

DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTION

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Purpose: Voluntary turnover of employees constitutes a challenge for modern organizations, especially when the problem pertains to key specialists or talents. Therefore, the examination of reasons behind such employee decisions is significant.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper discusses conceptual model of employee turnover intention developed on the basis of the review of literature.

Findings: The model consists of three factors determining the turnover intention: job characteristics, work centrality, and organizational commitment.

Research limitations/implications: The model constitutes a theoretical basis for further studies in the issue of turnover intention.

Originality/value: The empirical verification of the model will enable the formulation of recommendations for organizations to limit the turnover intention.

Keywords: turnover intention, work centrality, organizational commitment, job characteristics.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

The issue of voluntary employee turnover presents a considerable challenge for HR departments, especially in the context of the growing shortage of talented employees in modern organizations. The loss of employees translates into a loss for the organization. The profit the employee who resigned would bring to the organization constitutes a direct loss. In addition, the cost of further recruitment, selection, adaptation, training, further turnover, and the loss of motivation ought to be considered as additional costs associated with the issue.

According to the report of MERCER of 2016 (Gutmann, 2016), the overall voluntary employee turnover index amounted to 9.6%. The index amounted to 7.1% in Europe.

The issue of voluntary employee turnover was first undertaken in the late 1950s (March and Simon, 1958). The interest in the matter grew in the 1990s. Employee turnover remains a current issue. Scholars are still examining factors determining the decision regarding the

voluntary turnover (Table 1). They indicate that the intention to leave is the strongest predictor of the turnover and occurs when the employee recognizes the opportunity to change the place of employment for a more attractive one. Studies concerning the motivation to leave emphasize the existence of a research gap pertaining to the lack of discussion regarding the issue in terms of organizational perspective – organizational factors, and employee perspective – their capital (Lewicka, 2016).

Table 1.

Selected results of studies indicating a relationship among determinants of the turnover intention

	Job characteristics	Work centrality	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Job insecurity	Career satisfaction	Perceived job alternatives	Occupational stress	Leader-member exchange	Work-life balance	Well-being
Bal and Kooij, 2011		X									
Bouckennooghe, Raja and Butt, 2013				X							
Brawley and Pury, 2016				X							
Brunetto et al., 2012			X								
Brunetto et al., 2013											X
Fox and Fallon, 2003				X						X	
Hancock et al., 2013		X									
Hirschfeld and Field, 2000		X									
Jiang and Johnson, 2017		X									
Jiang and Lavaysse, 2018					X						
Jordan and Troth, 2011				X				X			
Joseph et al., 2007		X	X	X		X	X				
Kanungo, 1982		X									
Khanin, Turel and Mahto, 2012		X		X							
Krot and Lewicka, 2015	X										
Lewicka, 2016			X								
Lu and Gursoy, 2013				X							
Luna-Arocas and Camps, 2008			X								
Maertz et al., 2007	X										
Mahdi et al., 2012				X							
Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997		X									
Markey, Ravenswood and Webber, 2012	X										
Martin, 2007			X	X							
Martin and Roodt, 2008			X	X							
Oosthuizen, Coetzee and Munro, 2016				X						X	
Park and Shaw, 2013		X									
Park et al., 2017		X		X				X			
Schmidt and Lee, 2008		X	X								
Shalley, Gilson and Blum, 2000	X										
Singh and Loncar, 2010				X							
Snir and Harpaz, 2002		X									
Tett and Meyer, 1993			X	X							
Vandenberghe et al., 2007			X								
Wnuk, 2018			X								
Wright and Bonett, 2007				X							X

Source: own study.

On the basis of the synthesis of literature, it can be observed that researchers examining the turnover intention differ in their conclusions regarding variables determining the phenomenon. However, the most frequently recurring features include: job characteristics, work centrality, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. A decision was made to disregard job satisfaction and include job characteristics in the paper instead. When verifying the model, employees evaluate individual job characteristics to establish if these are satisfactory and motivating for them. The establishment of specific job characteristics will have a greater practical significance for the development of organizational actions aiming to limit the turnover intention.

1.1. Turnover intention

The literature of the subject offers a relatively straightforward definition of the turnover intention. The most popular definition was offered by Tett and Meyer (1993, p. 262). They stated that it is “a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization”. Similarly, Schyns, Torka and Gössling (2007, p. 660) define the turnover intention as “an employee’s intention to voluntarily change jobs or companies”. Two issues are worth mentioning at this point. First of all, the source of the intention can be traced back to the employee and not to the organization’s actions. Secondly, the intention refers to the internal state of an individual and not their immediate actions. The turnover intention may be high or low depending whether the employee is interested in resigning.

According to Bakker, Demerouti and Verbeke (2004), Janse Van Rensburg (2004), Kanungo (1982) and Roodt (2004), the turnover intention is a kind of withdrawal resulting from the lack of identification with the workplace (Bothma and Roodt, 2012). The intention is an adequate predictor of subsequent employee behaviour. It constitutes a multi-faceted process encompassing attitudes, decision-making and behaviour (Martin, 2007).

Several authors, e.g. Mobley (1982), Sager, Griffeth and Hom (1998), Jacobs and Roodt (2007) and Bester (2012), believe that the intention constitutes the final stage preceding a person’s decision concerning the resignation.

The research gap pertaining to the studies concerning the relationship between organizational factors and the turnover intention was indicated by Lewicka (2016) and Hauk (2014).

1.2. Job characteristics

According to Hauk (2014), the establishment of specific job characteristics which exert an impact upon employee satisfaction and motivation is significant for the development of adequate work environment. On the basis of studies and analyses, Hauk isolated 11 fundamental job characteristics: job complexity, physical requirements and working conditions, job feedback, autonomy, ergonomics, feedback from others, equipment and facilities,

interrelations among employees, interactions with the organization, social support – friendships in the organization, and work significance.

