STIMULI AND EFFECT OF THE INTENTION TO LEAVE THE ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

The intent to leave is a commonly studied phenomenon. In this paper, we have studied the intention to leave in two separate folds: Organization and Profession. The determinants and outcomes for these two aspects are identified from present literature. It is postulated that job satisfaction and organizational commitment has organic relationship with intention to leave organization and profession, and these two phenomena relate to intention to leave consistently through almost all determinants and outcomes. Therefore, it is suggested that by intentionally bringing satisfiers and commitment stimulators, organizations can benefit by controlling or eliminating such intentions totally, as they have dangerous effects on individual and organizational performance.

Keywords: Leave, Organization, Profession, Intention

Introduction

Since the end of civil war in 1990, Lebanese organizations have received significant international attention. However, strong competition level has put those organizations under pressure to give employee management high priority as a significant mean to sustain competitive advantage. Thus, in order for firms to retain quality talent with the required skills, it is essential to understand the reasons behind employees' contemplation to leave organization. This paper also tends to resolve the mystery of why people think to leave organization.

Employees are not only aiming to change organizations, but they contemplate leaving professions also. Studies conducted by Storer (2002), and Rosenstein & Russell (2002) exposed that a significant profession like medicine is facing such trouble.

Though, this problem is not limited to professions like medicine, it's widespread in organizations too (Lane & Crane, 2002), for example accountants looking for sales jobs or vice versa.

Theoretically, considerable work has been done to understand the concept of intention to leave, nevertheless, broad analysis of stimuli and implications is rare. This paper is an attempt to present a review of the concept 'intention to leave' organization and profession. It is also suggested that main antecedents of intention to leave organization or profession can be altered and used as satisfiers or stimulators to handle such intention.

Literature review

Intention to leave is a well-studied concept and scholars have explained it in various ways. Intention to leave is defined as the level to which a member contemplates leaving the relationship with current community or employer (Kim, Price, Muller, & Watson, 1996). It can be theorized as manifestation and predictor of real turnover (Cohen & Golan, 2007), according to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) behavioral intention generally is predictor of an actual action. Intention to leave refers to the 'conscious and deliberate willfulness of the employees to leave the organization' (Tett & Meyer 1993) and it is

'individual own estimated subjective possibility or probability of leaving the organization or profession in near future (Bigliardi, Petroni & Ivo Dormio 2005; Mowday, Steer & Porter, 1979; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999). Actually, scholars use intention as a proxy for actual turnover because of difficulties to study it (e.g. Bluedorn, 1982; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Steers & Mowday, 1981). Tett & Meyer (1993) discovered that intent to turnover establishes the final cognitive phase in the decision making process, in which members actively consider quitting and searching for alternative jobs or professions. Intention to leave is reflected in the thoughts and consequently declarations by the members that they actually want to leave (Park & Kim, 2009). Mobley, Griffith, Hand, & Meglino, (1979) provided four cognitive parts of turnover intent:

1) Thinking of quitting;
2) Planning to stay or leave;
3) Searching for alternative career; and
4) A desire to leave current career.

Management research database search engine is used to extract literature on intention to leave. Hypothesized stimuli and implications in those papers are elicited in the present paper.

It is evident that job satisfaction and organizational commitment appear consistently as one of precedents to establish fundamental relationship of any variable with intention to leave. Nevertheless, because of theoretical complexities, the two concepts and their effect on intention to leave has been addressed distinctly.

Stimuli of intention to leave the organization

Employees' intention to leave can be considered as normal choices made concerning present organization (Steers & Mowday, 1981). The stimuli of intention to leave the organization can be characterized as individual, organizational, and external factors.

Individual Factors

Stress: Increasing level of stress may cause the employee to take the decision to leave (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969; Sheridan & Abelson, 1983). Stress also has been proven to influence indirectly the intention to leave (Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981). Job stress causes dissatisfaction which in turn leads to the intention to leave. Consequently, Elangoven (2001) discovered direct and indirect relationship between stress and intention to leave among students. He found that even though there is circular relationship among studied variables e.g. job satisfaction and commitment, never the less certain stressful job characteristics may directly affect individuals decision to leave.

