

Predicting Turnover Intention: Do Organizational Support and Organizational Commitment play a Role?

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Abstract

This paper reports research investigating factors that might influence employees' turnover intention. The study was a cross sectional study where respondents' perception was measured at one point in time. 105 respondents participated in this study. Two factors, namely organizational support and organizational commitment (affective commitment and continuance commitment) were tested to predict turnover intention among employees in the company. Results from the study reveal that only affective commitment has the strongest influence on turnover intention. The findings were discussed and implications were also put forward.

Keywords: Turnover intention, Organizational support, Organizational commitment, Affective commitment, Continuance commitment

1. Introduction

Employee turnover has become a serious management problem because of its financial and moral impact on the organization's limited resources. Today, organizations have found it difficult to retain employees as a result of many baby boomers retiring from the workplace. Thus, employee turnover greatly demands management attention and do whatever they can to retain and motivate existing employees.

Employee turnover is the rotation of workers around the labor market, between firms, jobs and occupation as well as between the states of employment and unemployment. Organizations have invested a big paycheck on their employees in terms of induction and training, developing, maintaining and retaining them in their organization. Therefore, managers at all levels must know how to minimize employee's turnover. It is very important to develop a full understanding about employee turnover especially the source of what determines employee turnover, the effects and strategies that managers can put in place in order to minimize turnover.

In this globalization and high competitive world, organization must continue to develop tangible products and provide services which are based on strategies created by employees. These employees are extremely crucial to the organization since their value to the organization is essentially intangible and not easily replicated. For that reason, managers should recognize employees as major contributors to the efficient achievement of the organization's success. Managers also should control the employee turnover for the benefit of the organization success.

Therefore, the main aim of this study is to report findings on the factors that might contribute to employee turnover intention which mainly focus on organizational support and organizational commitment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Turnover Intention

In the scholarly literature, turnover intention has been defined in several ways but shared a common term (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986). Generally, it refers to an individual's perceived probability of staying or leaving an employing organization. Hellman (1997) for example, defined turnover intention as the behavioral intentions illuminating an individual's intention to leave or stay and is considered to be the primary antecedent or actual turnover behavior. In other writing, Bigliardi, Petroni and Ivo Dormio (2005) used the term intention to leave to refer to individuals' perceived likelihood that they will be staying or leaving the employer organization.

Empirical study on turnover has shown that turnover intention is the best immediate predictor of actual turnover behavior (Griffeth, Hom & Geatner, 2000). Indeed, there is a strong and significant positive relationship between turnover intention and actual turnover (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001). However, in the review of antecedents to turnover, Mor Barak, Nissly and Levin (2001) argued that many studies have used turnover intention rather than actual turnover as the work outcomes because employees typically make conscious decision before actually quitting their jobs and it is more practical to inquire from employees their intention to quit in a cross sectional study rather than actually tracking them down via a longitudinal study to see if they have left their organization. For that reasons and consistent with previous research (e.g., Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001; Price, 2001), turnover intention is the criterion variable in this study since it has recommended as a proxy in measuring actual turnover. Thus, turnover intention is clearly defined as employees' behavioral intention to leave or quit their particular organization.

2.2 Organizational Support and Turnover Intention

In the past, studies have shown how organizational support influence turnover intention. Tumwesige (2010) for example found that employees who perceive lack of support from their organization will feel less committed to their organization and thus, lead to turnover intention. In a study conducted by Valentine, Greller and Richtermeyer (2006), they found that organizations can build employees' positive perceptions of the workplace by emphasizing

ethical practices that support the welfare of stakeholders and that increase congruence between personal and organizational values. Such perception is associated with turnover intention.

According to Allen, Shore and Griffeth (2003), perceptions of supportive HR practices (participation in decision making, growth opportunities, and fairness of rewards/recognition) were related to employee intention to leave. When employees perceived organizational HR practices as supportive, their affective attachment to the organization will increase, and thus, decrease the intention to leave the organization.

Sharing the same view, Jawahar and Hemmasi (2006) also agree that organizational support related to turnover intention. In their study, they found that perceptions of lack of organizational support for women's advancement were related to turnover intention. Women who are aspiring to senior management positions, the extent to which the organization supports advancement will be more of a concern than the general construct of organizational support.

