

## **PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY IN NIGERIA**

*Política Organizacional Percebida e Incidência de Turnover dos Funcionários: Um Estudo Longitudinal na Nigéria*

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**Abstract:** Although prior research has demonstrated that perceived organizational politics were positively related to employee turnover intention, however, little is known about possible causal explanations for the relationship between the two variables. To address this gap, a longitudinal design was employed to examine the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee turnover intention with data collected over a two-year time period. Specifically, one hundred and seventy five Registered Nurses from government hospitals in Nigeria completed measures of perceived organizational politics and employee turnover intention at 2 times 16 months apart. There was empirical evidence, based on results of longitudinal regression analyses to support either the hypothesis that perceived organizational politics increases employee turnover intention or the hypothesis that employee turnover intention lead to organizational politics. However, employee turnover intention, and perceived organizational politics were found to change instantaneously. Implications of the results are discussed

**Key words:** Longitudinal design; Organizational politics; Turnover intention.

**Resumo:** Embora pesquisas anteriores tenham demonstrado que a política organizacional percebida estava positivamente relacionada com a intenção de rotatividade de funcionários, no entanto, pouco se sabe sobre possíveis explicações causais para a relação entre as duas variáveis. Para abordar essa lacuna, um desenho longitudinal foi utilizado para examinar a relação entre a política organizacional percebida e intenção de rotatividade dos funcionários com os dados coletados ao longo de um período de dois anos. Especificamente, cento e setenta e cinco enfermeiras registradas de hospitais do governo na Nigéria completaram medidas de política organizacional percebida e intenção de rotatividade em 2 ocasiões com 16 meses de intervalo entre elas. Houve evidências empíricas, baseadas em resultados de análises de regressão longitudinal, para apoiar já seja a hipótese de que a política organizacional percebida aumenta a intenção de rotatividade do empregado ou bem a hipótese de que a intenção de rotatividade dos funcionários leva à política organizacional. Entretanto, a intenção do turnover do empregado e a política organizacional percebida foram encontradas para mudar instantaneamente. As implicações dos resultados são discutidas.

**Palavras chave:** Desenho longitudinal, Política organizacional, Intenção de Rotatividade.

**Recebido em: 03/12/2016**

**Aceito em: 31/03/2017**

## INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is prevalence and has become a major concern of every organization. For example, In the United States of America (U.S.A.), about 7.7% of the full time faculty members from various universities and colleges had left their posts for other institutions in 1997/1998 academic session. Of these faculty members, only 29% were retirees, while the remaining 71% have left their institutions for variety of reasons (Sanderson, Phua, & Herda, 2000). The survey further showed that more than 40% of the faculty members in the USA have made of their minds to change careers (Sanderson et al., 2000). In a similar survey, Waswa and Katana (2008) reported that in Kenya, qualified faculty members from various Kenyan public universities have quitted their job for a secured and better paying jobs abroad. Munzali and Obaje (2008) also reported that about 64% of the required number of teaching staff from various universities in Nigeria have left for western industrialized countries, such as USA, United Kingdom (UK), Southern Africa and Middle East countries, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman, among others.

Records have also shown that about 500 employees from various organisations in Nigeria continue to leave annually, to western economies such as United States, Europe, Canada and other African countries for better condition of service (Bassi, 2004). A recent estimates have shown that that in the year 2012, more than 20,000 professionals, including medical personnel, teaching staff from various universities and colleges leave African continent annually to look for a greener pastures in Western countries such as United States, Canada, Germany and United kingdom, among others (Agency Reporter, 2012). Meanwhile, several studies have indicated that employee turnover is detrimental to both individuals and organisations (Glebbeck & Bax, 2004; Hellman, 1997). For instance, co-worker turnover, may be a “shock” to the remaining employees, which results in work disruption and also significantly reduce their job embeddedness, thereby triggering thoughts of quitting in them (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). It is also estimated that employee turnover has a financial costs to organisations due to the separation costs; replacement costs of departed employees and training costs of new employees (Cascio, 2000; McKinney, Bartlett, & Mulvaney, 2007).

