

Burnout, Work Engagement, work alienation as predictors of turnover intentions among universities employees in Kerman

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Abstract: The main purpose of the present study was to determine whether work engagement mediate relationship between burnout and turnover intentions in sample of 210 universities employees in Kerman- Iran. The participants ranged in age between 25 to 45 years old by using reliable instruments. Results of study indicated that work engagement negatively related to turnover intention, while burnout and work alienation were positively related to turnover intention. Also, work engagement mediate relationship between burnout and turnover intentions among universities employees. The implications of these results for work performance are discussed.

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Introduction

Many Studies showed reasons that why employees decide to depart or continue with a particular organization (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Kotze & Roodt, 2005) are gaining significance and most of them focus on many negative consequences that are linked with employee turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Mobley, 1982). As a result, employee turnover and its related expenses for organizations are an important challenge (Bluedorn, 1982). The present study is important theoretically for the body of knowledge on turnover and possible interventions to discourage employee turnover. Altogether, the management of employee turnover statistics and its associated costs could be improved with an increased understanding of the turnover process.

Burnout and turnover intentions

Burnout refers to a fact observed between human service worker and personnel that had to deal with emotionally demanding individuals. Maslach and Jackson's (1986) studied conceptualization of burnout. The term of burnout has three components: the first, emotional exhaustion that refer to feelings of being overextended and exhausted of physical and emotional resources), the second component of burnout refer to depersonalization (negative or extremely separate responses to various aspects of the job), and third component of burnout is decreased personal achievement (feelings of lack of skill and a lack of success at work). According to theoretical frameworks of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001), burnout is a mediator of the relationship between work stressors and different attitudinal outcomes. Among these outcomes, turnover intention is important that has been introduced as a main outcome of burnout by

many studies (Harrington et al., 2001; Huang, Chuang, & Lin, 2003).

Work engagement, work alienation and turnover intentions

Work engagement (involvement) is consists of three components which have been generally validated (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). First, Vigor refers to high degree of energy and mental flexibility while working, the enthusiasm to invest attempt in one's work and constant even when workers face with difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Dedication is defined as a feeling of meaning, eagerness, motivation, pride, and challenge whilst absorption is described as a form of being focused and extremely absorbed in one's work, where the time passes rapidly, and one has difficulties with separating oneself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Involved employees are enthusiastic to work firm with a positive situation of mind, thus their abilities is cause for achievement in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The significant of work engagement (involvement) has revealed that effects on work related feelings and behavioral outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and performance through its mediating role work engagement between abovementioned antecedents and outcomes. Saks (2006) indicated that work engagement had a positive association with employees' job satisfaction and a negative association with turnover intention. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also confirmed that work engagement (involvement) effects on turnover intention by mediating the relationship with job resources.

On the other hand, Industrial-Organizational (I/O) psychological literature rejected to present any considerable relations between the mixture of work engagement, burnout, work alienation and turnover

intentions. This shows a lack of research in this light. Work alienation is described as form of psychological departs from work insofar as work seems to not have the potentiality for enjoyable one's salient needs and hope (Kanungo, 1979). A further full perceptive of turnover intentions must safe solutions to better handle employee turnover. Work behaviors and attitudes work alienation can be theoretically connected to deduction behaviors and the turnover procedure (Ravichandran & Gilmore, 2007) and the position work engagement and burnout hold in the sequence leading up to turnover could help define the turnover process more comprehensively.

The research questions can therefore be formulated as: Are the work engagement can mediate the relationship between burnout and turnover intentions among universities employees? And are burnout, work engagement, work alienation significantly related to (and predictors of) turnover intentions? Consequently, the main objective of the research is to determine whether work engagement mediate relationship between burnout and turnover intention? The second question is whether different constructs such as work engagement, burnout, and work alienation are related to (and predictors of) turnover intentions.

