

Voluntary turnover typology utilizing the dispositional variables of core self-evaluation and negative affectivity

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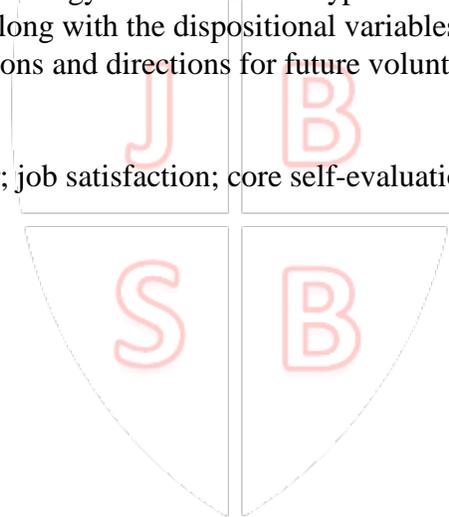
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ABSTRACT

A voluntary turnover typology is developed in order to provide a psychological, heuristic tool for understanding the psychology behind different types of voluntary turnover. The typology incorporates job satisfaction along with the dispositional variables of core self-evaluation and negative affectivity. Implications and directions for future voluntary turnover research are provided.

Keywords: voluntary turnover; job satisfaction; core self-evaluation; negative affect



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INTRODUCTION

Voluntary turnover has been widely studied in human resource management due to its large financial impact on organizations and pervasiveness (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). Costs associated with turnover include separation costs, recruitment and training costs (Allen, Bryant, & Vardamn, 2010), decreases in customer service quality (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel & Pearce, 2013), and increases in accident rates (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005). Voluntary turnover can also limit opportunities for future minority and women leaders (Becker & Cropanzano, 2011; Nyberg, 2010).

Traditional research has focused on job dissatisfaction and rational decision processes as causes of voluntary turnover (e.g., Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, Griffeth, 1992). The relationship between job dissatisfaction and turnover has been widely studied and has been found to be consistently correlated with one another (see Hom et al., 2012 for a review). Some researchers have suggested the turnover process begins when individuals experience *shocks to the system* (Lee, Gerhart, Weller, & Trevor, 2008; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

Researchers have indicated a need for more research on the psychology of voluntary turnover (Harman, Lee, Mitchell, Felps, & Owens, 2007). The relationship between intentions to quit and turnover varies greatly, and personality variables may be crucial moderators in the intention-turnover link (Allen et al, 2005; George & Jones, 1996; Hom et al, 2012; Judge, 1993; Zimmerman, 2008). Zimmerman (2008) in a meta-analytic study of the impact of personality on turnover, found direct effects of personality on turnover, and he found that personality variables had stronger relationships with outcomes than measures of both job characteristics and complexity.

Specifically, both core-self-evaluation (Allen et al, 2005; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011) and affective disposition (Judge, 1993) have been suggested as moderators in the turnover process. However, there has been some confusion regarding the function of these dispositional variables with resulting gaps in the literature and even conflicting hypotheses (Allen et al, 2005; Spector & Michaels, 1986). Allen et al, (2005) and Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2011), suggest that core self-evaluation (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997), which is a broader trait encompassing locus of control, should be explored in future turnover and boundaryless career research. Judge (1993) found that affective disposition affected the job dissatisfaction-turnover relationship. In order to more fully understand the moderating effects of core self-evaluation and negative affectivity on the intent to turnover- turnover relationship, they must be considered simultaneously.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a voluntary turnover typology of changers (i.e., individuals who leave the organization) versus stayers (individuals who remain with the organization) using core self-evaluation and negative affectivity together to help explain how these individual differences relate to voluntary turnover. Further, we make propositions about the three way interaction of these variables with job satisfaction in making specific predictions about the likelihood of voluntary turnover. We begin with a brief overview of personality variables examined in past voluntary turnover research followed by discussions of core self-evaluation and negative affectivity.

THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY VARIABLES IN TURNOVER

Research has explored the moderators of self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality and risk aversion in the relationship between turnover intentions and turnover behavior to better understand the voluntary turnover phenomenon (Allen et al, 2005). Allen et al, (2005) found that self-monitoring and risk aversion moderate the intentions-turnover link, while there were mixed results for locus of control as a moderator. Locus of control was found to be a significant moderator in 1 of 2 samples, while proactive personality did not directly moderate the relationship between intentions and turnover behaviors (Allen et al, 2005).

Zimmerman (2008) used a meta-analytic path model to examine turnover intentions and the Five Factor Model (FFM): Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience. They found that the trait of emotional stability best predicted (negatively) intentions to turnover.

The next two sections discuss core self-evaluation and negative affectivity as two moderators that may help explain some of this variance.

CORE SELF EVALUATION

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is comprised of four dimensions: Locus of control, neuroticism, generalized self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Judge et al, 1997; Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). The locus of control dimension of CSE has been widely studied (Allen et al, 2005; Judge & Bono, 2001). Individuals with an internal locus of control (internals) attribute the cause of events to themselves, while individuals with an external locus of control (externals) attribute the cause of events to chance, fate, or other external factors (Rotter, 1966). Research has shown that externals are less satisfied with their jobs, have higher absenteeism rates, more workplace alienation, and less job involvement than internals (Blau, 1987; Judge & Bono, 2001). Locus of control has been examined as a moderating variable in the turnover and intentions relationship, and it was suggested that CSE may play an important role in understanding why some people make the effort to translate intentions into actual turnover behavior and others do not (Allen et al, 2005).

Maertz & Griffeth (2004) suggests the importance of self-efficacy in determining an employee's likelihood of leaving the organization, since their perceptions of the quality and quantity of job alternatives would be likely to affect their turnover decision. On the other hand, dissatisfied employees with low CSE may not voluntarily turnover because of their perceptions that they have no control over the dissatisfying organizational outcomes, they lack confidence in the ability to adapt to change, and take the initiative to develop their job skills and abilities (Hall, 2002). Low CSE, if dissatisfied, may wait until they are forced to leave and therefore may have higher involuntary turnover. In addition, research suggests that those with high core self-evaluations will have greater persistence and resilience when looking for a new job (Wanberg, Blomb, Song, & Sorenson, (2005).

NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY

Negative affectivity was defined by Watson and Clark (1984) as "... a mood dispositional dimension. It reflects pervasive individual differences in negative emotionality and self-concept"

(p. 465). Individuals who are high in negative affectivity are generally less satisfied with all aspects of their lives, and they are more likely to experience distress than individuals that are low in negative affectivity (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Maertz and Griffeth (2004) state that employees who have negative views of their workplace are more likely to turnover. In addition, those with high negative affect are more likely to recall negative information (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and have negative perceptions of the environment and themselves (Burke, Brief, & George, 1993)

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) suggest that affective forces are an important in understanding the motivation for turnover. It has been suggested that negative affect is an important determinant of intentions to turnover and actual turnover (Thoresen, Kaplan & Barksy, 2003). In empirical findings, Maertz and Campion (2004) found that quitters with no job alternatives were impulsive and had higher negative affect than those who used other decision types (preplanned, conditional, comparison). Dispositional affect has been shown to be more than just a transient state, even though situations can certainly influence a person's mood (Staw & Barsade, 1993). Affective disposition has been shown to have continuity over time (Costa, McCrae, & Zonderman, 1987) and predict job satisfaction throughout people's careers (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). Genetics may even play a role in affective disposition (Baker, Cesa, Gatz, & Mellins, 1992).

Affective disposition has been found to moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover such that a stronger relationship exists between job dissatisfaction and turnover when individuals have a more positive disposition toward life in general (Judge, 1993). People who are generally negative about most things in their lives will not find it particularly unusual that they are dissatisfied with their jobs, and job dissatisfaction may not be a particularly important factor in turnover for persons high in negative affect. Similarly, persons high in positive affect who are generally satisfied, will find job dissatisfaction particularly alarming and will probably act to change their situation or in this case turnover (Judge, 1993).

