

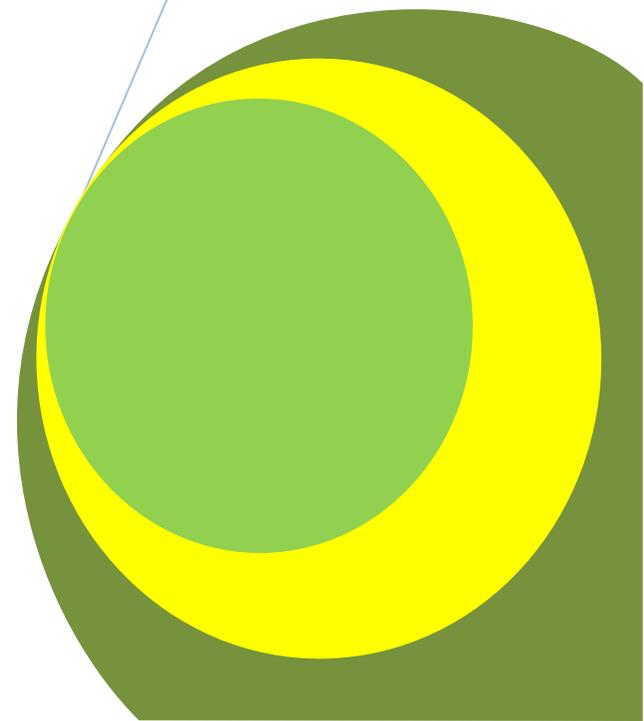
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## Teachers' Perceived Commitment as Measured by Age, Gender and School Type

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*Research Article*

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**ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate secondary school beginning teachers' perceptions of professional commitment in Ethiopia, and to determine how their perceptions differed across the selected demographic variables in terms of professional commitment. Respondents were 381 secondary school beginning teachers in East Shoa and West Arsi Zones of Oromiya regional state, Ethiopia. They responded to a 2-part questionnaire—demographic variables and Professional Commitment Scale (Allen, Meyer, & Smith, 1993). Data was gathered via questionnaires following the research procedures. Statistical analysis of the data was done using SPSS for Windows version 11.5. Scale results showed that the background variables—age, gender, and school type—have significant but small effects on the perceptions of beginning secondary school teachers' professional commitment in Ethiopia. Beginning male teachers in Ethiopia claim relatively higher levels of affective professional commitment; while their perceptions of normative, and continuance professional commitment tends to be neutral. This study also revealed that teachers in public secondary schools than private secondary schools perceived higher normative ( $MD = 0.28, p < 0.01$ ) and continuance ( $MD = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) professional commitment. Implications and recommendations for school practices and future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Affective, Beginning Teachers, Commitment, Continuance, Normative, Perceptions, Professional.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Beginning teachers can be considered as new force of the teaching profession. In order to utilize this new force wisely, it is vital to make their entry years satisfying and enjoyable (Fottland, 2004). Studies have argued that, beginning teachers need professional support and assistance from the school administrators and experienced teachers in order to succeed in the profession (Gilbert, 2005; Hoerr, 2005; Olebe, 2005; Useem & Neild, 2005).

The transition from preparation in teacher training colleges or other institutions of higher learning to begin teaching as a professional teacher requires a novice teacher to struggle to overcome many challenges. Those who fail to persist through the challenges drop the profession at the early stage of their entry (Roffey, 2004; Useem & Neild, 2005). Studies conducted in developed countries revealed that the drop-out rate among beginning teachers is between 40-50% during the first 5 years of their entry into the profession. Over 20% of these teachers leave the profession in their first 3 years and 10% drop the job within their first year (Cochran & Reese, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, McKinney & Finke, 2005; Roffey, 2004; Vok, 2003). According to Vok (2003) out of all new teachers joining the profession, one-fourth drop out within the first 4 years.

