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PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL EFFECTIVENESS AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC STAFF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT TURNOVER INTENTION: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

DR. A KUMUDHA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
PSGR KRISHNAMMAL COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
COIMBATORE

J. BAMINI
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
PSGR KRISHNAMMAL COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
COIMBATORE

ABSTRACT

Performance appraisal is one of the major factors that often influence academic staff intention to stay. However, in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), there is a tendency to overlook this aspect. An employee's intention to stay or leave his employment may be dependent on the organization's commitment towards its performance appraisal obligations. Managers of academic institutions must appraise performance of their academic staff in such ways so that a positive perception is created which motivates them to stay. This paper seeks to examine the impact of perceived performance appraisal effectiveness on academic staff turnover intention. It examines whether organisational commitment plays an influential part in determining the intention to stay. This model could be used as a platform for HEIs management to focus on their efforts in retaining their academic staff through enhancing or enriching its performance appraisal practices.

KEYWORDS

academic staff, performance appraisal, turnover intention, organisational commitment.

INTRODUCTION

Turnover is defined as the 'individual movement across the membership boundary of an Organization' (Thwala et al., 2012). Unlike actual turnover, turnover intent is not explicit as intentions are a statement about a specific behaviour of interest (Berndt, 1981). Research has shown that turnover is one of the most studied phenomena in organizational behaviour (Price, 2001). The extensive nature of turnover studies indicates the significance and complexity of the subject. This phenomenon attracts the interest of researchers due to its psychological, economic dimension and its organizational significance. Thus it is important to understand that there are several factors inherent to counter staff intentions of turnover. One theory indicates that employees' decision to resign is influenced by two factors: their 'perceived ease of movement', which refers to the assessment of perceived alternatives or opportunity and 'perceived desirability of movement', which is influenced for instance by job satisfaction (Abdullah et al., 2012). At the same time, institutions should also be aware of whether or not the decision to leave could have been prevented by their own initiatives. It would be pragmatic to manage this turnover as unavoidable rather than spend on conceived preventive measures, such as increasing pay. The losses of staff thus can also be viewed as 'necessary causalities' (Morrell et al., 2004).

Attempt is made to develop propositions that highlight the role of perceived PA practices among academic staff in HEIs and its role in shaping their organisational commitment and consequently its impact on their turnover intentions. The mediation role played by organisational commitment between perceived PA practices and turnover intentions is also examined. Previously researchers have examined these elements independently but the focus primarily was on one or few of the system elements of the system and did not view the system as a whole. Current studies are more inclined toward organizational job-related and demographic variables rather than turnover intentions and they are not being used within the performance appraisal framework.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is important for HEIs to overcome the problem of staff turnover intention. With the availability and attraction of younger and better educated workforce, there is also a growing concern especially in the shift of employees' negotiations from the bargaining table to more legalized setups as individuals attempt to define rights, obligations and responsibilities. Also, today's individuals are not 'detached' from this family concern and responsibility and therefore the days of an individual working for a single organization throughout his career have become rare if not extinct. Besides having a balance work and family life, they seek better career prospect and pay for themselves and their family (Ron, 1989). People are seeking many ways of live that is meaningful and less complicated and this new lifestyle actually has an impact on how an employee must be managed and motivated. HR practices have become so complex now, in contrast to the much less complicated scenario in the past when employees were primarily concerned with economical survival (Myron, 1993; Brian, 1994).

Performance dimensions for assessing the academic staff level of performance

The performance dimensions in general and the seven performance dimensions for assessing the level of performance of academic staff as posited by Robbins et al. (2007) are explained here. Performance dimensions describe the behaviour or result that staff are expected to exhibit when they are successfully performing their duties. This perspective assists HRM practitioners in the development of performance plans and is generally categorized into three types, namely universal dimensions (included in all performance plans); job content dimensions (which vary from job to job) and other performance dimensions (Anon, 2006). We will focus on universal dimensions including the seven performance dimensions for lecturers' job as suggested by the Robbins et al. (2007), namely: 1) knowledge; 2) Assessment procedures; 3) student-teacher relations; 4) organizational skills; 5) communication skills; 6) subject relevance and; 7) utility of assignments.

Performance Management

The success or failure of performance management programs of any organization depends on the philosophy that it is connected to the HEIs goals and the attitudes and skills of those responsible for its implementation. There are many methods available to gather information of an employee performance in the appraisal process. This information must be used for organizational needs and communicated to employees so that it will result in a high level performance (Chris, 1996; Abdullah et al., 2012; Thwala et al., 2012). Performance management can focus on the performance of an organization, a department, employee, or even the processes to build a product or service, as well as many other areas. It is acknowledged that a lack of performance appraisal can have adverse effect on employees' motivation and contribute to employees' turnover intentions (Laura, 1996).