In related research, George and Jones (1996) examined the interaction of positive mood and value attainment on the satisfaction-turnover relationship. They found that individuals with a high positive mood who did not experience value attainment at work had higher turnover intentions than individuals with low positive mood who also did not experience value attainment. Bouckennooghe and Butt (2013) found that negative affectivity influenced intention to quit.

TURNOVER TYPOLOGY AND INTERACTIVE EFFECTS

In this section, we integrate the three literatures addressing core self-evaluation, negative affectivity, and turnover to develop the voluntary typology presented in Figure 1 which will aid in the understanding of the voluntary turnover process. In order to ease interpretation of the typology, we used the following terminology in naming the four quadrants: Hobos, Malcontents (Ghiselli, 1974), Reward Seekers, and Stability Seekers. We also develop propositions reflecting the three way interaction of these variables as indicated in Figure 1 (Appendix).

As can be seen in Figure 1, hobos are characterized by high core self-evaluation, high negative affectivity, and low job satisfaction. Malcontents are characterized by low core self-evaluation, high negative affectivity and low job satisfaction. Reward seekers are characterized by high core self-evaluation, low negative affectivity and high job satisfaction. Stability seekers are characterized by low core self-evaluation, low negative affectivity and high job satisfaction.

Quadrant 1: Hobo Misfits

Ghiselli (1974) defined the “hobo syndrome” as the “periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place” (p. 81). Ghiselli described certain workers as having a type of wanderlust or a strong inexplicable urge to repeatedly change jobs after relatively short periods of time. Support was found for the hobo syndrome or the hypothesis that turnover depends on the number of times an individual has changed jobs in the past (Judge & Watanabe, 1995).

In an effort to explain their findings, Judge & Watanabe (1995) suggested that dispositional traits may be responsible for the unexplained, seemingly illogical behavior, and that in particular negative affectivity may be related to the hobo syndrome. They suggested that negative affectivity causes employees to feel job dissatisfaction and this dissatisfaction may lead to compulsive job hopping or hobo syndrome in a vain attempt to find satisfaction. This corresponds with research that found that misfits were somewhat quicker to turnover than those who fit with the corporate culture (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Suppose the hobo misfit who is dissatisfied with her or his job has an internal locus of control. Due to this internal locus of control, the hobo takes the initiative to change jobs. It's also possible that the job-hopper has a greater taste for variety than others (Astebro & Thompson, 2011).

This logic is consistent with the reasoning of Ghiselli (1974) and Judge and Watanabe (1995) in which the job hopper takes control and instigates the turnover process. It would be expected that these misfits are low in job embeddedness in that they are not strongly connected or involved with their jobs and coworkers (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004). Therefore, it would be easier for them to voluntarily turnover than those who are embedded in their jobs.

Quadrant 2: Malcontents

Ghiselli (1974) described the malcontents as those who experience job dissatisfaction but choose to remain with the organization. These malcontents are embedded in the organization. This type consists of individuals who are high on negative affect like the hobos, but with an external locus of control. The high negative affect means these people are generally negatively disposed toward life, and will probably not act on their job dissatisfaction, because they are accustomed to dissatisfaction (Judge, 1993). This group is similar to the “reluctant stayers” discussed in Hom et al, (2012).

They will remain on their job, and remain dissatisfied. Tuten and Neidermeyer (2004) found pessimists in the call centers they analyzed had lower turnover intent. Perhaps they were more negative about alternative job prospects and therefore less likely to turnover. Becker and Cropanzano (2011) discuss the unfolding model of turnover which suggests as performance decreases, the likelihood of organizational separation increase. Two more categories flow from this line of thought. In addition to the job changers with high negative affect, job changers with low negative dispositional affect obviously exist. In Judge and Watanabe's 1995 study that confirmed the existence of the hobo syndrome, brief mention was made of the need to control for job hoppers which are not actually hobos. Some individuals “may exhibit a pattern of turnover

behavior not due to a desire to job hop per se, but because they have a greater number of labor market alternatives” (Judge, 1995, p.213). This category can be called the reward seekers.

