



Present and Past Turnover Literature: An integrated Approach

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The purpose of the current review is to analyse the development in turnover literature. It is noted that several important developments in turnover literature have been published in the Journal of Applied Psychology since 1925. Since then, there have been a number of phases described, namely: formative phase (1920s-1960s), foundational models phase (1970s), theory testing (1980s), unfolding model (1990s) and 21st century research. Each phase presented significant developments in turnover research. It has been found that most of the turnover theories are applied on overall population rather than applying them differently on different set of populations. For example, decision-making models cannot be applied on both satisfied, education and dissatisfied and poorly educated people. Also, the focus of turnover research remains limited to individuals rather than collectives (from individuals to industrial level). The review concludes by highlighting important practical implications which might help practitioners and policy makers to overcome turnover and to improve organisational efficiency. Several keynote recommendations have been suggested for future scholars.

Key words: *Collective turnover, Job Attitudes, Job Embeddedness, Shocks.*

Introduction

Public administration scholars are continuously looking over the origins, adoption, and novelties of public management over time. Turnover literature shows that governance cannot be made possible without sound economical and governance systems (Farazmand, 2001). In this regard, administrators and policy makers should take necessary measures to build healthy relationships between individuals and groups who share mutual goals and interests (Taylor and Kent, 2016). In a few of the countries like France, well-reputed organisations try to attract



professionals and qualified staff and when these employees find suitable working conditions elsewhere, they quit their jobs (Dana et al., 1999). In such circumstances, voluntary service benefits to employees for continuity of services (Hom and Griffeth, 1995), have attracted the attention of practitioners and scholars for years. In early years, journalists reported that an increase in pay helped employers to reduce the turnover (Men Quitting Mail Service by Hundreds, 1906). Further to this, advisers and top management documented costs associated with turnover and suggested strategies to reduce turnover (Fisher, 1917a), (Fisher, 1917b), and researchers postulated about turnover behaviours of employees (Eberle, 1919). From that time, hundreds of research publications discussed turnover phenomenon (Rubenstein et al., 2015). The Journal of Applied Psychology has published more articles than any other journal (Allen et al., 2010). This growing and longstanding concern towards turnover shows that turnover badly impacts organisational performance. Fisher (1917b) first calculated associated costs of replacement and hiring which was estimated to be 90 to 200% of the annual salary (Allen et al., 2010).

Turnover scholars theorised that turnover harms several outcomes which are associated with productivity (Shaw et al., 2015) and also affect the financial position of the firms (Heavey et al., 2012). A few of the studies have shown that employees who quit, play their role to undermine the competitive advantage of their former employers (Agarwal et al., 2009). Lastly, turnover has non-productivity aspects as well, like reducing workforce diversity when women from different races quit (Hom et al., 2008) or increasing it through high turnover rate (Felps et al., 2009). This study is an attempt to include all key articles related to turnover research which has shaped management practice or turnover research. The articles that have been reviewed have been published in the Journal of Applied Psychology and other prominent journals that played a significant role in highlighting turnover research and the associated factors. High importance is given towards selection of research articles by selecting only highly cited papers or key influential published reviews.

The current study discussed turnover publications during the last hundred years of the Journal of Applied Psychology. Along with this, other key turnover publications and methodologies have been included in this review. In the earliest part of the study, methodologies for controlling and reducing the number of articles was analysed and then we tried to explain the methodological and theoretical contribution in the literature. Later on, the psychology of staying is tracked down along with turnover trajectories. In the end, rising trend on collective turnover has been discussed in order to guide future researchers and practitioners to tackle this problem. This review has been divided into six sections highlighting significant developments in past turnover research. It starts with the beginning and early rise of the turnover research from the year 1920.



Evolution of turnover research

Turnover articles have theorised antecedents of turnover research, however Bills (1925) was the pioneer who published an empirical paper in the Journal of Applied Psychology. In this article, Bills (1925) clearly demonstrated that turnover ratio was high in employees whose fathers were involved in business or they were professional as compared to those whose fathers were semiskilled or unskilled and had no professional experience. Bills (1925) later on presented a predictive research design, while ignoring the relationship between the professional status of parent's turnover, to assess whether there is a relationship between application questions and turnover. Later on, this approach became a standard research design for testing theory in the 20th century (Steel, 2002).

