

Why are Your Employees Leaving? The Effect of Organizational Mobility Preferences on Turnover Intentions and Affective Commitment

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Abstract—It is crucial to study the factors affecting employee's turnover intentions to lessen the turnover rate that affects companies, groups, and individuals. Although organizational mobility preferences could explain employee's turnover intentions in an organization, a limited number of studies that can explain the psychological process of the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intentions currently exist. For the current study, data was collected from 178 participants using questionnaires, which were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro. Findings indicate that organizational mobility preferences have an indirect effect on turnover intentions through affective commitment. The implications of this finding and additional suggestions for future research are included in this paper.

Keywords: turnover intention, organizational mobility preferences, affective commitment

Introduction

Turnover is one of the great challenges encountered by organizations (Gim, Desa, & Ramayah, 2015). At an organizational level, turnover can increase the costs associated with losing the skills and proficiency of employees, recruitment expenses, training expenses, separation cost, loss of talent, and decrease the performance of the organization (Elkjaer and Filmer, 2015; Hatum, 2016; Park & Shaw, 2013; Wynen & De Beeck, 2014). At an individual level, employees can experience loss of seniority, loss of non-vested benefits, cost of moving to other organizations that cannot be replaced, family disturbance, stress caused by the transition, loss of friends, and lack of family bonds (Pruitt & Porter, 1982). Turnover also affects groups in organizations by increasing workload, lowering performance, increasing stress, and the loss of friends (Pruitt & Porter, 1982).

The problems stated are even more worrying given the high number of turnovers in organizations all over the world, including Indonesia. For example, a survey conducted in Indonesia found that turnover is relatively high for back- and middle-office employees in the banking industry (Walters, 2017). Another survey in Indonesia discovered that almost three quarters (72%) of the participants expressed that they were quite likely or very likely to quit from their organization in the next 12 months (Michael Page Data Services, 2015).

Turnover is classified into two types: voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover (Harhara, Singh, & Hussain, 2015). The present research will only focus on voluntary turnover defined as "voluntary cessation of membership in an organization, by an individual who receives monetary compensation for participation in that organization" (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017). There are various cognitive and behavioral events occurring before an employee decides to leave their organization (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Mobley (1977) suggested that the employees' intention to quit is the prompt sign of actually withdrawing from the company, and

Sjöberg and Sverke (2000) argue that the single significant predictor of turnover is the turnover intention. Thus, the aim of this study is to focus on employee's turnover intention.

Many researchers have tried to explore factors that might affect turnover intention. For example, Arthur (1994) identifies a variable that has a close relation to the workplace movement phenomenon: boundaryless career attitudes, which are "career paths [that] may involve sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings" (DeFillipi & Arthur, 2014). Employees who prefer boundaryless careers will likely move from one organization to another, which could imply that they also have high turnover intention.

Boundaryless career attitudes consist of organizational mobility preferences and a boundaryless mindset (Crocitto, 1998; Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006). Organizational mobility preferences are defined as "the strength of interest in remaining with a single (or multiple) employer(s)" (Briscoe et al., 2006, p. 33). Meanwhile, a boundaryless mindset is "one's general attitude to working across organizational boundaries" (Briscoe et al., 2006). Though they are related, organizational mobility preferences and a boundaryless mindset can be studied independently (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Past research regarding boundaryless career attitudes focused on the physical mobility across boundaries (Steers, 1997), and these can be represented in organizational mobility preferences. Organizational mobility preferences are concerned mostly with individual's preferences to remain within the organization (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014). It is implied that individuals who have high scores on organizational mobility preferences will feel comfortable with, or even prefer, a career across several employers (Briscoe et al., 2006). On the other hand, individuals who have boundaryless career mindsets prefer to work with other people and organizations beyond their current employment boundaries (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009), which represent psychological mobility (Steers, 1997). Thus, among those two concepts, only organizational mobility preferences will likely have a relation to turnover intention. Hence, this research will only focus on organizational mobility preferences.

Although the association between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention seems promising, there is still a lack of explanation regarding the psychological processes that underlie those relations (Meyer & Allen, 1984). One of the variables that can explain the psychological processes behind the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention is the affective component of organizational commitment (Enache, Sallán, Simo, & Fernandez, 2013). Organizational commitment is an employee's psychological state that describes their relationship with the organization and serves as the source of their decisions about their participation within the firm (Allen & Meyer, 2001). It implies that employees who possess a high commitment will not leave their current organization.

Organizational commitment can be divided into affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 2001). Those three components are independent and different from one another (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Among the three components, affective commitment is the component that can describe organizational

commitment better than any other components (Allen & Meyer, 2001; Meyer & Allen, 2004). Porter, Mowday, and Steers (1979) described affective commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization.” This kind of commitment is described by positive emotions and identification with, closeness to, and participation inside the company (Manjot & Sharma, 2018). People who have high affective commitment will be willing to stay in the organization apart from other instrumental values. Among other components of organizational commitment, this paper seeks to propose affective commitment as the variable that can best mediate the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention.

