Employee Workplace Behaviors and Attitudes

INVESTIGATION FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF HIGH TURNOVER AND BUDGET CUTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between employee workplace attitudes and behaviors by further understanding the role of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on job performance. This study is especially interesting because it follows a period of high turnover and budget cuts in a university setting, which addresses research gaps. Data was collected from approximately 50 participants within a university college, in a one-step anonymous survey process. Participants include both full-time and part-time faculty and staff within a university college. The results of our study were analyzed through correlational analyses. Implications for both theory and practice as well as study limitations will be discussed.

METHODS

This research was conducted within a college at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Employee participants were provided access to an anonymous survey via a school provided laptop. The primary investigator for this research invited employees to participate in the survey, which asked participants about their workplace attitudes, stressors, motivators, and behaviors. All measures are established and validated scales from previous research including “Subordinate Job Satisfaction” (Cammann et al., 1983) and “Job Stress” (Motowidlo et al., 1986) that asked participants to respond to statements like, “I am satisfied with my job” and “I feel a great deal of stress because of my job.” Other scales included “Exit” (Rusbult et al., 1988) and “Role Overload” (Bolino & Turnley, 2005) that asked participants to respond to statements like, “I have recently spent some time looking for another job” and “I never seem to have enough time to get everything done at work.” No procedures are designed to modify the thinking, attitudes, feelings, or other aspects of the behavior of the subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are several positive findings for the college. Specifically, employees reported high mean scores for intrinsic motivation (6.907) and perceived job satisfaction (6.367). Further, the mean scores tend to suggest that employees agree or somewhat agree that they have perceived empowerment (5.6857), job satisfaction (5.8473), and leader effectiveness (5.4807). However, given the recent budget cuts, increased class sizes, and increased rate of turnover during the last two years, it was important to collect information pertaining to stressors, stress, and turnover. Evident research suggests that stress is problematic for organizations. In a study examining the public accounting field, Greenhaus et al. (1997) found a link between high workload and stress as well as a positive relationship between stress and intent to turnover. Another study examining the negative effects of stress explains that unmanaged stress can lead to reduced employee commitment, job satisfaction, and work quality as well as poor morale (Walb, 2000). Further, turnover is expensive. “Firms experiencing significantly high turnover rates incur high training costs and other employee-related expenses” (Lau, 2003, p. 3). For example, within our college at UW-Eau Claire, a candidate visit for a tenure-track position is estimated to cost at least $700 in travel, food, and lodging. Based on recent candidate schedules, a typical visit requires at least 35 hours of employee time. The search committee, which often consists of four employees spends at least 25 hours of combined time screening candidates and conducting SKYPE interviews. Generally, three candidates visit campus (approximately 130 hours of employee time). Thus, it can be estimated that it costs more than $8000 in recruiting expenses for a single tenure-track position. It is important to note that these figures do not consider moving expenses, or the cost of lost knowledge.

Therefore, given the high levels of recent recruitment activity and increased class sizes, it is not surprising that survey participants reported escalated levels of role overload (4.017), with 41% indicating that they agreed to some extent with statements like “It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do” and “The amount of work I am expected to do is too great” (Bolino & Turnley, 2005). However, it is surprising that 33% of the respondents indicated some level of agreement with items measuring intention to exit. These items included, “I have recently spent some time looking for another job” and “During the last year, I will probably look for a new job.” Further, correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationships between role overload, stress, and intent to exit. As demonstrated in Figure 1, findings suggest positive correlations between these variables.

![Figure 1: Conceptual model between role overload, stress, and intent to exit.](image-url)

Findings suggest that employees within the college tend to perceive higher levels of intrinsic motivation, empowerment, and job satisfaction. Therefore, it is likely not the nature of job that is influencing turnover intentions. Further, results suggest that employees tend to believe their leaders are effective. Therefore, findings suggest supervisors can look for ways to reduce role overload and perceived stress in order to reduce turnover intentions. Future studies could explore ways to reduce role overload and stress. Specifically, wellness programs may weaken relationships proposed in Figure 1. Implementing a new or further integrating a current wellness program could be the answer. According to Gau and Henry (2003), “Organizational changes, such as mergers and downsizing, create uncertainty and anxiety in employees that can lead to dysfunction at both the individual and organizational level.” Wellness programs have been demonstrated to offset some of these effects. Additional research has reported reduced turnover rates, decreased absenteeism, and improved employee productivity as benefits of wellness programs (Chapman, 1996; Powell, 1999). The limitations that are inherent with the design of this study also present opportunities for future research. Specifically, although representative of the college, this study had a small sample size. Further, data for this study was cross-sectional and was collected from a single-source. Future studies could collect data from multiple sources, larger samples, in a longitudinal format.

REFERENCES

[References list not included in this text]

We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting this research, and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.