Theoretical framework

The present study indicated a variety with poles of extremity that is work engagement and burnout and work alienation and their respective relationships to turnover intentions. The mentioned constructs (burnout, work engagement, work alienation) were theoretically grouped jointly to make a further holistic model that relates to turnover intentions. The theoretical model in present study called the Job Demands Resources model that helps to map these organizational attitudes and their relationships with turnover intentions. A short debate on the interrelatedness of the Job Demand Resource model will now describe with strength discussion on work engagement and burnout, an introduction to the construct turnover intention and relevant results obtained nearby other related constructs of work engagement and burnout.

The wide Job Demand Resource model revealed that every career has special job characteristics that can be divided into two categories such as job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands is described as corporeal, social, or managerial aspects of the job that require continued physical or mental attempt and are therefore related with physiological and psychological costs such as exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). Exhaustion can then increase job stress and tension (Demerouti et al., 2001) and negative psychological forms such as burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Schaufeli and

Buunk (2003) defined burnout as a kind of work stress that effect on health and well-being of employees. On the other hand, Job resources is defined physical, psychological, social, or managerial aspects of the career that can be useful in work goals, decrease job strain and the connected physiological and psychological costs, and developmental of stimulate personal (Demerouti et al., 2001). External resources are consist of managerial or organizational (career opportunities), social (support from colleagues) and task (performance feedback) (Demerouti et al., 2001). Briefly, work engagement was found to mediate the relationship between available job resources and turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Demerouti et al. (2001) propose that a lack of available resources will influence the level of job demands fulfillment, which can make possible withdrawal behavior that withdrawal behaviors may lead to work disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). The Job Demand Resource model shows job resources as the only predictor of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2003). According to Bakker et al. (2003) job resources, such as social support by social group, supervisory coaching, and performance feedback and time control have a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions and work engagement (commitment) mediates the relationship. According to the Job Demand Resource model's that explain burnout, job demands predict sense of exhaustion and absent job resources predict work disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). In this light, exhaustion is the key indicator of the burnout syndrome (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Many researchers have discussed significance in differentiating between the kinds of engagement, because they vary in their respective antecedents and consequences (Saks, 2006; Simpson, 2008). Based on reviewed literature, six kinds of work-related engagement were recognized: job engagement, organization engagement (Saks, 2006) personal engagement, burnout/engagement, work engagement, employee engagement (Simpson, 2008).

In the current study, work engagement and relevant factors mentioned. It has been reported that employee engagement is related to employees' attitudes, intentions and behaviors (Saks, 2006) and that work engagement indicate that contribute in the employing organizations of the engaged employees (Koyuncu, Burke, & Fiksenbaum, 2006). Therefore, it's not surprise that work engagement has been connected to a refuse in intentions to give up (Koyuncu et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The Job Demand Resource model shows job resources as the only predictor of work engagement and engagement is as the mediator between job resources and turnover intentions (Bakker

et al., 2003) and, lastly, work engagement (involvement) is directly associated to turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The findings of Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006) propose that a lack of job resources to meet job demands can be related to burnout, which can lead to deduced work engagement. According to the literature (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), reduced work engagement could in turn lead to improved turnover intentions.

The three sub factors of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout has effect on the intention of employees for leaving their organizations that it has been well studied by Lingard and Sims, (2007).

These results are similar with Job Demand Resource model (Jackson et al., 2006). Research results of a predictive relationship between burnout and turnover intentions are not plentiful and literature regarding the strength of the relationship proved to be inconsistent; nevertheless, a clear linkage does seem to exist. Therefore, it seems that when experiencing symptoms of burnout, experiences of turnover intentions will not be far behind. Also, burnout is main predictor of depression that in turn depression proves to predict turnover intentions (Anderson, 2008; Baba, Galperin, & Lituchy, 1999).

Hypothesis

H_{a1}: High levels of burnout will exhibit low levels of turnover intentions among respondents.

H_{a2}: High levels of work engagement will exhibit high levels of turnover intentions.