In the United States about 50% of beginning teachers leave the teaching profession within the first 5 years (McDevitt, 2008). In Germany, teachers who stay in the profession until their standard retirement age is less than 10%. In the Czech Republic, the teacher attrition rate is 20%; in Britain, more teachers are dropping out of the profession early than enduring until retirement (Macdonald, as cited in Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002). Beginning teachers' attrition rate is higher than experienced teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Even more worrying, some evidence indicates that it is precisely the academically gifted teachers who drop out of teaching early (Heyns, as cited in Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002). The dropout rate in junior and higher secondary schools is higher than in the elementary schools (Cochran & Reese, 2007). In Ethiopia, many media reports reveal that there is a high teacher attrition rate and that the crisis of teachers' shortage appears to be a serious challenge for the ministry of education of Ethiopia (Tesfaye, 2003). Although there has been an increasing interest to attract more professionals to teaching and retain them, no adequate research has been found to address beginning teachers' perceptions of professional commitment; hence, this study is to address this gap.

## 1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

- i. To assess secondary school beginning teachers' perceptions of professional commitment Ethiopia.
- ii. To discover how age, gender, and school type impact on secondary school beginning teachers' perceptions of professional commitment.

## 1.3 Research Questions

To understand the stated problems of the study better, this researcher has endeavored to investigate the following three questions:

1. What are the perceptions of beginning teachers' professional commitment in Ethiopia?
2. How do the perceptions of the beginning teachers differ across age, gender, and school type in terms of professional commitment in Ethiopia?

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1. Professional Commitment

Professional commitment refers to the measure of strength of the employees' identification with the goals and values of their profession, having strong faith in it and showing considerable effort to continue in the membership of the profession (Nazari & Emami, 2012). Teachers' professional commitment refers to the willingness of the teachers to "go the extra mile" to ensure that students can be successful. Professionally committed teachers assist students in their extra time, cooperate with and willing to work with parents, and utilize class time profitably.

Professional commitment likely has an impact on people's working behaviors such as their observable attitudes, their judgments about the work end, and their involvement in professional groups. Professional commitment is related to positive behaviors which is useful for organization and people with high levels of professional commitment subsequently are less involved in activities that is harmful to the organization (Greenfield, as cited in Nazari & Emami, 2012, p.5).

Previous studies on school type and teachers commitment show mixed results. Gupta and Gehlawat (2013) have reported that teachers in private schools are more committed to their profession than did those in public schools. In contrast, Gerald (2011) reported that there is no significance difference in teachers' commitment in public and private schools. When age is considered, Gerald (2011) reported that younger teachers are more committed than older ones. But, Garipağaoğlu (2013) found no significant difference in commitment with regard to age, whereas Hanlon (1983) have reported that older teachers are more committed than younger ones.

Considering gender, some studies have indicated that females' level of commitment is higher than males' levels of commitment (Coladarci, as cited in Chan et al., 2008; Park, 2005). But, the findings of Borman and Dowling (2008) indicated lower commitment of females.

Allen and Meyer (1993) adapted their work from organizational commitment and defined three different types of professional commitment, the affective, normative, and continuance professional commitment, these three professional commitments correspond to (a) emotional, (b) feeling of obligation, and/or (c) economic reasons of a person. An employee may be committed to the profession because of one of the above single mental state or combination of two or even three of them.

#### 2.1.1. Affective Professional Commitment

Affective professional commitment refers to teachers' emotional connection to, identification with, and participation in the teaching profession and its objectives in regard to (a) motivation of the teacher to identify with and the aspiration not to drop the profession for self-interested desires, (b) compliance to teach altruistically and contribute to the success of the teaching profession, and (c) keenness to make special sacrifice—do further than regular potential and to tolerate challenging situations (Bagraim, 2003; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

### 2.1.2. Normative Professional Commitment

Normative professional commitment refers to the feelings of moral responsibility of people to stay in the profession (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Bagraim, 2003; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). It is “the sense of obligation of the professional towards the profession to uphold the values” (Maheshwari et al., 2007, p. 8).

