected three of the hypotheses.

- H1: Ethical commitment is positively related to professional commitment.

The result of the current study indicated non-signification relationship between ethical commitment and professional commitment. This contradicts to the results from previous studies mentioned in literature review which reported positive relationship between ethical commitment and professional commitment. It is possible that the discrepancy may be due to different settings. For instance, a study of Koh & Boo (2004) was conducted in Singapore, whereas the current study was conducted in Thailand. According to the corporate corruption ethic index (2004), Signapore corporate ethic index scored 83.0 out of 100 points, while Thai coparate ethic index scored 28.7 out of 100 points (Kaufmann,

2004). It implies that companies in Singapore play more attention to the ethic issue than companies in Thailand do. Hence, ethical commitment was not related to professional commitment in the current study.

- H2: Individual self-belief is positively related to professional commitment

The result of the current study indicate that individual self-belief is positively related to professional commitment. This finding is in line with those of Bogler & Somech's (2017) and Ware & Kitsantas's (2007) studies.

- H3: Job performance is positively related to professional commitment

The result of the current study indicates that job performance is not related to professional commitment, contradicting to previous studies which reported a positive relationship between job performance and professional commitment (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Marshall, 2005). One plausible explanation for this discrepancy is different research designs used. For example, a study of Jaramillo, et al. (2005) used a longitudinal design, which involves repeated observations of the same variables through time. However, the current study employed a cross-sectional design, which is one-time study. Another reason for contradictory results may be due to different profession of respondents. For instance, a study by Jaramillo et al. (2005) used sale employees and their performance are measured by the number, such as monthly or quarterly sale. However, the current study used account executives and they may have intangible indicator such as clients' satisfaction and recognition.

- H4: Innovation orientation is positively related to professional commitment

The current study found a positive relationship between innovation orientation and professional commitment. This result is in line with those of previous research (Perry, Hunter & Currall, 2016).

- H5: Personal satisfaction is positively related to professional commitment

The result of the current study indicates a non-signification relationship between these two constructs. This finding contradicts to previous studies (Chang, Lu, & Wu, 2007; Lu, Lin, Wu, Hsieh, & Chang, 2002) which found that personal satisfaction was positively related to professional commitment. It is possible that the discrepancy may be due to different professions of respondents. For example, a study of Chang, Lu and Wu (2007) was conducted in nurses, but the current study was conducted in account executives. These two professions are likely to have different job requirements. There is a long

journey to become a nurse. The journey includes preparing oneself for entrance requirement such as height and weight, four-year in nursing institution with intensive curriculum and internship in hospitals depending on the chosen institution (Atimatranon T., 2005) This dedication might affect self-satisfaction. However, to become an account executive, one might need certain level of education and other requirements, such as interpersonal and negotiation skills depending on the company you apply for.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The main purpose of this study is to identify the factors affecting professional commitment among account executives.

The results of this study indicate that individual self-belief and innovation orientation are significantly positively related to professional commitment. On the other hand, three other factors including ethical commitment, job performance, and personal satisfaction were not significantly related to professional commitment for account executives. According to the results of the current study, the recommendations for organizations are as follows:

Individual self-belief was positively related to professional commitment in this study, which primarily concerns the way employees feel about their own ability to execute or complete tasks (Bandura, 1986). It is recommended to increase individual self-belief by adapting the intervention program and enactive mastery experience, which have been previously tested as influencers of higher self-belief (Dinther, 2010). To adapt the intervention program, managers can create training sections in order to prepare employees before going into actual business fields or meeting real clients. This can promote self-belief among employees. Another recommendation is to adapt the enactive mastery experience. Experience is the strongest element in developing self-belief and depends on how each person psychologically processes information about their previous performance (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2003) Therefore, it is recommended that managers review tasks after employees have completed them in order to identify the aspects of accomplishment carried out by the employees that enabled the successful task, which could then be discussed with the employees. Moreover, successful stories should be raised in the conversation

from time to time. This action will encourage employees to generate information about the success of previous performance, which can lead to enhanced self-belief.