H_{a3}: High levels of work alienation will exhibit low levels of turnover intentions.

H_{a4}: The regression coefficients for burnout, work engagement, work alienation variables are significant when regressed against respondents' turnover intentions.

H_{a5}: Work engagement mediates the relationship between burnout and turnover among respondents.

Method

Research design

This is a correlational and cross-sectional research. The variables in this study were burnout, work engagement, work alienation, and turnover intentions.

Participants

The majority of the respondents were male (57%), and (43%) of respondents were female. Respondents of present study aged between 25-45 years old. Majority of the respondents were between 35-45 years (62.5%) and minority of the respondents were 25-34 years (38.5%). Most respondents were married (79.1%) and indicated that their highest academic qualifications were bachelor or above (40.7%).

Measures

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17)

The UWES-17 was used to measure work engagement with three subscales called vigour, dedication, and absorption. This scale has 17 items (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the three subscales were 0.78 for vigor, 0.89 for dedication and 0.78 for absorption (Storm & Rothmann, 2003). In the present study, the UWES objects were scored on a 7-point Likert ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday). High scores indicated high levels of work engagement.

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS-20)

The MBI-HSS-20 is consists of three subscales and 25 items that was used to measure burnout. Subscales labeled emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment (Vanheule, Rosseel, & Vlerick, 2007). Reliability of the 20-item MBI was estimated 0.83 (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale with ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday). High score revealed high burnout among respondents.

Work Alienation scale

The alienation scale was conducted to assess work alienation that consists of two subscales (Korman, Wittig-berman, & Lang, 1981) called Personal Alienation and Social Alienation. The used scale in present study was modified by combining two separate measures; that is, the 18-item Alienation measure of Korman et al. (1981) and the 24-item Alienation scale of Dean (1961). The 18-item Alienation measure yielded an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.83 (Banai, Reisel, & Probst, 2004) and the 24-item Alienation measure yielded a borderline reliability coefficient of 0.78 (Dean, 1961). This response scale was scored on a 7-point Likert. The response scale ranged from 1 (very much so) to 7 (not at all). However, within this study the focus was totally on the subscale Personal Alienation due to its better importance to work alienation. Higher score in present scale revealed high degree of work alienation among respondents.

Turnover Intentions Questionnaire

Roodt (2004) developed the Turnover Intentions Questionnaire that was used to measure employee intentions of staying or leaving an organization. Two previous studies (Jacobs, 2005; Martin & Roodt, 2007) confirmed Roodt's (2004) questionnaire to be both reliable ($\alpha = 0.913$ and $\alpha = 0.895$) and valid. The response scale was scored on a 7-point Likert scale varying between poles of intensity. The scale ranged, for example, from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Higher scores indicated high levels of turnover intentions.

Analysis of Data

Data from the current study were processed and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16. Three statistical procedures i.e. exploratory data analysis, descriptive analysis, and inferential statistical analysis were depicted for the data analyses. Descriptive statistics is consisting of mean score, standard deviation, percentage and frequency distribution were used to explain the demographic profiles of the respondents. Inferential statistics that was used in the data analysis was Pearson Correlation Analysis to conduct of relationship between burnout, work engagement, work alienation, and turnover intentions. Multiple regression analyses were used to determine significant predictors of turnover intentions and to explore the mediating role of work engagement on the relationships between burnout and turnover intentions.

Results

Levels of burnout, work engagement, work alienation, and turnover intentions

In total, there were 210 participants' filled burnout, work engagement, work alienation, and turnover intentions questionnaires. As shown in Table 1 (38.4%) of the respondents reported that levels of burnout. More than half (59.1%) of the respondents reported high work engagement, less than half of the respondents (34%) reported high levels of work alienation.

