

EFFECT OF WORK ENGAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR, KENYA

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study is to determine the effect of work engagement and employee turnover intention in public institution. The study was informed by theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior. Explanatory research design was used in this study. The target population was managers from public institutions. The study used both primary data and secondary data. The researcher used questionnaires as a tool for data collection. Data was analyzed using descriptive which included mean and standard deviation used to provide general trends of the data. In additional, inferential statistics which included Pearson correlations to show the relationship between variables and multiple regressions to test hypothesis was used. The study findings indicated a negative significant effect of dedication and absorption on turnover intention. It is therefore important for organizations to employ individuals with a secure attachment style since they are more likely to experience at work. It is utmost necessary for the organization to reward dedicated employees by promoting them. The organizations should therefore design employees job schedule in such a way that they can find meaning and purpose in the work that they do.

Keywords: Dedication, Absorption, Turnover Intention, Work engagement, Employee

INTRODUCTION

Today in the world of globalization, organizations operate in a fierce competitive environment, where they face many challenges to remain competitive in the market. One of the major challenges that the organizations face is employee retention. Turnover rates in organizations are increasing. In most studies, turnover intention is used instead of actual turnover because

turnover intention is the critical antecedent of actual turnover (the behavior) (Rizwan *et al.*, 2013). The other reason for using turnover intention is that it is an attitude that can be assessed in the present time and in combination with other factors that are causing the turnover intention, which results in gaining a more accurate understanding of the causes of turnover (Perryer *et al.*, 2010). Turnover intention is a measurement of whether a business' or organization's employees plan to leave their positions. Managers and researchers consider turnover a problem because of costs associated with it (Soon *et al.*, 2005). They also found that the impact of turnover intention on a business can be quite costly in a number of different ways forcing firms to consider strategies that retain employees such as work engagement.

Saks (2006) suggests that work engagement is associated with an individual's attitudes, intentions and behaviors. Therefore, engaged employees are likely to be more attached to their organisation and would have a lower propensity to leave it (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This view is supported by several researchers who found that work engagement is negatively related to turnover intention (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Work engagement was found to have positive results relating to job satisfaction, a motivated workforce, employee well-being and less likelihood of leaving an organisation (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Van den Berg, Bakker & Ten Cate, 2013; Yeh, 2013). In addition, a meta-analysis of 7939 business units in 36 companies by Harter *et al.*, (2002) reported a significant positive relationship between work engagement and business outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, profitability, turnover and safety.

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) proposed four reasons why engaged employees perform better than unengaged employees. Firstly, engaged employees were found to have positive sentiments towards their job, consequently leading to productivity. Secondly, engaged employees were seen to be more open to work opportunities and more confident and optimistic (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). Thirdly, research suggests that engagement is positively related to employee well-being, leading to better performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shimazu, Schaufeli, Kubota & Kawakami, 2012). Lastly, engaged employees work more productively because they have tenability to create their own resources. Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2007) found in their study of highly skilled Dutch technicians that personal resources (optimism, self-efficacy and organizational-based self-esteem) resulted in higher levels of work engagement

Turnover has significant implications for an organisation, with influencing factors such as the potential cost of human capital loss and interruption of ongoing organizational activities (Smyth, Zhai & Li, 2009). Research indicates that work engagement have emerged in the current world of work as constructs that may significantly influence employees' turnover intention

(Halbesleben&Wheeler, 2008; Mitchell, Holtom& Lee, 2001a). In particular, employees with low levels of work engagement are more likely to have a higher intention of leaving the organisation, as well as actually leaving it(Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski&Erez, 2001b).Talent retention is becoming more essential as an organization’s human capital increasingly becomes the key source of competitive advantage (Halawi *et al.*, 2005; Pfeffer,2005). A growing awareness of shifts in the characteristics of the workforce is calling for organisations to be more focused in retaining skilled employees, keeping them fully engaged and embedding them in their jobs (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004). It is therefore vital for organizations to be able to make informed decisions about developing effective retention practices that result in the reduction of turnover. (Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004)

Recognizing the forces that keep employees in their current employment is critical in attracting and retaining talented staff in higher education institutions (Lawler & Finegold, 2000; Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). Retention of talented staff promotes better decision-making capabilities, enhanced quality of curriculum programmes based on best practices, improved academic services and reduces turnover costs (Kidwell, Vander Linde& Johnson, 2000). Consequently, higher education institutions can succeed in contributing to the socio-economic development of Kenya by retaining the critical human capital that makes it possible to provide higher education to all stakeholders, including students and society as a whole (Coetzee & Rothman, 2004; Van den Berg, Bakker& Ten Cate, 2013)

Statement of the problem

Turnover intentions tend to render poor service and corrode organizational effectiveness (Karatepe and Ngeche, 2012). Research has shown that intent to leave an organisation is one of the indicators of turnover (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). From the organization’s perspective, turnover of employees can lead to costs arising from recruitment, selection, training or the employment of temporary staff (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2004). In addition, turnover may have an effect on the organizational culture or employee morale (Morrell *et al.*, 2004).

