



Research paper

Does turnover intention mediate the effects of job insecurity and co-worker support on social loafing?

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationships between job insecurity, co-worker support, social loafing and turnover intention, specifically the mediating effect of turnover intention in the relationship between job insecurity, co-worker support and social loafing. It uses social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity theory to look investigate turnover intention. Data were collected from a questionnaire distributed to 222 restaurant employees in Mersin, Turkey. Structural equation modelling was used to test the research hypotheses. While the mediating effect of turnover intention in both the relationship between co-worker support and social loafing and between affective job insecurity and social loafing is fully supported, the mediating effect of turnover intention in the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and social loafing is only partially supported. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

Individuals feel content when they see that they are being supported by others in every step of their lives (Giray and Şahin, 2012). Likewise, according to the social exchange theory (SET), employees' perceptions that they are supported by their co-workers or managers may lead them to display positive behaviours within the organisation. The theory assumes that favours that create diffuse future obligations rather than precisely defined ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it (Blau, 1964). Such social relations contribute to the productivity, welfare and job satisfaction of employees (Hodson, 1997), which can help improve organizational performance and reduce employee stress (Babin and Boles, 1996; Joiner, 2007). Similarly, co-worker support also reduces employee disengagement behaviours or turnover intentions (Karatepe, 2012).

De Witte (1999) defines job insecurity as employees' fear of losing their jobs and becoming unemployed. This affects employee behaviours because job insecurity is a source of stress that damages employees' psychological and physical health (Ashford et al., 1989) and reduces employee motivation (Dereeli, 2012). Greenhalgh and Roseblatt (1984) argue that employees who experience a sense of job insecurity may display less effort to achieve organizational goals because employees who feel job insecurity may be less willing to spend time and energy on work. These factors, which affect the motivation and behaviour of

employees in the face of job insecurity, cause them to display negative attitudes and behaviours such as disengagement with work or increased turnover intention (Ünsar, 2011).

The turnover intention resulting from lack of co-worker support or job insecurity leads to a decline in employee performance (Gül et al., 2008; Zincirkıran et al., 2015). Due to the positive relationship between motivation and performance (Abdulsalam and Mawoli, 2012), a decrease in employee performance may indicate decreased motivation, leading to negative employee occupational behaviour. Social loafing, which Karau and Williams (1993) define as the tendency for individuals to expend less effort when working collectively than when working individually, is a negative employee behaviour (Luo et al., 2013; Akgündüz et al., 2014), and is particularly displayed by individuals with lower motivation (Brickner et al., 1986). Hence, turnover intention can predict employees' social loafing behaviours in the absence of co-worker support and when there is job insecurity. This prediction is the focus of this study, which aims to identify the mediating role of turnover intention in the effect of co-worker support and job insecurity on social loafing. The first part of this paper presents the concepts of co-worker support, job insecurity, turnover intention and social loafing. It then introduces the hypotheses are presented, followed by an explanation of the data collection tools and structural equation model. After presenting the results, the conclusion compares these findings with the literature and proposes some suggestions for practitioners.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Co-worker support

Beehr and McGrath (1992) define co-worker social support as co-workers' willingness to help one another (e.g. being caring, friendly, warm, empathetic, cooperative, not back biting or gossiping, appreciative, respectful and supportive) in performing daily tasks and handling upsetting workplace situations (Ibrahim, 2014). For Arora and Kamalanabhan (2010), co-worker support is expressed as a measure of belief in the willingness of colleagues to help carry out workplace duties. Co-worker support provides an opportunity for employees to share specialist knowledge as well as support and encouragement (Zhou and George, 2001). Hodson (1997) argues that workplace social relations can contribute to employee welfare, productivity and job satisfaction. In businesses where co-worker support is high, employees express their ideas more freely and honestly (Bateman, 2009).

Co-worker support can have both positive and negative effects on employees. The behaviours of co-workers towards each other can also be seen in terms of self-promotion or political behaviour (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992), which means that co-worker support may not always be related to the structure of work attitudes (Ibrahim, 2014). When support from a co-worker is accepted, the person accepting the support may think of it as implying incompetence (Bateman, 2009). As Ng and Sorensen (2008) argue, negative opinions about co-worker support may arise from such perceptions in that, for those who hold equal positions, co-worker support can make the supported employee feel that they lack independence or talent. Thus, it cannot be assumed that workplace support inevitably has only positive effects in the workplace (Ibrahim, 2014).