Growth Stage of Turnover Research

Test Validation

No new studies (except Minor, 1958), included any further advancement in turnover articles until the 1960s and 1970s. Validation for weighted application blanks (WABs) (Schwab and Oliver, 1974) and a few of the other tests for selection (for example, achievement motivation, vocational interests by Hines in 1973) were reported in these studies. During this phase of renewal, Schuh (1967) reviewed the impact of selection tests which could help in determining job tenure, came to the conclusion that WABs are helpful for predicting turnover. This is because 19 out of 21 published studies found that few of the items in an applicant's personal history are related to tenure in most jobs. After such advancement, most of the research related to validation testing focused on WABs (Federico et al., 1976). But Schwab and Oliver (1974) did not agree with validation testing while Cascio (1976) stated that similar predictive validity can be found for both minorities and whites. A later study proved that predictive efficacy of WABs is better than other selection tests (Hom and Griffeth, 1995). Early WAB tests exaggerated validity for both quantitative and narrative reviews because of the fact that findings of these reviews were not cross-validated in most of the cases (Schwab and Oliver, 1974) and most of the WAB studies inflated variance of turnover, for example, indicating a 50% turnover rate (Minor, 1958).

Organizational commitment and turnover research

Later on, focus of most of the researchers was towards exploring attitudinal responses related to workplace environment (Hulin, 1966)(Hulin 1968) or an individual's views about their workplace environment (Fleishman & Harris, 1962) in order to examine turnover behaviour of employees. Though Brayfield and Crockett (1955) already theorised the relationship between job attitude and employee turnover, [27] authored their first effort in JAP to examine the relationship between job dissatisfaction and job survival using statistical tests and predictive research design. Hulin (1966) extended turnover research with prominent changes which significantly contributed to standard research design (Steel, 2002) and methodological features. Hulin (1966) became a standard guideline which includes, (a) to strengthen internal validity prospective research design should be employed, (b) aggregate-level relationship should not be focused rather individual-level should be given preference (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955), (c) inclusion of job satisfaction measures to examine turnover (Weitz and Nuchols, 1955) and (d) examining voluntary turnover rather than focusing on all forms of turnover. Later on, Hulin (1966) used quasi-experimental research design in a program which was initiated in 1964, a company was successful in achieving high job satisfaction among its employees which led to low turnover rate in 1966.

Earlier studies further stated that employees who leave the organisations have negative perceptions about their leaders (Fleishman and Harris, 1962) and working conditions (e.g. underutilized capacity, performance reviews, shift work and pay through the work of Hellriegel and White, 1973) as compared to employees who stay with their firms. Though these studies were not as influential as Hulin's (1966) work, they opened a gateway for future turnover scholars to consider environmental factors in order to further elaborate on turnover process (Mobley et al., 1979), (Price, 1977); (Price and Mueller, 1981). Later on, several turnover research scholars believed that employees are dissatisfied by several aspects of their work such as factory labour's monotony (Eberle, 1919). Hulin (1966), therefore started applying theories of job attitudes or work motivation including equity theory (Dittrich and Carrell, 1979), theory of reasoned action (e.g., Newman, 1974), expectancy theory (Mitchell and Albright, 1972) and theory of motivational needs (Hines, 1973) to examine the turnover pattern of employees.

Psychology of job and turnover

A new dimension in turnover research arises with the fact that supportive recruitment policies and accommodating new hires can reduce the turnover behaviour. Woo (2011) equipped new hires with a supportive material about working with an insurance agent and found that this

technique (realistic job preview) increased retention. These studies proved to be a new venture in realistic job preview (RJP) moderators, mechanisms, and media (Earnest et al., 2011). Some of the studies, though less influential, predicted that recruitment from other sources for example, from employee referrals (Gannon, 1971) and delivering brief orientation sessions to new hires (Rosen and Turner, 1971), can also minimise turnover.

