Critical Review of Theories of Staff Turnover Intentions and their Implications to Staff Turnover in National Non-governmental Organizations in South Sudan

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Abstract
An employee remains to be one of the most valuable resources of an organization. Unfortunately, high turnover rate in the national non-governmental organizations in South Sudan continues to be a concern for them and various stakeholders. This is because organizations spend a lot of resources in training and investing in their employees. The purpose of the study was to review the various theories that explain staff turnover with the aim of understanding their distinct views. The methodology involved the review of literature of turnover theories and models. The researcher was able to find six theories that helped to explain the phenomenon of staff turnover, and each provided distinct factors that when not addressed could lead to staff turnover. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs which identified different human needs which if not met could lead to staff turnover. Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory revealed two factors that need to be addressed by an organization, namely, “motivation factors” and “hygiene factors”. The Social Exchange Theory explains that turnover intentions come because of non-compliance with the agreed rules by either the management or the staff. LMX Theory emphasized the importance of maintaining good relationships between leaders and members in different groups to promote better performance at work and minimize staff turnover.

Keywords: Staff Turnover, Turnover intention theories, The Theory of organizational Equilibrium, Theory of job embeddedness and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory.

Introduction
According to [1], the current employee turnover in non-profit organizations hovers around 19-20% which is higher than that of for-profit organizations, which is currently around 13%. Therefore, managers of non-profit organizations should have retention plans. Employee retention matters in all organizations because the departure of employees makes the organizations incur overhead costs in recruiting and training new ones. Moreover, high turnover harms the image of an organization in the community which in turn affects an organization in maintaining existing partnerships with key stakeholders. The organization will also find it difficult to get new partners over time. Staff turnover affect the morale of the remaining staff because they must take on additional tasks which can lead to stress, burnout, absenteeism and more turnover. If an organization improves its retention rate, it will reduce turnover costs and foster a more experienced team that can maintain existing partnerships, build new partnerships, and continue to advance the mission of the organization in society.

With such an alarming rate of turnover in non-profit organizations, there is an urgent need to
invest in building workforce environments to ensure dedication and longevity among their employees [2].

According to [3], a high turnover rate can result in many challenges which can directly impact on the organization’s revenue and profitability. Therefore, managers should keep their employees happy to protect their companies’ revenues.

Organizations should understand employee turnover intention theories to enable them design programs to motivate their employees to decrease turnover. Understanding these turnover intention theories can also help individuals to understand their own needs and motivations to inform decision making [4].

Problem to be Solved

There are many theories developed over the years that explain and predict staff turnover intentions. These theories have different views when it comes to staff motivation. Managers need to understand the different theories in order to design effective strategies for staff retention.

Therefore, it is important to review various theories on staff turnover intention with the aim of developing an understanding of their distinct views on staff turnover intentions which can then be used to inform staff retention strategies.

Conceptual Background

In order to understand the various turnover intention theories, it is important to define turnover and understand the types. Two definitions of staff turnover are found to be important to our conceptualization: According to [5], turnover is defined as termination of an employment by an individual or otherwise a choice to leave an organization.

Employee Turnover is when an employee leaves their job and others join [6]. Therefore, staff turnover is the total separation from the company by staff voluntarily for either a new job or personal reasons.

Objective of the Study

To review staff turnover intention theories with the aim of developing an understanding of their distinct views on staff turnover intentions.

Limitation of Study

The limitation of the study has been the sole reliance on data uniquely drawn freely from Google Scholar papers. Internet access is also very expensive.

Research Methodology

The data was collected online with the help of search key word, “turnover intention theories” in Google Scholar. The researcher focused on finding facts related to each theory such as: origin of the theory, strengths of the theory, limitations and gaps and relevance of the theory to non-profit organizations. Details of each step is explained in the flow chart below:
Results

Maslow’s Theory of Hierarchical Needs

The theory was developed by Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist to explain human motivation. It was first introduced in 1943. According to Maslow, there is a relationship between human behavior and needs. The behavior changes as the needs are satisfied. Maslow identified five sets of human needs in order of importance and priority. Maslow classified the five needs into two: The lower-level needs which refer to our physiological needs and the higher-level needs which represent more to intrinsic or internal factors. The needs are often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid. According to Maslow, the lower needs must be met first before moving to the next level [7].
Maslow stated that people are born with desire to self-actualize, a goal that can be achieved after meeting the needs at the lower levels.

