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The Impact of Highly Engaged HR Policies, Fair Procedures, Employee Dedication, and Civic Engagement on IT Workers' Plans to Leave an Organization Sagarika K

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Abstract

This research looks at how different factors related to high-involvement HR practices interact with employees' plans to leave their current positions. Two research topics are specifically addressed: To what extent do innovative HR policies and procedures for holding on to top talent need to be implemented? Do high-involvement HR practices have an influence on turnover intentions, and if so, is it mediated by procedural fairness, organizational commitment, and citizenship behaviors? Canadian Information Processing Society members in Quebec were emailed a survey including metrics that had already been vetted. A total of 394 participants provided data for the study's validation phase. Key results demonstrate a negative and direct relationship between turnover intentions and nonmonetary recognition and competence development, and to a lesser degree, fair incentives and information-sharing procedures. High-involvement HR policies have been shown to have an influence on the likelihood that highly competent workers would leave an organization, and the authors also found that procedural fairness, emotional and continuous commitment, and citizenship behaviors partly mitigate this relationship.

Keywords: human resource practices; turnover intentions; organizational com-mitment; organizational citizenship behaviors; information technology specialists

Introduction

Our understanding of the processes or mechanisms through which HR practices affect organizational outcomes is still in its infancy, despite the growing body of literature suggesting that such investment in human capital and the implementation of HR practices may improve corporate financial performance (Huselid, 1995; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Vandenberg, Richardson, & Eastman, 1999). Youndt (2000) discovered that HR policies don't have an immediate impact on organizational performance, but they do contribute to the development of intellectual capital, which in turn increases the value produced by the business. HR practices have been found to have an indirect effect on organizational effectiveness by increasing organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000) and decreasing turnover intentions (Vandenberg et al., 1999), among other things (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Whitener, 2001). Despite these findings, it is still unclear how HR procedures contribute to attitude-behavior connections of this kind. The current literature on organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and turnover provides a limited, non-theoretical collection of HR practices in study models. Despite rising agreement regarding the conceptualization of HR practices (Wright & Boswell, 2002), empirical research' selection of HR practices is seldom philosophically justified. Finally, while the retention of highly skilled workers like IT professionals and engineers is often cited as the most pressing human issue on the minds of executives today (Ang, Slaughter, & Ng, 2002; Evans, Gonzalez, Popiel, & Walker, 2000), empirical studies have rarely used these groups as their unit of analysis.

In this setting, we established a multidimensional set of high-involvement HR practices and investigated a number of research hypotheses that specify the links among HR practices, procedural fairness, organizational com- mitment, OCBs, and turnover intentions. The current research focuses on answering the following questions: To what extent do innovative HR policies and procedures for holding on to top talent need to be implemented? How do high-involvement HR policies affect the intentions of highly trained individuals to leave their current positions, and can procedural fairness, organizational commitment, and citizenship behaviors moderate these relationships? There are five ways in which this research differs from the aforementioned works. Although there is already a large body of knowledge on the topics of organizational commitment and OCBs, the present study bridges the gap between the current understanding of the relationship between job attitudes, role behaviors, and turnover intentions by incorporating the concept of high-involvement HR practices. We define a multidimensional, theoretically grounded configuration of high-involvement HR practices based on the conceptual frameworks of Lawler (1986) and Bailey (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000) and test its influence on with- drawal intentions of employees. Third, this research is the first

to explore pro- cedural justice, organizational commitment, and citizenship behaviors as possible mediators of the link between high-involvement HR practices and turnover intentions. Fourth, the possible mediating role of procedural fairness between perceptions of high-involvement HR practices and organizational commitment and civic behaviors has not been investigated in any previous empirical research. An further empirical improvement comes from testing the accepted conceptual model on a group of highly trained experts. The next sections will examine the causes and effects of corporate citizenship practices, organizational commitment, procedural fairness, employee turnover intentions, and human resource management procedures. We then show the findings of our empirical analysis of a wide cross-section of Canadian IT workers. The cross-sectional data employed in this study have the benefit of allowing us to evaluate the complete set of predicted associations at once, even if experimental data would give a better test of the causal processes indicated in our theoretical model. We think this method provides a more thorough examination of whether or not the facts support the theoretical assumptions of the hypotheses being tested. Finally, we analyze the results' practical and theoretical significance.