The dynamic between these variables can be explained using theory of reasoned action, which is a method of recognizing individual’s complex decision-making processes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). This theory suggests that decision-making starts with beliefs, attitudes against the behavior, intentions, and it ends with the behavior itself (Hill, Fishbein, & Ajzen, 1977) Attitude cannot immediately envision intention, whereas attitude must first be converted into desire, in turn connecting it to behavior intentions (Liou, 2009).

In this sense, organizational mobility preferences, as a part of boundaryless career attitudes, could act as a positive attitude toward working over the boundaries of single employment (Briscoe et al., 2006). While the affective commitment serves as a desire to preserve membership within the organization (Porter et al., 1979), turnover intention has a direct connection to the behavior. In this case, organizational mobility preferences are the attitude that can convert into the desire to remain in the organization (affective commitment), and that will make the employee have a certain behavior intention (turnover intention).

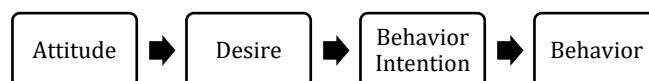


Fig 1. Relation between attitude, desire, and behavior attention.

Previous research can also support this model. Organizational mobility preferences have been found to have a relationship with affective commitment (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012). Employees who do not have preferences to work within the current organizational boundary are supposed to identify themselves less with the organization, and are not as willing to stay in the organization, while affective commitment has a significant negative effect on turnover intention (Gim et al., 2015; Sow, 2015). It means that the employees that identify themselves with their organization will have less intention to leave an organization.

Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the relation between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention is mediated by affective commitment. If employees have high organizational mobility preferences, then it will reduce their affective commitment and will also increase the turnover intention.

As a hypothesis, this can be phrased as the following: The relationship among organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention is mediated by affective commitment.

Method

Participants

Participants in the study included 178 employees (51.1% male, Mage = 26 years old). The minimum tenure of the participants was three months with M = 44 months. This research used a convenience sampling method to find participants. The data was collected online using a self-report questionnaire. The online questionnaire link was distributed through social media (LINE, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, and Facebook) with a message that contained the requirements for participants and purpose of the research. As a reward incentive for possible participants, phone credits with a total amount of Rp 100.000 were offered. Participants completed the online questionnaire through a platform called Typeform.com.

Research Design

The data collection in this research was only done once per participant and, thus, was categorized as a cross-sectional study.

Measures

Turnover intention

The turnover intention measurement used in this research was the adaptation of the turnover intention scale (Mobley, 1977). In this questionnaire, there are three items, and the response format is a five-point Likert scale. One of the items, for example, is "I'm thinking of quitting." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (α).81, which indicated that this measurement was reliable.

Organizational mobility preference

In this study, the Boundaryless Career Attitudes Scale developed by Briscoe and Hall (Briscoe et al., 2006). was used to measure both organizational mobility preferences and the boundaryless mindset, but only the items that measured organizational mobility preferences were used. One of the items, for example, is "I prefer to stay in a company I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere." There are five reversed-keyed items and it uses a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (α).76.

Affective commitment

This research used the Affective Commitment Scale, constructed by Meyer and Allen and reviewed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (Allen & Meyer., 2001). It is a multidimensional scale consisting of six items, three of which are reversed-keyed items. One of the items, for example, is "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." Participants were asked to respond to every item using a seven-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale was (α).81.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro, using model number four.

Results

The correlation analysis shows that organizational mobility preferences have a negative correlation with affective commitment ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$) and correlates positively with turnover intention ($r = .42$, $p < .01$). Additionally, affective commitment correlated negatively with turnover intention ($r = -0.56$, $p < .01$) (See Table 1).

Mediation analysis was used to examine the effect of organizational mobility preferences on turnover intention mediated by affective commitment. There were two paths: organizational mobility preferences directly affecting turnover intention (direct effect), and organizational mobility preferences affecting turnover intention through affective commitment (indirect effect). Findings indicate that organizational mobility preferences were a significant predictor of affective commitment ($b = -.640$, 95% BCa CI $[-.885, -.395]$). The results also indicated that affective commitment was a significant predictor of turnover intention ($b = -.231$, 95% BCa CI $[-.297, -.165]$), while the relation between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention through affective commitment was also found to be significant ($b = .15$, 95% BCa CI $[.086, .214]$). Moreover, the organizational mobility preferences had a direct effect on turnover intention ($b = .198$, 95% BCa CI $[.069, .324]$).

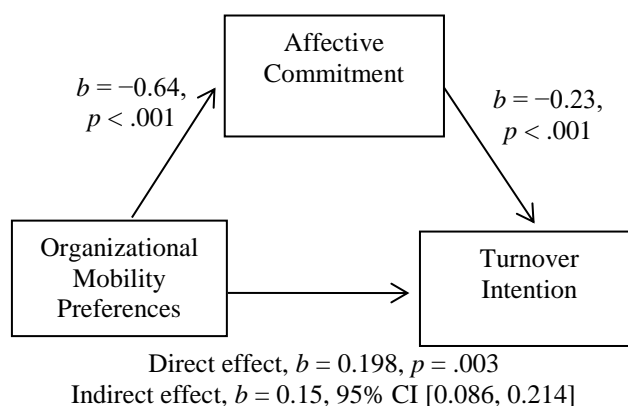


Fig. 2. Result Diagram

Table I. Correlation Matrix

Variables	M	SD	OMP	AC
Organizational mobility preferences (OMP)	16.36	3.75		
Affective commitment (AC)	27.79	6.28	-.38**	
Turnover intention (TOI)	10.09	3.11	.42**	-.56**

