

## Perceived Justice, Prestige and Career Development as Predictors of Employee's Turnover Intention in Small and Medium Enterprises

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**Abstract:** The success of any organization including entrepreneurial organization depends on attracting and retaining the most valued employees through critical strategic human resource processes as studies indicate that employee's turnover is expected to increase worldwide. This study investigated factors which are strong predictors of employee turnover intention. The relations between perceived justice, prestige, career development and turnover intention were investigated. Furthermore, the extent to which these variables predicted employee turnover intention was also examined. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from the respondents. A stratified random sampling method based on accessibility and popularity of small and medium enterprises was utilized in selecting 349 respondents. The results indicate that there were significant negative relationships between perceived prestige and turnover intention ( $R = -0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and career development and employee turnover intention ( $R = -0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Perceived justice did not significantly correlate with turnover intention. The three variables jointly predicted turnover intention ( $F(3,345) = 60.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) accounting for 34.4% of its variance. Also, perceived prestige ( $\beta = -0.18$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) and career development ( $\beta = -0.54$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) independently predicted employee turnover intention. Findings, suggest that turnover decisions among small and medium enterprises employees is about the individual's perceived prestige and career development.

**Key words:** Small and medium enterprises, turnover intention, career development, organizational justice, organizational prestige, employees

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### INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been described as efficient and productive job creators, the seeds of big businesses, catalyst for socio-economic transformation being the largest employer of workers (Abor and Quartey, 2010; Ihua, 2009). In a global context, SMEs contribute about 50% of GDP and 18% of Hungary's export (Richbell *et al.*, 2010) while in Japan, it is the largest employer's accounting for 66% employees, thus making SMEs sector as the backbone of their economy (Gamage, 2014). In most African nations, SMEs represents over 90% of business and offer more than 50% of employment (Abor and Quartey, 2010). There seems to be a continuous increase investment in SMEs because of the annual inflow of fresh graduates into the pool of unemployment market and the low investment cost (Apulu, 2012). In addition, to having low levels of bureaucracy with a prevalence of egalitarian structures

(Forth *et al.*, 2006; Taylor, 2006). The owner managers adopt informal management styles (Down, 2010) and also responsible for majority of human resource issues (Forth *et al.*, 2006) as human resource management in small businesses is predominately informal in nature (Markova, 2009; Storey *et al.*, 2010;). Researches targeting this vital economic sector remained scarce (Chinomona and Pretorius, 2011; Chinomona *et al.*, 2010).

Every organization wishes to retain its key employees as employee disengagement (turnover) can have disproportionate impact on the business (Armstrong, 2009). Employee turnover especially, key employee affect not only the direct cost of replacement and new training costs but indirect costs such as lowered productivity, competitiveness, increased work-load and planning time (Abdullah *et al.*, 2007; Allen, 2008; Wagar and Rondeau, 2006). The decision to quit a job could range from personal or job characteristics, offer of

better job, career change, poor working conditions to low benefits (Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2012). According to Gomez-Mejia *et al.* (2012) study, about 80% of employee turnover were avoidable with thorough investment in quality HR management practices.

Factors that often affect employee's behaviour such as turnover include, the context in which the work is carried out (Armstrong, 2010), training and development opportunities and policies and procedures for rewarding employees (Hafiza *et al.*, 2011). There is therefore, a need to study factors that influence employee turnover intention with specific reference to SMEs as employees are potential source of competitive advantage (Boxall and Purcell, 2011) and also because few research has been conducted in this area in relation to small businesses (Wagar and Rondeau, 2006).