Background and Hypotheses

Effect of High-Involvement HR Practices on Organizational Commitment, Procedural Justice, OCBs, and Quit Intentions

Although several sets of innovative HR management practices have recently been proposed to enhance effectiveness in organizations and to retain talented employees (Arnett & Obert, 1995; Dessler, 1999; Pfeffer & Veiga,

1999), these configurations of practices are narrowly focused and often lack theoretical grounding. Two complementary conceptual frameworks havereceived much attention in the academic press. The high-involvement model proposed by Lawler (1986) is seen as the primary engine behind the evolu-tion of contemporary strategic HR management (McMahan, Bell, & Virick,1998), and the high-performance work system model proposed by Bailey(Appelbaum et al., 2000) suggests that five distinct, supportive HR practices may influence employees' work-related attitudes and performance behaviors. First, through empowerment, organizations allow employees to assume several roles and responsibilities and thus exert a greater influence at workwhile enjoying increased autonomy. Employee discretion and influence through task involvement fosters a greater sense of support, trust, and intrinsic motivation and provides positive work attitudes (Eby, Freeman, Rush, & Lance, 1999; Lawler, 1986). This increased sense of responsibil- ity also stimulates more initiative and effort on the part of everyoneinvolved (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). In this line ofthought, Agarwal and Ferratt (1999) found that successful IT organizations are empowering IT professionals to take increasing responsibility for their work and for decision making.

Second, high-performing firms use competence development practices (e.g.,job rotation programs, mentoring, and training) for both improving the produc-tivity of existing employees and sending employees the signal that decision makers are willing to invest in them beyond short-term returns (Agarwal & Ferratt, 1999; Guptill, 1998; Morrison, 1996; Schwochau, Delaney, Jarley, & Fiorito, 1997; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Hite, 1995). Furthermore, training and other competence development practices can represent major sources of competitive advantage and performance because organizations rely on frontline employee skill and initiative to identify and resolve problems, to initiate changes in work methods, and to take responsibility for quality (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

Third, previous research shows that information-sharing practices favorthe internalization of organizational goals and values by employees, enhance feelings of mutual trust, and make individuals feel important to the company (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1997; Rodwell, Kienzle, & Shadur, 1998). According to Lawler (1986), information sharing is one of the easiest and most effective ways to foster employee involvement within organizations. Information sharing also represents an essential component of high-performance organizations, notably because "the sharing of information on such things as financial performance, strategy, and operational measures conveys to the organization's people that they are trusted" (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 44).

Fourth, motivation researchers have long acknowledged that the need for recognition is a fundamental driver of human behavior. For most highly skilled professionals, much of their motivation ensues from the recognition they get from managers for a job well done and the feeling that they are a pivotal part of the organization (Agarwal & Ferratt, 1999; Gomolski, 2000). In this study, recognition practices refer to nonmonetary rewards through which an organization tangibly signals its appreciation of quality work andachievements. They also include efforts made by the organization to care-fully consider employee suggestions and provide employees with positive feedback. Several scholars found that high-performance organizations per-sistently sought to recognize and reinforce valuable contributions made byemployees (e.g., Agarwal & Ferratt, 1999).

Fifth, fair organizational rewards refer to the perceived fairness of various job outcomes, including compensation conditions, performance evaluations, and job assignments. A high level of perceived equity signals to employees that the organization supports them and has their well-being at heart (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Lawler, 1986).

