

Predictors of Turnover Intention among SME Employees in Lagos, Nigeria: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

This article examines employees of manufacturing SMEs' turnover intention, which plays a vital role in predicting actual turnover. Turnover has been one major problem for organizations of all sizes, negatively affecting organizational performance. Therefore, this study examines the factors (i.e., organizational trust and perceived organizational support) affecting the turnover intention of SME employees to leave their current organizations. Furthermore, this study draws up from social exchange theory to explain how social relationships are built based on the norm of reciprocity. The survey results from 72 SME employees revealed that both independent variables (organizational trust and perceived organizational support) are significant and negatively influenced turnover intention.

Keywords: Turnover Intention, SME Employees, Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Trust, Regression Analysis, and Social Exchange Theory

Introduction

Employee turnover has been one major persistent problem organizations faced over the decades, especially in the field of human resource development (HRD). Human resources have an essential role in recruiting, developing, and retaining competent employees, resulting in long-term competitiveness (Joo et al., 2015). However, employee turnover negatively affects organizational performance and costs in hiring and training new employees (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). The consequences of high employee turnover in HRD leads to loss of knowledgeable and experienced employees, increases the demand for recruitment, hiring, and training of new employees, and decreases the possibilities for new and older workers to share their knowledge (Alzayed & Murshid, 2017; Bartlett, 2008; Ju & Li, 2019). The rise in employee turnover rate shows that it could cost organizations about 40% of their annual income (T.F. Mahan, D.A. Nelms, Y. Jeeun, A. Jackson, M. Hein, 2020). For instance, when employees voluntarily leave their current workplace, it could cost the organization's business

performance, recruitment and training of new employees, technical expertise, etc. (Srimindarti et al., 2017). Various researchers have considered turnover intention the major precursor of actual turnover (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Meyer & Tett, 1993; Van Breukelen et al., 2004).

SMEs contribute 50% to the national GDP; it accounts for 92% of Nigeria's businesses and employs 76.5% of the workforce in Nigeria (PWC, 2020; SMEDAN, 2017). The turnover of SME's frontline employees is a challenge to the organization. The high rate of SME employee turnover is a major setback to Nigeria's business performance and growth (Amah & Oyetuunde, 2020). Most of the studies of employee turnover intention among SMEs in the extant literature, theories, and frameworks were mainly conducted in Western and Asian countries. The findings of the studies may not necessarily apply to the manufacturing SMEs in Nigeria due to the cultural, economic, and social environment. However, literature on SMEs' employee turnover intention is scarce in Nigeria (Amah & Oyetuunde, 2020). This breach in the literature of turnover intention among SME employees may be connected to the dearth of empirical studies on such businesses in Nigeria (Amah & Oyetuunde, 2020; Chan & Ao, 2019; Kim et al., 2017). There is little empirical research on the impact of organizational trust and perceived organizational support on the manufacturing SMEs' employee turnover intention. This study examines the effect of organizational trust and perceived organizational support on SMEs' employee turnover intention in Lagos State, Nigeria.

In recent years, academics have made important contributions to the exchange relationship between employers and employees. Studies by several researchers (Amoako et al., 2019; Zeffane & Melhem, 2018; Van Breukelen et al., 2004) revealed that employee turnover intention is influenced by numerous aspects, including perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, organizational trust, and organizational commitment. In addition, Blau's (1964) social exchange theory stipulated an equal exchange relationship between parties when someone offers something valuable to the other, and the recipient reacts passionately. Similarly, when employees feel supported by the organization, they produce favorable job-related outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions, and increased trust among coworkers. The norm of reciprocity requires that people in an exchange relationship should repay in kind what another has done (Gouldner, 1960). An employee who receives fair treatment from the employer tends to reciprocate by being more committed to the organization and displaying low turnover intention (Chen et al., 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

This current study contributes to the growing turnover intention literature in HRD by using social exchange theory to examine whether organizational trust and perceived organizational support influenced turnover intention. The research answered questions on (1) what is the level of employee turnover intention and (2) what is the effect of organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and employee turnover intention.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the study variables, which are organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and employee turnover intention among SME employees in Lagos, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the level of employee turnover intention in small and medium enterprises in Lagos State.
2. To examine the effects of organizational trust and perceived organizational support on employee turnover intention in small and medium enterprises in Lagos State.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Turnover intention is an employee's subjective estimation pertinent to the possibility of leaving their workplace shortly. Employees' turnover intention is the thought and the deliberate wilfulness of an employee to leave their workplace (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006; Kaur & Sharma, 2016; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Turnover intention is the tendency of an employee to leave their job or the organization that they are currently working for (Price, 2000; Sharma & Singh, 2015). Turnover is believed to affect organizations, and HR managers are required to reduce turnover by finding means to retain the employees, which will help in ensuring effective organizational competitiveness (Joo et al., 2015).