In this study, innovation orientation was found to be positively related to professional commitment. Innovation orientation is related to identifying new ways or methods to complete specific tasks (Perry, Hunter & Currall, 2016; Robinson, 1991). It is recommended to increase innovation orientation by valuing changes and allowing more risk-taking actions. Two activities mentioned were tested as positively related to innovation orientation (Zhang & Duan, 2010). Change can be minimal, such as a working-desk rotation in the office, to a major change such as changing the management team. It is recommended that the organization should value the changes whether minor or major. Furthermore, managers can help increase innovation orientation by allowing employees to initiate and execute any ideas that have been carefully analyzed. The company should be prepared to accept risks in order to gain innovation.

The other three factors, ethical commitment, job performance, and personal satisfaction were insignificantly influential to professional commitment. This means that the factors were not related to professional commitment. Therefore, the organization should not waste time or money attempting to promote these factors if they want to increase professional commitment.

5.3 Limitations of the Current Study and Recommendations for Future Study

The first limitation is that all respondents were account executives at firms in Thailand. Thus, the results may not be applied broadly to other professions. Future research should investigate the antecedents of professional commitment using different professions.

The second limitation is the research method, which was quantitative research. Future research should conduct assessment by using a qualitative method in order to collect respondents' insights. Moreover, the researcher might discover some aspects during the in-depth interviews that were not found in the literature review.

The third limitation of this study involves the sampling method utilized. The current study employed convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling

technique. Generalizability and reliability of the results may vary (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, future study may choose to employ other methods such as systematic sampling or stratified sampling to enhance the generalizability of the results.

The fourth limitation is the independent variables used to identify the relationships. This study was conducted using only five independent variables. However, there are many factors that can potentially affect professional commitment among account executives. Therefore, future study should test more potential factors of professional commitment. For example, Yeh (2009) studied the relationship between work climate and professional commitment. Work stress is another potential factor for future study to examine.

The final limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study used to collect the data at only specific points of time. It cannot track or analyze the changes of variables through time. Cross-sectional design does not allow for causal relationships to be established. In future study, it is recommended to conduct research using a longitudinal design in order to follow-up and detect the changes between independent variables and dependent variables over time. Moreover, it allows for the establishment of causal inference between variables.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

The aim of this survey is to investigate potential factors that can influence professional commitment of account executives/client service of firms in Bangkok. The survey is developed in a partial fulfilment of Master's degree at College of Management Mahidol University. The information gathered by this survey will not be disclosed to any third party and will be used only for academic purpose. The survey will not ask any personal information of the respondents that can identify an individual. The respondents can also withdraw from the survey anytime they want without prior notice and can choose not to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable to express.

The survey consists of two parts. The first part asks about demographic information of the respondents. The second part asks about the factors that can potentially affect professional commitment.

Part 1 Demographic information

Please in the box where the answer mostly suits yours

1.1 Gender

Male Female

1.2 Age

18-30 years 31-40 years 41-50 years
 51-60 years More than 60 years

1.3 Marital status

Single Married

1.4 Work experience

Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 year
 7-9 years 10 years or more

Part 2 Potential factors influenced professional commitment

Please ✓ in the box where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree.

Statements	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical commitment					
2.1 People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm others even to a small degree.					
2.2 People should never psychologically or physically harm others.					
2.3 If my action could harm an innocent person, then it should not be done.					
Individual self-belief					
2.4 I feel confident in handling my company's account.					
2.5 I feel confident in understanding terms/words relating to my company's work.					
2.6 I would need only little change in my present circumstances if I want to work in areas that I am not familiar with.					
Job performance					
2.7 I take the initiative in gathering information or skills needed for my job.					
2.8 I normally plan the schedule in advance before working on my job.					
2.9 I normally try to process properly as soon as possible when I encounter difficulties.					
Personal satisfaction					
2.10 I am being paid a fair amount for my job.					
2.11 I am satisfied with the benefits I receive at work.					
2.12 I like my colleagues.					
Innovation orientation					
2.13 I normally spend time working on several ideas for improving my work.					

Statements	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
2.14 I usually assign routine tasks to others after only a short period of time.					
2.15 I can handle unstructured situations without panic.					
Professional commitment					
2.16 I belong to the professional community of others in my field.					
2.17 I am building my professional reputation in my field.					
2.18 I am improving my knowledge in my field.					

