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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, JOB SATISFACTION
AND TURNOVER AMONG PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS

LYMAN W. PORTER

RICHARD M. STEERS

PAUL V. BOULIAN

Technical Report No. 16

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Project Directors

Robert Dubin

Lyman W. Porter

University of California
Irvine, California 92664

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This investigation was designed to study variations in organizational commitment and in job satisfaction, as each related to subsequent turnover among a sample of recently-employed psychiatric technician trainees. The analysis took the form of a longitudinal study across a 10-1/2 month period, with attitude measures collected at four points in time. It was found that, for this sample, job satisfaction measures were better able to differentiate future stayers from leavers in the earliest phase of the study. However, with the passage of time, organizational commitment measures proved to be a better predictor of turnover, while job satisfaction failed to predict turnover in these later time periods. These findings are discussed in the light of other related studies on the topic, and possible explanations for such findings are examined.

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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, JOB SATISFACTION
AND TURNOVER AMONG PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS¹

Lyman W. Porter², Richard M. Steers³

University of California, Irvine

and Paul V. Boulian

Yale University

The problem of employee turnover has continued to plague organizations in recent years despite an increase in investigations into factors affecting such behavior. With few exceptions, attitudinal studies of turnover have focused on the construct of job satisfaction as a predictor of tenure. A fairly strong and consistent relationship has generally been found across various samples between greater job satisfaction and the propensity to remain with the organization (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell, 1957; Vroom, 1964; Porter & Steers, 1973). The failure to experience such satisfaction, then, appears in many cases to influence significantly the decision to terminate and seek alternative employment.

Recent investigations of turnover have typically attempted to replicate the findings of previous studies and have generally failed to look beyond the job satisfaction construct for other potential predictors of turnover. Little in the way of new information has thus been added to our knowledge of the withdrawal process. In addition, such research has been consistently static in nature, collecting attitudinal measures at one point in time and comparing such data with either present or future turnover rates. As pointed out by Lefkowitz and Katz (1969), attitudinal measures of factors

associated with turnover do not remain constant over time. Because of this, it appears more appropriate to measure patterns of attitude changes over time as they relate to the propensity to leave than to rely on a single measurement at one point in time. Our knowledge of the turnover process could therefore be expanded, at least in part, by the following: (1) investigations into other potential constructs relating to turnover in addition to job satisfaction, and (2) measures of attitudinal changes over time as they affect withdrawal. The present study is designed to accomplish both of these objectives.

This study focuses on the attitude construct of organizational commitment, in addition to job satisfaction, and compares their respective predictive powers in differentiating stayers from leavers among a sample of psychiatric technician trainees. The assessment takes the form of a longitudinal study over a 10-1/2 month period.

Based on previous findings, we would expect overall job satisfaction measures to be inversely related to turnover. Hulin (1966, 1968) found, for example, that turnover among a sample of clerical workers could be accurately predicted by using the unweighted sum of the scores on the five-scale Job Descriptive Index. Similar findings have been demonstrated by Wild (1970) and Waters and Roach (1971). In addition, Katzell (1968) and Dunnette, Arvey and Banas (1969) found that both stayers and leavers entered an organization with similar levels of expectations. However, those who later left found it increasingly difficult to satisfy these expectations as time went on, while those who remained found it easier to experience such satisfaction over time.

When individual components of job satisfaction (e.g., satisfaction

with pay) have been used to predict turnover, fairly consistent results have been found for several factors. Satisfaction with pay, promotion, supervision, co-workers and the work itself have all been found to be generally related to the propensity to remain (Friedlander & Walton, 1964; Knowles, 1965; Ley, 1966; Hulin, 1968; Farris, 1971). Such findings are not universal, however, as some studies found certain of these factors unrelated to withdrawal (Kilbridge, 1961; Taylor & Weiss, 1969b; Telly, French & Scott, 1971; Waters & Roach, 1971). Given the strength of relation between overall job satisfaction and turnover, it is not surprising to find fairly strong relations between many of the components comprising the overall measure and turnover. We would therefore expect in our sample that the global measure of job satisfaction would be inversely related to turnover and that, in addition, at least some of the components of job satisfaction would also be so related.

