



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Leadership Quarterly

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua

The influence of higher order cognitive capacities on leader organizational continuance and retention: The mediating role of developmental experiences[☆]

Stephen J. Zaccaro^{a,*}, Shane Connelly^b, Kristin M. Repchick^a, Andreina I. Daza^a, Mark C. Young^c, Robert N. Kilcullen^c, Veronica L. Gilrane^a, Jordan M. Robbins^a, Lindsey N. Bartholomew^a

^a Consortium of Universities in the Washington DC Area and George Mason University, United States

^b University of Oklahoma, United States

^c U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 19 February 2015

Available online xxxx

Editor: M. Mumford

Keywords:

Leader retention

Leader turnover

Problem solving skills

Developmental experiences

ABSTRACT

The relationship between cognitive capacities and retention or turnover has received scant attention in the extant literature. The few findings that have been reported show mixed to no linear effects of general mental ability on organizational continuance. In this study, we examined the association of more specific higher order cognitive capacities including complex problem solving skills and divergent thinking with officer continuance in the U.S. Army. We also tested the role of developmental experiences as a partial mediator of this relationship. Our sample included 640 officers who completed measures of these skills and of their career experiences in 1992–1993. To this sample, we added years of service from date of commissioning to 2008, as well as data on whether officers experienced particular assignments considered to be challenging and developmental. Our findings support the association of complex problem solving and divergent thinking skills with leader continuance. We also found that this effect is partially mediated by challenging developmental experiences. Thus, we provide stronger evidence than in prior studies for a linear relationship between cognitive abilities and continuance in an organization.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The retention of leaders and executives is a high priority for most organizations. Significant amounts of training and development dollars are devoted to the growth and development of these individuals, especially as they rise through organizational levels (Lamoureux, 2012). Yet the turnover rates for leaders and executives are high (Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011); research

[☆] Stephen J. Zaccaro, a professor of Psychology at George Mason University, and Shane Connelly, a professor of Psychology at the University of Oklahoma completed this research as Senior Fellows with the Consortium of Universities in Washington DC. Kristin M. Repchick, Andreina I. Daza, Veronica L. Gilrane, Jordan M. Robbins and Lindsey N. Bartholomew, as psychology graduate students at George Mason University completed this research as Junior Fellows with the Consortium of Universities. This research was conducted under contracts W5J9CQ-11-C-0040 and W5J9CQ-13-C-0004 for the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI). The views, opinions, and findings contained in this article are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as an official U.S. Department of the Army or U.S. Department of Defense position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other documentation. Portions of this paper appeared in an ARI technical report and were also presented at the 121st annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, 2013. The authors wish to thank Winnie Young and Michael Ingerick for their work in constructing and documenting the very large and complex database used in this research. This is a work of the U.S. Government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The U.S. Government retains the right of non-exclusive, royalty-free use of this work for Government purposes.

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, MSN 3F5, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030, United States.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.03.007>

1048-9843/© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article as: Zaccaro, S.J., et al., The influence of higher order cognitive capacities on leader organizational continuance and retention: The mediating role of devel..., *The Leadership Quarterly* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.03.007>

has shown that failure rates among executives about 18 months in position can be as high as 40% (Crowley, 2004). A recent posting on Bloomberg.com indicated that “U.S. corporations are switching chief executive officers at the fastest pace in five years” (Green & Hymowitz, 2013). Such turnover represents a significant loss of investment, particularly in military organizations.

Most military organizations, such as the U.S. Army, invest considerable financial and human resources in training an officer before and after he/she is commissioned. In addition, such organizations rely on a closed personnel system where external recruits enter into junior level leadership positions, and thereafter only internal candidates are considered for further promotion into higher leadership positions (although some direct commissioning of individuals into higher ranks may occur if they have certain training, such as medical degrees). Moreover, after completing their initial active duty service obligation, officers typically make a formal decision either to continue to serve, or to leave the Army. Likewise, later in their careers, as chances for promotion narrow, they may consider leaving if they do not perceive strong promotion prospects or opportunities to attain more challenging leadership positions. Accordingly, excessive leader/executive separation rates can lead to a significant loss in leadership investment with an attendant decrease in overall productivity and military readiness (Gencer, 2002).