Foundational Models of Turnover

March and Simon (1958) were the first to introduce voluntary turnover which proved to be different (according to Thomas Kuhn) from earlier theoretical research. Yet no further improvement was made in turnover research until further work by Mobley (1977) and Price and Mueller (1986) who chose movement desirability and ease, central construct of March and Simon's (1958) model, as a baseline construct to develop turnover models. Mobley (1977) theorised a linear sequence of turnover showing how dissatisfaction leads to turnover. He described this sequence as: dissatisfaction, quitting thoughts, costs of quitting and evaluating SEU (subjective expected utility of job search), intentions to search alternatives, evaluating alternatives, comparing alternatives and current job, intentions to quit, quitting.

Later on, Mobley et al., (1979) introduced a more comprehensive content model showing associated factors of employee turnover. Like (Mitchell and Albright, 1972), (Mobley et al., 1979) model is based on expectancy theory. They stated that employees will continue their job, even worse, because they expect some positive initiatives from their firms (like desirable transfers, promotions etc.), while employees may leave good jobs because their new job may have high utility from another job (by comparing the cost-benefit analysis of current job and other alternatives). They also theorised that consequences of leaving and non-work values moderate how SEUs and job satisfaction and certain alternatives strengthen turnover. Despite the presence of comprehensive turnover reviews, Price (1977) theorised a detailed overview of turnover antecedents. Price's explanation not only covers labour market causes (job opportunities) and workplace factors (e.g. pay, integration) but it also gives attention to occupational and community (kinship responsibility) drivers. Though March and Simon's (1958) model considers intentions behind quitting and job satisfaction as mediating variables between environmental factors and turnover, this model focuses on turnover content rather than turnover process. His theories are more directed towards environmental factors leading to practical steps which a manager can adopt to reduce turnover. His perception regarding inclusion of environmental factors for understanding turnover opened new ways to inquire further external antecedents such as family or community embeddedness (Mitchell and Lee, 2001), social networks (Feeley, et al., 2008) and social cues (Felps et al., 2009).

Modification of Turnover Theories

Empirical Directions

Unlike March and Simon (1958), Mobley and Price empirically validated their models, thereby promoting foundations of (March and Simon, 1958) model and standard research design for theory testing (Steel, 2002). Several turnover scholars applied their methodology and models in different settings and they remained dominant in this area for years, however the theory of reasoned action by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was also tested by some of the turnover scholars (Hom and Hulin, 1981). Mobley et al.'s (1978) model triggered testing of new methodologies (Hom et al., 1992). In doing so, too came the conclusion that the mediating process of Mobley's model was not appropriate and alternate structural modelling was suggested (Hom and Griffeth, 1991). Even though after the finding that Mobley's (1977) constructs are not in the correct sequence, modern theory is still practicing these constructs to assess turnover processes (Lee and Mitchell, 1994). Furthermore, (Mobley, 1977) theorised job alternatives and job search as the main constructs to explain the whole turnover process, suggesting future scholars explore them independently for their brief operationalisation and conceptualisation (Blau, 1964). Kraut (1975) was the first to find out that intentions to quit predict leaving, however later on Mobley's conceptualisation attested this and his conceptualisations remained dominant in turnover research for years (Steel and Ovalle, 1984) and turnover intentions remained part of all important turnover designs (Hom et al., 2012). Considering it as a predictive construct (Griffeth et al., 2000), intentions to quit remained an important factor, as a proxy or a surrogate, to predict turnover when availability of actual turnover data was not possible (Jiang et al., 2012). In addition to this, the expectancy framework by Mobley et al. (1979) highlighted how individuals comparing certain alternatives (Hom and Kinicki, 2001) and performing analysis of their future career (Ballinger et al., 2010), are still in practice in modern research, although rationalisation of SEU decision making has been a matter of dispute in turnover research (Feldman et al., 2012). Lastly, (Mobley et al., 1979) 'non-work' ideology emerged as a great landmark in turnover research in the same manner family embeddedness (Feldman et al., 2012) and work-family conflicts (Hom and Kinicki, 2001) proved to be an important construct in turnover research.