Furthermore, employee turnover intention is a strong predictor of actual turnover, which means that it determines the future behavior of an employee in the organization (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006; Skelton et al., 2019). Therefore, if employees develop an intention to leave, it may result in employees' actual turnover, which can cost the organization in terms of organizational competitiveness and recruitment. The employees' turnover intention often happens for various reasons attributed to certain factors, such as individual or organizational factors. For example, turnover intention can occur when there is a lack of organizational trust and perceived organizational support (Oladunmoye, 2017; Wagner, 2010).

Social exchange theory by Blau (1964) has been used in organizational research to investigate employees' workplace attitudes and behavioral outcomes (Wayne et al., 1997). SET explains how social exchange in organizations is established and guided based on mutual trust, commitment, loyalty, and reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to social exchange theory, workers exchange their effort and dedication towards supporting the organization in return for tangible rewards such as pay and fringe benefits and socio-emotional bonuses such as self-esteem, approval, and job satisfaction (Blau, 1964). A review conducted by Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) suggested that SET was one of the influential and explanatory theories of organizational behavior. The basic principle of SET is that the relationship between two social entities depends on the extent to which each of these entities respects social rules and norms of exchange implicitly and explicitly agreed upon between the two parties. Thus, trust, commitment, and loyalty are attributes of a social exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Organizational Trust and Turnover Intention

Trust is a person's willingness to be vulnerable to another person's actions hoping that the other person will conduct a specific activity that is important to the recipient, regardless of the recipient's ability to track or control the other person (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust is an outcome of positive social exchange between an employee and the organization's top management, resulting in positive behavior and action. Organizational trust is the consequence of a social exchange process (Blau, 1964). Employees interpret and reciprocate behaviors and continually watch the work environment to determine if they can trust the top management. For example, when an employee begins to lose trust in the organization, it

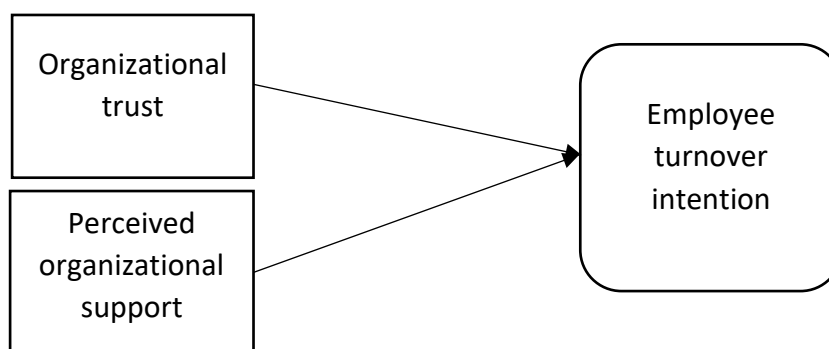
affects their sense of responsibility and commitment to the organization, leading to turnover intention. Employees' positive attitude in the organization results from their trust in the organization, leading to high social exchange relations with their superiors and colleagues, thus enhancing their positive attitude towards the organization (Kim, 2019). Several studies have found that trust links a range of employees' work attitudes, including turnover intention (Engelbrecht & Samuel, 2019; Jiang & Shen, 2018; Mayer et al., 1995). Studies have revealed that an employee's high level of trust in an organization will enhance employee commitment, thereby reducing employee turnover intention (Idell, 2020; Zeffane & Melhem, 2017). The following hypothesis is postulated based on the above-stated discussion.