Perceived effectiveness of performance appraisal

The latest components added to the performance appraisal systems have tended to move away from being primarily control and maintenance based towards an approach that is more concerned with motivational and developmental issues (Dutra, et. al, 2001). The introduction of development activities and training based on performance appraisal results is a welcome change. Hence, a favorable PA would positively affect employee attitudes, behaviors and organizational efficiency. Higher employee performance and productivity attainment is derived through the PA capability in reflecting, measuring and evaluating an individual

employee's behavior (DeVries *et al.*, 1981), collaboration, teamwork, knowledge reuse, and knowledge sharing competencies and accomplishments over a specific period of time. These positive outcomes are a function of the employees' perception on the overall PA effectiveness (Benson *et al.*, 2010). Past research has also placed large importance on the six PA components as the source of perceived PA effectiveness variation among these critical organizational stakeholders.

Organizational Commitment

Organisational commitment was first by Steers (1977) as an employee attitude and composed of a set of behavioral intentions; the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979; 1982) further refined that organizational commitment can be characterized by three factors: (a) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to remain in the organization. The researchers have also defined organizational commitment as the strength of an individual's identification with the goals of an organization's multiple constituencies and it is about positive involvement, which is integral to developing shared goals and objectives in a particular organization. Therefore organizational commitment can be considered to be affective responses or attitudes which links or attaches an employee to the organization and motivates them to work towards the accomplishment of organisational goals.

Fairness of Performance Appraisal and Organizational Commitment

The processes used in evaluating the performance of employees is one of the most important determinants of organizational justice (Greenberg, 1986; Folger *et al.*, 1992). Researchers argue about the category of fairness, but there is a general consensus that organizational justice consists of at least two components, namely distributive and procedural justice (Arif *et al.*, 2011). Procedural justice is the perception of workers indicating that procedures used to evaluate their performance is fair while distributive justice indicates that performance or rewards received from the use of these procedures is fair (Greenberg, 1990; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Other researches indicate that fair practices in human resource management, specifically in terms of performance appraisal plays a predictive role in determining the employee attitudes which include organizational commitment (Jehad *et al.*, 2011). Performance appraisal is viewed as an important tool for changing employees' attitude and behaviors such as affective commitment (Morrow, 2011). Moreover, a study by Tam (1996) shows that the federal government agencies that implement a fair and transparent assessment can expect a higher level of organisational commitment from its employees.

Turnover intentions and behavior

Turnover intention and turnover behavior influences the employees decision to stay or quit (Sager, Griffeth & Hom, 1998, p. 255). Turnover behaviour is a multistage process and includes basic components like attitudes, behavior and decisions. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that behavioural intention is a good predictor of actual behaviour. Studies have successfully demonstrated that behavioural turnover intentions are consistently seen with moderate to strong correlations with turnover, substantiating the notion of Ajzen (1991). There is considerable support for the notion that intention to quit-stay is probably the most important and immediate individual-level antecedent and predictor of turnover decisions. Mobley (1977) has suggested that there are several other possible turnover cognition types of interest to add in the withdrawal decision (the decision to quit a job), highlighting notions such as thinking of leaving the current job, followed by the intention to search for alternatives. Many studies have been based on the belief that turnover is an individual choice behavioural pattern based on the conceptualisation that it is a psychological response (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979; Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid & Sirola, 1998).

DEVELOPING PROPOSITIONS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL, ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER INTENTION

PA and intention to quit

Intention to withdraw or quit an organization simply refers to an employee's perceived probability of staying or leaving an employing organization. The turnover intention concept has appeared in literatures as the most immediate predictor to eventual turnover (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Allen *et al.*, 2003). This is particularly true because it highlights the various elements of behavior and the motivation to leave that covers many unavoidable reasons for actual turnover. For organizations employee turnover is costly (Booth, 1997; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001) and maybe difficult to quantify when unique knowledge assets are lost and the costs do not stop here. Each time an employee leaves the HEI, we believe that productivity drops acknowledging the fact that there is a learning curve involved in understanding the job and the principles of the organization. Additionally, research proves that, after losing key employees, organizations experienced damage to a main customer relationship, had lost best practices information and lost significant income (Warren, 1999).

Turnover intention has brought about the importance of perceived PA effectiveness. The relationship between perceived PA effectiveness and turnover intention is the most researched subject in the field of management research. The most common objectives of PA among all organizations is to retain the topmost performing employees. This is true even with the academic institutions. Hence, the intensity of PA perception is fundamental in encouraging an employee to stay with the organisation (Smith and Rupp, 2002). An employee with a low intensity of perceived PA effectiveness could oppose the best interest of other employees. The employee will feel that his or her contributions are not effectively appraised or recognized, thus will put forward a negative organizational attitude. As a consequence, the employee willingness to be in employment will weaken. Hence, we make the following proposition:

Proposition 1 (P₁): Academic staff with lower the level of PA effectiveness will have higher levels of turnover intention compared to those who experience higher levels of perceived PA effectiveness.