In the same pattern, (Price and Mueller, 1981) conceptualisations have undergone a thorough investigation (Gaertner, 1999). Several empirical studies have affirmed their theoretical model (Gaertner, 1999) yielding different results. Most of the research on Price-Mueller conceptualisations affirmed that several constructs of the model play pivotal role in quitting behaviour of employees, especially job satisfaction is the most significant construct of their model in this regard (Gaertner, 1999).

Specifically, the “kinship responsibility” construct of Price and Mueller model has emerged as an influential antecedent in turnover research which shows no significance between the work-family influences and intentions to stay or quit. Standard theory (March and Simon, 1958) is not successful to readily regard family causes as a prominent antecedent as compared to job alternatives and job satisfaction accorded in turnover research (Abelson, 1987). Thus, Price and Mueller (1981, 1986) theorised that this antecedent should be further examined in relation to turnover, with questions about how the number of relatives living nearby, marital status and the number of children etc. (Blegen et al., 1988) impact turnover. This construct is helpful in identifying that how familial relationship ties triggers intentions to quit of an individual from current job, such as quitting a job to take care of an elderly family member job (Hom and Kinicki, 2001) or continuity in job to enjoy health benefits or good rating schools for children (Gaertner, 1999). In summary, validation of Price and Mueller’s measures seem to be contrasting with standard research practices of using ad hoc measures, particularly whose validity is unknown.

Modification in existing methodology

Price and Mobley models considered not only important studies for constructing such brief models but also their further extensions and refinements (Steel, 2002). Again considering (Mobley, 1977) conceptualisations, (Hom and Kinicki, 2001) thus theorised another structural model. This is not the end, Steers and Mowday (1981) also criticised Mobley and Price Mueller models and conceptualised a brief turnover process which is as follows: (a) addition of more antecedents, (b) addition of new moderators, (c) identified other ways to tackle dissatisfaction of employees along with quitting, (d) taking feedback positively and implementing necessary measures after getting it and (e) identification of all possible ways that lead to turnover.

Steers and Mowday (1981) conceptualisations and constructs have a significant impact in the turnover process but the fact is that these constructs have been tested very rarely in its entire form (Lee and Mowday, 1987). Later on, researchers hypothesised that job opportunity plays the role of moderator between attitudes and the impact of intentions to quit on turnover (Carsten and Spector, 1987). So, turnover researchers realised employees whose satisfaction level is not so high, respond differently before leaving, such as contributing less towards organisational goals or avoiding work (Hom and Kinicki, 2001). Lastly, present-day research emphasises more towards the identification of alternative paths of employee turnover other than standardised paths explained in past research (Lee, et al., 2008).

To find out the solution, (Hulin, et al., 1985) were eager to know about an accurate prediction of turnover with the help of unemployment rates as compared to perceived job alternatives

(Steel and Griffeth, 1989). They related it to a specific workforce in the labour market whose quit intentions were not clarified by conventional turnover models. These labours were named hobos, and whenever they feel bored or dissatisfied, they used to rotate from one job to another in order to find a pleasurable job. For them, dissatisfaction is directly associated with the turnover rather than complex processes explained in traditional turnover models. Later turnover scholars started to investigate hobos (Judge and Watanabe, 1995) or spontaneous turnover paths which deliberately do not involve SEU estimation of the job and job alternatives (Lee, et al., 1999). Accepting prior researcher's conceptualisations (Price and Mueller, 1981), (Hulin, et al., 1985) suggested that it's not necessarily that employees quit because of getting employment opportunities from local employment statistics. Rather, they quit their jobs when they get proper job offers. Similar findings were observed later on and it was found that intended leavers do not look for new jobs before leaving as they get offers from unsolicited jobs (Lee, et al., 1996) or the employees are confident enough to find out better jobs whenever they quit their current position due to availability of multiple job opportunities in the market, for example, nursing. Hom and Griffeth (1991) stated this type of turnover is more common compared to those which were earlier identified by strategic management research (Agarwal et al., 2009).

