



Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intentions: Impact of Employee's Training in Private Sector of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate impacts of training on organizational commitment and turnover intentions in private sector of Saudi Arabia. The study seeks to focus on the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions of the employees. **Design/methodology** – A literature review on employee organizational commitment and employee turnover provides the basis for the research model and hypotheses. A self administered questionnaire survey, involving 251 respondents from leading private organizations of Saudi Arabia was used to gather data and test existing theory. **Findings** – The results provided strong support for the hypothesized negative relationship between organizational commitment and employee turnover intention. Employees training are significantly connected with organizational commitment, turnover intentions and the commitment-turnover relationship. **Research limitations** – The sample was limited to private organization in Saudi Arabia. It may not be appropriate to generalize the findings across other populations or settings. However, the sample can be viewed as a representative case typical of many other organizations in the same industry. **Practical implications** – The results provide insight into the impact of organizational commitment on turnover intentions in the specific Saudi private sector, which might be beneficial for managers and policy makers in the concern organizations, and other organizations generally operating in the same sector. **Originality/value** – The paper studies problems that describe the private sector of Saudi Arabia.

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Keywords – Organizational Commitment, Employees turnover, Private Sector, Saudi Arabia.

1.0 Background

In the 1970s, training and development efforts were focused on young employees that appear to have high potential. It was a suggestion for the companies to plan for the future and train young employees for senior management positions (Moses, 1999). The given career path model robust very well with the conventional commitment which employees would offer to their organization. This commitment can be defined as a “psychological contract” in which employers are mostly assured long term loyalty and commitment to the organization in return for giving employees job security, opportunities for promotion, and training (Feldman, 2000). The capability to get on this quickly to the top of a organization diminished in the 1980s when organizations were trying to moving a flat hierarchy with fewer room for promotions. In the 1950s quite a few organizations followed the same path. During the 1950s General Electric developed Crotonville Management Development Institute (Gerbman, 2000). Therefore, training should be designed in a way that achieved organizational commitment (Lang, 1992). Effective

commitment can be defined as an optimistic desire to perform in a certain way (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

In start of 1960, MacDonald also pursued this trend and start Hamburger University for the training of the employees. Today most of the organizations emphasized on the training of their employees. Training is defined as organizational program by which employee learn knowledge and skills for a specific purpose (Beach, 1965). Moreover, benefits of employees from training included career advancement, job security, pride, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Geale, 1995). Training has been described as the practice of organization that can be prescribed to draw a desired set of employees' attitudes and behaviors, such as organizational commitment (Sparrow, 1998). Regardless of the incredible availability of various training programs which concern, regarding the contribution of training to specific outcomes such as employee commitment. Employee commitment has been correlated to the actual and perceived human resource practices such as training (Gaertner and Nolen, 1989). One school of

thought suggest that training leads to an increase in turnover as the other declare that training is a tool which use for the employee retention (Colarelli and Monte, 1996; Becker, 1993).

2.0 Introduction

Current researches have started to examine the relationship between training and organizational commitment (Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007). Numerous studies describe the provision of training that leads to enhancement in organizational commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007). In any industry the success of an organization is extremely dependent on its human resources. Though there are so many other aspects that play a major role, an organization must have efficient employees in order to keep financially dominant and competitive in the market. In order to maintain this valuable commodity, organizations must be conscious about the employee organizational commitment and retention. Several companies made the mistake of assuming that employees are only seeking financial benefits for their jobs. This assumption neglects the high significance, many people place on the intrinsic benefits of their careers. Consequently, it is not just employee job satisfaction and retention but also has negative effects on the business. Organizations must have employees who are able to quickly adapt to an ever-changing world market.