Table 1: Gender, Age, and Levels of Variables

| Variables | n | % |
|------------------------|-----|------|
| Burnout | | |
| Low | 128 | 61.6 |
| High | 82 | 38.4 |
| Work Engagement | | |
| Low | 119 | 59.1 |
| High | 91 | 40.9 |
| Work Alienation | | |
| Low | 138 | 66 |
| High | 72 | 34 |

Analysis of the relationship between burnout, work engagement, work alienation with employees' turnover intentions

Pearson correlation test was used to examine the relationship between burnout, work engagement, work alienation with turnover intentions. As shown in Table 2 there was a medium positive and significant relationship between burnout and turnover intentions ($r=.34, p<.05$). The positive correlation coefficient indicated that an increase in the score for burnout is followed by an increase in the employees' turnover intentions. Also, Table 2 shows that there was a

negative correlation between work engagement and turnover intentions ($r=-.047, p>.05$). This means that employees who are highly engage in workplace, have lower turnover intentions. Finally, as shown in Table 2 there was a positive significant correlation between work alienation and turnover intentions ($r=.26, p<.05$). This means that employees who are highly estrange or alienate in workplace, have higher turnover intentions.

Table 2: correlation analysis

| | Variables | X1 | X2 | X3 | Y |
|----|---------------------|---------|---------|--------|---|
| X1 | Burnout | 1 | | | |
| X2 | Work Engagement | -.256** | 1 | | |
| X3 | Work Alienation | .248** | -.243** | 1 | |
| Y | Turnover Intentions | .34** | -.047** | .263** | 1 |

Analysis of unique predictor variable of academic achievement

In the present study, Regression analysis is one of the used methods that explore predictors of turnover intentions (Chen, 2002). Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test burnout, work engagement, and work alienation in predicting turnover intentions. It seems the main factors which influence turnover intentions are burnout, work engagement, work alienation. In addition, the model is consists of three predicting variables labeled X_1 burnout, X_2 , work engagement, and X_3 work alienation. The contribution of three variables separately as well as in total contribution is presented in the following regression equation

$$\hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 + e$$

(Turnover Intentions) \hat{Y}
 $= 9.143 + (.021) + (-.011) + (.019) + .040$

Where:

- \hat{Y} = Turnover Intentions
- X_1 = Burnout
- X_2 = Work Engagement
- X_3 = Work Alienation
- e = Random error

The hypothesis test which examines the validity of the model can be expressed as follows:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = 0 \\ H_1: \text{against the } H_0 \end{cases}$$

Based on Table 3 there is a significant relationship between burnout, work engagement, and work alienation and outcome (turnover intentions) [$F(3,207) = 14.334, p=.000$].

Further to this, Table 4 with the observed $t=1.738, p=.004$, the standard coefficient Beta=-.162 and the relatively value of the standard error=.012, can

be clearly confirmed that burnout has a relationship with turnover intentions. Also, the second variable (work engagement) has significant relationship with turnover intentions (Beta= .491, p=.02. The third variable (work alienation) where t=-4.384, p= .000, Beta= -.231, standard error=.021. Also, R² showed that about 41 % of the variance in turnover intentions is explained by burnout, work engagement, and work alienation. In other words, 59 % of turnover intentions are related to the other factors. According to Table 4 work engagement is the strongest predictor of turnover intentions.

Table 3: ANOVA Table of regression model

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| 1 | Regression | 225.123 | 3 | 126.459 | 14.334 | 0.00 |
| | Residual | 896.311 | 207 | 4.099 | | |
| | Total | 1131.434 | 210 | | | |

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis on Turnover Intentions

| Model | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|-----------------|--------|------------|-------|--------|------|
| 1 (Constant) | 8.284 | 1.021 | | 9.028 | .000 |
| Burnout | 0.038 | 0.012 | -.162 | 1.738 | .000 |
| Work engagement | -0.013 | 0.014 | .491 | -1.02 | .000 |
| Work alienation | -0.065 | 0.015 | -.231 | -2.314 | .000 |

Mediation Analyses

A series of Multiple Regression analyses were used to explain the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationships between burnout and turnover intentions. The mediation test examines the indirect effect of predictor (X) on the outcome (Y) variable through mediator variable (Z). The current study follows the principle planned by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test the mediation importance of a mediator on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), there are four steps in establishing mediation:

Step 1: There must be a significant relationship between the predictor and the outcome variable.