Employee turnover is a serious issue for many organizations; organizational experts view this phenomenon as a persistent problem for the organization (Yin-Fah *et al.*, 2010). This is considered an acute problem due to its detrimental effects on the organization especially when the high performing employees leave the organization. Moreover, excessive turnover is dangerous for the organizations, and it undermines the efficiency and productivity of the organization. Furthermore, in some occasions, it threatens the organization’s long term survival (Brereton, Beach, and Cliff, 2003). Therefore, retention of top performing employees has become a big challenge for the employers/organizational managers (Samuel and Chipunza,

2009; Ovadje, 2009). The situation is similar among most of public sector (KIPRRA, 2010). Socio-economic and political strategies implemented by governments competing in the global economy are increasingly impacting negatively on the availability of talent in public sector (Makhanya, 2012). Furthermore, new labour market demographics, globalization and competitive pressures have become essential for businesses to be effective (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2008). State corporations institutions in Kenya have become vulnerable to losing their highly qualified knowledge workers to well- paid offers from the private sector, and headhunting from other private institutions internationally (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Over the last two decades, State corporations have been facing a myriad of problems which have affected their ability to motivate and retain their employees. Few studies have been conducted on work engagement and turnover intentions on state corporations. Thus this paper hypothesized that:

H₀₁: Absorption has no significant effect on turnover intention

H₀₂: Dedication has no significant effect on turnover intention

Theoretical review

Theoretically, turnover intention is anchored upon the theory of reasoned action based on beliefs-attitude-behavioral intention model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The attitude – intention – behavior model posits that one’s intention to perform specific behavior is the immediate determinant of behavior. The theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) is useful in terms of adequate prediction of intention and behavior because it encompasses one’s cognitions and judgments (Ajzen, 1991). Turnover intention would therefore offer a better explanation of behavior. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is essentially an extension of the theory of reasoned action (T>). Ajzen (1991) extended the T> to include a measure of perceived behavioural control. Contrary to the basic assumption of the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behaviour argued that perceived behavioral control (PBC) tends to influence both intention and behavior (Armiffage, 2001). Situations do arise in real life where employees with intention to turnover may not quit an organisation as predicted by the theory of reasoned action (Oluwafemi, 2010)

Self-determination theory

This theory helps to explain work engagement together with psychological states and behavioral repercussions that can result from the absence of work engagement. This theory bases work engagement on two forms of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The theory explains that intrinsic motivation encourages task performance for its own sake out of the individual

enjoyment and interest. Extrinsic motivation encourages task performance for instrumental reasons; however, extrinsic motivation is predominant in the work context (Meyer, 2008). This theory explains that employees who are engaged in what they are doing experience better physical and psychological wellbeing than those employees who are less engaged (Meyer & Gagne, 2008).

Empirical review

Engaged employees are likely to be more attached to their organisation and would have a lower propensity to leave it (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This view is supported by several researchers who found that a work engagement is negatively or positively related to turnover intention (Du Plooy & .Roodt, 2010; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Work engagement was found to have positive results relating to job satisfaction, a motivated workforce, employee well-being and less likelihood of leaving an organisation (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Van den Berg, Bakker & Ten Cate, 2013; Yeh, 2013). In addition, a meta-analysis of 7939 business units in 36 companies by Harter et al. (2002) reported a significant positive relationship between work engagement and business outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, profitability, turnover and safety

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Recent studies across a range of sectors have found various performance-based outcomes of engagement. Bakker et al. (2004) found that engagement was linked to both in-role and extra-role performance in a multi-sector Dutch sample, a finding replicated by Schaufeli et al. (2006); Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) found similar results for in-role performance and turnover intentions in a multi-sector US sample. A meta-analysis of nearly 8,000 business units in 36 companies found that engagement was also linked to business unit performance (Harter

etal2002), and links have also been found with client satisfaction in service settings (Salanovaetal2005).

Xanthopoulouetal(2009) found a link between work engagement of restaurant workers and objective daily financial returns. Engagement has also related to safe working by employees in a meta-analysis of 203 separate samples (Nahrganget al2011). Many other studies have found links between engagement and performance outcomes (Bakker et al, 2008).