### 2.1.3. Continuance Professional Commitment

Continuance commitment refers to commitment based on “the benefits and costs that is related to stay in” the profession (Nazari & Emami, 2012, p. 3). It is “the extent to which individuals believes that they must remain in the teaching profession because of lack of alternatives or possible disruptions resulting from leaving their jobs” (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, p. 304). It is the “economic compulsions that make the professionals stay with the profession and its values” (Maheshwari et al., 2007, p. 8). Teachers with continuance professional commitment remain within the teaching profession because leaving the profession has high cost for them.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. The primary purpose of this study was to assess the beginning teachers’ perceptions of professional commitment in Ethiopia and compare them according to school characteristics. The perception was assessed using the survey instrument for data gathering, and data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 11.5. Interpretations of the results were based on the statistical analysis of the data. The two variables and their related constructs were the following:

- i. Teachers’ perceptions of Professional commitment: The three subscales of professional commitment being (a) affective, (b) normative, and (c) continuance professional commitment.
- ii. The demographic variables: This consisted of two categories (a) teachers’ age (b) gender and (c) school type.

### 3.1. Survey Instruments

#### Professional Commitment Scale (PCS)

The instrument chosen to measure teachers’ perceptions of their professional commitment was the 18-item, and three factor Professional Commitment Scale (PCS) developed by Allen et al. (1993). This is the most commonly used instrument to measure commitment (Aamodt, 2007; Andrews, 2007; Maheshwari et al., 2007). Since the instrument was developed to measure teachers’ occupational commitment, it is adapted with permission for this study. The method of adaptation was by replacing reference point “occupation” by the noun “profession,” preceded by the noun “teaching” to make “teaching profession.” This instrument measured the affective, normative, and continuance professional commitment.

#### 3.1.1. Validity Analysis of the Instrument

Since the PCS—used in this study was developed in the western context, it was necessary to conduct a validity analysis in the Ethiopian context. Literature indicates that for fully structured, developed, and validated instruments, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the only appropriate method of hypothesis testing and AMOS for SEM is appropriate for CFA (Byrne, 2001). Thus, the CFA was done using AMOS for SEM software version 17.0 to check whether each scale could be formed into an independent model with a goodness of fit and with each item contributing significantly to the scale in terms of the sample population of this study. Models of goodness of fit were generated and then the models for each of the scales were examined with model fit indicators and significance indicators. Significant  $\chi^2$  values for the models would suggest a poor fit. In such cases, other fit indices such as goodness of fit index ( $GFI > 0.90$ ), normed fit index ( $NFI > 0.90$ ), comparative fit index ( $CFI > 0.90$ ), Critical Ratio ( $CR > 1.96$ ), and  $p$ -values ( $p < 0.05$ ) were examined especially in relation to the sample size of the present study (Byrne, 2001).

The CFA for the original three scale, and 18-items PCS, developed by Allen et al. (1993) showed that goodness-of-fit indices of these scales revealed that the original 6-item affective and continuance professional commitment scales proposed by the developers did not fit the data. Close examination of the goodness of fit models revealed that items number 2 and 5 of affective professional commitment, and item number 17 of continuance professional commitment were not contributing significantly to the model. Further, the analysis showed that when these items were removed from each scale, the model improved significantly.

### 3.1.2. Reliability Analysis of the Instruments

The reliability analysis of the PCS, however, indicated the need for some modification of the instrument before the analysis and interpretation of the data. The initial reliability analysis of the PCS in this study showed alpha values ranging from 0.44 to 0.61 compared to 0.69 to 0.87 reported by the developers of the instrument (Allen et al., 1993), and 0.56 to 0.78 in an Indian study (Maheshwari et al., 2007). In this study, both affective ( $\alpha = 0.55$ ) and continuance ( $\alpha = 0.44$ ) professional commitment showed alpha values lower than the minimum alpha coefficients ( $\alpha \geq 0.60$ ) required for data analysis and interpretation (Leech, 2005). Similar to the CFA results, the reliability analysis suggested the removal of item numbers 2 and 5 from the affective professional commitment and item number 17 from continuance professional commitment scales. When item numbers 2 and 5 were consequently, removed from the scale, the alpha coefficient of affective professional commitment scale increased from 0.55 to 0.61, and when item number 17 was removed from continuance professional commitment scale its alpha coefficient improved from 0.44 to 0.59.