According to Krzyszkowska (2015), reasons for leaving the organization are usually associated with the workplace and stem from dissatisfaction with working conditions. Spector and Jex (1991) indicated a vital significance of autonomy, duties, feedback and the scope of work for the turnover intention.

Markey, Ravenswood and Webber (2012) studied the impact of the quality of job characteristics upon the turnover intention. They discovered that employees manifest a lower intention if they perceive their work environment as positive, i.e. one characterized by low stress level, where managers appreciate their subordinates, and employees do not feel threatened. On the other hand, studies by Shalley, Gilson and Blum (2000) indicated the existence of a relationship between work environment characterized by creativity and complexity and the turnover intention. Studies by Krot and Lewicka (2015) proved the existence of a relationship between organizational justice and the turnover invention.

1.3. Work centrality

Work centrality constitutes a further variable determining the turnover intention. Much like regarding the turnover intention, scholars are relatively unanimous in defining the concept. According to Diefendorff et al. (2002), it pertains to a personal perception of work as a chief element of one's life. In addition, Walsh and Gordon (2008) define work centrality as a personal belief of an individual regarding the position work occupies in their lives. It is noteworthy that individuals' perception of work significance does not pertain to specific organizations they are employed in, but to work in general (Jiang and Johnson, 2017). The significance of work emerges from life and work experiences. It exerts a negative impact upon the intention concerning retirement but not upon the change of employment (Schmidt and Lee, 2008).

The relationship between work centrality and the turnover intention was indicated by Kanungo (1982). The relationship was confirmed by e.g. Mannheim, Baruch and Tal (1997), Schmidt and Lee (2008), Bal and Kooij (2011), Snir and Harpaz (2002), Hirschfeld and Field (2000) and Jiang and Johnson (2017).

1.4. Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment constitutes the final determinant of the turnover intention. Based upon the review of literature, it may be argued that the commitment is one of the most widely studied phenomena influencing the turnover intention.

The concept of organizational commitment was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). It was based upon the psychological bond between the employee and organization. It is composed of three elements: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Mendryk and Rakowska, 2017).

Studies indicate that all the components are connected with the turnover intention. The relationship was confirmed by e.g. Meyer et al. (2002), Vandenberghe et al. (2007), Luna-Arocas and Camps (2008) and Schmidt and Lee (2008). In addition, Lewicka (2016) and Wnuk (2018) also studied the field.

It turned out that affective commitment has a greater significance with regard the turnover intention. Strong affective commitment denotes that employees remain in the organization out of their choice (Meyer et al., 2002; Vandenberghe et al., 2007).

2. Conceptual framework

The research model was developed on the basis of the review of literature (Fig. 1). The following five hypotheses describe the relations between individual variables:

H1: There exists a relationship between job characteristics and the turnover intention.

H2: There exists a relationship between organizational commitment and the turnover intention.

H3: There exists a relationship between work centrality and the turnover intention.

H4: There exists a relationship between organizational commitment and job characteristics.

H5: There exists a relationship between organizational commitment and work centrality.

The first three hypotheses pertain to direct relations emerging between the determinant and the turnover intention. Hypothesis 4 and 5 make a premise of existence of a relationship between organizational commitment, job characteristics and work centrality.

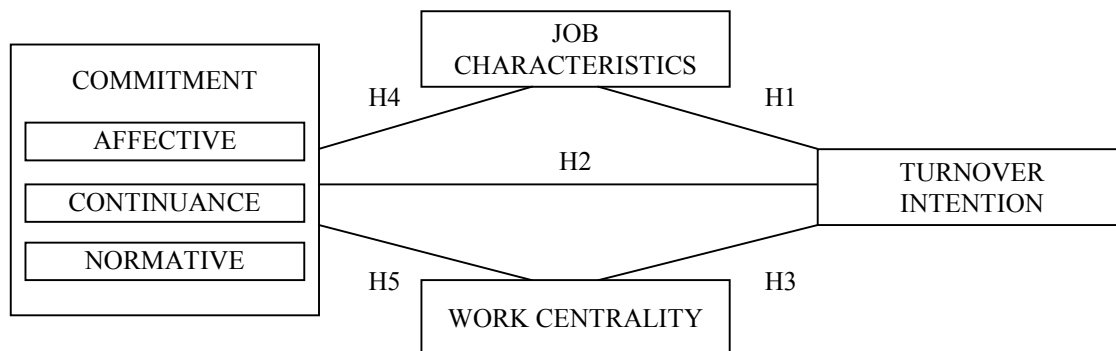


Figure 1. Model of factors determining the turnover intention. Source: own study.

In the model, it can be observed that there are three sources of determinants of the turnover intention. Job characteristics are an element directly determined by the organization. Work centrality finds its source in the employee. It determines the role of work in a person's life. It is not attributed to a specific organization. Therefore, the organization has no influence over it. On the one hand, organizational commitment is related to job characteristics, and to work centrality on the other.

3. Limitation and Further Research

The present concept of the research model concerning the turnover intention is theoretical in its nature at the moment. Further empirical studies are required to verify the model. The model incorporated determinants of the turnover intention which, according to studies, exert the strongest impact upon the intention. This means that the model does not include all determinants. When verified empirically, the model will have significance for human resources management. It will enable recommendations for organizations pursuing to limit the turnover intention to be formulated. The research model presented in the paper will be applied in the doctoral dissertation of Paweł Wójcik. The dissertation is titled “Determinants of the turnover intention of employees in IT sector”. The dissertation is supervised by Anna Rakowska, Associate Professor at Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin.

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