Salanovaetal's (2005) study suggests that one reason why engagement is linked with performance is through the mediating mechanism of service climate. When employees are engaged, they are more likely to put energy into interactions with clients, and there may be a spillover effect onto colleagues, creating a more engaged workplace generally. This may also be one reason why engagement might have an effect on turnover outcomes in public sector.

Absorption and turnover intention

Freene (2006) argues that absorption rate enables organization members to draw deeply on their personal selves in role performances hence reduce staff turnover intention. Engagement in a role refers to one's psychological presence in or focuses on role activities and may be an important ingredient for effective role performance. This includes the expression of thoughts and feelings, questioning, assumptions and innovating. He stated that employees are emotionally and cognitively engaged when they know what is expected of them, have what they need to do their work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfillment in their work, perceive that they are part of something significant with co-workers whom they trust, and have chances to improve and develop thus reduction in staff turnover. Absorption rate is characterized by a combination of exhaustion low activation and cynicism low identification, whereas engagement is characterized by high activation and dedication high identification. The third alternative to the operationalisation of burnout and engagement is the Job Demand-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001, and Bakker &Demerouti, 2007). The model indicates that job demands i.e. physical demands, time pressure, shift work) are associated with exhaustion whereas lacking job resources i.e. performance feedback, job control, participation in decision making, and social support are associated with disengagement (Demeroutietal., 2001).

Dedication and turnover intention

According to Macey and Schneider (2008), measuring dedication among employees is difficult as it involves assessing complex feelings and emotion. Dedication among employees has been used to refer to a psychological state e.g., involvement, commitment, attachment, mood), performance construct e.g. either effort or observable behavior, including pro-social and

organizational citizenship behavior, disposition e.g. positive affect, or some combination of the above thus reduction in staff turnover (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Over the years, researchers have measured dedication among employees by using three different approaches, namely engagement as a description of conditions under which people work, engagement as a behavioral outcome, and engagement as a psychological presence thus reduction in staff turnover. Engagement can be described by the conditions under which people work (Macey and Schneider, 2008). In many cases, the definition of engagement is constructed based on in-depth interviews, consultations and other qualitative studies with employees.

According to Macey and Schneider (2008), surveys that ask employees to describe their work conditions may be relevant for assessing the conditions that provide for engagement but do not directly tap employee dedication. They further argue that such measures require an inferential leap to engagement rather than assessing engagement itself. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. and dedication are the direct positive opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, respectively thus reduction in staff retention. The third dimension of engagement is called absorption, which was found to be a constituting element of engagement in 30 in-depth interviews (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2001).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Explanatory research design was used in this study. This design was chosen because it applied closely to the research objectives of this study and was practical in testing the study hypotheses. The researcher used theories or hypothesis to account for the forces that caused a certain phenomenon to occur (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Geographically, the study focused on 118 parastatals in Kenya.

The target population comprised of employees and managers drawn from 118 parastatals in Kenya (Registrar of companies, 2014). The study employed stratified sampling method to achieve the desired sample sizes from various sub-sets (counties) in the population. Simple random sampling procedure using the lottery technique was used to pick the sample size in every stratum (county).

This study used questionnaires to collect data relevant to the study. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied on the results obtained to determine how items correlate among them in the same instrument. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha of more than 0.7 will be taken as the cut off value for being acceptable which will enhance the identification of the dispensable variables and deleted variables Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the

hypotheses. All the above statistical tests were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. All tests were two-tailed. Significant levels will be measured at 95% confidence level with significant differences recorded at $p < 0.05$

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

The researcher sought to arrive at average mean of the variables; Absorption, dedication and turnover intention by getting the average mean of the variable items of each respondents and getting the average mean of all the respondents.

Table 1. Variable constructions

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Absorption	4.0431	0.32055	0.242	1.648
Dedication	3.9421	0.30729	0.303	-0.69
Turnover intention	4.4218	0.41053	-1.232	2.548

Interpretation scale is:

1- 1.49 = Strongly Disagree 1.5-2.49 = Disagree 2.5 -3.49 =Slightly Disagree
3.5-4.49= Neutral 4.5 - 5.49 =Slightly Agree 5.5- 6.49 = Agree 6.5 - 7 = Strongly Agree

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is often used in data reduction to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance that is observed in a much larger number of manifest variables. Table 2 shows the factor loading for each item as sorted by size. Any item that failed to meet the criteria of having a factor loading value greater than 0.5 and loads on one and only one factor is dropped from the study Wei *et al.* (2008).

Components matrix in factor analysis showed the components matrix before rotation. The matrix contained the loading of each variable on each factor. The study loading less than 0.5 were suppressed in the output. The study results showed that all values for all the factors were more than 0.5 reflecting the accepted value of factor loading. Factor analysis was performed to test the validity of the model. Factor analysis attempted to identify the underlying variables, or the factors, that explained the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables.

