

COMPONENTS OF JOB SATISFACTION RELATED TO  
INTENTIONS TO LEAVE: A STUDY OF THE PURCHASING PROFESSION

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Abstract

Research has related job satisfaction to employee turnover in the purchasing profession. However, little research has been done to establish which aspects of job satisfaction contribute to this turnover. This research reports on a survey of almost 400 purchasing executives nationwide and establishes a link between intention to leave and the components of job satisfaction.

Employee turnover has been frequently investigated as a dependent variable in organization research (e.g., Staw 1984). Most of this research has employed attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction to account for variance in the turnover criterion. Many of these studies point to the consistent, although weak impact of job satisfaction as a predictor of turnover (Price and Mueller 1981; Michaels and Spector 1982; Mobley 1982; Steers and Mowday 1981). Other research has suggested that intentions to leave may be a better predictor of turnover than job satisfaction (Atchison and Lofferts 1972). Researchers following this approach argue that an employee's intention to leave may be the next step after the experienced dissatisfaction. In a study of salespeople, Donnelly and Ivancevich (1975) reported a positive relationship between dissatisfaction and intention to leave. Similarly, Busch and Bush (1978) reported that female sales people were slightly less satisfied with their jobs than their male counterparts, but more inclined to leave, although no direct test of this relationship was provided.

Recently, Parasuraman and Bower (1983) reported that approximately one third of purchasing executives surveyed appeared ready to switch fields. They found that propensity to leave the field of purchasing was related to selected personal and job factors, including an overall measure of job satisfaction. While consideration of overall job satisfaction in the decision to stay with an organization is important, such a measure offers little insight into the roots of dissatisfaction. Knowing that a purchasing executive is dissatisfied and ready to leave does not tell us why he/she is dissatisfied. Consequently, little can be done in an effort to retain his/her services. To answer these questions, it is necessary to take a closer look at aspects of the work situation and job satisfaction as they relate to a purchasing executive's intention to leave. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship of several aspects of job satisfaction with purchasing executives' intentions to leave. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship of several aspects of job satisfaction with purchasing executives' intentions to leave the organization.

Methodology

The Sample

The data for this study was gathered via a mail questionnaire sent to a random sample of 1000 purchasing executives. A total of 395 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 39.5%.

The sample included purchasing executives from a wide range of industries including government and all sizes of organizations. Fifty-two percent of the sample reported only one purchasing agent in their organization while 14 percent had 6 or more. Forty-four percent of the respondents represented organizations with 500 or fewer employees and 34 percent had over 2000. Finally, 54 percent of the organizations represented had annual sales revenues of \$100 million or less while 20 percent had sales of \$1,000 million or more.

Data Collection Instrument

As part of a larger study, the purchasing officers were asked to rate their job satisfaction on a 91 item scale using a five-point agree/disagree format. The scale is based on the one developed by Churchill, et al. (1974) for salespeople and was slightly modified for purchasing executives. The satisfaction scale consists of statements that indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with specific aspects of the purchasing executive's work environment and includes seven components--the job itself, coworkers, supervision, company policy and support, pay, promotion, and suppliers and salespeople. A detailed discussion of the measurement of job satisfaction is beyond the scope of this paper. Interested readers can consult Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969), Futrell (1979) and Futrell and Parasuraman (1984). The scale allows for obtaining scores for each purchasing executive on each component. A factor analysis and subsequent measurement of internal consistency (Cronbach's (1951) Alpha Coefficient) indicated the scale works as well for purchasing executives as with salespeople (Churchill, et al. 1974). Table 1 shows the alpha coefficients for each of the seven job satisfaction components.

Intention to leave was measured on a five-point scale from "not at all" (1) to "A very great extent" (5) in response to the question "To what extent are you presently seeking to change employers?" In order to determine the relationship between intention to quit--a precursor to turnover--and the seven job satisfaction components, regression was used with intention to quit as the dependent variable.