Demographic characteristics: Many studies tackled the literature on employees in terms of demographic characteristics and turnover intent. Lambert (2006) discovered that gender, tenure, and education level of employees influenced their turnover intent. Women had higher turnover intent than men; he accredited this to job characteristics which involved more masculinity. (Becker, 1960) stated that with increasing tenure, employees intention to leave diminishes as employees "sunken cost" increased i.e. employees became more devoted to the organization. People with greater educational level were found to display greater turnover intent than those with lesser educational level. People with greater educational level observed higher external job occasions.

In literature, age has been a stimulating variable presenting positive relationships (Byrd, et al., 2000; Camp, 1994; Mitchell, et al., 2000; Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1997) as well as negative (Ford, 1995; Jurik & Winn, 1987). Perhaps this is due to its adjacent relationship with tenure.

We may consider that greater age should overthrow the risk taking abilities of an individual, though at the same time since age and tenure increase in tandem, employees with considerable tenure may get better occasions.

Work vs. Family conflict. Observed work-family conflict (WFC) is the level to which work is identified as interfering with home or family life (Frone, 2003) which occurs because of three reasons:

First, when employees fail to manage time

Second, when work is perceived as stressful and exhausting

Third, if behavioral demands (e.g. need of aggression at job though not at home) are dissimilar (Frone, 2003). Nevertheless, family-work conflict is the level to which family duties and responsibilities hinder work obligations (Frone, 2003) due to competitive family and job demands.

According to Role theory (Coser, 1975; Mead, 1934), individuals carry several role identities, work and family roles being the two utmost important ones. Contradiction between these two roles causes negative feelings, leading to a negative appraisal of the source of the threat (Lazarus, 1991). And as employees tend to attribute these stressors to organization and not to themselves (Frone, Russel & Cooper, 1992), it is recommended that in such cases employees are interested to search for alternative job that can propose better work schedule so that they can handle these conflicts (Cohen, 1997).

Locus of Control and self-efficacy: Locus of control refers to the level to which people believe they themselves or external factors, such as coincidence, are in control of the events regulating their lives (Levenson, 1974; Rotter, 1966). People with great internal locus of control are least affected by stressors and consequently tend to stay in the firm (Firth et al., 2003). Also, in a research conducted by Moore (2002), self-efficacy was associated with reduced intention to leave.

Organizational factors

Role ambiguity and role conflict: Role ambiguity is a consequence of weak clarity about the definition of role expectations, and the requirements or methods to complete work related tasks (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role conflict arises due to the incompatibility of demands and expectations from the role, where compatibility is measured on the basis of conditions that impact role performance (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Role conflict is considered more intense in jobs that require theoretical thinking and decision-making (Menon & Aknilesh, 1994). Role ambiguity and role conflict both can cause an employee to consider leaving the organization. Role ambiguity and role conflict may lead to faster depletion of employees personal resources; afterwards they will strongly try to preserve those resources with intent to use them where they can find job clarity (Hobfall, 1989; 2001). Keller (1975) stated that role conflict and ambiguity are negatively related to perceptions of opportunity related to promotions. Lack of growth opportunities for employees may lead them to search for other jobs.

Career anchors: Organizations are interested to provide internal career incentives in order to reduce employees' intent to leave (Hsu et. al., 2003). Internal career anchors refer to an individual's self-concept, the psychological attractions that serve to guide his or her career and are realized in terms of indirect incentives, such as job security, location, and autonomy. External career anchors refer to the similar set of anchors, though are measured in terms of individuals' perceptions of the organization's concern to satisfy the internal anchors through benefits and incentives (Jiang, & Klein, 2000; Kassicieh, Igbaria, Silver, 1999).

Studies have mentioned that compatibility of internal career anchors with employees' jobs leads to lesser intention to leave their organizations (Crepeau, et. al., 1992; Igbaria, Greenhaus, & Parasuraman 1991). Similarly, other internal career anchors can be supervision,

autonomy, communication, support, authority, promotional opportunity, and input into decision-making (Lambert, 2006) that may affect employees' intention to leave.