Quadrant 3: Reward Seekers

In contrast to Judge & Watanabe’s (1995) description of the hobo as being high on negative affect, are the seemingly happy, free-spirited job changers or the mobile, go-getter managers. When this type is in a situation they are not satisfied with, these high CSE individuals will make a change in order to become more satisfied or happier. This leads to the third quadrant that can be called reward seekers. They are high on internal locus of control and low on negative affect. Perhaps they are seeking growth or self-actualizing opportunities. Perhaps family, volunteer work, an alternative career, or some other strong desire pulls people away from their jobs. Organizations have a vested interest in trying to retain this group of high performing reward seekers (Nyberg, 2010).

This group is similar to the “enthusiastic leavers” discussed in Hom et al., (2012). The distinguishing feature is the low negative affect and the resulting higher general satisfaction than the quadrant 1 type. The reward seekers may be temporarily dissatisfied with their jobs directly before and during the turnover process, because it is not fulfilling certain needs. However, in general over the long-term, these individuals will tend to make positive change so that they are satisfied with their jobs.

Quadrant 4: Stability Seekers

In this quadrant are the stability seekers who are low in negative affect and low in CSE. These people are low in negative affect and therefore, generally satisfied with their jobs (Judge, 1993). Because of their job satisfaction combined with low CSE, they will be stayers and not generally voluntarily turnover. Even when they are dissatisfied with their jobs, they may cognitively distort the dissatisfaction because of their desire for stability or fear of change.

Perceived obligation of the psychological contract, normative commitment or embeddedness may be related to the lack of turnover for the engaged or “enthusiastic stayers” (Hom et al, 2012). Self-efficacy, a part of CSE, has been theorized as an important factor in voluntary turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Specifically, the employee’s self-efficacy beliefs about their ability to obtain a quality job alternative can be an important consideration in the voluntary turnover process and this idea corresponds with both the alternative forces’ mechanisms that include both the uncertainty avoidance aspect, as well as the attraction sides (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Given the above discussions and following the typology shown in Figure 1, we propose the following:

- Proposition 1: Hobos/Misfits and Reward Seekers (both characterized by high CSE) will be quicker to turnover than Malcontents and Stability Seekers.
- Proposition 2: Among Hobos/Misfits and Reward Seekers, Hobos/Misfits will be the most likely to turnover.
- Proposition 3: Among Malcontents and Stability Seekers, Malcontents will be quicker to turnover.

DISCUSSION

Core self-evaluation (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011) and negative affectivity (Judge, 1993) are broad concepts that are important to consider in the turnover process. As discussed previously, these concepts subsume other more narrow personality traits such as self-esteem, trait anxiety, and neuroticism (Judge & Bono; 2001). Because negative affectivity is strongly linked to satisfaction and satisfaction is strongly linked to turnover, it is likely negative affectivity has strong moderating effect on the satisfaction-turnover relationship. Additionally, CSE is a variable which may determine whether a person takes action. Because people with high CSE feel they have more power to control and change events, they may be more likely to do so. For example, a person may be dissatisfied with his or her job. But if he or she is low on CSE, they will probably not initiate the action of quitting because of the belief that the situation is out of his or her control (Allen et al, 2005).

The typology developed here attempts to clarify the dispositional affects of two pervasive personality variables on the turnover process. When combined, core self-evaluation and negative affectivity may help predict who stays and who leaves the organization. For example, how negative affect leads to turnover depends on the level of CSE and vice versa. Judge (1993) called for more research on negative affectivity. Perhaps, negative affect moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and withdrawal cognitions. This typology although exploratory will hopefully stimulate more theorizing as well as empirical testing in this area.

Situational variables could be included by considering this typology under various situations. For example, this typology could be analyzed under both positive and negative environmental or organizational situations. Specifically, the typology could be tested in organizations in which there are high levels of perceptions of organizational politics or lack of organizational support. Other types of situations at times may thwart dispositional tendencies. For example, when a maintenance seeker who is normally inclined to stay with her job becomes pregnant, she may decide to turnover.