The first level needs are those which are vital for survival. These needs include basic needs such as food, water, sexual satisfaction, clothing, sleep and air. These needs lie at the bottom of the hierarchy because they have priority over other needs and must be satisfied to the required extent. Without satisfying them to the required extent other needs will never motivate a person. For example, a hungry person will not think about anything other than his hunger and food. Maslow expressed it as, ‘man lives by bread alone,’ when there is no bread. Physiological needs only lose their motivating potential after being satisfied.

According to Maslow, if the physiological needs are relatively satisfied then a new set of needs known as safety needs will emerge. These needs include security, stability, protection, freedom from fear and so on. The second level of needs are connected to psychological fear of one’s health, job security and any hazard.

The third level are love and belonging or social needs. Here human behavior is driven by emotional relationships and the needs include friendship, family, intimacy, and sense of connection.

The fourth level needs are esteem needs where people need appreciation and respect. Here people are interested in accomplishing things so that they are recognized. According to Maslow, satisfaction of self-esteem needs leads to the feeling of self-confidence, worth, adequacy, strength, and capability.

The fifth level of the needs are the self-actualization needs where people are interested in fulfilling their potential. Maslow describe it as, ‘to become everything that one is capable of becoming’.

To conclude, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is still relevant in modern society if viewed as a guide to our numerous demands regardless of the order they will be addressed [8].

Critical Review

There are people who want to satisfy esteem needs even before physiological needs. For example, there are people who prefer meeting security needs first before basic needs like building a house. Furthermore, there are people who do not care about other needs so long as their lower needs are satisfied.

Maslow reached conclusion on the characteristics of self-actualized person by studying biographies of 18 educated men who were all white men. His sample was unrealistic and hence, it is difficult to generalize the results.

Implications to Organizations

Organizations can use Maslow’s Theory of Hierarchical Needs to plan better for staff retention. Understanding physiological needs help the managers to acknowledge the fact that any hungry or thirsty employee will hardly be able to make much of any contribution. Safety needs inform managers to plan for a working environment which is free from harm. Organizations can learn to meet the social needs of their employees by organizing retreats and picnics.

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory

The theory was developed by Herzberg’s from after conducting a research involving a group of 200 engineers and accountants in 1950s. The purpose of the research was to identify different attitudes at the workplace and their causes. According to the theory workplace satisfaction and dissatisfaction are caused by two mutually exclusive factors known as hygiene and motivator factors.

According to Herzberg, hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) extrinsic to the job and function and cannot motivate employees but rather minimize dissatisfaction. These factors include salary, interpersonal relations, company policies, supervision and working conditions. According to the theory, the presence of hygiene factors does not motivate employees, but their absence causes dissatisfaction. On the other
hand, motivators (satisfiers) satisfy an employee and they include work itself, responsibility, achievement, recognition, and advancement. They fulfil employee’s intrinsic needs [9].

Out of the theory also grew out a technique which is referred to as ‘job-enrichment which involved the inclusion of motivator factors in the job design.

In [10], Dartey & Amoako conducted a study to understand essential factors advanced by Herzberg’s two-factor theory that motivate Ghanaian workers. They found out that motivator factors indeed increased satisfaction of the workers and that workers rate motivator factors higher than the hygiene factors in the work setting.

In [11], Nanayakkara and Dayaratna carried out a study to identify factors which affect turnover intention of non-executive level employees in Colombo, Sri Lanka using a structured questionnaire, by applying Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory of Motivation. The study found out that hygiene factors were found to be more affective for the turnover intention than motivators.

The Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators, hence providing valuable insights for organizations aiming to reduce employee turnover intentions. When organizations address both hygiene factors and motivators, they will be able to foster more employee engagement, hence staff retention.

**Critical Review**

Although the theory offers several valuable insights for managers, it has the following weaknesses:

The theory cannot be generalized to all kinds of job as it applies only to white collar jobs. He developed the theory after interviewing 200 engineers and accountants.

The theory is limited in its applicability because was developed based on research conducted United States. Different cultures have different ways of periodizing either hygiene or motivating factors.

The theory ignored the role played by other factors such as personality, age to mention but few in employee motivation.