Human resource practices and organizational culture: Many potential reasons can explain why HR practices could play a significant role in defining employees' intention to leave. Honest job previews are crucial for new employees as in future their evaluation and expectation of job requirement should be similar (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Consequently, realistic job previews, even with the risk of losing potentially valuable employees, lessen the chances of occurrence of intention to leave and thus increase job survival rate. Training and initial socialization also play an important role.

New employees, when receiving a considerable relevant training experience, feel confident about their capacity to achieve the given task. This is because they feel important and it also serves as initial encouragement required for essential socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

HR practices also affect numerous forms of organizational justice, especially procedural and distributional justice (Barber & Bretz, 2000; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Gaertner & Nollen, 1989; Gratton, & Sharpley, 1991; Currall, Towler, Judge, & Kohn, 2005 Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid, & Sirola, 1998; Tabibnia, Satpute, & Lieberman, 2008). Likewise, organizational culture has influence on individuals' employment decisions (Park & Kim, 2009; Carmeli, 2005). O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell (1991) discussed that employees aim to leave the organization as soon as they discover the cultural misfit.

Social Support and perceived organizational support: Social support is proven to be an essential element that can diminish the intention to leave among employees. Social support from supervisors or seniors decreases the level of exhaustion and indirectly, thus, intention to leave (Hatton & Emerson, 1998; Kalliath & Beck, 2001; Moore, 2002). Witt and associates (Nye & Witt, 1993; Witt, 1991; Witt & Nye, 1992) studied the relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' aspiration to stay with the organization and discovered the relationship to be positive.

External factors

Family structure: Some experimental indications propose that family structure can influence individual behavior via its social control of members (Thornton, 1991) and its direction of members' time and energy (Biblarz & Raftery, 1993; Downey, 1995). However, work-family conflict and family-work conflict are normal outcomes of family structure; nevertheless, its separate influence on employees' intention to leave can be significant. For example, Lee & Mourer (1999) discovered that two-parent households have better supervised children than single-parent situations. Also, employees' with children and dependent wives have lesser odds to consider a job change than those who have working wives and lesser or no children.

Perceived community support: Sometimes, causes related and identified with the organization keeps the employees bonded to it. For instance, Tham (2007) discovered that social workers of various European countries never intended to leave the organizations because of their social reputation and inherent community support. Many studies demonstrate that community members' perceptions of values and interests are an important reason for making joining and survival decisions (Vincent & Thompson, 2002).

Implications of intention to leave the organization: Scholars have established a consistent idea that turnover intention is the final stage before the actual turnover occurs (Bigliardi, Petroni & Ivo Dormio, 2005; Carmeli, 2005; Gregory et. al. 2007; Mobley, 1982; Price, 2001). Nevertheless, a gap may exist between the aroused intention and the actual turnover action. Job 'embeddedness', which may be the opposite of the intention to leave and

the withdrawal behavior, is considered as positively related to performance, citizenship, and reduced absenteeism.

Firing the employee: The intention to turnover does not always lead to voluntary resignation, sometimes it leads to firing the employee. When the employee is in full control of his or her job (Herman, 1973), a slight withdrawal from it can lead to serious loss of productivity (Bowen, 1982). High visibility of productivity loss or absenteeism causes supervisor's attention and therefore leads to firing the employee.

Demoralization among peers: When an employee shares his/her turnover intention with peers, along with options of another position in an external environment, peers may react indirectly by doubting their own stimuli to stay in the organization. This reflective sentiment may increase considerably (Staw, 1980: p. 257). There are more factors leading to this sentiment; for instance, if another position is usually admired among peer group but seldom available, or if the employee with intention to leave belongs to highly cohesive group and has high social status. In such cases, demoralization among peers can be even greater.

Krishnan & Singh (2010) recognized additional three outcomes of intention to leave: OCB, deviant behavior, and performance orientation.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB): Procedural and distributive justice are both strong predictors of OCB and intention to leave (Moorman, 1991; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002). With turnover intention, an employee may withdraw from the social system. Therefore, during the interim period of turnover intent and actual turnover, employees may not engage in OC behaviors (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006).