Step 2: The relationship between the predictor and the hypothesized mediator is significant.

Step 3: The hypothesized mediator is significantly related to the outcome variable when both the IV and the mediator are treated as predictors and DV as the outcome variable.

Step 4: When the assumptions at step 1 to 3 are fulfilled, the mediation test is conducted (step 4). The IV and mediator are treated as predictors and DV as the outcome variable. To establish that the mediator variable completely mediates the relationship between IV and DV, the unstandardized coefficient (path c') should be zero.

At step 4, if there is a mediation effect, the strength of relationship between the predictor and the

outcome is decrease after controlling for the effect of the mediator. Figure 1 shows the mediation model of the relationship between the independent variables and the outcome variable. Path *a* shows the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator. Path *b* refers to the relationship between the mediator and the outcome variable. Path *c'* indicates the relationship between the independent variable and the outcome variable after controlling for the mediator. According to Baron and Kenney (1986), it is preferable to used unstandardized coefficients in mediating analyses. This is supported by Dugerd, Todman, and Strains (2010).

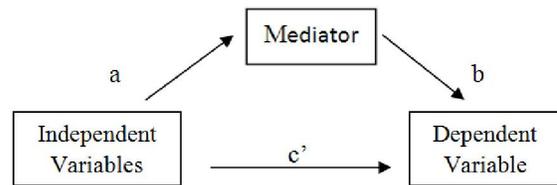


Figure 1: Mediation Model (Center)

When the results shown are consistent with the mediation model (partial or complete mediation), Sobel test was run to prove the significant effect of the mediation. Partial mediation means that path *b* (relationship between the mediator and the outcome variable) is significant after controlling for independent variable; and path *c'* is still significant. Complete mediation means that the measured effect in path *c'* (relationship between independent and the dependent variable after fixing the mediator variable) is zero or at least non-significant (Dugerd, Todman, & Strains, 2010).

Work engagement mediate relationship between burnout and turnover intentions

Table 5 shows that there was a direct significant effect of burnout on turnover intentions (B= -.038, SE=.014, t= -2.104, p<.05) and work engagement (B=-.627, SE=.189, t= -2.011, p<.05). The relationship between work engagement (mediator) and turnover intentions was also significant (B= .046, SE=.002, t=17.035, p<.05). The results of multiple regression analysis at Step 4 (Beta=-.013, SE= .012) supported the complete mediation model. The summary of the results is presented in Figure 1.

Soble test was used to make sure the significance of the indirect influence of the burnout on turnover intentions via work engagement. The results of the Sobel test confirmed that work engagement significantly carries the influence of the burnout to turnover intentions (Z=-2.7201, P<.05).

Table 5: Relationship between Burnout and Turnover Intentions Mediated By Work Engagement

| Step | I V | D V | B | SE | Beta | t |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|---------|------|-------|---------|
| 1 | Burnout | Turnover Intentions | -.038** | .014 | -.123 | - 2.104 |
| 2 | Burnout | Work Engagement | -.627** | .189 | -.131 | -2.011 |
| 3 | Work Engagement | Turnover Intentions | .046** | .002 | .499 | 7.035 |
| 4 | Burnout | Turnover Intentions | -.013 | .012 | -.042 | -0.89 |
| | Work Engagement | | .041** | .002 | .456 | 15.86 |

Note: B= Unstandardized coefficient; Beta= Standardized coefficient ** p<.05

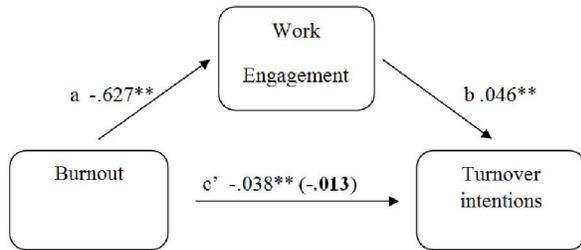


Figure 2: Mediation model

Discussion and Conclusion

Respondents of the present study were universities employees aged between 25 and 45 years old. Results of the study indicated that a majority of the employees reported high work engagement and less than half of the employees reported low levels of work alienation, and burnout.