Far less is known about the relation between organizational commitment and turnover, as no studies have been published relating these two variables. Organizational commitment is defined here in terms of the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Such commitment can generally be characterized by at least three factors: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a definite desire to maintain organizational membership. Some evidence exists that a stated intention to remain with the organization, a component of commitment, is strongly and inversely related to turnover (Kraut, 1970; Atchison & Lefferts, 1972). In addition, it can be argued that individuals highly committed to an organization's goals and

willing to devote a great deal of energy toward those ends would be inclined to remain with the organization in an effort to assist in the realization of such highly-valued objectives. We would thus expect organizational commitment to be inversely related to turnover. While the individual may be dissatisfied with either his pay or his supervisor, for example, a high degree of commitment to the organization and its goals may serve to override such dissatisfaction his decision to continue participation in organizational activities. That is, measures of organizational commitment may be more effective predictors of turnover than job satisfaction, at least under certain circumstances. In other cases (e.g., where money is very important to an employee and where he is quite dissatisfied with his salary), on the other hand, satisfaction with various aspects of the job may take precedence over commitment in the decision to participate.

The use of psychiatric technician trainees as subjects for such a study has a number of advantages. The training requirements and procedures, as well as the pay and promotional opportunities during the first year of employment, are all standardized either through hospital policy or state law. In addition, the subjects do not differ greatly from one another in demographic characteristics or in socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, many personal and organizational environment factors are essentially held constant. The major factors left uncontrolled are informal social interaction patterns and the formation of individual expectations, needs and desires on the job. [A more detailed examination of the job environment and role requirements of psychiatric technicians may be found in Rushing (1964) and Strauss et al. (1964).] A further reason for selecting such a sample is that these trainees typically tend to have high rates of turnover.

Finally, as increasing emphasis is placed on health sciences in the future, it is especially important to learn more about the job environment and employee attitudes of such workers.

Method

Subjects and Research Setting

The subjects in this study were drawn from two classes or groups of psychiatric technician trainees employed by a major west coast hospital for the mentally retarded. The training course for these employees was one year in duration, including 1,000 hours of supervised clinical experience and 400 hours of on-site classroom lectures. The clinical tasks required of the trainees were quite varied, ranging from feeding and dressing patients to doing physical therapy and using such techniques as behavior shaping and operant conditioning. During the training period, the technicians received a modest salary.

The demographic characteristics of the two training groups were very similar. The average age of the Group 1 trainees was 28.0 years, while Group 2 trainees had an average age of 29.0 years. Group 1 consisted of five males and twenty-five females, while Group 2 had nine males and twenty-one females at the beginning of the study. Subjects in both groups typically had a high school education. In addition, selection procedures for both groups were identical, as were the training sequences, ward assignments, and instructors. The training groups were begun two months apart. Because of the similarity of the two groups, it was felt combining them into one study group was justified for purposes of analysis.

As with most state hospitals, this organization had a long history of high turnover among its psychiatric workers, especially among those with

shorter tenure. Psychiatric technicians traditionally have turnover rates ranging between 30% and 50% during the first year of "full-time" employment (i.e., after completion of training). Those employees with one or more years of full-time tenure typically average a 25% turnover rate. Similar turnover rates were found in the present sample. A total of 84 individuals began training in Groups 1 and 2. However, by the beginning of this study (approximately nine months later), only 60 individuals remained. These 60, then, constituted the initial study group. During the remainder of the study period, however, 27 more individuals terminated, or 45% of the sample.

Instruments

Two research instruments were used in the attitudinal assessment. Each will be discussed briefly.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. This 15-item questionnaire was designed to solicit a measure of the degree to which subjects feel committed to the employing organization. Included in this instrument are items pertaining to the subject's perceptions concerning his loyalty toward the organization, his willingness to exert a great deal of effort to achieve organizational goals, and his acceptance of the organization's values. All items represent statements to which the subject responds on seven-point Likert-type scales, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". A measure of overall commitment is derived by taking the mean score across all items. The internal consistency (coefficient alpha) correlations on this instrument ranged from .82 to .93 across the four time periods.

Job Descriptive Index. The JDI was employed to measure satisfaction with five aspects of the subjects' jobs: supervision, co-workers, work,

pay, and promotion. In addition, the unweighted sum of the five scales was used as a measure of overall satisfaction. Validity and reliability data, as well as scoring techniques, for the JDI are described in Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969).