Deviant behavior: Bowen (1982) proposed that intention to leave leads to increased absenteeism and thereby lower performance. Behaviors such as calling sick, lying about working hours, ignoring instructions (Aquino, Lewis & Bradfield, 1999) are considered as employees' deviant behavior (Kammeyer, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005) in context of immediate stimuli of actual turnover. These behaviors may also arise after the employee has decided to leave.

Performance orientation: It is defined as employees' pursuit for reward (Kohli, Shervani & Challgalla, 1998). These rewards are the result of positive assessment by others.

Performance orientation is vastly linked to a positive appraisal from others (Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994), in which the employee with intention to leave may not be interested. A time lag usually exists between performance and reward (Harrison, Virick, & William, 1996), within which an employee with turnover intent may expect to find another job, thus loosing eligibility for reward. However, unclear but significant relationship exists among turnover intention, performance, and actual turnover (Harrison, Virick, & William, 1996).

Circularity among stimuli and implications

Studying circularity became vital due to two consistent intervening variables: job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Scholars have used these two concepts regularly to explain their arguments about stimuli or implications of turnover intention. The following section of the current paper is an endeavor to comprehend the multidimensional relationship between stimuli and implications of intention to leave. Clugson (2000) examined the relationship between three variables and discovered that job satisfaction is a stimuli of organizational commitment and hence intention to leave.

Hsu et al. (2003) discovered that when employees are provided with desired career anchors, there will be slighter odds for them to have intention to leave. These career anchors will lead to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment thus slighter turnover intent.

Job satisfaction is considered to have the highest negative correlation with turnover intent (Bannister & Griffeth, 1986; Dalessio, Silverman & Schuck, 1986; Hom, Griffeth &

Sellaro, 1984; Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth, 1978).   Likewise, organizational commitment implies that employees with greater commitment endure more. Organizational commitment is considered to bear negative correlation with intention to leave (Cohen, 1993).

Preferred career anchors lead to greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment and consequently reduced intention to leave (Hsu et. al., 2003). Stress also shows considerable connection with turnover intent in presence of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Valle & Perrewe (2000) extended the model of Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter & Ammeter (1989) and discovered that perceived organizational politics increased intention to leave because of reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Pay satisfaction (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Currall, Towler, Judge, & Kohn, 2005; Griffeth et al., 2000) and supervisory support (Cohen, 1997; Iverson & Roy, 1994) where found to be directly related to turnover intent, some scholars have suggested that it is and indirect relationship also. Other factors, like working conditions, (Hasselhorn, Tackenberg, Müller, 2003) also lead to intention to leave due to dissatisfaction and lack of commitment. It is noticeable that literature on intention to leave has developed with help of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as it becomes hard to elaborate intention to leave without the presence of satisfaction and commitment construct.

Intention to leave profession; stimuli and implications

A related concept to intention to leave organization is intention to leave profession. Blau (2000) suggested that Intention to quit profession is a much more difficult decision than to quit the organization. Employees' intention to leave can be described as rational choices taken at cognitive end regarding present profession or organization or both (Steers & Mowday, 1981). Work transitions can take place at 5 different levels; entry/re-entry, intra-company (Dalton & Todor,1993), inter-company (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979), inter-profession, and exit (McCune & Schmitt, 1981; Talaga & Beehr, 1995), each treated differently by scholars, although studies on inter-profession transition are insufficient or not up to date (Louis, 1980).

Professionals are considered as individuals who show certain characteristics for instance, high levels of expertise, autonomy, commitment to work, commitment to the profession, identification with the profession, ethics, and collegial preservation of standards (Kerr, Von Glinow, & Schriesheim, 1977). These characteristics are viewed as obstacles since change of profession is accompanied with loss of income, loss of dignity and therefore lack of family and social support (Neapolitan, 1980). Similar to intention to leave organization, intention to leave profession is also viewed as most proximal variable to actual change of profession (Rhodes & Doering, 1983).

Cotton & Tuttle (1986) recognized three general classes of change intent; external, work related, and personal. External variables are employment perceptions or organizational image, which if negative, originate the intention to leave. Work-related variables are overall satisfaction with the aspects of pay, work, supervision, co-workers, and promotions (which are considered to relate negatively with intention to leave), and task repetitiveness, (which is suggested to relate positively with intention to leave). Personal variables like age, gender, and marital status are also considered to be related to intention to leave.