If the proposed three way interaction were tested in the future, the effects of age and tenure could be included or at least controlled to prevent confounding results. Other personality variables also may be found to be related and important to voluntary turnover. Some of these variables may be highly correlated with negative affect and locus of control or subsumed by them. Risk taking, need for achievement, growth needs strength, and sensation seeking are a few of the dispositional variables which could be considered in the future.

Turnover is becoming a more important topic as 5 or 6 job changes during a person's career are now considered commonplace. However, job-hopping while sometimes benefiting the employee can be costly to both firms and individuals in lost productivity during transitions and due to training and hiring costs. In addition, companies can determine an employee-organization fit in the staffing and selection process by utilizing personality testing. Therefore, it is important to try to better understand the dynamics of personality in the voluntary turnover process.

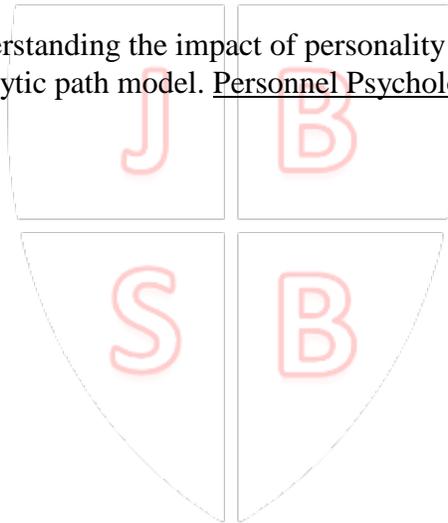
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APPENDIX

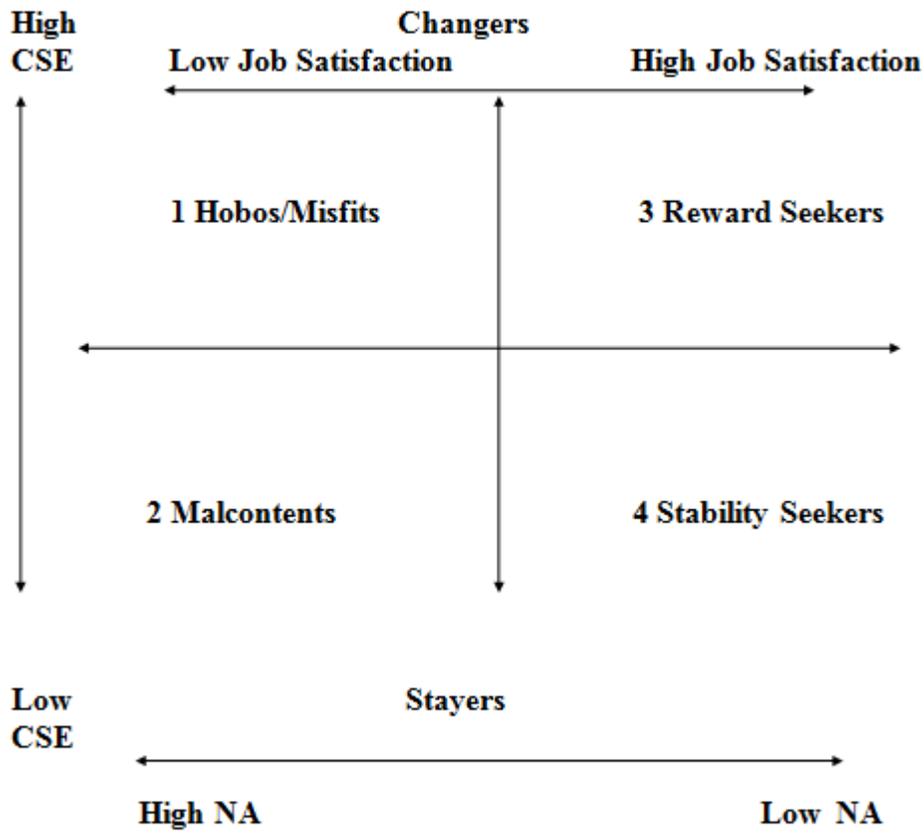


Figure 1. Dispositional Changers versus Stayers Turnover Typology