Indeed, a recent meta-analysis reported an overall significant negative association between turnover rates and subsequent organizational performance, with the relationship worsening when examining only voluntary turnover (Park & Shaw, 2013). Another recent meta-analysis found significant negative associations between collective turnover rates and lower customer satisfaction and performance efficiency, as well as positive associations with counterproductive work behaviors and error rates (Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausnecht, 2013). Accordingly, understanding the factors that contribute to career-long continuation and advancement of leaders and executives remains a significant concern for most organizations, and particularly for those that rely mostly on closed personnel systems.

In the present study, we examine the relationship between higher-order cognitive capacities such as complex problem solving skills and divergent thinking and military officers' tendencies to remain in the Army for longer periods of time. We argue that such capacities will increase the likelihood that officers will perceive a personal match with stronger cognitive job demands at higher leadership levels (Wilk, Desmarais, & Sackett, 1995), and therefore would be more inclined to continue their military service. We also suggest that the relationship between higher-order cognitive capacities and continuance will be partially mediated by the quality of a leader's developmental experiences. Such experiences increase the likelihood of being promoted into higher level leadership positions. They also facilitate the chances of success in those positions, raising even further the probability of future advancement.

Research on the causes and drivers of leader turnover has been relatively scant, at least in comparison with the volume of studies devoted to the more general issue of employee turnover (Gordon, 2010; Knudsen, Ducharme, & Roman, 2009; Lambrou, 2002). The voluminous Handbook of Leadership (Bass, 2008) contained only two pages on the theme of executive turnover, with the primary focus on the effects of executive succession; little or no research is cited regarding the antecedents of such turnover. A recent review of the turnover literature mentions only three studies that used managers or executives as a sample, and cited the need for more consideration of job level in turnover research (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). Meta-analyses of employee turnover have not generally examined organizational rank as a sample characteristic (Heavey et al., 2013; Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012; Van Iddekinge, Roth, Putka, & Lanivich, 2011); if they do, they either report a small number of studies using managers/executives, few differences across levels (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000), or do not examine antecedents of such turnover (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013).

The few studies that have explored leader and executive turnover generally focused on contextual dynamics and drivers. Contextual factors that have been associated with turnover include pay differentials and other characteristics of executive pay (e.g., Bloom & Michel, 2002; Dunford, Boudreau, & Boswell, 2005), supervisory and organizational support (e.g., Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007); and organizational/job stressors (e.g., Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005; Knudsen et al., 2009; Lee & Ashforth, 1993, 1996).

While contextual factors matter greatly in employee and leader turnover, significant variance in retention and turnover can also be attributed to a range of individual differences (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Mount, Witt, & Barrick, 2000). A focus on individual characteristics as drivers of turnover is helpful in two ways, especially in organizations with relatively closed personnel systems, where only internal candidates are promoted to higher organizational ranks. First, significant validity coefficients between individual differences and subsequent retention or turnover can help inform selection systems for entry into organizations and systems for the subsequent identification of high potential executives (e.g., Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005). Second, individual differences that can be linked to turnover and that are relatively malleable, such as particular cognitive and social skills, may then be specifically targeted in leader training, development, and succession programs. Thus, a focus on the relationship between individual differences and turnover outcomes can provide organizations with valuable tools to facilitate leader and executive retention.

A few reviews and meta-analyses have noted the role of personality as a predictor of employee turnover. For example, Porter and Steers (1973) reported that emotional instability and a strong achievement orientation were associated with turnover. A more recent review described several studies showing personality variables, such as self-confidence, conscientiousness, negative affectivity, self-monitoring, and risk aversion as being associated with either retention or turnover (Holtom et al., 2008). In a military sample, Capon, Chernyshenko, and Stark (2007) found that attributes related to core self-evaluations (e.g., self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism) influenced intentions to reenlist through the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction. Bauer et al. (2006) found that extraversion moderated the effects on one contextual variable, the quality of relationships between leader and subordinate (i.e., leader–member exchange, or LMX) on both turnover intentions and actual turnover in a sample of new executives.

Intelligence and cognitive abilities have received relatively less attention than personality in the turnover literature (Maltarich, Nyberg, & Reilly, 2010). This lack of research is surprising given consistently significant validity coefficients between intelligence

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10439486>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10439486>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)