The meaning of organizational commitment is an effective connection to the organization with encouraging decisions to work and committed to continue work with that organization (Porter, Steers, and Mowday, 1974). The largest gap between the skills employees have and required, are the lack of job satisfaction and turnover intention of the employees. Therefore, to understand a positive return on training, organizations must ensure that the training appropriately aligned with organizational goals (Clark and Kwinn, 2005). The importance of training is rapidly growing and organizations are using this tool to compete with their competitors in the market. There is momentous discussion between scholars and professionals that training has effective impact on employee and organizational goals. Training is a planned activity taken by the organizations to communicate the job knowledge and skills and also modify the attitude and behavior of employees in a way which is aligned with the goal of organization (Noe, 2002). Regardless of all discussion, most of researchers agreed that employee training is a complicated human resource practice that can significantly impact on success of the organization.

Saudi Arabia is a major manufacturer and exporter of oil with major oil reserve in the world. Government of Saudi Arabia plays an important role for the development of country. Saudi organizations are increasing vastly in the economic development with the help of government that desires to expand its national income by the private sector to spend highly in economy of Saudi Arabia. It is important for the Saudi organizations to be vigilant on employee turnover for public and private sectors. The policy of Saudization requires the government and private sectors to hire Saudi nationals in position of foreign workers by a quota system and enforce restrictions on the staffing of foreign employees (Looney, 2004). Therefore, Saudi government needs the private sector for Saudization, however the organizations have negative attitude for recruiting the Saudi nationals.

3.0 Literature Review and Hypothesis

3.1 Organizational Commitment

Training and development program utilized by organizations has an effect on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Training has been defined as providing a significantly role to organizational effectiveness (Schuler and MacMillan, 1984). An inadequate research has been conducted in America (Bartlett, 2001), Middle East (Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007) and Malaysia (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003). These studies found a positive relationship between training and organizational commitment and negative turnover intentions. A study on US health care exposed positive relationship between training and effective organizational commitment (Bartlett, 2001). To observed effectiveness of training, it has been suggested that directly examined its relationship to organizational commitment. Training must design in a way that achieves organizational commitment (Lang, 1992). Organizational commitment appear more significant in cultures and industries where employees increase high levels of self-interest that might increase thinking to leaving one organization and join another (Beyer, 1990).

Some of researchers suggested that training and development affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and result thereof affect employee retention (Lam and Zhang, 2003; Lowry et al. 2002). Therefore, it has been described as positively related to organizational effectiveness (Bartlett, 2001). The research proposes that encouraging work behavior and attitude relay on the employee perception, extent to which employer take care about their future career (Allen et al, 2003). Training can be utilized to provoke desired results that may include better organizational commitment

(Bartlett, 2001). It is like a psychological attachment, employee has for his organization. Current research argued that training and development programs taken as a sign by employees that their organizations desire to social exchange with them. This produces a strong emotional commitment between employees and their employers (Garrow, 2004). Training supposed to have a positive impact on employee motivation and organizational commitment.

3.2 Availability of Training

The availability of training is being extent to which employees believe that they are capable to approach the training opportunities offered by their organizations. Previous research proposed that employees, who have the opportunity for availability of training, are more committed with their organization (Bartlett, 2001). In past, it has been pointed out by research that in USA and Malaysia, the accessibility of training was highly associated with effective but not persistence organizational commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Ahmad and Bakar, 2003). These findings support that organization augment affective commitment by encouraging awareness of training opportunities. There is a momentous relationship between training and job satisfaction and particularly those employees who obtain training are more satisfied than those who did not receive (Patrick and Owens, 2006). Quite a few studies have pointed out that availability of training and education programs are important factors of increasing job satisfaction and reducing turnover intentions among employees (Reddy, 1996; Bartlett, 1999).