Table 2. Factor analysis

	Loading
Time flies when I'm working.	0.837
I feel happy when I am working intensely.	0.807
I am immersed in my work.	0.611
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	0.806
I get carried away when I'm working.	0.811
When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	0.908
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	0.858
I am enthusiastic about my job.	0.719
My job inspires me.	0.894
I am proud of the work that I do.	0.808
To me, my job is challenging.	0.834
I often think of leaving the organization.	0.874
I am planning to look for a new job unrelated to public sector.	0.868
I will actively look for a new job in the next year	0.888
I am planning on looking for a new job at a different organization.	0.799
I frequently consider working elsewhere.	0.758
I am committed to work for this organization at all the times	0.824
This organization meets my work aspirations	0.862
Most of the times I feel like quitting this job	0.847
I feel frustrated working for this organization	0.784

Correlation Results

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) was used to test the hypothesis. The results were summarized and presented in table 3. Pearson Correlation results showed that absorption is negatively related with turnover intention with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of $r = -0.580$ which is significant at $p < 0.01$. The output also shows that dedication is negatively related with turnover intention, with a coefficient of $r = -0.599$ which is also significant at $p < 0.01$. Finally, exhibited negative relationship with turnover intention as indicated by a coefficient of $r = -0.599$ which is significant at $p < 0.01$. From the foregoing, there is a linear relationship between absorption, dedication and with turnover intention. This provided more ground to perform multiple regression analysis.

Table 3. Correlation Results

	Turnover intention	Absorption	Dedication
Turnover intention	1		
Absorption	-0.580**	1	
Dedication	-0.599**	.454**	1

Regression model results/ testing of hypotheses

Table 4 illustrates the model summary of multiple regression model, the results showed that all the four predictors (absorption and dedication) explained 58.2 percent variation of turnover intention.

Further, the Durbin- Watson value was within the thumb rule (1.602) which shows lack of serial correlation. Study findings in table 4 indicated that the above discussed coefficient of determination was significant as evidence of F ratio of 44.526 with p value $0.000 < 0.05$ (level of significance). Thus, the model was fit to predict turn over intention using absorption, and dedication.

Test of Hypothesis

It is useful to check the existence of multicollinearity or Collinearity between the independent variables before embarking on multiple regression analysis. As evidenced in table 4, the VIF for all the estimated parameters were found to be less than 4 which indicate the absence of multi-Collinearity among the independent factors.

Hypothesis 1

The results of multiple regressions, as presented in table 4 revealed that absorption has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention with a beta value of $\beta_1 = -0.227$ (p-value = 0.002 which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and it is accepted that for each unit increase in absorption, there is 0.227 unit decrease in turnover intention. Consistently, Maslach, (2001) echoes that high levels of employee leads to low levels of turnover intention among employees.

Hypothesis 2

The results of table 4 showed that the standardized coefficient beta and p value of dedication was negative and significant ($\beta_2 = -0.236$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and it is accepted that, dedication has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention. Consistently, it is for managers to improve dedication among employees since it reduces their turnover and their general performance (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000; Taris *et al.*, 2003; Griffith, 2004; Michie and West, 2004; Maceyand Schneider, 2008; Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Hakanen, 2008).

Table 4. Test of Hypotheses

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.042	0.337		0.125	0.900		
Absorption	-0.254	0.079	-0.227	-3.218	0.002	0.658	1.520
Dedication	-0.256	0.081	-0.236	-3.163	0.002	0.586	1.707
R Square	0.582						
Adjusted R Square	0.569						
Durbin-Watson	1.602						
F	44.526						
Sig.	.000						

a Dependent Variable: Turnover intention

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the analysis indicate that dedication among the employees is instrumental in reducing staff turnover. As such, it is important for managers to improve dedication among employees since it improves staff performance and reduces their turn over. Organizations should also have a flexible work schedule so that their employees can have a work life balance. As well, to promote dedication among employees, it is utmost necessary for the organization to reward dedicated employees by promoting them.

Finally, the results of the study are indicative of a negative relationship between employee absorption and turnover intention. In the event that employees are absorbed, they will be aware of what is expected of them and how they can be of aid to the organization. Absorption will also enable them to improve and develop thereby reducing their level of turn over. The organizations should therefore design employees job schedule in such a way that they can find meaning and purpose in the work that they do. For the managers, they need to help employees build confidence, establish routines and set realistic goals for the employees to achieve. In so doing, the effectiveness and functioning of the organization will be improved.

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