**Literature review:** Fairness theory has previously been used in management studies to explain employee reactions to organizational authorities (Azar and Darvish, 2011). In psychological studies, fairness theory suggests that when the individuals face negative situations, they make cognitive comparisons, known as "counterfactual thoughts" (Nicklin *et al.*, 2011). The "Counterfactual" involves the three facets of cognitive comparisons of what should, could and would (Duffy *et al.*, 2006). That is they evaluate and react to the present circumstances in terms of what should, could and would (Duffy *et al.*, 2006). Fairness heuristic theory similarly predicts that when an organizational relationship is in flux, fairness-relevant experiences become especially potent factors in shaping attitudes and behaviour (Behson, 2010). Relating fairness theory to the current research, this study submits that when SMEs employees evaluate the quality of work life at their workplace, judge it against what should, could and would alternative scenarios be. They ask such question as would our quality of work life be better if the working conditions improve? Could SMEs employer improve their working conditions? The SMEs employees will perceive the quality of work life to be unfair if their employer act differently. Although, there is no general accepted reason(s) why employees opt to leave an organization. It is therefore, important to understand those factors that lead employees to build intent to leave their organization.

The concepts of justice and fairness are closely related and are often use interchangeably (Williamson and Williams, 2011; Pourezzat and Zeinali, 2011). Specifically, organizational justice focuses on the perception of fairness in the workplace (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2009) just as it helps to explain why employees retaliate against inequitable outcomes and interactions (Alsalem and Alhaiani, 2007). Studies further indicated that the

behaviour and attitude of employees towards work significantly influence employee's perceptions of fairness (Fuchs, 2011; Pourezzat and Zeinali, 2011). In addition, researches further showed that employees who perceived that their organization treated fairly, tended to develop and maintain communal relationships with the organization (Kim, 2009) while employee's work performances escalate and intentions to leave work decreases (Fatt *et al.*, 2010; Iyigun, 2012; Orucu and Ozafsarlioglu, 2013). In other words, POJ is fundamental to organizational employee's social interaction which can affect turnover intention.

Perceived Organizational Prestige (POP) has played a substantial role in binding employees to their employers. According to Kim *et al.* (2010), employees that have positive organizational prestige continue to work and show positive behaviours being a member of the organization. Other studies showed that organizational prestige reduce employee's turnover intention (Akgunduz and Bardakoglu, 2015; Al-Sakarnah and Alhawary, 2009). According to Akgunduz and Bardakoglu (2015), high prestigious organization is important to make the employee stay due to the associated self-esteem, even when the financial earning is below satisfactory. Herrbach *et al.* (2004) concluded that the relationship between POP and turnover intentions which have been identified in their study might have not been completely conclusive and need to be replicated in various samples. However, the result of findings by O'Neill and Gaither (2007) showed a significant but weak direct relationship between POP and turnover intentions. Giving these facts, the study therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between POP and turnover intentions.

Organizational career development is being examined for its influence on turnover intentions. Employee development allows organizations to boost its performance and create a sustained competitive advantage (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006) because employees with informed knowledge and skills (Lazarova and Taylor, 2009) are required for organizational effectiveness. Both employee development and lack of employee development pose substantial risk for employers as either can stimulate turnover (Koster *et al.*, 2009). This dilemma in terms of cost and benefits is often referred to as the management paradox (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). For instance, Gamage (2014) review showed that training was linked to a higher likelihood of employees quitting their jobs as increase skills make it easier to secure employment elsewhere (Haines *et al.*, 2010). While study by Govaerts *et al.* (2011) indicated that with the management implementation of appreciative learning and working climate, talented employees are more likely to continue

working in the organization. This assertion is a confirmation by Chew and Chan (2008) research that training and development and recognition showed positive relationships with the intention to stay in the organization. In the same vein, lack of career advancement opportunities is the driving force that can trigger employee turnover (Umar *et al.*, 2013). While employee's career success and the continuous provision of more career opportunities often leaves fewer reasons for employee turnover (Zhao and Zhou, 2008). This study argues that retention programs mostly fail because managers do not actually understand the key drivers that initiate the intention to leave an organization.