Table II. Model Coefficient of the Study

Antecedents	Consequent					
	AC			TOI		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
OMP	−.64	.12	<.001	.20	.06	.003
AC	—	—	—	−.23	.03	<.001
constant	38.27	2.00	<.001	12.28	1.77	<.001
R ² =.15			R ² =.36			
F (1, 176) = 26.6, p < .001			F (2, 175) = 55.6, p < .001			

a. — = Not Applicable

The results indicate that affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and affective commitment. Employees who had preferences to move from one organization to another did not have an emotional identification with their organization, in turn meaning they were more likely to leave the organization. Results also show that individuals who have organizational mobility preferences will likely have a turnover intention.

Discussion

This study aims to demonstrate how affective commitment impacts the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention. In regards to organizational mobility preferences, the research results found a positive and statistically significant relationship with turnover intention. The direct effect between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention means that an individual who prefers working across several employers will tend to discontinue their affiliation with their current company. The findings also show that there is a negative effect of organizational mobility preferences on affective commitment. Individuals willing to cross-organizational boundaries do not look forward to establishing affective bonds with their present company because they prefer physical mobility. Affective commitment was also found to have a negative effect on turnover intention. Individuals who establish affective bonds with their current organization will be less likely to terminate their membership in the company.

According to statistical analysis, there was an indirect effect of organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention through affective commitment. Given the definition of each variable, this finding is not surprising. Individuals with a predisposition for inter-organization movement will find it difficult to develop affective bonds to their present organization, in turn leading to quitting. This research can explain more about the psychological process behind the effect of organizational mobility preferences on turnover intention, which is partially mediated by affective commitment. Anttila (2014) suggested that affective commitment can act as the desire and can bridge the attitude (organizational mobility preferences) and behavior intention (turnover intention). Even so, because affective commitment only partially mediated the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention, there may be

other variables that can explain the dynamic between the two variables. As suggested by Chan and Dar (2014), perceived employability might also mediate the relationship between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intentions (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012). Future research should explore other mediator variables to explain better the relationship between them. Similar to previous research, this study also found a significant relationship between each variable. Research done by Çakmak-Otluoğlu (2012) also shows that organizational mobility preferences have a negative effect on affective commitment. Chan and Dar (2014) argue further that organizational mobility preferences represent an individual's tendency to move and being employed by multiple organizations that are likely to influence their intentions to quit. A lot of research has found that affective commitment affects turnover intention among employees (Steers, 1977; Anttila, 2014; Yin-Fah, Foon, Chee-Leong, & Osman, 2010; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). One of the possible reasons for the results is people who have organizational mobility preferences tend to choose working in various organizations and crossing the boundary of the current employer (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). An employee with a high affective commitment will be happy to devote their career to an organization (Solinger, Van Olffen, & Roe, 2008).

The study's findings can help organizations reduce organizational mobility preferences or promote the affective commitment of their employees. This can be done by constantly providing additional training or development program to boost employees' careers, and providing feedback about employees' performance to avert organizational mobility preferences (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012). Moreover, companies have to consider how to increase employees' affective commitment since the main result of this study shows that affective commitment could act as the mediator between organizational mobility preferences and turnover intention. Companies should establish fair and supportive human resource management practices, which include career development, benefits, training, and performance appraisals that will increase employees' affective commitment (Meyer & Smith, 2000).

Notwithstanding the fact that this study brings a broader perspective of the psychological process behind the effect of organizational mobility preferences on turnover intention, there are some research limitations. The study used self-report questionnaires completed through an online platform. This method can lead to social desirability bias and increase the chance of systematic measurement error because of type I and type II errors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Other measurement errors could include random components such as mood, time, and participants' place when filling the questionnaire. Future research should also try to use another collection method to reduce the social desirability bias.

Nevertheless, certain techniques to control common method biases were implemented as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), which maintain respondents' confidentiality and balance the question order. Participants were encouraged to respond to the questionnaire truthfully since there were no wrong answers to lessen the likelihood that they would give socially desirable responses. Counterbalancing question order was also used to control prediction effect that participants would have when reading the questions the first time, a question that might induce several moods states, and other biases corresponding to the question context.

Future research should increase the number of participants and broaden the characteristics sample to represent various industries better. This can help increase the generalization of the study.

Conclusion

The findings from the present research indicate that organizational mobility preference has a direct and indirect effect to turnover intention. The indirect effect is through affective commitment that explained the psychological process between organizational mobility preference and turnover intention. The results indicated that the indirect effect has a bigger coefficient than the direct effect. Thus, the effect of organizational mobility preferences on turnover intention is better predicted through the mediation of affective commitment. Therefore, employees that have preferences to move across different organizations will have less emotional identification to an organization. This lack of emotional identification with an organization makes them more likely to leave the company.

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