Data Collection Procedures

Instruments were administered to the subjects during four sequential time periods by the researchers. Confidentiality of responses was assured by both the university researchers and hospital management. Moreover, subjects were given the opportunity to decline participation but none did so. The first administration (designated Time Period 1) was given 10 weeks prior to the completion of the training program. Only Group 1 (n = 30) participated in this administration since Group 2 had already passed this point in their training program.

The remaining three administrations (Time Periods 2, 3, and 4) were given to both groups 2 weeks prior to training completion, 2 weeks after beginning "full-time" work (i.e., after training), and 6 weeks after beginning full-time work. Subjects who did not complete the training program and left during the initial data collection periods were dropped from the investigations because of insufficient attitudinal data across time. The sample size fluctuated somewhat during the latter three administrations due primarily to an inability to secure unanimous participation of all subjects during all time periods and to a very small amount of turnover between the third and fourth administration periods. The resulting sample sizes for these three periods were, respectively, 47, 51, and 45. Thus, while a pure longitudinal design was attempted, it was not possible to achieve an entirely homogenous sample across time. Turnover data, based on

hospital records, were collected up to 8 months following the completion of the training program.

Results

Attitudinal Differences Between Stayers and Leavers Across Time

The sample was divided into stayers and leavers based on subsequent turnover data, and mean scores for each group were calculated on the organizational commitment and job satisfaction instruments for each time period. Results are presented in Table 1. Because we would expect the mean score

Insert Table 1 About Here

for stayers to be greater than the mean score for leavers, differences were tested using one-tailed t-tests.

As is evident from Table 1, the mean score on organizational commitment for stayers is higher than that for leavers during Time Period 1 (10 weeks before the completion of training). But the difference, while approaching $p < .05$, is not significant at that level. For Time Period 2, however, the difference between mean commitment scores for stayers and leavers is highly significant ($p < .005$). Thus, two weeks before the completion of training and the beginning of full-time work, fairly accurate predictions can be made with respect to the propensity to leave during the following year. This highly significant difference between stayers and leavers on the commitment instrument continues through the third and fourth time periods.

Commitment scores among stayers continued to rise over time through Time Period 3, but declined slightly in the fourth period. Meanwhile,

commitment scores among leavers rose very slightly from Time Period 1 to 2 and thereafter consistently dropped off. The difference between stayers and leavers with respect to organizational commitment, then, increases over time.

In contrast, mean scores between stayers and leavers on overall job satisfaction generally tend to converge over time. As shown in Table 1, a significant difference exists ($p < .05$) between the two groups for Time Periods 1 and 2. However, mean differences for Time Periods 3 and 4 failed to reach significance. It should be noted that both stayer and leaver satisfaction curves increased in Time Period 3, but such a change is not surprising, since these measures were taken two weeks after the beginning of full-time work as certified psychiatric technicians (with an accompanying increase in pay). This increased satisfaction was temporary, however. During Time Period 4, the satisfaction scores for both groups dropped to their lowest points in the study.

As expected, Table 1 also shows a great amount of fluctuation among the various subscales of the JDI across time periods. While mean scores for stayers are typically higher than those for leavers, few significant differences were found. In addition, those significant differences that were found did not follow any consistent pattern. For example, satisfaction with pay scores for stayers and leavers were only significantly different in the first time period and no other, while satisfaction with promotion scores were only significantly different in the third period.

From the data presented here, it appears as if subjects' attitudes as they relate to turnover are directed primarily toward job-related factors in the organizational environment during the very early phases of employ-

ment. However, as time goes on, increased attention appears to be directed toward the more broadly-based organizational context factors. That is, based on these data, it appears as if employee attitudes as they affect turnover become increasingly directed over time toward particular aspects of the total organization (e.g., its goals, values, etc.) instead of toward the immediate job environment. This point will be discussed in greater detail below.