In other study, Ng (2009) found that the perceptions on organizational support and external prestige are important to employees' perceptions of the quality of their exchange relationships with their organizations. The results suggest that these perceptions affect employees' work attitudes and behaviors indirectly, through the quality of exchange relationships with their organization. Employees reciprocate the organization's cares and recognitions by developing trust in organization and reduce their intention to leave the company.

In a study on repatriate, similar results were also found. Lazarova and Caligiuri found that repatriates who perceive higher levels of organizational support have lower intentions to leave their organization. They believed that company-wide appreciation of global experience and career planning sessions were the most important elements in an MNC's repatriation system. The lack in the repatriation system will most likely generate unfavorable attitudes towards the company, and will ultimately, lead to turnover. Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Organizational support is negatively related to turnover intention

2.3 Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention

Past studies have shown that organizational commitment can influence turnover intention among employees in organization. For example, Blau and Boal (1989) found that employees with lower levels of job involvement and organizational commitment are in the "highest risk" category for subsequent turnover, with employees having high job involvement and low organizational commitment being next in terms of turnover risk. Pare, Tremblay and Lalonde, (2001) found that organizational commitment not only mediates but also moderates the effects of HR practices on quit intentions (Pare, Tremblay & Lalonde, 2001).

In other study, Cohen (1993) found that job withdrawal intentions are affected negatively by job satisfaction and job commitment, but positively by organizational commitment. He also found that age factor has also affected the intention to leave. For instance, they found that compared to young employees, though older employees reported low levels of organizational

commitment, they didn't leave the organization because of structural bonds, few employment alternatives and a desire for stability.

In other study on organizational commitment, Cole and Bruch (2006) found that officers and middle-management who have affectively attached to the organization (i.e., commitment) have low interests in seeking other employment. However, commitment among lower hierarchical levels (non-management employees) did not influence workers' desire to remain or leave the organization.

Apart from that, organizational commitment and intention to stay were significantly related to person-organization fit, and, remuneration and recognition (Chew & Chan, 2006). In terms of types of commitment, affective commitment appears to be more salient in predicting intent to turnover than continuance commitment, and, a high level of continuance commitment may help employees rationalize an emotional, affective attachment to an organization (Law, 2005). Pare and Tremblay (2004) also found that strong affective commitment motivate individuals to construe their work role as extending beyond tasks formally prescribed, which in turn encourages them to adopt extra role behaviors and negatively related to quit intentions. Result from this study also indicates that continuance commitment also associated with turnover intentions, since employees are likely to stay with their organization not only when they have an emotional attachment to their organization but also when they perceive a cost of leaving.

Perryer, Jordan, Firms and Travaglione (2010) found that employees may be less likely to leave their organization as their levels of affective commitment increase in conjunction with an increase in support provided by the organization. Similarly, Stallworth (2003) also found that affective commitment demonstrates the strongest relationship with turnover. Result from this study also indicate that affective commitment may be the best predictor of intentions to leave at lower organizational levels, while continuance commitment become increasingly important as employees move up the ladder. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Affective commitment is negatively related to turnover intention

H3: Continuance commitment is negatively related to turnover intention

3. Method

3.1 Participants

105 participants (63 male, 42 female) from a manufacturing company participated in this study. The average age of respondents was 31 years old. Malays constitute 77.1% of the survey respondents, followed by 14.3% Malaysian Chinese and 8.6% Malaysian Indians. Engineer made up 40% of the total respondents. The rest consisted of administrative and other technical staff. On average, the respondents had been in their present position for almost 5 years and had served their organization for more than 3 years. The majority of the respondents in this survey (90.5%) had higher academic qualifications of either a tertiary or diploma, first or second degree.

3.2 Measurements

Turnover intention was the dependent variable and the measure was adapted from Lee (2008). The 5-item scale asked respondents about their probability of staying or leaving an employing organization. Organizational support and organizational commitment were the independent variable tested in this study. Organizational support was assessed using 10-item scale adapted from Perryer, Jordan, Firms and Travaglione (2010) where respondents were asked about their perceptions of supportive HR practices in terms of participation in decision making, growth opportunities, and fairness of rewards / recognition. Organizational commitment was measured by two dimensions, affective commitment and continuance commitment. The 16-item scale adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990) asked respondents' perception of emotional attachment to or identification with organization and their willingness to remain in the organization because of the investment that the employee has with "nontransferable" investments. In this study, each of the adapted questions asked how strongly the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement given on a five-point scale whereby, 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

4. Findings

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations of variables for the 105 participants. The internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) of the research measures are reported in parenthesis along the diagonal of the correlation tables. As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha for organizational support was .96, and for the organizational commitment was .72. The two sub-scales of organizational commitment (affective commitment and continuance commitment) also have satisfactory reliability values of .83 and .66 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha for turnover intention was .86.