Pearson correction test indicated that employees who had high levels of burnout, more likely to have high turnover intentions. Burnout has positive influence on turnover intentions. The present finding support past studies

Also, result of Pearson correlation showed employees who are highly engage in workplace have low turnover intentions. Engaged employees are willing to work hard with a positive state of mind, thereby enabling them to accomplish much in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Work engagement has shown its significant effects on work related attitude and behavioral outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intention.

In light of the relationship between work alienation and turnover intentions employees with high levels of work alienation, have high levels of turnover intentions. Results from the present study support past finding by Ravichandran and Gilmore (2007). Work behaviors and attitudes work alienation can be theoretically linked to withdrawal behaviors and the turnover process.

Results of multiple regression analysis indicated that strongest predictor of turnover intentions was work engagement. Finally, result of mediation test utilized that work engagement mediate relationship between burnout and turnover intentions. According

to job demand resource, work engagement mediates the relationship between available job resources and turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Demerouti et al. (2001) propose that a lack of available resources will influence the levels of job demands completion, which in turn will lead to withdrawal behavior. On the other hand, withdrawal behaviors can lead to work disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). The Job Demand Resource model indicated job resources as a predictor of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2003). Specific job resources, such as social support by colleagues, supervisory coaching, and performance feedback and time control have a significant negative relation to turnover intentions. Also, work engagement (commitment) mediates this relationship (Bakker et al., 2003). Job demands, such as work overload, changes in the task and emotional demands were as predictors of exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2003). In this light, exhaustion as one of the subsets of burnout is main indicator of the burnout syndrome (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Implications and recommendations

The study investigated how observing employees in the work place – their work commitment, their behavioral symptoms - could assist in predicting whether they had or did not have intentions to leave. It was found that those employees who were obviously committed to their work did not harbor such intentions whereas those who showed signs of being alienated were more likely to plan on leaving.

The objective of the study was to help management better understand how and why employees leave so as to increase the efficiency of HR turnover management and reduce the costs of staff turnover. This is because replacing staff that leave implies a cost factor that can negatively affect an organization (Bluedorn, 1982). When such predictor data is available, the HR department will be able to create a more effective approach in recruiting and selecting new employees. Such an evidence-based policy would also contribute to the development of more effective ways to train, develop and retain employees.

There are several situations that are particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of employee departure. The position of a civil engineer is a case in point because it is important that such a key employee should see through an important project and not leave while the project is still in progress. As such, it is important, when recruiting staff for such a position to hire one who shows indications that he/she will more likely stay than leave at an inopportune time.

Another scenario which requires that someone being interviewed is not likely to quit in the middle of a project in progress is that of lawyers or marketing consultants. This arises from the need to protect the interests of their clients.

In light of what has been mentioned above, this study is therefore very important and useful for HR managers and other practitioners as the research findings provide a “predictive validity” that could contribute to a reduction in staff turnover costs. Retaining good staff has always been a challenge for management. However, it has now become an even greater challenge especially for high flying employees who are normally the first to leave. This is because of the many available opportunities provided by competitors at home and from abroad (Ready, Hill, & Conger, 2008). The ability to be able to identify predictors of turnover intention that this study provides is invaluable for the better management of a firm’s human resources and there can be wide-ranging implications that affect the whole HR chain of activities from employee entry to exit.

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