Training is described as “planned intervention that is designed to enhance the determinants of individual job satisfaction” (Chiaburu and Tekleab, 2005, p. 29). Training is associated to the skills required by the organization that must be obtained by the employee in order to achieve the job organizational goals. Employees enthusiastic to learn, demonstrate a high level of job satisfaction through an optimistic effect on their performance (Tsai et al. 2007). There is a strong association between job turnover and availability of the training programs, but the accurate picture of this relationship is unclear (Reddy, 1996). Effective training programs resulted in improved production; reduce job turnover, and greater job satisfaction of the employee (Harris, 1990). In contrast to the earlier findings, it has assumed that availability of training will be absolutely related to organizational commitment.

H1: There is a positive relationship between availability of training and organizational commitment.

3.3 Motivation to learn

A motivated employee has positive observation about the training program offered by the organization. It has been revealed to lead superior contribution in training activities (Mathieu, Tannenbaum and Salas, 1992). Empirical research also pointed out that, those motivated to learn likely to apply learnt expertise more efficiently in their jobs (Facteau et al. 1995). The resulting benefits must produce optimistic feelings towards the organization and increase effective commitment. Studies established that motivation for training is the most important factor for training effectiveness (Kontoghiorghes, 2004). Regardless of the preliminary motivation of trainees to contribute in the training program, most of the members had positive expectations concerning transfer of training to the workplace. Motivation for training has defined as “a specific desire of the trainee to learn the content of the training program, and use the knowledge and skills mastered in the training program on the job” (Noe, 1986).

Colquitt et al. (2000) concluded that motivation to learn facilitates the connection between the variables associated with training and effectiveness of training through the model of “Integrative Theory of Training Motivation”. Baldwin et al.’s (1991) study directed that individuals with higher pre-training motivation on the basis of their willingness to participate in training have greater learning results as compared to individuals who have lower pre-training motivation. Cannon-Bowers et al. (1995) confirmed that pre-training motivation is the most significant factor for training effectiveness as compared to other factors, based on the reaction towards training. Research studies confirmed that there is a highly significant connection between an employee’s motivation to learn and their affective organizational commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Ahmad and Bakar 2003). These findings propose that organizations can get benefit from high commitment by motivating their employees to contribute in training programs. Research studies in Hong Kong also confirm that there is a constructive relationship among motivation to learn and organizational commitment (Cheng and Ho, 2001).

H2. There is a positive relationship between employee motivation to learn and organizational commitment

3.4 Manager Support for Training

The research suggested that the support in the workplace environment has essential implications for the appropriate functioning of the organization.

Researchers suggested that social support increase employee's job satisfaction and commitment, and reduce turnover and absenteeism (La Rocco, House and French, 1980; Allen and Meyer, 1990). Social support is an important determinant of organizational effectiveness. There are three main resource of social support: co-workers, family and friends (Ganster, Fusilier and Mayes, 1986), and immediate manager (Eisenberger et al. 2002). From last decades, researchers have constantly confirmed that social support is an important resource for facilitating the psychological, physical and overall well-being of individuals (La Rocco and Jones, 1978; La Rocco et al. 1980).

Senior colleagues support for training has been exposed to affect training participation (Noe and Wilk, 1993). There is a momentous relationship between supervisor support for training and both, affective and continuance commitment (Bartlett, 2001). These findings demonstrate possible benefits that may be obtain from the creation of an environment in which participation in training and development activities are encouraged by the managers. This kind of personal attachment with manager results from a given social norm dictates a requirement to be faithful with seniority (Wang 2008). The research studies observe that degree to which multinationals companies are able to increase employee's commitment by encouraging managerial level employees to provide more support to their subordinates, to participate in training activities and apply learnt skills on their jobs.

H3. There is a positive relationship between manager support for training and organizational commitment.

