

# Place attachment, intent to relocate and intent to quit: The moderating role of occupational commitment

Qingxiong (Derek) Weng<sup>a,\*</sup>, Song Wu<sup>a</sup>, James C. McElroy<sup>b</sup>, Limin Chen<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Science and Technology of China, China

<sup>b</sup> Iowa State University, United States of America

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Place attachment  
Intent to relocate  
Intent to quit  
Occupational commitment

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the influence of place attachment on intent to quit via intent to relocate and the moderating effect of occupational commitment. Findings from both cross-sectional ( $N = 4629$ ) and two-wave ( $N = 110$ ) data indicate that (1) place attachment is negatively associated with intent to relocate and intent to quit; (2) intent to relocate partially mediates the relationship between place attachment and intent to quit; and (3) occupational commitment moderates the relationship between intent to relocate and intent to quit and the strength of the indirect effect of place attachment on intent to quit via intent to relocate. Results underscore the importance of accounting for employees' emotional bonds with places when understanding and predicting employee turnover. Implications and directions for future research are also discussed.

## 1. Introduction

Employees have evolved from maintaining a long-term relationship in a single organization to experiencing multiple career changes throughout their working lives (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). Cross-regional job mobility, in particular, has become increasingly frequent (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). In China, for example, the economic disparity between coastal cities and interior cities motivates a large number of migrants to relocate from the interior cities to the metropolitan coastal cities for jobs (Chen & Coulson, 2002). This phenomenon also occurs in the US (see *Compdata Surveys' national survey*, 2015). The discrepancies in geographical turnover behavior suggest the importance of the people-place relationship in retaining talent in today's labor market.

According to Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001), one of the most important approaches to studying the relationship between people and place is through the emotional bonding between individuals and where they live. Place attachment refers to the bonds and connections that people develop with places (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003). Individuals who are highly mobile are said to experience little or no place attachment and vice versa (Gustafson, 2001). However, scholars have rarely considered the impact of the people-place relationship in turnover studies, and thus may be missing a potentially crucial driver of this phenomenon.

Research from related fields also suggests the utility of examining the role of place attachment on intent to quit. Kirschenbaum and Weisberg (2002), for example, noted the importance and benefit of incorporating destination choices into the study of careers and employee turnover, while Eby, Burk, and Maher (2010) found that the most common specific personal reason for turnover was relocation. Consequently, in this study we investigate how place attachment influences intent to quit. By doing so, we contribute to the turnover literature by introducing place attachment as a predictor of employees' intent to quit.

The second purpose of this study is to elucidate the mechanism through which employee place attachment affects intent to quit.

\* Corresponding author at: School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, China.

E-mail address: [wqx886@ustc.edu.cn](mailto:wqx886@ustc.edu.cn) (Q.D. Weng).

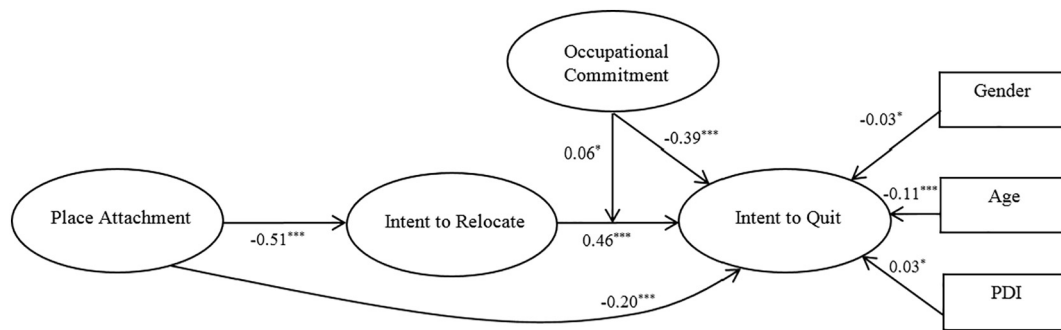


Fig. 1. Standardized path estimates of the final model.

Note: PDI = per-capita disposable income. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The relationships between position, education, marital status, GDPR and intent to quit were not significant, and thus were not shown for the sake of parsimony.

We theorize that place attachment is related to intent to relocate by drawing on the literatures demonstrating relationships between work commitment and intent to quit and between place attachment and behavioral loyalty to a place (Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2005; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003). Further, research on work-family interface and consumer behavior (e.g., Ilies, Wilson, & Wagner, 2009; Simonin & Ruth, 1998) suggests that states (e.g., emotion and attitude) can be transferred from one domain to another – a process they named a spillover effect. In view of this, we assume that intent to relocate can be transmitted onto intent to quit because it is difficult for someone to move to another city without quitting their current job. This assertion is consistent with the results of Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996) showing that relocation can cause employee's turnover behavior. Accordingly, we extend current thinking on place attachment by proposing that the low place attachment leads to high intent to relocate and high intent to relocate in turn leads to high intent to quit.

Third, the current study also identifies occupational commitment as a mechanism that strengthens the relationship between intent to relocate and intent to quit, as well as the indirect effect of place attachment on intent to quit. Individuals who are highly committed to their occupations show lower intentions to withdraw from their occupations and jobs (e.g., Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Weng & McElroy, 2012). Consistent with the literature on the boundaryless career, we argue that individuals high in occupational commitment will be more open to new career opportunities outside their current location. Thus, we propose that for employees with high occupational commitment, intent to relocate can be more easily transmitted onto intent to quit, which also adds to the occupational commitment literature.

Our theoretical model is presented in Fig. 1. We test our model with data from two samples: a large cross-sectional sample ( $N = 4629$ ) and second, smaller, sample using longitudinal data gathered over two waves ( $N = 110$ ).

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

### 2.1. Place attachment

#### 2.1.1. The concept of place attachment

Growing interest of scholars in place attachment has resulted in a variety of definitions of place attachment. For example, some scholars (e.g., Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974) argue that place attachment is a universal affective tie that fulfills fundamental human needs, while others suggest attachment to place is the intensity of longing for places that are lost (Deutsch, 2005). Currently, there is a certain consensus that place attachment refers to the subjective connection or bonding between an individual and a particular place (Manzo, 2003; Pretty et al., 2003).

The focus of place attachment can be conceptualized in variety of ways. The most common target of place attachment research has been one's neighborhood, followed by one's home, city and, much less often, national regions and continents (Lewicka, 2011). In general, all authors explicitly or implicitly recognize that people can develop feelings of attachment toward places ranging from small places such as a house to larger places like a city or a nation (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

In the current study, we define place in terms of one's city. Using a more microscopic definition (e.g., neighborhood or home) would mean that people could choose a new neighborhood or home in the same city when they have low attachment to those places rather than leaving the organization in which they work and relocating geographically. Therefore, individual attachment to one's city is the most microscopic level to define place when studying intent to relocate and intent to quit.

#### 2.1.2. Affective dimension of place attachment

Place attachment includes three components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral intentions (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Previous studies (e.g., Eisenhauer, Krannich, & Blahna, 2000; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004) have confirmed the salience of the affective component in both the conceptualization and measurement of place attachment. Because of this, in this study we operationalize place attachment as an individual's affective attachment to the city in which they live. This is similar to other forms of attachment, such as Meyer, Allen, and Gellatly's (1990) affective organizational commitment.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7247095>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7247095>

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