Although item numbers 2 and 5 seem to be core items in the scales, their non-significant contribution to the scale and their contribution to the low alpha values of the scale suggested their removal. Similarly, close examination of the statement of item number 17 revealed that from a cultural viewpoint, this item may be understood in terms of external forces, while it is actually referring to the psychological state of the profession. Thus, item numbers 2 and 5 of affective professional commitment and item number 17 of continuance professional commitment scale were not included in the data analysis of this study.

### 3.2. Research Locale

This research was conducted on public and private secondary schools in East Shoa and West Arsi zones of Oromiya Regional State, Ethiopia. Oromiya is one of the 11 administrative regions in Ethiopia. The rationale for choosing Oromiya state and specifically the two zones is that Oromiya is the largest state in Ethiopia in terms of both geographical and population size and located in the heart of the country, the selected two zones are among the zones with a high concentration of schools, teachers, and student populations. It was assumed that the selected two zones are among the zones where the teaching profession is considered as a low status profession.

### 3.3. Descriptions of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents used in the data analyses.

#### Age:

The majority of beginning teachers come from the young age group who are in the age category of 26 and below (63.8%). Only 6 teachers (1.6%) were in their early thirties and one teacher (0.3%) in the late thirties. This is apparently because of it being an expected age range at which many young people complete their undergraduate studies and enter into the profession.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Teachers (N = 381)

Demographic Variable	Category	N	%
Age	Below 26	243	63.8
	26-30	130	34.1
	31-35	6	1.6
	36-40	1	0.3
	Over 40	0	0
	Missing	1	0.3
Gender	Male	339	89.0
	Female	42	11.0
	Missing	2	0.5

Level of education	College diploma	84	22.0
	BA/BSC	289	76.0
	Other	8	2.0
	Missing	3	0.8
Teaching experience	Less than one year	89	23.4
	1-2 years	73	19.2
	2-3 years	86	22.6
	3-4 years	54	14.2
	4-5 years	77	20.2
	Missing	2	0.5
School type	Public	268	70.3
	Private	113	29.7
School setting	Urban	82	21.5
	Suburban	299	78.5
Teaching subjects	Mathematics	44	11.5
	Science	115	30.2
	Social studies	111	29.1
	Languages	83	21.8
	Other	28	7.3

### Gender:

Considering gender, compared to other developing countries such as the Philippines (Amada, 1997), and Bangladesh (Bairagee, 2008), where the majority of teachers are females, and the US where teaching is decidedly a female occupation (Borman and Dowling, 2008), this research finding showed that in Ethiopia a majority of beginning teachers are males (89.0%). This is consistent with the general composition of the secondary school teaching staffs in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the data obtained from the secondary schools sampled for this study showed that male teachers comprised 87% of the total teaching force.

### Level of Education:

More than half (76.0%) of the teachers had bachelor's degrees, while diploma holders make up 22.0%. In secondary schools sampled for this study, there was no teacher with more than bachelor's degree. This indicates that the maximum qualification required to teach at Ethiopian secondary schools is bachelor's degree. Those with more than bachelor's degree may be assigned to some administrative duties or transferred to teach at higher levels. Those diploma holders and others teaching at the secondary school level may be in the process of upgrading to bachelor's degree or assigned to teach subjects such as vocational and physical education.

### School Type:

There were more respondents from public schools (70.3%) than private schools. This is obvious because the number of public schools as well as their student population is higher than private schools.