2.2. Cognitive and affective job insecurity

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) were the first to propose the concept of job insecurity (Pienaar et al., 2013), which they defined as the perceived weakness of the worker's willingness to work if their job's permanence is threatened (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). According to Hartley et al. (1991), job insecurity is a mismatch between the level of assurance based on an employee's experience and their preferred level of assurance (Rosenblatt and Ruvio, 1996). De Witte (1999) refers to job insecurity as employees' fear of losing their jobs and becoming unemployed. Job insecurity can negatively affect an employee's psychological and physiological health while also being seen as a source of stress (Ashford et al., 1989; Pienaar et al., 2013). This causes the employee to display negative reactions towards the job (Dereli, 2012).

There are different approaches to defining job insecurity that distinguish between (1) objective and subjective job insecurity; (2) cognitive and affective job insecurity and (3) qualitative and quantitative job insecurity (Pienaar et al., 2013). The present study focuses on the cognitive and affective approach to job insecurity.

Borg and Elizur (1992) described job insecurity as cognitive job insecurity (job loss) and affective job insecurity (job loss fear) (Rosenblatt and Ruvio, 1996). While cognitive job insecurity refers to the cognitive element of the employee's perceived probability of losing the job, affective job insecurity reflects emotionality as the fear of job loss (Çetin, 2015). In other words, cognitive job insecurity refers to the benefit or probable awareness of job loss whereas affective job insecurity expresses an emotional experience of being anxious or nervous about potential job loss (Huang et al., 2012). Thus, cognitive job insecurity reflects whether the employee considers the insecurity about losing the job; affective job insecurity expresses the employee's fears about possible job loss and its effects (Pienaar et al., 2013).

2.3. Turnover intention

Turnover intention is expressed as employee's awareness or thoughts about quitting the job (Çelik and Çıra, 2013) while Tett and Meyer (1993) define turnover intention as the employee's conscious and deliberate desire to leave the organisation in which they work. This can be measured by an employee's desire to leave work and deliberate search for new jobs (Avcı and Küçükusta, 2009).

Various studies have shown that many factors affect employees' turnover intentions (Avcı and Küçükusta, 2009; Çarıkçı and Çelikkol, 2009), including organisational support (Hui et al., 2007), organizational citizenship behaviour (Bellou, 2008), organizational justice (Choi, 2011), organizational commitment and emotional exhaustion (Boyas et al., 2012). Cotton and Tuttle (1986) classified the factors affecting turnover intention into three groups. These include environmental factors, such as national and sectoral unemployment rates in, job perceptions and the union presence, and the labour force participation rate of new candidates; job-related factors, such as wages, job performance, role clarity, job repetition, general job satisfaction, wage satisfaction, promotion opportunities and organizational commitment; and personal characteristics, such as age, experience, gender, educational level, marital status, number of dependents, abilities, intelligence and behavioural tendencies (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986).

An employee's turnover intention can cause a significant loss if the enterprise does not identify and take measures to prevent it being realised (Şahin, 2011). A high labour turnover rate, that is, an increased frequency of employees' quitting their jobs, can increase financial losses and have other negative effects (Demir and Tütüncü, 2010). The financial losses include costs of hiring and training new employees and delays in serving customers (Baysal, 1984; Bannister and Griffith, 1986). At the same time, an employee's turnover intention and its transformation into action can also interrupt or disturb social interaction and communication between other employees (Şahin, 2011).

There are very few studies of the turnover intentions of restaurant employees. Kumar et al. (2012) investigated organizational culture, organizational commitment and the compatibility between the employee and organisation in Malaysian fast food restaurants. Nasyira et al. (2014) found that perceived organisation support and commitment decreases the turnover intentions of employees working in casual dining restaurants in Malaysia. Han et al. (2016) found that organizational and supervisor support decreases the turnover intentions of restaurant employees in the United States whereas customer rudeness and burnout syndrome increases it. Jang and Kandampully (2017) found that positive leadership attitudes and emotional organizational commitment in United States' restaurants reduce employees' turnover intentions. Finally, DiPietro and McLeod (2012) showed that turnover intentions at a casual dining restaurant chain in southeastern America are higher for part-time than full-time employees while autonomy, emotional organizational commitment and perceived managerial support reduced turnover intention.

2.4. Social loafing

Social loafing is defined as a reduction in the amount of effort and motivation of individuals when working collectively compared to working individually (Karau and Williams, 1993). The term was first used by Latane et al. (1979) to refer to a phenomenon that occurs when the individual underperforms while working in a group, as a social illness, based on the difficulties it creates (Latané et al., 1979). They argued that social loafing emerges as a consequence of reduced conscious and unconscious social awareness (Liden et al., 2004).

Social loafing can lead to several problems affecting an organisation's success (Luo et al., 2013) such less effort, lower productivity and reduced group commitment (Mulvey and Klein, 1998). Social loafing is also said to be dangerous regarding the continuity of the work environment because it can harm the organisation's climate in the long

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