Partial Correlations Between Attitudes and Turnover

The homogeneity of stayers and leavers with respect to demographic characteristics is reflected in the general lack of significant differences between the two groups on these variables. No significant differences were found between the two groups on education, tenure, male-female ratio, or income. One important exception, however, was age. The mean age for stayers was 31.9 years, significantly higher ($p < .01$) than the mean age of leavers, 23.9 years. This relation between age and turnover has been found elsewhere and was not surprising (Minor, 1958; Fleishman and Berniger, 1960; Ley, 1966; Stone and Athelstan, 1969; Farris, 1971). However, such a finding did open the possibility that attitudes or turnover might be accounted for solely by age.

The small size of the present sample precluded the use of matched pairs to control for age as has been done elsewhere (Hulin, 1966, 1968). The effects of age were therefore statistically partialled out in the analysis phase. Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated between age, turnover, and the two attitudes. The use of the Product Moment method on the turnover variable (a dichotomous variable) is justified here since it yields the same results as would the biserial

correlational method (Nunnally, 1967). Partial correlations were then computed between the attitude variables and turnover, holding age constant.

The partial correlations between the two attitudinal constructs and turnover, with age held constant, are presented in Table 2. As can be

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 Insert Table 2 About Here
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readily seen from this table, age, while lowering the significance levels somewhat, is not an important moderator of the commitment-turnover relationship. Organizational commitment scores still accurately differentiate stayers from leavers for the latter three time periods ($p < .05$, $p < .01$, $p < .01$, respectively).

On the other hand, partialling out the effects of age serves to eliminate the significant relations between overall job satisfaction and turnover for Time Periods 1 and 2. Thus, with age held constant, job satisfaction as measured here was not found to effectively differentiate stayers from leavers in this sample. In addition, holding age constant similarly eliminates four of the five significant relations reported above between the various JDI subscales and turnover. Thus, age was found to be an important moderating variable in the relationship between job satisfaction and subsequent turnover.

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to study patterns in organizational commitment and job satisfaction across time as they relate to turnover among psychiatric technicians. Based on the data presented here, several points warrant emphasis and discussion.

Initially, some consideration must be given to the relationship between the two attitude constructs themselves so as to determine the relative degree of independence of the major predictor variables under study. Across the four time periods, commitment and satisfaction were intercorrelated at .66, .61, .56, and .79, respectively, for this sample. On the average, then, these two attitudes shared approximately 44% of the common variance. Therefore, while it must be recognized that the two constructs are fairly closely related, they are still distinct enough so that two somewhat independent attitudes can be identified for purposes of study.

When the data are viewed within a cross-sectional framework, it becomes apparent that leavers as a group consistently scored lower than stayers on both attitude measures during all four time periods. This difference is particularly strong on the commitment instrument, where differences of a highly significant nature were found for three of the four time periods. While leavers are thus identified as being less committed, as well as less satisfied, the data are not sufficient to demonstrate why such differences occur. One possible explanation may be found in the existence of substantial differences between stayers and leavers with respect to the degree to which their expectations had been met on the job (Porter & Steers, 1973). It is possible that the relatively stable "reward" system (e.g., pay, training procedures, task requirements, and instructors and supervisors were common to all subjects) was insufficient to meet the expectations of those who later left, but was quite adequate to fulfill the expectations of those who remained. While the present investigation was not specifically designed to test this hypothesis, support for such a possibility can be found elsewhere in the literature (Dunnette et al., 1969; Katzell, 1968;

Macedonia, 1969; Weitz, 1956; Youngberg, 1963). In other words, lower degrees of commitment and satisfaction and resulting higher turnover may have occurred because the realities of the job environment were not perceived to be adequate when compared to what some subjects expected at the time of employment.

A second important point illustrated by the data concerns changes in attitudes over time. When the data are viewed in a longitudinal fashion, it becomes apparent that differences between stayer and leaver mean commitment scores widen with increases in tenure. Conversely, the differences between stayers and leavers on both the overall scale and on the various sub-scales of the job satisfaction instrument tend to diminish over time, although such a pattern is not entirely consistent. In fact, the greatest number of significant differences between the two groups' satisfaction scores occur in the first time period, and differences generally decline thereafter. Moreover, not only do the mean satisfaction scores for stayers and leavers converge over time, but in addition the curves for both groups fluctuate considerably across time with no discernible patterns.