Table 1 revealed that organizational support was significantly negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = -.575, p < .01$). This result implies that, the more support given by the organization, the less intention to leave the organization.

Overall, organizational commitment was significantly negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = -.619, p < .01$). Table 1 also revealed significant negative relationships between affective commitment and turnover intention ($r = -.700, p < .01$), while continuance commitment was not significantly negatively correlated to turnover intention. The results suggest that participants with higher feeling of affective commitment towards their organization have less intention to leave.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations of variables

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Organizational support	105	3.68	.830	(.96)				
2. Org. commitment (overall)	105	3.38	.430	.680**	(.72)			

3. Affective commitment	105	3.32	.657	.779**	.772**	(.83)		
4. Continuance commitment	105	3.45	.547	.134	.646**	.014	(.66)	
5. Turnover intention	105	2.70	.881	-.575**	-.619**	-.700**	-.134	(.86)

Note: Coefficient alpha reliability estimates are in parentheses on the diagonal of the correlation table

*Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ and **Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

4.2 Regression Analysis

To test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, regression analysis was conducted. The result shown in Table 2 indicates that 50.5% ($R^2 = .505$, F value = 34.41 $p < .001$) of the variance in turnover intention had been significantly explained by organizational support, affective commitment and continuance commitment. However, in the model, only affective commitment factor was found negatively associated with turnover intention ($\beta = -.67$, $p < .001$). Therefore, only hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 2
Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
(Constant)	6.49	.50		13.00	.00
Organizational support	-.04	.12	-.04	-.34	.74
Affective commitment	-.90	.15	-.67	-5.92	.00**
Continuance commitment	-.19	.12	-.12	-1.67	.10

**p<.001; R² = 0.505; F= 34.41

5. Discussions

The main aim of this study was to investigate the role of organizational support and organizational commitment on turnover intention. The empirical results of this study suggest that affective commitment was negatively related to turnover intention. Though in the previous study affective commitment was found to be the best predictor of intention to leave among employees at the lower level of the organization (e.g. Stallworth, 2003), in this study affective commitment was also significant predictor of intention to leave among the engineers. This is not surprising as employees' emotional bond to their organization has been considered to be the important determinant of dedication and loyalty regardless of level of position within the organization. Besides that, affectively committed employees are seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases their involvement in organization's activities, their willingness to pursue the organization's goals and their desire to remain with the organization.

Based on the findings, the management need to continually enhance their organizational support by allowing employees to participate in decision making, providing developmental activities, providing employees' with fair rewards, acknowledging employees' contribution and providing an extensive two ways communication between all level of management. By having this kind of healthy culture in the organization, employees will have more sense of belonging to the company, thus prevent them from leaving the organization.

5.1 Limitation of Study and Direction for Future Research

There are limitations in the design of this study that might influence the interpretations and generalizations of these findings. In understanding turnover intention, the study only tested two predictors which are organizational support and organizational commitment. Apart from that, the data was collected from one type of industry and located in a specific geographic location.

Given the findings and acknowledging the limitations of the present study, several areas of potential future research exist. Since the study only tested two variables in predicting turnover intention, perhaps in the future research, it may be worth investigating other variables such as organizational climate, leadership style, role ambiguity and role conflict that may influence the turnover intention, which are not being considered in this study. There is also a need for future research to extend the exploration on turnover intention on other kind of industry such

as in services, medical setting, academics as the data provided in this study was from one type of industry and located in a specific geographic location. While there are some limitations associated with the approach used here and given the exploratory nature of the study, the results of this research provide useful findings that should be of interest to both researchers and practitioners.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine factors that might influence turnover intention. The results indicate that both organizational support and organizational commitment (affective commitment and continuance commitment) were related to turnover intention. However, only affective commitment was found having the strongest influence on turnover intention. Since the study was conducted at one organization only, the findings must be interpreted with cautious and cannot be generalized to represent other organization. It is hoped that through the examination of the factors that influence turnover intention, a more complete understanding of the kind of effort needed to enhance employee retention will be achieved.

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