It is remarkable that nearly every model of intention to change profession hypothesizes job satisfaction or occupational satisfaction as significant antecedent (Mueller & Price, 1990; Rhodes & Doering, 1983). Other than professional satisfaction, Morrow's (1993) proposed that professional commitment is a more stable aspect than organization commitment, and discovered that age and professional commitment were negatively related to intent to quit profession.

The work of Rhodes & Doering (1983) merits special attention to understand intention to leave. In a seventeen factor model, career satisfaction has been suggested as stimuli to intention to change profession.

Literature gap

A lot of theoretical work has been done on intention to leave, as it is an important issue for organizations. Nevertheless, literature did not mention how can an organization deal with this topic and mould the intentions of employees in their interest. For instance, literature is restricted to simply classifying several organizational and individual antecedents' levels of intention to leave, and does not extend to its application so that organizations can manage the situations when employees start emerging such intentions.

As mentioned formerly, there is theoretical circularity in stimuli and implications of intention to leave. Therefore it is suggested that stimuli of job satisfaction and organizational commitment can perform as measures to control intention to leave. For instance, if organizations handle the source of job stressors, they will automatically contain intention to leave.

Breaking the cycle

Based on the model of Rhodes & Doering (1983), and considering job satisfaction (Mueller & Price, 1990; Rhodes & Doering, 1983) and organizational commitment (Morrow, 1993) as two significant dynamic factors influencing intention to leave, it can be anticipated that the cycle starting with the intention to leave and reaching to actual turnover can be broken by stimulating job satisfiers and commitment boosters.

Job Satisfiers

Job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976). It is all the characteristics of the job and the work environment which employees find "rewarding, fulfilling, and satisfying, or frustrating and unsatisfying" (Churchill. Ford, & Walker, 1974). In a Meta analysis of stimuli and implications of job satisfaction, Brown & Peterson (1993) categorized four groups of satisfiers:

(1) work outcomes; performance
(2) individual differences; demographics, self esteem
(3) role perceptions; role ambiguity, role conflict
(4) organizational variables; supervisory behaviors, job/task characteristics each having unique relationship with job satisfaction.

Employees may be supported to develop their performance through cooperative supervisory behaviors. Organization may also attempt to eliminate role conflict or role ambiguity through numerous means. Those attempts are named 'job satisfiers'.

Commitment boosters

The causal relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment has been subject to hypothetical debate. Organizational commitment has been considered as stimuli (e.g. Bateman & Strasser 1984; Idigbaria & Guimaraes, 1993) as well as implication (e.g. Bluedom 1982; Johnston et al. 1990).

Lately, Ariani (2012) suggested a circular relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Consequently, it may be presumed that stimuli of job satisfaction should influence organizational commitment. On the other hand, Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993) classified the stimuli of commitment into emotional attachment and belief, perceived economic value, and ethical reasons of obligation to organization.

As satisfaction can be a stimulus to commitment, we may presume that satisfiers should also function as boosters. Nevertheless, there are some unique stimuli of commitment that may influence it directly. For instance, culture fit is an important stimulus of commitment (O'Reilly et. at., 1991). Organization can plan culture fit programs (Cameron & Quinn, 1991) to improve member's commitment.

Given the dynamic nature of intention to leave, we suggest that job satisfiers should diminish the influence of dissatisfaction and obstruct the process of transforming intention to leave into actual turnover. Likewise, commitment boosters will improve the chances of a person to stay in organization (Figure 1).

An initial sentiment of dissatisfaction may come with loss of commitment and therefore intention to leave. Prior to any actual change in career or organization, members should prepare themselves (Rhodes & Doering, 1983). During this preparation, an initiation of satisfiers or boosters may give members an opportunity to reconsider the option of staying in the organization. Employees' feelings are unstable; each member may have diverse feelings about his/her organization or profession. Typical induction programs may support organizations or professional bodies to manage explicitly unidentifiable yet existing intentions. Thus, we hypothesize that the objective of the organization to stay above the action threshold may be accomplished with the support of these inducers.