PA, organisation commitment and intention to quit

Since the 1960's organizational commitment is an exciting topic for managers and researchers 'Organizational Commitment is a psychological link between an employee and his of her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization'. (Allen & Meyer, 1996). 'Organizational commitment is increasingly valued as a predictor of work behaviours and behavioral intentions' (Jaros *et al.* 1993). Performance appraisal may be seen as a viable organizational tool that may be use to motivate, direct and develop subordinates thereby increasing the organisational commitment. According to Smith and Rupp (2004), performance-based rewards and understanding work-effects linkage would successfully engage academicians. Academic staff enjoy the most positive work environment on all measures, which include perceptions of appraisal effectiveness. High intensity of perceived PA effectiveness should result in extrinsic rewards such as higher salaries (Day and Allen, 2004) or advancement (Jones and Whitmore, 1995), along with intrinsic rewards such as self-satisfaction (Bandura, 1986; Locke and Latham, 1990b; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1993). These rewards and recognition motivates academic staff to direct their energies in directions appropriate to their careers. With higher levels of organisational commitment, individuals may make significant investments in their careers to pursue their high career goals, regardless of the setbacks (Colarelli and Bishop, 1990; Aryee and Tan, 1992).

On the other hand, for employees with low intensity of perceived PA effectiveness the appraisal role is merely a powerful means of managerial control (Edmonstone, 1996, Weise *et al.*, 1998). The performance appraisal systems which tend not to incorporate employees personal aspirations with their future development have been cited by several authors (Long, 1986; Segall, 1989; Randell, 1994; Wilson and Western, 2000; Seddon 2001; Freeman, 2002;). Organizational and their professional values and goals are evidenced to be dissimilar (Lee *et al.*, 2000). Owing to the differing or conflicting needs of stakeholders, the appraisal process itself becomes a source of expectations of staff being unmet (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). Considering that perceptions of the appraisal effectiveness may contradict academic staff' beliefs about their contributions, management would expect them to exhibit lower levels of organisational commitment. Academic staff who feel their contribution is not effectively appraised and recognized have no interest to prolong their tenure and will eventually consider leaving the organization. We expect that perceived PA effectiveness has a positive impact on organisational commitment that will negatively affect turnover intention. Therefore the following propositions are made:

Proposition 2 (P₂): Low intensity of perceived PA effectiveness will tend to be associated with lower levels of organisational commitment relative to those with high intensity of perceived PA effectiveness.

Proposition 3 (P₃): Employee turnover intention level will be higher or lower as an outcome of P₁ & P₂.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEPICTING THE INDIRECT (THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT COMPONENTS) ASSOCIATIONS OF PA AND TURNOVER INTENTION



CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Generally, there have been a tremendous number of written literatures on performance appraisal, organisational commitment and turnover intention. Literature shows that the institutional environment plays a major role in the adoption of performance appraisal systems in higher education institutions. These pressures work mainly at the level of the head of department and extend up to the role of the dean. Heads of department play a major role in the implementation of performance appraisal systems, while the heads of institutions are responsible for the integration of HR practices and performance appraisal measures.

Our study takes into account the complete framework of PA, rather than each one of its components, while and tries to integrate it into organisational commitment as a detrimental component in influencing turnover intention. Evidences in the past have suggested that the intensity of perceived PA effectiveness will affect academic staff's general level of organisational commitment through expected extrinsic and intrinsic organizational rewards. Academic staffs with high intensity of perceived PA appraisal are therefore highly committed to their organisation. Improving PA practices to enhance organisational commitment should be an important objective for those responsible for reducing turnover intention. Hence, organizations should give more consideration as to how effectively performance appraisals are, and recognize their academic staff's contribution to the institutions.

Indirectly, the model also throws light on the challenges faced by organization to maintain continuous and rigorous human resource practices in managing academic staff. Hence, the organizational values, norms, culture and beliefs towards these concerns, expectations and perceptions should match the expectations of academic staff. This will then determine their turnover intention. It is therefore crucial to recognize that the ultimate success of the HEIs is dependent upon the attitudes and behavior of staff. This calls for implementing effective PA systems. Although this study makes progress to increase understanding of how perceived PA effectiveness affect directly and interactively turnover intention, future work should include other aspects like moderation effects of psychological contract and organization benefits in organisational-related research. The propositions in this study can form the starting point for developing empirical research work for further understanding of the issues. It would be a significant contribution to the field of human resource management literatures.

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