Modern turnover literature

The unfolding model introduced many criteria to validate and reshape the turnover process. This unfolding model and its novel constructs have attained endorsement by practitioners and turnover scholars, becoming the most prominent turnover model in modern research (Hom, 2011). Lee et al. (1999) pioneered a qualitative methodology for validating turnover models. When leavers were interviewed, it became known that the majority of the leavers followed one of the paths described in the model and supported future scholars to elaborate further on this in their work. Moreover, it was found that shocks lead more to turnover than dissatisfaction.

Current turnover research refined or extended the unfolding model. Particularly, (Mitchell and Lee, 2001) related this model with job embeddedness theory and found that embedding forces have more impact on shocks by neutralizing their intensity which finally leads towards quitting behaviour (Burton, et al., 2010). Maertz and Campion, (2004) also theorised the model which supports the questions why and how individuals leave their current job. They highlighted different processes to explain the four types of leavers (types of decisions) which are based on certain forces of motivation that compel them for leaving. For example, there are pre-planned leavers (who leave with a plan) and impulsive quitters (who leave without having future jobs). Their decisions are aligned with Lee and Mitchell, (1994) turnover paths but they are not similar in nature. For example, (Maertz and Campion, 2004) differentiate pre-planned quitters,

those who already have planned for occurrence of specific event to occur, and conditional quitters, the ones who quit subject to occurrence of an uncertain event; however unfolding model treats both as path 1 types of turnover. Methodological considerations were finally adopted in turnover research to explain the revolving nature of turnover and to understand turnover forms like boomerang employees (who return to their former job) (Shipp, et al., 2014).

This unfolding model proved to be a distinctive milestone in turnover research as it is the best model to explain the role of novel constructs which explains why and how people quit. Furthermore, the model contains several novel antecedents, like multiple turnover paths, shocks etc., which hold a strong impact on turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller, et al., 2005), yet, predictive research designs need to be tested in order to fully understand the unfolding model.

Discussion

Since the emergence of applied research (Bills, 1925) and theoretical outcomes (Barnard, 1983), turnover research is well-known in Applied Psychology and Management Research. Theory-driven research in turnover literature has gained much more attention since (March and Simon, 1958) conceptualisations and its further explanation by Mobley (1977). With the passage of time, development of theories opened the gateway for the search and adoption of sophisticated statistical methods and research designs. As this review is an effort to conclude 100 years of turnover research, our technique of analysing research has been cumulative, sometimes discontinuous and sometimes in a normal and increasing fashion (Kuhn, 1963). Applied psychologists have done a marvellous job to synthesise this complex phenomenon. Yet, further investigation into turnover is needed to overcome it.

Validating Turnover Antecedents

(Mitchell and James, 2001) suggested considering the time factor, while (Lee, et al., 2014) supported their ideas and extended their findings. In this regard, turnover research offers several empirical and conceptual tools for researchers who have a great interest in considering the time factor. According to (Chen, et al., 2011) and (Liu, et al., 2012) changes in job satisfaction trajectories influences individual's intentions to stay or leave their job compared to static measures of job satisfaction. Besides job satisfaction, embeddedness and commitment (Bentein, et al., 2005), other antecedents like absenteeism, perceived organisational support or job involvement might be studied in future research. For example, (Hausknecht, et al., 2011) found that intentions to quit are also associated with justice trajectories. Further, they stated that employees use past experiences or perceptions to predict forthcoming workplace conditions. In terms of turnover outcomes, (Call, et al., 2015) stated that change in one standard



deviation in collective turnover results in the decrease in annual profit by 8.9% for retail stores. Thus, it can be said that studying different trajectories in relation to turnover can magnify turnover research in a new way. Analysing different antecedents of turnover intentions would be a valuable contribution in turnover research.

Investigating after-effects of turnover at an individual and organisational level

Until now, the focus on turnover scholars remained limited conceptualising turnover as the final destination of research outcomes. But (Shipp, et al., 2014) tuned turnover research by extending the unfolding model to research and testing the differences between alumni (who do not return) and boomerangs (who are re-hired). Boomerangs are more likely to be affected by negative personal shocks as compared to alumni. Alumni are presumed to be more affected by dissatisfaction and personal work shock. Future researchers should explore turnover destinations in order to learn which forces lead an employee getting another job versus adopting other lines of action like pursuing education or becoming a stay at home parent. They suggested analysing quitting behaviour at a different angle rather than considering turnover as an endpoint.