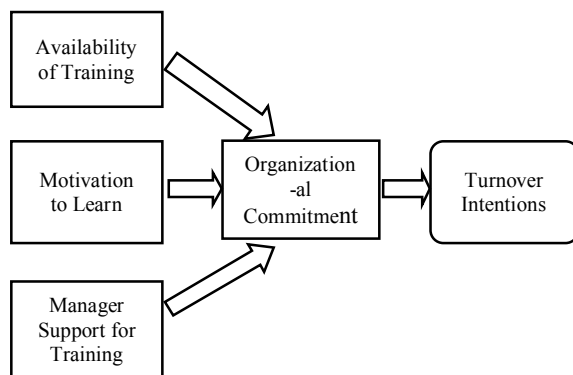


Figure 1: Impact of training model

3.5 Turnover Intentions

Employee turnover has been a significant subject for many researchers and academics because of its negative results as turnover (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Mowday et al., 1982). The relationship between training and development has been developed in the literature but contradictory results described in literature discussing the role of training and its impacts on job turnover makes the relationship complex (Mincer, 1988). For example the low rate of training program in organizations may lead to poor job performance and higher employee turnover rate. On other side, the organizations which have proper training program for the development of their employees, enjoying high success ratio and lower level of employee turnover. Employees might feel grateful to show greater commitment and less encouragement to leave the organization (O'Reilly et al., 1991).

While a study on young employees found weak confirmation on the fact that training reduces job turnover (Veum, 1997). Conversely to the above results, employees who are more satisfied with the training programs of their organizations are more expected to leave (Sheng, 2003). Therefore turnover may be costly to organizations whereas commitment is commonly used as desirable skills that might increase in employees. Benefit satisfaction is positively associated to organizational commitment and negatively related with employee turnover intention (Lane, 1993). A vigilant survey of the contemporary literature on the role of training and its impact of employee turnover intentions provide no significant and strong confirmation to simplify the positive effect of training on employee turnover.

H4. There is a negative relationship between organizational commitment and employee turnover intentions.

4.0 Research Methodology

4.1 Procedure

Randomly selected employees were invited to contribute in the study by completing survey questionnaire. Respondents were full-time employees and were working on different managerial and non-managerial positions. The organizations selected were from various industries in the private sector of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, such as banks, fast food, telecommunication and retail. However, each organization has more than 50 employees. Total 350 questionnaires were distributed whereas 278 were received back out of which 251 questionnaires were finally selected for our analysis with the response rate

of 72%. The field work was conducted in March-April 2012. A written letter was issued to HR Manager describing the reason of research to get the formal approval.

4.2 Measures

Availability of training program was measured by seven item scale. Motivation to learn was measured by adopting three items which are taken from the study of Noe and Schmitt's (1986). Manager support for training was measured by ten item scale. Meyer et al. (1993) scale was adopted for organizational commitment. A seven item scale was adopted from Newman et al. (2011), to measure the availability of training program. Items included: "My organization provides training opportunities to learn general knowledge and skills which later may use for the betterment of my future career". Manager support for training was measured by 10 items which is taken by Noe and Wilk (1993). 5-point likert scale was used to measure the all the responses.

Table 1: Demographics

	Description	Percent
Gender	Male	95.7
	Female	4.3
Age	Less than 20 years	4.3
	21 – 30 years	49.3
	31 – 40 years	37.7
	41 – 50 years	7.2
	Over 50 years	1.4
Qualification	High School	5.8
	Undergraduate	18.8
	Graduate	66.7
	Others	8.7
Total Years of Experience	Less than 1 year	10.1
	1 – 4 years	33.3
	5 – 9 years	34.8
	More than 10 years	21.7
Nationality	Saudis	59.4
	Non-Saudis	40.6

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic details of respondents are shown in Table 1. Gender shows, there were 98.7% male and 4.3% were female. Such gender ratio is justified because of Saudi society has limitations to approach females. In terms of age, the highest

respondents fell into the age of 21 – 30 years, which were accounted for 49.3%. This was followed by 31 – 40 years of age group, in which respondents were 37.7%. 66.7% of the respondents were graduated and the 18.8% were undergraduates. By the ethnic group of respondent, 59.4% respondents were Saudis and remaining 40.6% were non-Saudis. This ratio of Saudi citizen participation is expected in the private sector as most of the Saudi citizens prefer to work in the government sector.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviations and Pearson correlations among key variables (Availability of Training Program (ATP), Motivation to Learn (ML), Manager Support for Training (MST), Organizational Commitment (OC) and Turnover Intentions (TI)).