Given its prevalence and detrimental effects to both individuals and organisations, researchers have examined perceived organisational politics as an underlying factor explaining employee turnover. Perceived organisational politics “involves an individual’s attribution of behaviours of self-serving intent and is defined as an individual’s subjective evaluation about the extent to which the work environment is characterized by co-workers and supervisors who demonstrate such self-serving behavior” (Ferris, Harrell-Cook, & Dulebohn, 2000, p. 90). Specifically, Huang et al. (2003) showed that perceptions of organizational politics are significantly and positively related to turnover intentions among 612 Tax employees from Taiwan Ministry of Finance. Likewise, in a study conducted among 198 full-time hospital employees in United States, Byrne (2005) found that employees who experience high levels of organizational politics at work are more likely to consider quitting their jobs. Recent evidences (e.g., Abbas, Raja, Darr, & Bouckenoghe, 2012; Bedi & Schat, 2013; Chinomona & Chinomona, 2013) also suggest that high levels of organizational politics are significantly and positively related to turnover intentions.

While the aforementioned empirical studies have contributed to theory and concept development, most of them employed a cross-sectional research design, which does not allow researchers to detect changes in the characteristics of the sample studied. However, notable exception is the work of Karatepe (2012). The present study is significantly different from Karatepe (2012), which mainly focused on full-time frontline hotel employees in Cameroon, while our concern in this study was to focus on Registered Nurses working in public hospital in Nigeria. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to employ a longitudinal research design in order to examine the influence of perceived organizational support on turnover intention among Registered Nurses working in public hospital located in Kaduna metropolis in Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **1. Participants and procedure**

Participants in this study were Registered Nurses employed by a large government hospital located in Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria. We collected the data in a two-wave panel study (Time 1 in September 2014) and the second wave of the study was sixteen months later (Time 2 in January 2016). One hundred and ninety four participants completed a survey at the second wave of the study. After deletion of multivariate outliers, the final sample included 185 Registered Nurses. On the other hand, 185 Registered Nurses participated in the second wave as well.

## **MEASURES**

### **1. Perceived organisational politics**

To measure employees' perception of organisational politics construct, we adapted seven items from perceived organizational politics scale developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). Sample items in this scale are: 1) "Employees in my hospital attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down", and 2) "Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in my hospital". Participants were asked to respond to questions in this scale using a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agreed).

### **2. Turnover intention**

We adapted three items to measure turnover intentions from prior research (e.g., Aryee & Yue Wah, 2001; Lam, Chen, & Takeuchi, 2009). Items in this scale are: 1) "There any likelihood that you would resign from the hospital?", and 2) "There is likelihood that you would not continue to be a staff of the hospital during your tenure of employment with your present hospital?". Participants were asked to respond to questions in the turnover intentions scale using a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agreed).

## **RESULTS**

Table 1: presents the means and standard deviations of the variables employed in this study. The mean for perceived organisational Politics at Time 1 was found to be 4.362 with a standard deviation of 0.347. Relatedly, mean and standard deviation for perceived organisational Politics at Time 2 4.362 were 4.455 and 0.526, respectively. Regarding the turnover intention at Time 1, we found a mean and standard deviation of 3.463 and 0.914, respectively. On the other hand, the mean for turnover intention at Time 2 was found to be 3.400 with a standard deviation of 0.912. In terms of correlations, perceived organisational Politics at Time 1 was positively related to turnover Intention 2 ( $r = 0.394$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), perceived organisational Politics at Time 2 was positively related to turnover Intention 1 ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Perceived organisational Politics at Time 1 was positively related to Turnover Intention 1 ( $r = 0.263$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), perceived organisational Politics at Time 2 was positively related to turnover Intention 2 ( $r = 0.571$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Furthermore, following (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), we used lagged hierarchical multiple regression to analyse the longitudinal data towards hypotheses testing. Specifically, we computed two block-wise multiple regression analyses with the turnover intention at Time 2 and perceived organisational politics at Time 2 as the dependent variables. In the first block, we regressed the turnover intention 2 on perceived organisational politics 1. We then we regressed the perceived organisational politics 2 on turnover at Time 1 in the second block. Accordingly, in order to ascertain the longitudinal effects of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention, the incremental R<sup>2</sup> for the first block of regression analysis was examined. The results of the lagged hierarchical multiple regression analyses are reported in Table 2.

**Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Study Variables.**

|                              | Mean  | SD    | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4 |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Organisational Politics 1 | 4.362 | 0.347 | 1      |        |        |   |
| 2. Organisational Politics 2 | 4.455 | 0.526 | .605** | 1      |        |   |
| 3. Turnover Intention 1      | 3.463 | 0.914 | .021   | .263** | 1      |   |
| 4. Turnover Intention 2      | 3.400 | 0.912 | .394** | .437** | .571** | 1 |

Note: \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01 (two tailed).

**Table 2 Results of the Lagged Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses**

| Predictors                       | Block 1         | Block 2       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Intercept                        | -2.93*** (0.64) | -0.01(0.39)   |
| Organisational politics - Time 1 | 0.38***(0.14)   | 0.60***(0.08) |
| Turnover Intention - Time 1      | 0.56***(0.05)   | 0.25***(0.03) |
| R <sup>2</sup>                   | 0.47            | 0.43          |
| Adj. R <sup>2</sup>              | 0.47            | 0.42          |
| ΔR <sup>2</sup>                  | 0.32            | 0.36          |

Note: \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001 (two tailed). The values in brackets are standard errors (SE) for corresponding estimates

Dependent Variables: Turnover intention at Time 2 (Block 1); Perceived Organisational Politics at Time 2 (Block 2).

As shown in Table 2, the first block accounted for a significant proportion of the Time 1 perceived organisational politics ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the same vein, according to our expectation, Turnover Intention at Time 1 was related to higher levels of Perceived Organisational Politics at Time 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Accordingly, the findings supported both Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The goal of the present study was to examine the relationship between perceived organisational politics and turnover intention. We examined longitudinal data from Registered Nurses employed by a large government hospital located in Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria in a two-wave self-administered survey 16 months apart. A longitudinal model was tested using a Lagged Hierarchical Multiple Regressions. The results largely supported our hypotheses that there would be reciprocal effect of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention. These results underline our postulation that the relation between perceived organisational politics and turnover intention is complex and reciprocal. This suggests that there is no simple one-directional effect of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention. Whereas perceived organisational politics influence turnover intention, employee turnover can also influence the perception of organisational politics in the work environment.

Despite its contributions, the present study, there few of its several limitations that should be discussed. First, the findings of the present study should be regarded as descriptive and preliminary given the low variance explained in the dependent variables. As reported earlier, our research model was able to explain 47% of the total variance in turnover intention at Time 2 (Block 1) and 43% of the total variance in perceived organisational politics at Time 2 (Block 2), which means there are other variables that could significantly explain the variance in dependent variables. In other words, the remaining 53% and 57% of the variance in in perceived organisational politics at Time 2 (Block 2) and perceived organisational politics at Time 2 (Block 2), respectively could be explained by other factors not incorporated in our longitudinal model. Thus, future research is needed to consider other possible factors that could help in minimizing tendency of turnover intention and organisational politics. For example, future research might examine the longitudinal effect of perceived organisational justice or organisational support on turnover intention.

Second, although perceived organisational politics and turnover intention were measured at the same point in time, as well as even at different points in time, however, we cannot interpret with confidence the causal effects of one variable on another. Hence, only an experimental research design can demonstrate causal effect of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention. This represents one of the limitations of longitudinal research design. Therefore, it has become imperative for future research to replicate the findings of the present study using a well-design experiment. The final limitation that the data did not allow us to dependably distinguish between those Registered Nurses who have really changed their jobs voluntarily, and those who changed jobs involuntarily. It is likely that some of the Registered Nurses who involuntarily changed jobs may not have reflected such when answering the questionnaires, since there was no provision for that in the questionnaires that have been administered. Hence, this suggests an avenue for future research. Specifically, replication of the present study is needed by incorporating the questionnaires those Registered Nurses who have really changed their jobs voluntarily, and those who changed jobs involuntarily so as to understand the underlying reasons why the left.

In conclusion, the present study is one of the first empirical studies that provide comprehensive examination of the longitudinal effect of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention among Registered Nurses employed by a large government hospital located in Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria. This particular study showed provided empirical evidence based on results of longitudinal regression analyses to support either the hypothesis that perceived organisational politics increases employee turnover intention or the hypothesis that employee turnover intention lead to organisational politics. Finally, although the present study extends recent work on turnover intention, there is a need for further extension of the effect of perceived organisational politics on turnover intention using a well-design experiment.

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