The different findings between these two related constructs may, in part, result from basic differences in the nature or make-up of the two attitudes. Organizational commitment, on the one hand, appears to be a relatively intangible and abstract phenomenon, possibly requiring an employee to think in fairly global terms about his relation to his employer (e.g., his degree of agreement or disagreement with the organization's goals and values). We might expect that such a "searching out" process would require a greater amount of time to develop, during which an individual would either come to

feel a part of the organization (i.e., identify with the organization) or he would not. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, appears to be largely associated with relatively specific and tangible aspects of the work environment (e.g., pay, promotional opportunities, required tasks, etc.). Reactions to such factors may be more spontaneous and more quickly developed than those for commitment. Moreover, depending on short-run alterations in the task environment, these reactions may also be more transitory in nature than those for commitment. Such explanations could in large measure account for the shifts in satisfaction levels over time among both stayers and leavers.

The major finding of the present study, then, is that organizational commitment, as defined and measured here, proved to be a better predictor of turnover than did job satisfaction for this sample. In other words, the results indicate that in this organizational context general attitudes toward the organization may be more important in the decision to participate than the more specific attitudes toward one's particular job. It must be remembered, however, that such findings emerged among a sample of psychiatric technicians working in a state mental hospital. It is conceivable here that, given the nature and purpose of such an organization, organizational commitment may take on a special importance in the participation decision. That is, employees working in such an organization may feel that contributing their services toward worthy goals outweighs their like or dislike of the particular tasks required to attain such goals. Whether this situation would exist among employees of profit-oriented business organizations remains to be demonstrated.

The general implication of these findings for future research on the

psychology of turnover is the necessity of looking beyond the more traditional construct of job satisfaction for other potentially significant factors that may affect the decision to participate or withdraw. While job satisfaction clearly appears to be an important variable in such a decision, other attitudes may at times be even more important, especially among particular samples. Future investigations should consider searching outside the satisfaction-turnover paradigm for a more comprehensive explanation of why people voluntarily leave their jobs. Based on the data presented here, it appears that organizational commitment may represent one such factor involved in this complex process.

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Table 1

Mean Attitude Scores for Stayers and Leavers Across Time Periods

Attitude	Time Period 1 (-10 weeks)		Time Period 2 (-2 weeks)		Time Period 3 (+2 weeks)		Time Period 4 (+6 weeks)	
	Stayer \bar{X}	Leaver \bar{X}	Stayer \bar{X}	Leaver \bar{X}	Stayer \bar{X}	Leaver \bar{X}	Stayer \bar{X}	Leaver \bar{X}
Organizational Commitment	3.96	3.44	4.26	3.46***	4.26	3.24***	4.01	3.01***
Job Satisfaction (JDI)								
Overall	161.87	130.00*	152.04	127.72*	155.40	136.40	146.85	124.52
Supervision	31.18	24.00	32.88	26.31	32.33	27.95	36.57	29.05*
Co-workers	42.31	37.38	35.72	30.81	39.29	38.13	40.03	35.23
Work	35.62	30.15*	32.88	26.77*	27.70	25.22	26.25	22.82
Pay	20.50	11.53*	20.16	20.27	21.92	22.54	20.50	19.88
Promotion	32.25	26.92	30.40	23.54	34.14	22.54*	23.50	17.52

* Significant at .05 level, one-tailed test.

** Significant at .01 level, one-tailed test.

*** Significant at .005 level, one-tailed test.

Table 2
 Partial Correlations Between Attitude Measures
 and Turnover Across Time Periods (Age held constant)

Attitude	Time Period 1 (-10 weeks)	Time Period 2 (-2 weeks)	Time Period 3 (+2 weeks)	Time Period 4 (+6 weeks)
Organizational Commitment	-.02	-.32*	-.43**	-.43**
Job Satisfaction (JDI)				
Overall	-.30	-.17	-.11	-.23
Supervision	-.19	-.08	-.03	-.23
Co-workers	-.23	-.14	-.01	-.15
Work	-.27	-.21	-.04	-.15
Pay	-.34*	.01	-.01	-.02
Promotion	-.12	-.14	-.27	-.21

* $p < .05$, two-tailed test.

** $p < .01$, two-tailed test.

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²Requests for reprints should be sent to: Lyman W. Porter, Graduate School of Administration, University of California, Irvine, California 92664.

³Now at the School of Economics and Management, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.