Based on literature reviewed, the following hypothesis were set for this research:

- H<sub>1</sub>: there would be a significant negative relationship between perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational prestige, organizational career development and employee turnover intention among employees of small scale enterprises
- H<sub>2</sub>: perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational prestige, organizational career development would significantly jointly and independently predict employee turnover intention among employees of small scale enterprises

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research design:** The purpose of this quantitative study was design to examine perceived organizational justice, prestige and career development as predictors of employee turnover intention among employees of SMEs, hence adopted a correlational research design. The survey data was collected among employees of SMEs.

**Participants:** The survey data was collected using documents from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria which indicated micro scale enterprises, small scale enterprises and medium scale enterprises. A stratified random sampling technique based on accessibility and popularity of small and medium enterprises in Oyo State, Nigeria was adopted. The 535 questionnaires were distributed and 349 questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 64.99%.

## Measures

**Demographic questionnaire:** Employees of SMEs completed a short demographic section of the instrument to obtain descriptive data for the sample. The study included; gender, marital status, age,

educational level, number of children, job role, years of experience on the job and size of the organization's workforce.

Perceived Organizational Justice (POJ) scale was adopted from a research conducted by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). The questionnaire comprises of 20 items, with 5 Likert response formats ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.69 was obtained for the scale in this study.

Perceived Organizational Prestige (POP) scale was adopted from a research conducted by Mael and Ashforth (1992). The questionnaire comprises of 8 items, with 5 Likert response formats ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 was obtained for the scale in this study.

Organizational Career Development (OCD) scale was adopted from Garavan and Coolahan (1996). The questionnaire comprises of 5 items with 5 Likert response formats ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.61 was obtained for the scale in this study.

Employee turnover intention scale was adopted from Chen *et al.* (1998) study. Employee turnover intention consists of measures of intention to leave their organizations. The questionnaire comprises of 5 items, with 5 Likert response formats ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 was obtained for the scale in this study.

**Procedure:** A study based survey strategy was used for data collection, allowing for collection of quantitative data which could be analysed. The questionnaires were self-administered. Informed consent was obtained from the director of operations of each of the enterprises and from the participants. Confidentiality of individual employees were protected as the questionnaires were anonymous. Respondents were given a cover letter which accompanied the questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the research as well as encouraging employees to completely fill and return the questionnaire. Out of the 537 questionnaires that were distributed 349 were filled and returned while the questionnaires were coded and processed through IBM-SPSS Version 24.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result of the correlational analysis in Table 1 indicated that there was no significant relationship between organizational justice and employee turnover

Table 1: Zero order correlation showing the relationships among POJ, POP, OCD and employee turnover intention

Variables	1	2	3	4	$\bar{X}$	SD
POJ	-	0.21**	0.17**	0.07	62.13	9.41
POP		-	0.15**	-0.25**	25.31	6.80
OCD			-	-0.56**	15.97	4.76
Turnover intention				-	10.78	2.86

\*\*p<0.01; POJ = Perceived Organizational Justice; POP = Perceived Organizational Prestige; OCD = Organizational Career Development

Table 2: Summary of multiple regression showing POJ, POP and OCD as predictors of employee turnover intention

Variables	B	t-values	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F-value	p-value
POJ	-0.06	-1.31	>0.05				
POP	-0.18	-3.99	<0.05	0.59	0.34	60.29	<0.01
OCD	-0.54	-12.21	<0.05				

POJ = Perceived Organizational Justice; POP = Perceived Organizational Prestige; OCD = Organizational Career Development

intention ( $r = 0.07$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). A significant negative relationship exists between organizational prestige and employee turnover intention ( $R = -0.25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and career development had a significant negative relationship with employee turnover intention ( $R = -0.56$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, hypothesis one which stated that there will be a significant negative relationship among organizational justice, organizational prestige, career development and employee turnover intention among employees of SMEs was accepted.