### School Setting:

While the majority of beginning teachers (78.5%) taught in the suburban school settings, only one third (29.2%) taught in urban school settings. As the years of their teaching experience increases, majority of teachers move to urban schools and those who newly join the teaching profession are assigned to suburban schools. The fact that moving to urban schools is based on seniority and is considered as promotion, contributes to this situation. Teaching at urban schools provides teachers with better working and living conditions and various professional development opportunities than suburban schools. It appears that suburban public schools have become experimental grounds for relatively young and inexperienced teachers. This might result in an imbalance in the quality of educational practices.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the analysis of the data to answer the two research questions addressed in this study.

##### 4.1. Perceptions of Professional Commitment

The first Research Question asked, "What are the perceptions of beginning teachers' in terms of their professional commitment?" To answer this research question, the modified PCS with 15-items was used to analyze the data gathered from 381 respondents.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the three scales, affective, normative, and continuance professional commitment survey. This section deals with the mean and standard deviation scores of the beginning teachers' perceptions of professional commitment in terms of the three scales.

*Affective professional commitment.* The affective professional commitment scale measured teachers' emotional connection to, identification with, and participation in the teaching profession and its objectives. Sample items include, "My teaching profession is important to my self-image," "I am proud to be in my teaching profession." This scale originally consisted of six items of the PCS. Items 2, 4, and 5 in this scale were reverse scored items and recorded as suggested by the developers of the instrument. Items number 2 and 5 were removed from the analysis due to their low contribution to the reliability of the factor and their insignificant factor weights in the CFA. Thus, the analysis, of affective professional commitment was done using only four items. The highest mean score among these items was 4.13, ( $SD = 1.18$ ), within the *agree* response range and the lowest was 3.26, ( $SD = 1.42$ ), within a *neutral* response range. The overall mean score for this scale was 3.56, ( $SD = 1.28$ ) and fell within the *agree* range.

*Continuance professional commitment.* The continuance professional commitment scale measures the extent to which teachers intend to stay in the profession because of the economic compulsions that make them stay with the teaching profession and its values. The original scale consisted of six items, but item 17 was not included in the analysis because its presence markedly lowered the reliability of this scale. Thus, in this scale, only five items were used for the analysis.

On a 5-point scale, the lowest mean score for this scale was for item 14, "changing teaching profession now would be difficult for me to do" ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), and item 15, "too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my teaching profession now" ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). The responses for both of these items plus item number 16 ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) fell within the *neutral* response range while the remaining two items fell within the *agree* category. The overall mean calculated for this scale was low  $M = 3.19$ , ( $SD = 1.24$ ) and fell within the *neutral* response range.

*Normative professional commitment.* The normative professional commitment scale measures teachers' feelings of moral responsibility to stay in the teaching profession. This scale consisted of six items of PCS. Sample items include, "I would feel guilty if I left my teaching profession," "I am in my teaching profession because of my sense of loyalty to it" Item 8 was reverse scored item, as suggested by the developers. Items 8 and 11 of this scale scored the lowest mean 3.15, ( $SD = 1.35$ ), and 2.75 ( $SD = 1.28$ ), respectively. The responses for both of these items fell within the *neutral* response range. On a 5-point scale, the overall mean calculated for this scale was the lowest 3.14, ( $SD = 1.31$ ) of all the three PCS fell within the *neutral* response range.

As indicated in Table 2, the summary of statistical analysis for the PCS shows that the highest mean score was for the factor affective professional commitment followed in descending order by continuance professional commitment, and normative professional commitment ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ). Teachers in the present study reported high perceptions of affective professional commitment but low perceptions of normative and continuance professional commitment.

Table 2: Summary Results of Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Commitment (N = 381)

Professional commitment	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Affective	381	3.56	1.28	Agree
Continuance	381	3.19	1.24	Neutral
Normative	381	3.14	1.31	Neutral

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79; *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59; *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39; *Agree* = 3.40-4.19; *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00.

#### 4.2. Professional Commitment and the Demographic Variables

The second Research Question asked, “How do the perceptions of the beginning teachers’ differ across age, gender, and school type in terms of professional commitment?” The corresponding hypothesis to this question stated that “there is no significant difference in beginning teachers’ perceptions of professional commitment when grouped according to the demographics.” For the three professional commitment variables—*affective*, *normative*, and *continuance* professional commitment—three null sub-hypotheses were stated corresponding to the three demographic variables—age, gender, and school type.