Analysing turnover practices

Researchers might consider turnover control in their future studies. Yet very few studies have covered this area of research, for example, (Agarwal et al., 2009) analysed how different organisations hold their engineers and scientists by providing protection regarding patent infringements, while (Gardner, 2005) explained that how they can defend themselves from poaching. Shapiro et al. (2016) conceptualised how employees may follow their leaders who are facing the problem of scarce resources and both social and human capital. Yet there is need to examine that whether mobility, upward or downward, has more implications for a turnover or not. Repeatedly, turnover may have different implications in different economies (Hom and Xiao, 2011) or cultures (Ramesh and Gelfand, 2010). There are great opportunities to overcome this problem when practitioners and researchers work together to ensure that there is a large amount of data available from organisations making it possible for researchers to develop new turnover research and theories (Hausknecht and Li, 2015).

Conclusion

The main focus of turnover scholars has evolved around individuals, work-groups or organisations. However, the role of industries has been neglected. Turnover may have different implications for both profit earning and descending in industries. Some industries are solely dependent upon knowledge workers, specialised and higher education individuals. Several directions have been indicated in this review, for example, formal tests of job search models, additional investigation on networks, further refinement and testing of embeddedness and unfolding models and integrating those ideas to offer five different research areas on which future researchers can advance their research in the upcoming years. The past hundred years of research includes data from both small and large organisations. It may give a new way for turnover research if nascent firms are analysed in relation to turnover. In such firms, leaving behaviour of professional people can determine a new guideline in turnover research. In this regard, it should also be questioned, can turnover scholars apply 21st-century theories to such employees and firms? After one hundred years of turnover research, turnover scholars have reached the conclusion that they can guide turnover research in a way which holds more value for future turnover scholars and practitioners.

Although very few journals have now published scholarly work from practitioners, this review helps and guides some practical implications for researchers in this regard (Daud, et al., 2018; Daud, et al., 2012; Daud, et al., 2014; Rahim and Daud, 2013; Daud, et al., 2017). Employers ensure to hire the right person for the job in order to overcome the issue of turnover. In this regard, person-organisation fit and bio-data of the employee can be helpful to analyse such prospects. Furthermore, employers must consider on-boarding practices in order to retain new employees as research has shown that employees who face difficulty in adjusting to the new environment might leave. In addition, firms must encourage surveys in order to take the response from employees to make sure that working conditions are suitable for the achievement of desired organisational goals and a decrease in turnover (Liu et al., 2012). Firms should also record turnover rate trajectories which impact organisational performance (Liu et al., 2012), using scoreboards or dashboards to collect data about who leaves (for example, prominent persons from network, average worker or high performers) and what is their destination (whether they join competitors or they quit profession). Adding to this, firms might record the numbers of reluctant stayers and leavers. In addition to this, firms may also assess reluctant leavers and its related aspects in order to extend turnover research and to help employers to overcome the turnover or to tackle such wind of turnover among employees.



Future Research

This review showed that turnover research is always changing its path. The current review expanded from individual to group and firm level, from micro to macro levels, from macro to cross-sectional levels and from cross-sectional levels to predictive levels. Yet there are many avenues that need to be explored and future turnover research is expected to bring some novel ideas in this regard. It has been a general practice that turnover theories are used to examine the turnover pattern of the whole population, but is there any change in results when different theories are applied in a different range of samples and populations? Like, whether there are different results when rational decision-making models are applied both in highly stable industries having highly educated individuals and unstable and short-term industries having low education employees? Is it not more suitable to not use embeddedness theory rather satisfaction based models in the fast food industry? So, future scholars should consider the attributes of different industries in relation to turnover. In particular, academic settings play an important role in economic development of the country. It would be a great input in literature if studies are conducted in developing states along with inclusion of job embeddedness as a measure of turnover intentions.



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