

Chapter 88

Twenty–First Century Issues Impacting Turnover of IT Professionals: From Burnout and Turnover to Workplace Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Identifying the precursors of turnover has been the subject of examination for the past four decades. IT professionals are a critical group of employees in the current knowledge-driven economy, and as such, they experience unique job stressors. This chapter explores recent research on the organizational stressors that influence IT turnover intentions. The goal is to provide insights on how organizations can begin to stem burnout, turnover intentions, and eventual turnover while improving work-related wellbeing. A revised model of work-related wellbeing is also presented in this chapter. Another objective is to discuss current issues in the IT domain and provide new research directions. New research for the IT turnover literature will provide information to scholars and practitioners on how they might improve and alleviate the impact of turnover on organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Identifying the precursors of turnover has been the subject of examination and study for the past four decades (Dinger, Thatcher, Stepina, & Craig, 2012; Joseph & Ang, 2003; Joseph, Ng, Koh, & Ang, 2007). Historically, researchers who study employee withdrawal in the form of turnover viewed two variables as key to understanding why employees voluntarily leave organizations: job satisfaction and perceived job alternatives (Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985). Over the last 30 years, however, considerable research has been devoted to developing predictive models of voluntary turnover, with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit among the most commonly proposed reasons for dissatisfaction (Ferratt, Agarwal, Brown, & Moore, 2005; Maier, Laumer, & Echardt, 2015; Moore, 2000a; Weinert, Maier, Laumer, & Weitzel, 2015).

Information Technology (IT) professionals are a critical group of employees in the current knowledge driven economy and as such, they experience unique job stressors (Weinert, et al., 2015). Stressors are stimuli or actions encountered by an individual at work. Stressors might trigger an individual to produce different responses in the form of strain that lead to burnout (Weinert et al., 2015). There is a difference between IT professionals and knowledge workers. Information technology professionals are workers in a technology services organization (Burrell, 2014). They are in occupations that include computer programmers, systems analysts, database administrators, information security, computer support specialists, application developers, network administrators, and team members who support and maintain computer systems, other technology and related activities (Burrell, 2014; Dixon, 2016).

Recent studies have shown that the IT professional's environment – knowledge oriented work and around-the-clock service is prone to creating job stress (Chen & Karahanna, 2014; Shih, Jiang, Klein, & Wang, 2011). Additionally, as organizations continue to ask more from their IT employees (e.g. increased workload), turnover intention and job burnout also are increasing (Zaza & Armstrong, 2016). Job burnout is an extreme or advanced form of job stress and has been recognized as an occupational hazard (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Job burnout is important to researchers and practitioners because of its association with critical psychological and behavioral outcomes, including productivity, withdrawal, turnover, and employee well-being (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Weinert, et al., 2015). Job burnout has been identified as one of the main consequences of job stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach, et al., 2001).

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the authors seek to explore previous research and the most recent findings on the organizational stressors that influence the turnover intentions of IT professionals. The goal is to provide insights on how organizations can begin to stem burnout, turnover intentions and eventual turnover. Another important objective of this chapter is to provide new research directions that have not been investigated yet or have been explored less. New research for the IT turnover literature will provide information to researchers on how they might improve and alleviate the impact of turnover amongst staff.

To this end, this chapter will:

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