The result in Table 2 indicated that POJ, POP and OCD jointly predicted employee turnover intention in SMEs ( $R = 0.59$ ;  $R^2 = 0.34$ ;  $F(3,345) = 60.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This implies that justice, prestige and career development jointly accounted for 34% of the variance in employee turnover intention. Organizational prestige ( $\beta = -0.18$ ;  $t = -3.99$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and career development ( $\beta = -0.54$ ;  $t = -12.21$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) were significant predictors of employee turnover intention while organizational justice did not significantly contribute to the prediction of turnover intention. Thus, hypothesis two which stated that prestige, justice and career development would significantly jointly and independently predict employee turnover intention among employees of SMEs was partially accepted.

This study offers strong indications that some of the selected variables had greater impact on employee turnover intention among small-medium enterprises. First, the study showed that negative relationship existed between turnover intention and the factors of career development and organizational prestige. It can be assumed that employee experiencing poor career development and working in a lowly perceived organization has the greater tendency to quit, thus supporting (Kim *et al.*, 2010) assertions. On the contrary, perception of organizational justice seems not to have effects on employee turnover intention which is in contrast to Iyigun (2012), Orucu and Ozafsarlioglu (2013)

studies. This study found that organizational prestige was a significant negative predictor of employee turnover intention which is in line with previous findings by Akgunduz and Bardakoglu (2015), Al-Sakarnah and Alhawary (2009) and the research by Herrbach *et al.* (2004) that viewed employee's perception of organizational prestige as related to workplace attitudes such as turnover intention. Although, O'Neill and Gaither (2007) study showed a weak direct relationship between organizational prestige and turnover intentions. From this finding, it can be concluded that perception of organizational prestige substantial play significant role in binding employees to the organizational as Kim *et al.* (2010) earlier advanced.

The results of this study indicated that career development significantly contributed to the prediction of turnover intention which confirmed the observations of researchers that lack of employee development (Koster *et al.*, 2009) and lack of career advancement (Umar *et al.*, 2013) could stimulate or trigger employee turnover. This study invariably confirmed by Chew and Chan (2008) findings that training and development is related to intention to stay in an organization. In line with this study, previous findings indicated that supporting career development encourage employees to stay with the organization (Govaerts *et al.*, 2011; King *et al.*, 2005; Zhao and Zhou, 2008).

The non-significant contribution of the predictor variable of organizational justice to turnover intention contradicted (Kim, 2009) observation that the perception of fair treatment by employees tended to relate work outcome of relationship with the organization. The current study did not also support the research findings by Fatt *et al.* (2010), Fuchs (2011), Iyigun (2012), Orucu and Ozafsarlioglu (2013), Pourezat and Zeinali (2011) that employee's perceptions of fairness influence work outcome such as intentions to leave. However, the concluded relationship between organizational prestige and turnover intentions which have been identified in their study might have not been completely conclusive as the issue of organizational justice might not mean so much to SMEs employees. In addition, there is a need to determine whether the outcome in this study can be replicated with other samples.

## CONCLUSION

This study has been able to provide information that with the improved career development of employees and increase in organizational prestige, employee turnover intention decreases. The study simultaneously showed that organizational justice is important with the presence of prestige and organizational career development in the

prediction of turnover intention in SMEs. It is also important to highlight the significant role of human resource issues no matter how small it may be. There should be clear guidelines on opportunities for career development (training, recognition) and this must be based on employee's performance. Management should engage employees in the career development planning strategies and allow employees to grow even through self-development. In addition, owner/managers should maintain good relationship with employees and invest in building constructive norms that will underpin employee's attainment of career development goals. All these will encourage employees to stay and lead to reduced turnover intention. A committed workforce can be built this way. In summary, this research can be used by SMEs to adjust their current policies and procedures to retain the best employees and build a committed workforce with the aim of sustaining a viable economy with minimal employment problems.

### IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study offer both theoretical and practical implications for SMEs owners and stakeholders that are interested in SMEs business improvement or performance. When evaluating many options that are available to SMEs, management should use strategies that promote organizational prestige among valuable employees which may involve but not limited to identification with the enterprise. The owner/manager of SMEs should use principles such as unique branding, innovative product range, flexible dress code, etc., to promote organizational prestige among employees.

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