**Age.** Independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine if there is significant difference in beginning teachers’ perceptions of professional commitment when grouped by age of the respondents. Results showed significant differences only in *normative* professional commitment when grouped by age ( $t = 2.44, p = 0.02$ ; see Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Commitment by Age (N = 381)

Professional commitment	Age	N	M	SE	MD (SED)	t-value	p-value
Affective	Below 26	243	3.57	0.06	0.04(0.09)	0.45	0.65
	26 and above	137	3.52	0.07			
Normative	Below 26	243	3.15	0.05	0.20(0.08)	2.44	0.02*
	26 and above	137	2.95	0.07			
Continuance	Below 26	243	3.23	0.05	0.10(0.08)	1.24	0.21
	26 and above	137	3.13	0.07			

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79; *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59; *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39; *Agree* = 3.40-4.19; *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00; SE = Standard error of the mean. MD = Mean difference. SED = Standard error of the difference. \*Significant at 0.05 level.

The age group below 26 indicated a higher level of *normative* professional commitment ( $M = 3.15$ ) than the age group 26 and above ( $M = 2.95$ ).

**Gender.** Results of the independent samples *t* test indicated (Table 4) that only the *affective* professional commitment showed significant difference when grouped by gender ( $t = 1.97, p = 0.05$ ).

Table 4: Comparison of Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Commitment by Gender (N = 381)

Professional commitment	Gender	N	M	SE	MD(SED)	t-value	p-value
Affective	Male	339	3.58	0.05	0.26 (0.15)	1.97	0.05*
	Female	42	3.32	0.13			
Normative	Male	339	3.08	0.04	- 0.05(0.13)	-0.35	0.71
	Female	42	3.12	0.13			
Continuance	Male	339	3.20	0.04	0.00(0.12)	0.04	0.97
	Female	42	3.19	0.11			

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79; *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59; *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39; *Agree* = 3.40-4.19; *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00. SE = Standard error of the mean. MD = Mean difference. SED = Standard error of the difference. \*Significant at 0.05 level.

Male teachers indicated higher level of *affective* professional commitment ( $M = 3.58, SE = 0.05$ ) than female teachers ( $M = 3.32, SE = 0.13$ ).

**School type.** As the results of the independent *t*-test analysis shows in Table 5, significant difference existed in *normative* ( $t = 3.32, p < 0.01$ ) and *continuance* ( $t = 2.04, p < 0.05$ ) professional commitment when grouped by school type.

Table 5: Comparison of Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Commitment by School Type  
(N = 381)

Professional commitment	School type	N	M	SE	MD(SED)	t-value	p-value
Affective	Public	268	3.60	0.05	0.14(0.10)	1.43	0.15
	Private	113	3.46	0.08			
Normative	Public	268	3.17	0.05	0.28(0.08)	3.32	0.00**
	Private	113	2.88	0.08			
Continuance	Public	268	3.25	0.05	0.17(0.08)	2.04	0.04*
	Private	113	3.07	0.07			

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79; *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59; *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39; *Agree* = 3.40-4.19; *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00; SE = Standard error of the mean. MD = Mean difference. SED = Standard error of the difference; \*Significant at 0.05 level; \*\*Significant at 0.01 level.

In terms of normative professional commitment, public school teachers have higher normative professional commitment ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ) than private school teachers ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ). Teachers in public schools also perceived higher continuance professional commitment ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ) than those teachers in private school ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ).

## 5. DISCUSSIONS ON THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The majority of beginning teachers come from the young age group who are in the age category of 26 and below (63.8%). Only 6 teachers (1.6%) were in their early thirties and one teacher (0.3%) in the late thirties. This is apparently because of it being an expected age range at which many young people complete their undergraduate studies and enter into the profession.