Figure 1
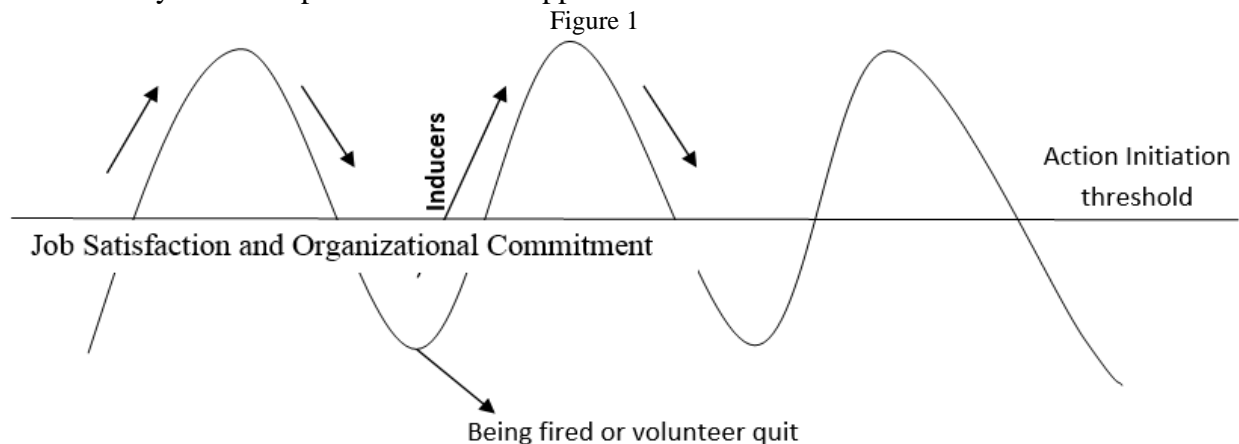
Discussion

The performance of an employee or the dedication of a professional depends upon her/his willingness to abide by the oragnization's objectives. As discussed earlier, there could be many reasons causing the intention to leave; the two most important ones are satisfaction and commitment. Due to the unwillingness to perform which comes along the intention to leave, organizations may want the unsatisfied employee to quit in order to cease the process of peer demoralization, or they can choose to stimulate satisfiers or commitment boosters in order to recover employee's willingness to perform.

Due to its direct negative correlation with performance, the intention to leave is very unfavorable for organizations. It does not only influence negatively the performance of employees, but also has the potential to spoil the positivity of other members of the organization.

Those satisfiers and boosters may be a temporary or a permanent feature in the HR policies of the organization. As there could be internal as well as external factors stimulating the intention to leave, therefore satisfiers and boosters should be designed. In addition, since intention to leave is not always explicit, organizations may offer satisfiers and boosters for all employees without specifying or identifying who has the intention.

This paper simply tries to initiate a thought process to manage the intention of employees that may damage the social fabric of the organization and even the organization

itself as a whole. It will be optimal to check the proposals in this paper empirically. Not all antecedents to career satisfaction and organizational commitment can be considered as satisfiers or boosters; nevertheless, organizations can choose some of those antecedents to stimuli members to stay in the organization.

Conclusion

The intention to leave is a topic greatly researched as being an immediate antecedent of actual turnover, and an immense important element to organizations. Though, work on managing such intentions in practice is almost unavailable in literature. Consequently, this paper proposes thoughtful and precautious use of satisfiers and boosters, which can be utilized in order to diminish the risk and expected harm from bad intentions like planning to leave.

We cannot simply illustrate conclusions about the effectiveness of satisfiers or boosters; nonetheless, large problems (like attrition) may be managed with experiments at small level. There is a reasonable possibility of failure or such satisfiers and boosters, as they are designed as part of the organizations schemes. Appropriate diagnosis of problems is also necessary to evade failure. Occasionally, organizations encourage employees to change their roles/professions as part of an organizational development plan; in such situations, those satisfiers and boosters may perform successfully.

This paper is an endeavor to examine the problem of intention to leave from a different facet. On the other hand, it may serve as an inauguration of a new step in the road of maintaining talented personnel in organizations or professions.

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