Note:

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

Table 2 shows the standardized Cronbach's alpha for each variable that reflects adequate and acceptable internal consistency reliability coefficients for all the scales as greater than .75 (Nunnally, 1978). Correlation between the selected variables of training, organizational commitment and the employees' turnover intentions are also presented in Table 2. Variables associated with training that were availability of training and manager support for training found consistent with the theory and our hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that availability of training and organizational commitment is positively correlated. Results depicted positive correlation between both variables ($r = 0.192$, $p < .05$). Regression analysis results in Table 3 indicates that relationship between availability of training and organizational commitment is highly significant ($\beta = .49$, t -value = 5.192, $p = .000$) and in line with past studies (Bartlett, 2001; Ahmad and Bakar, 2003).

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis

	Mean	S.D	ATP	ML	MST	OC	TI
ATP	3.18	0.9	-0.9				
ML	3.96	0.7	0.316**	-0.89			
MST	3.32	0.8	0.684**	0.269*	-0.9		
OC	2.97	0.6	0.192*	0.034	0.179*	-0.79	
TI	2.88	0.8	-0.114	-0.266**	-0.213	-0.483**	-0.79

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	β	S. E	t-value	Sig.	Adj. R ²	F Value
		(Std. Coeff.)					
OC	ATP	0.49	0.071	5.192	0	0.32	20.83
	ML	0.169	0.077	2.01	0.05		
	MST	0.157	0.064	1.937	0.05		
TI	OC	-0.218	-0.12	-1.96	0.05	0.035	3.857

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found much weaker and insignificant relationship between motivation to learn and organizational commitment. This negates findings from other countries (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003; Al-Emadi and Marquardt, 2007) but supports the findings of (Newman et al. 2011) who also found no relationship between motivation to learn and organizational commitment. The lack of a relationship between motivation to learn and organizational commitment possibly occurred because an employee's motivation to learn might not

lead to interest in training activities. Decision to join training activities might not take by employees individually but enforced by the management. Past studies has recommended that perceptions of training might only be linked to commitment when training is tied to career development (Meyer and Smith, 2000).

Consistent with our theoretical framework and hypothesis 3, our results strongly indicates the positive relationship between manager or supervisor support for training and organizational commitment.

Our results proposed that the manager is exceptionally central in supporting employee training involvement in Saudi Arabia. In line with the Chinese study, as suggested by the literature that places high importance on the values in hierarchies and personal relationships rather than on the system itself (Redding, 1990; Wang, 2008), Saudi employees feel more likely to be based on gratitude for organizational support from a supervisor or manager.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover intentions. Table 2 revealed that organizational commitment and turnover intentions have negative correlation ($r = -.483$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis results in Table 3 also confirmed that organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover intentions and significant ($\beta = -.218$, $t\text{-value} = -1.964$, $p < .05$). Results found are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Cheng and Stockdale, 2003; Newman et al. 2011).

6. Conclusion

In our study of private sector in the Saudi Arabia, we attempt to explore the relationship between the perception of training and organizational commitment and the further impact of organizational commitment on turnover intentions. In line with theory, all the selected variables: availability of training and manager/supervisor support for training are found positively related to organizational commitment. Nonetheless, contrary to theory, motivation to learn depicts insignificant results which could have other reasons e.g. employees might be motivated to learn but their failure to put on learnt skills might cause the absence of an apparent relationship with organizational commitment (Benson et al. 2000). A strong inverse relationship is also confirmed by our research between organizational commitment and turnover intentions of an employee. Hence, organizations should consider how to get their employees strongly recognized with their organizational goals, missions and values through appropriate training.

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