Hanlon (1983, p. 1) has reported that "older workers were indeed more committed to their jobs than were their younger counterparts." Similar to the findings of Gerald (2011) where younger teachers were found to be more committed than older ones, the findings of the present study revealed that younger teachers' (age below 26) perceptions of normative commitment were higher than older (age 26 and above) teachers ( $MD = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that younger teachers feel more obligated to the teaching profession than older teachers. Borman and Dowling (2008) reported mixed findings on teachers' age and commitment. Garipağaoğlu (2013) found no significant difference in commitment with regard to age. Thus, findings on teachers' normative professional commitment as it relates to age are inconclusive. The present study did not find significant effect of age as it relates to teachers' perceptions of affective and continuance professional commitment.

Considering gender, compared to other developing countries such as the Philippines (Amada, 1997), India (Kurian, 1999), and Bangladesh (Bairagee, 2008), where the majority of teachers are females, and the US where teaching is decidedly a female occupation (Borman & Dowling, 2008), this research finding showed that in Ethiopia a majority of beginning teachers are males (89.0%). This is consistent with the general composition of the secondary school teaching staffs in Ethiopia. Research findings on female commitment are mixed. Some have indicated that females' level of commitment is higher than males' levels of commitment (Coladarci, as cited in Chan et al., 2008; Park, 2005). If we consider teachers' attrition and retention as a substitute for commitment, females more than males were reported to leave the teaching profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

This study revealed that male teachers' perceptions of affective professional commitment were significantly higher ( $MD = 0.26$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) than female teachers. One possible reason for this may be that females in Ethiopia do not prefer teaching as their profession. Another reason could be that since female teachers are fewer in number, may be they are experiencing isolation (lack of collaboration) and intending to leave the teaching profession. It could be possible that schools are not providing a friendly environment for beginning female teachers. The levels of perceptions of affective, normative, and continuance professional commitment of female teachers in this study were generally low, suggesting that school administrators explore reasons why professional commitment levels of female beginning teachers are lower than male teachers and seek ways of attracting and recruiting female teachers to the profession to get desirable outcome. It also suggests the need for further investigation to come up with specific recommendation of how to motivate and attract more females to the teaching profession in Ethiopia.

Previous studies have shown higher commitment of private school teachers than public school teachers (Gupta & Gehlawat, 2013; Park, 2005). In contrast, this study revealed that teachers in public secondary school than private secondary schools perceived higher normative ( $MD = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and continuance ( $MD = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) professional commitment. This may be due to more job security in public schools than private schools, and

government incentive plans such as opportunities for free scholarship and other benefits. Another reason could be attributed to the working and employment conditions. In Ethiopia, many private schools are run by few teachers with heavy class loads and extracurricular activities which could be a reason for teachers' intention to leave the profession. Still another reason could be that public school teachers' employment condition from the start is always on permanent basis while some of private school teachers' employment is on temporary or contract basis and it appears that these teachers intend to leave the teaching profession at the end of their terms of contract. This situation suggests that private schools in Ethiopia need to reconsider terms of employment of teachers in order to attract and retain committed professionals.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the present study:

The original 18-items PCS (Allen et al., 1993) did not fit the present data, and required some modifications to make it fit the Ethiopian context. Thus, future researchers who use this scale should analyze the construct validity of the instrument in relation to their population.

The background variables—age; gender, and school type—have a significant but small effect on the perceptions of beginning secondary school teachers' professional commitment in Ethiopia. Male beginning secondary school teachers in Ethiopia claim relatively high level of perceptions of affective professional commitment than female beginning teachers. In this study, teachers' levels of normative and continuance professional commitment is low. This reveals a need for further research to find out what factors, particularly contribute to beginning teachers' normative and continuance professional commitment in order to promote their moral responsibility to the profession and decision to stay. In contrast to the previous studies, this study revealed that teachers in public secondary school than private secondary schools perceived higher normative ( $MD = 0.28, p < 0.01$ ) and continuance ( $MD = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) professional commitment.

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