We posit that HR practices that enhance these five components are likely to heighten the perception of organizational commitment (both affective and continuance) and the perception of procedural justice and OCB-helping behaviors and decrease intentions of resigning among employees because individuals tend to respond positively to top management commitment and support (Eisenberger, Fasalo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). In the following sections, we review the relevant literature to develop specific hypotheses for this research.

HR Practices and Organizational Commitment

It is widely accepted that employees' commitment to the organization can take various forms and that the antecedents and consequences of each can bequite different (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1997). First, affective commitment corresponds to an employee's personal attachment and identification with the organization resulting in a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. Previous research concluded that individual orbundles of HR practices play a positive role in the development of an employee's attachment to the organization (e.g., Gaerter & Nollen, 1989; Gould-Williams, 2003; Meyer & Smith, 2000). Two main reasons are partic-ularly salient. First, large investments in HR practices signal to employees that they represent a major source of competitive advantage for the company (Fiorito, Bozeman, & Young, 1997), leading in turn to a greater sense of organizational attachment. Second, high-involvement HR practices are likely to be perceived as a concrete signal of a company's support, trust, and commitment toward its employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). Altogether, these arguments suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Recognition, empowerment, fair organizational rewards, competence development, and information-sharing practices have a positive influence on affective commitment.

Second, although the positive link between HR practices and affective commitment has received extensive support, the role of these practices in thereinforcement of continuance commitment has been less clearly established. Continuance commitment is conceived as a tendency to engage in consistent lines of activity based on the individual's recognition of the costs associated with discontinuing the activity (Meyer & Smith, 2000). Therefore, employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment because they need to do so. Meyer and Allen (1997) and McElroy (2001) have suggested that HR practices positively influence continuance commitment. Meyer and Smith (2000), however, found no significant rela-tionship between HR practices and continuance commitment. Despite the lat-ter result, we predict a positive link between HR practices and continuance commitment. Consider employee empowerment. Employees who are empow-ered in their job might not only view the organization as caring and support-ive and thus experience a stronger affective commitment; but they might also believe that to lose the benefits associated with a high level of empowerment would be costly, therefore experiencing greater continuance commitment. Inlight of the arguments presented above, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 2: Recognition, empowerment, fair organizational rewards, competence development, and information-sharing practices have a positive influence on continuance commitment.

HR Practices and Procedural Justice

Although findings from several studies suggest that HR practices are related to employee commitment, some scholars have found that these rela-tionships are not necessarily direct or unconditional. For instance, Meyer and Smith (2000) observed that the links between some HR practices and both affective and normative commitment were either fully or partially mediated

by employees' perceptions of procedural justice and organizational support. According to the group-value model (Tyler & Lind, 1992), people in organi-zations are concerned about their long-term relationships with a group and with its authorities and institutions. More important, employees expect an organization to use neutral decision-making procedures enacted by trustwor- thy authorities so that, over time, all individuals will benefit fairly from being members of the group (Tyler, 1989). In the present study, we will further investigate the nature of the links among HR practices and procedural justice. More precisely, in line with the group-value model, we posit that high-involvement HR practices that allow employees to voice their opinions, participate at various levels, and develop their feelings of mutual trust are likely to contribute to the perception of fairness and, ultimately, to the devel-opment of a long-term commitment to the company. We then hypothesize thefollowing:

Hypothesis 3: Recognition, empowerment, fair organizational rewards, competence development, and information-sharing practices have a positive influence on procedural justice.