H₁: Organizational trust has a significant negative effect on employee turnover intention

Perceived Organizational Support and Turnover Intention

The literature on perceived organizational support (POS) has been extensively studied in relation to human resource (HR) regulations to better understand employee behavior and attitudes. However, more study into the mechanisms by which POS impacts essential HR policies and how turnover intentions in knowledge-intensive businesses are explained is required (Joo et al., 2015). Employees in an organization who perceive that they are treated fairly and receive benefits based on their efforts are most likely motivated to have positive attitudes and remain with the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Eisenberger et al., 1986). The study by various researchers on employee POS and turnover intention (Emerson, 2013; Jayasundera et al., 2017; Kalidass & Bahron, 2015; Nandialath et al., 2018) revealed that POS influences employees' turnover intention negatively. When the employees perceive that the organization cares for their well-being, they reciprocate by showing more commitment and loyalty, reducing their intention to leave the organization. The findings of these studies are consistent with previous works (Allen et al., 2003; Joo et al., 2015; Maertz et al., 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Wayne et al., 1997; Wong & Wong, 2017). The results from the studies reveal a significant negative relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee turnover intention, and a significant relationship between POS and a host of organizational outcomes (Allen et al., 2003; Chen et al., 2005; Newman et al., 2012). Conversely, other researchers have also reported a moderate relationship and even non-significant relationships between POS and employees' turnover intention (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Karatepe, 2015; Shafique et al., 2018). However, the meta-analysis by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) revealed a negative relationship between POS and turnover intention. In addition, recent studies by Jayasundera et al (2017) Joo et al (2015); Nandialath et al (2018); Phillip et al (2021) supported the negative relationship between POS and employee turnover intention. Based on the above-stated discussions, the following hypothesis is formed.

H₂: Perceived organizational support has a significant negative effect on employee turnover intention.



Methods

Participants

A cross-sectional quantitative research design was employed to examine SMEs' employee turnover intention. The data for this study were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from frontline manufacturing SME employees in Lagos State. A sample size larger than 30 and less than 500 is appropriate for most research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). According to Roscoe's (1975) rules of thumb, the minimum sample size required for most behavioral studies is 30. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 72 frontline employees from the manufacturing SMEs. Questionnaires were distributed randomly to the study participants. A total of 90 questionnaires were sent out; 85 questionnaires were collected at the end of the data collection, out of which 72 were valid for this study. The sampling technique used for this study to collect data is simple random sampling.

Measures

The instrument used in this study were all established scales for all the constructs. The three valid and reliable scales employed in this study have been validated in previous studies. Each construct was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Turnover Intention: This construct, which is the study's dependent variable, was measured using a turnover intention scale (TIS) instrument developed by Roodt (2004). The instrument includes six items validated by Bothma & Roodt (2013), with the Cronbach alpha of 0.80. The items in this instrument include: "I often considered leaving my job" and "I often dream about getting another job that will better suit my personal needs."

Organizational Trust: Cook & Wall's (1980) interpersonal trust at work instrument was used in this study to measure organizational trust. The 6-items in the trust in management scale were used to assess employee's trust in their top management. The questionnaire was on a five-point Likert scale with responses starting from 1 = No, I strongly disagree to 5 = Yes, I strongly agree. The reliability of interpersonal trust in management scale coefficient is .85. In addition, items such as "The organization's management is honest in its efforts to understand the employees' perspectives" and "I trust the management of this organization to make good decisions for the organization's future" were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Perceived Organizational Support: Eisenberger et al. (1997) short version scale of perceived organizational support (SPOS) with eight items was used to measure this construct. This study utilized the short version of the eight-item scale to access the employee's POS. Items such as "My organization really cares about my well-being" and "My organization cares about my

opinions" are examples of the construct. The scale has been reported to be 0.90 (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

Data Collection Procedure

Analytic Procedure

The data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were utilized in measuring the level of SMEs' employee turnover intention. In addition, multiple regression was used to analyze the influence of the two independent variables; organizational trust and perceived organizational support, on turnover intention.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Following the ratings of 1 to 2.33 is low, 2.34 to 3.66 is moderate, 3.67 to 5.00 is high. The analysis shows that turnover intention among the employees is at a high level. The descriptive statistic showed the mean and standard deviation of 72 participants on the dependent variable 'turnover intention', which is presented in Table 1. The table revealed the mean of 3.6667 and the standard deviation of 4.73227. This result indicated that the participants had a high level of intention to leave their current organization.

