EXAMINE THE VARIABLES OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies important variables that generate dissonance, and finds important variables that may reduce professionals' turnover in each source. A logit model is used to identify significant variables that affect the formulation of turnover intention.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, turnover intention

Introduction

The current revolution in IT has served to efficiently and effectively provide valuable information, but it has also increased complexity. As this complexity rapidly expands, recruiting and training professionals has become increasingly difficult. The retention of qualified and motivated people is critical to the success of IT departments and the organization as a whole. [4] reported that more than 65% of chief information officers left their jobs between 1996 and 2004. Turnover results in considerable costs to recruit, select, and train new employees before they become productive. This is particularly true in highly technical areas. A study by ComputerWorld reported that the cost of replacing an employee ranges from 65 to 120% of the first year's salary. The high replacement costs of IS professionals are attributable to the shortage of new qualified professionals and the difficulty of training them. Moreover, IT professionals' high turnover increases the risk of draining key information from the organization.

The analysis of turnover intention can exclude those who leave for organizationally unavoidable reasons such as moving to another spouse-imposed location or medical problems. The analysis of turnover intention can also include the perceptions of those employees who try to leave the organization sooner or later. By including them, the analysis of turnover intention can provide valuable information on how to keep qualified professionals.

Turnover intention can be used as a surrogate measure for organizational commitment and employee morale because it is closely related to those variables [3]. The survey performed by [3] reported that less than 20% of the variance in turnover could be explained. Consequently the major problem addressed by this research is that prior research has disregarded individual information processing in a turnover decision.
**Information Processing**

The present job can be regarded as the best among the alternatives which were available when the choice was made. When the changes produce a state of imbalance called disequilibrium, IS professionals try to revise their previous choices. When applied to a turnover decision, a discrepancy calls for a turnover decision which revises the previous choice of the current job.

If an employee experiences a high level of discrepancy, he/she will try to reduce the imbalanced situation. Because of the high level of dissonance, an adjustment process will be undertaken to reduce or remove the uncomfortable situation. Changing the current job can be one alternative to avoid the dissonance. A primary purpose of discrepancy theory in turnover analysis is to determine what factors create a discrepancy.

The input for the human information processing system is external stimuli. In the process of the turnover decision, changes in available alternatives, organizational situations, and demographic characteristics can be regarded as external stimuli. In turnover analysis, the perception subsystem evaluates the effects of changes and may produce discrepancies. The output for the human information processing is some observable activity. In turnover analysis, turnover intention or actual turnover can be considered as output.

Since the understanding of the turnover decision process is far from complete, [5] argued that much more emphasis should be placed on the psychology of the turnover process. [1] summarized Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance as follows:

Dissonance exists when an individual holds a cognition that is inconsistent with his or her other cognition in the same domain. Dissonance gives rise to measures to reduce, as well as to avoid increases in the dissonance. One way in which the individual can reduce dissonance is by altering the discrepant cognition to bring it in line with his or her other cognition.

**Preference Changes**

Preference changes resulting from changes in values can be one important source of discrepancy. [8] argued that each employee would have a somewhat different set of expectations depending upon his or her own values and needs at any given time. The changes in values result in the changes in preferences toward job features. The current job was the best alternative when the decision was made. Following the choice of the current job, however, an employee's preferences can change. The change may cause a discrepancy. Therefore, the current job no longer provides the best choice on the basis of the changed decision criteria.

**Variables Related to a Job**

[2] examined the process by which job characteristics influence turnover intention and job attitudes. The possibility of attaining outcomes can be replaced with the amount of input to get the outcomes. Therefore, choices about a job can be based on the interaction between input and
output job characteristics. System theory is useful to consider this interaction. To apply the system theory, decision variables are divided into two categories: input and output.

Research Framework and Hypotheses

This study is designed to find the variables that create the dissonance in the formulation of turnover intention. The following objectives are derived: 1) To identify possible factors that generate dissonance, 2) To measure the discriminant power of input and output sources.

The first objective examines what makes employees feel that they do not fit the current job. [6] reported that changes in consumer preferences due to the new knowledge of the health risk of cholesterol might increase the consumption of white meat in place of red meat. Thus, preference changes may cause employees to revise the previous choice.

The second objective aims at finding the relationship between variables and the level of dissonance. By examining the contribution of each variable in the formulation of turnover intention, relevant strategies can be specified to retain qualified professionals.

Two sets of hypotheses are addressed in this study. The first set of hypotheses is to find important variables that generate dissonance. The second hypothesis concerns the role of the variables in determining the level of satisfaction. It purposes to find important antecedents of job satisfaction. If the determinants of job satisfaction are different from those of turnover intention, job satisfaction can be considered as an intermediate variable which connects its determinants with turnover intention.

H1: High levels of dissonance display a higher chance of generating turnover intention.

H2: IS professionals who are dissatisfied with the current job display a higher chance of generating turnover intention.

Data Analysis

The sampling frame used in this study was a listing of staff members who are non-government subscribers to Datamation. Data has been collected and being analyzed. The study results can be discussed at the meeting in Charleston.

REFERENCES