Control Variables

Organizational behavior and management researchers have also identified three sociodemographic variables that tend to correlate with turnover inten-tions. Indeed, age, organizational tenure, and pay level have a negative effect on voluntary turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Furthermore, organizational tenure has consistently been found to be positively associated with both forms of organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer & Smith, 2000), whereas pay level is positively related to continuance commitment. It has also been asserted that the continuance component of organizational commitment is developed on the basis of a perceived lack of job alternatives. Indeed, job opportunities outside the organization reduce the perceived costof leaving (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983) and, in turn, increase quit intentions. More recently, Meyer et al. (2002) also found con-tinuance commitment and lack of alternative job offers to be positively asso-ciated. Accordingly, age, organizational tenure, pay level, and the number of job offers were assessed and statistically controlled in the present study. The pay level measure was based on annual salary in the respondent's current position. Categories ranged from 1 (*less than \$40,000*) to 5 (*\$100,000 or more*). The number of formal job offers was measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*no job offers*) to 7 (*several job offers*). In addition, ageand organizational tenure were each measured by a single-item scale, whichis appropriate for objective constructs such as demographics.

Data Analysis

Following Tsui et al. (1997), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the 29 items that measure the five HR practices considered in

this study. The results in Table 1 supported a five-factor structure, with an adjusted goodness-of-fit index (GFI) of .98 and a root mean square resid- ual (RMSR) of .05. Of all the items included in the analysis, only FR3 was removed from the fair rewards scale because its factor loading was less than

.50. The reliability coefficients for the five HR scales ranged from .73 to

.86. Next, a similar CFA procedure was performed for items from the affec-tive commitment, continuance commitment, perceived procedural justice, and OCB scales. As indicated in Table 2, only AC5 was not retained in the affective commitment scale because its factor loading was not above the cutoff point. Nevertheless, as expected, the results supported a four-factor structure, with a GFI of .99 and a RMSR of .04. Therefore, the reliability and construct validity of our measures are highly satisfactory.

A major concern in this study was common method, and to determine whether the focal variables were represented by multiple factors, Harman's one-factor statistical test was performed (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Following Moore (2000), an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the scale items used to assess the 10 variables considered in the present study. A total of 50 items were entered into the analysis, and 10 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 emerged. The first factor in the unrotated solu- tion was made up of various items from the recognition, procedural justice, distributive justice, and competence development scales. Some of those items also cross-loaded strongly on subsequent factors. Items from OCB, continuance commitment, affective commitment, and turnover intentions loaded highly on subsequent factors. The results of this test indicate that the items used to assess the independent, mediating, and dependent variables in the present study do not tend to load on a single general factor.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The present study enlightens practitioners and researchers with regard to turnover among highly skilled professionals, yet several limitations shouldbe considered. For one, given the low response rate, the results may be influenced by nonresponse bias and volunteer bias. Next, cross-sectional data cannot confirm the direction of causality implied in our research model. Longitudinal studies are thus needed to validate the predictive dimension of the model by examining actual turnover. Furthermore, futurelongitudinal research should clarify the direction of relationship between turnover intentions and OCBs. Indeed, we cannot rule out the possibility of an inverse relationship between OCB-helping behaviors and turnover. A high rate of turnover may increase the fragility of the social capital and theskills capital within work groups and thus reduce the possibilities of recip-rocal support and helping behaviors.

In addition, the present study (similar to most of the research in this area) relied on single methods. Even though Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) is useful in testing for common method vari- ance, future research should attempt to gather data from multiple sources, including employee self-reports, coworkers, and

supervisors and company records, using multiple methods, such as structured interviews, question- naires, and observation. Nonetheless, if high-involvement HR practices are in place but employees are not aware of them, they are unlikely to be effective. For this reason, we posit that employees' perceptions of HR practices remain valid factors to examine.

Conclusion

In the present study, we chose to consider organizational commitment rather than job satisfaction as our focal construct of interest for several reasons. First, some authors have argued that organizational commitment represents a more stable construct than does job satis-faction (e.g., Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Second, a study conducted by Schappe (1998) shows that although organizational commitment and job satisfaction are both considered antecedents of OCBs, only organizational commitment has a significant influence on the dependent variable. Third, and most importantly, some scholars (e.g., Moorman, 1991; Organ, 1990) have suggested that job satisfaction largely reflects employees' perceptions of organi- zational justice or fairness, a construct that is already integrated in our research model.

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