Table 1:
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Average mean	SD	Min.	Max	Range
Turnover intention	Low	23	31.8	3.67	4.73	1.00	5.00	3.33
	Moderate	12	16.4					
	High	37	51.8					

Note: Low (1-2.33), Moderate (2.34-3.66), High (3.67-5), N=72

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, multiple regression was employed to test the relationship between organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention. The multiple regression results showed that the model, which has two predictors; organizational trust and perceived organizational support combined, accounted for a 19% variance in turnover intention ($R^2=.019$) as shown in Table 2.

Table 2:
Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error estimate
.101	.010	.019	4.77597

Table 3:

ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Regression	16.115	2	8.057	.353	.000
Residual	1573.885	69	22.810		
Total	1590.000	71			

The ANOVA table revealed statistically significant results $F(2, 69) = .353, P < .000$. Table 3

Table 4:

Results of The Multiple Regression Analysis

Constructs	SE	Beta	t	Sig.	Findings
Organizational trust	.152	-.065	-.505	.000	Supported
Perceived organizational support	.098	-.104	-.808	.000	Supported

Referring to Table 3, the result shows that $F = .353$ and $sig = .000$, which indicates that the two predictors (organizational trust and perceived organizational support) significantly affect turnover intention.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that organizational trust is negatively related to turnover intention. As shown in Table 4, a negative and significant relationship was found between organizational trust and turnover intention ($\beta = -.065$; $t = -.505$; $p < .05$). Therefore, indicating support for hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceived organizational support is negatively related to turnover intention. The results in Table 4 showed a negative and significant relationship between POS and turnover intention ($\beta = -.104$; $t = -.808$; $p < .05$). The result provides support for hypothesis 2. The results revealed that the most significant influence of SME's employee turnover intention is POS $-.104, p < .05$. The result implies that a high level of employee POS will lead to a decrease in their turnover intention.

Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention of employees in registered manufacturing SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using Blau's (1964) social exchange theory as the underpinning theory, employees with a high level of organizational trust reduce their tendency to leave their workplace. Similarly, employees who perceive a high level of organizational support are less likely to leave their workplace.

The first hypothesis predicted that organizational trust would negatively influence turnover intention. The hypothesis was fully supported with organizational trust significantly and negatively related to turnover intention. This finding is supported by previous studies that found a significant and negative relationship between organizational trust and turnover intention (Aryee et al., 2002; Idell, 2020; Jiang & Shen, 2018; Mürşide & Hamitoğlu, 2019; Nair et al., 2017; Yurtkoru & Karabay, 2018). As expected, organizational trust was negatively

related to turnover intention. This result implies that SME employees who trust their organization are less likely to have turnover intention towards their current workplace. The second hypothesis was also supported. As anticipated, POS was found to be negatively related to turnover intention. Similar to previous studies (Ghosh et al., 2019; Joo et al., 2015; Satardien et al., 2019; Tapia & Rader, 2021; Wayne et al., 1997; Ye et al., 2017), the higher the SME employees' perception of organizational support, the lower their level of turnover intention. In this study, POS did significantly influence turnover intention and contributed most among the two predictors. POS contributed most to the turnover intention with the highest Beta of .104 against the organizational trust, which is significantly related to the turnover intention with Beta .065 as seen in Table 4.

Implication

This study provides empirical evidence of the role of organizational trust and perceived organizational support in predicting turnover intention. The findings suggest that organizational trust and perceived organizational support will reduce turnover intention towards the workplace. This finding is in line with previous studies and social exchange theory by Blau (1964). Furthermore, perceived organizational support had the most influence on the employees' turnover intention in this study. This implies that when the employees perceive that their organization supports and values them, they are more likely to remain with the organization. Hence, the findings suggest that organizational trust and perceived organizational support are important factors in predicting turnover intention.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendation

The findings of this current study cannot be generalized to the entire population. The sample size from which the study's data was collected is small, with a total of 72 respondents in Lagos State. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire SME employees in Nigeria. Thus, in the future, this research should be expanded to include all manufacturing SMEs in Nigeria in order to acquire a more representative sample of SME employees.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention among SME employees in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results of the study supported the two hypotheses that the relationship between organizational trust and perceived organizational support negatively influence turnover intention. These findings can help HRs and managers develop retention strategies that could reduce SME employees' turnover intention.

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