**Implications to Organizations**

By understanding Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, managers of organizations will be able
to look inwardly to establish the causes of turnover in the light of motivation and hygiene factors. They should eliminate job dissatisfaction and ensure job satisfaction by addressing hygiene and motivator factors.

To address hygiene factors managers should ensure fair and rational salary structure, improve the working environment, encourage good working relationships and make sure employees are secure in their jobs.

Managers should address motivating factors in the workplace to increase job satisfaction and ultimately, employee retention. More specifically, if managers plan to increase job satisfaction, they should address the motivator factors by providing opportunities for employee career growth, rewarding employees who have accomplished major tasks, and offering opportunities for the employee career development.

**Theory of Organizational Equilibrium**

The Theory of Organizational Equilibrium is the first formal structured theory on employee turnover and retention [12]. The theory argues that an employee will continue to work if their perceived contribution to the organization is commensurate to the organization’s perceived contribution. Organizations offer inducements while employees offer their services. Inducements refer to what an organization offers such as wages, services, and so on.

According to the theory, when both employers and employees feel they are getting value from their exchange, then an equilibrium is said to have been attained. Increasing inducements can lower employee tendency to leave. However, the inducement-contribtion balance can be affected by two primary forces determining the decision to quit: the desirability of movement and the ease of movement. The perceived desirability of movement decreases when the level of job satisfaction is increased by an organization.

When an employee is not satisfied, he/she may seek the possibility of an intraorganizational transfer. When there is possibility of intraorganizational transfer, the employee is less likely to leave.

The perceived ease of movement is determined by the availability of alternative jobs. According to the theory, the greater the perceived number of alternative jobs, the higher the perceived ease of movement.

**Critical Review**

The theory assumes that increase in inducements lower turnover intention. However, this assumption is not true because there are many factors that determine job satisfaction. For example, an employee may opt to leave an organization due to stress.

Secondly, the theory has ignored other factors that cause turnover such as working conditions, leadership style and stress.

**Implication to Organizations**

The theory implies when an organization maintains an equilibrium between staff contributions and organization inducements, no employee would leave.

Managers should use the theory on organization equilibrium as a diagnosis tool to understand why their employees leave. The findings will help them to design appropriate retention strategies.

For example, organizations should offer opportunities for intraorganizational transfers to the employees.

**Job Embeddedness Theory**

Job embeddedness theory, as introduced by [13], helps to explain why some employees are less likely to quit. The theory was developed over ten years of research carried out by Brooks C. Holtom and his colleagues. According to the Theory, an employee has series of connections in his/he life. An employee that has wide job-related roles, responsibilities, and relationships has more connections and hence more job embedded. Likewise, an employee with less job-related roles, responsibilities, and relationships
has less connections and hence low job embeddedness.

According to the theory, the level of connections of an employee are indicated by three elements: the fit (compatibility or comfort derived from how an employee’s work relates to his/her skills, values, and goals), the links (how an employee is connected to organization and other people) and sacrifice (the psychological and material loss an employee will experience if he leaves the job). These levels of connections are sometimes known as influences which determines an employee’s intention to stay on the job. Understanding the three critical elements (fit, link and sacrifice) enables organizations to assess the extent employees are at risk of quitting an organization.

Organizations should organize training sessions for the employees to increase their element of fitness. To increase links, opportunities to develop employee’s cohesion such as encouragement of positive interactions should be provided. To increase the level of sacrifice, organizations should increase the perception of value of organizational benefits.

From the discussions above the dimensions of job embeddedness include both job-related and non-job-related aspects. Job-related aspects tie them to their jobs while the other aspects are for personal life and the community and tie them to a given location.

Implication to Organizations

Managers should embrace the Job-Embeddedness theory by focusing on the three aspects of the employee-organization relationship. The three aspects are link, fit and sacrifice.

To help build links between the team members, managers should encourage activities that bring the members together such as celebration of key events, encourage open communication and hold regular meetings.

To address fit, managers should ensure that each member’s roles are in line with their strengths and skills. The manager can also meet each team member to understand their career goals and guide them accordingly.

In [14], Cynthia carried out a study to investigate on-the job and off-the job embeddedness and its dimensions of links, fit, and sacrifice to determine effects on math teacher turnover intention. He collected from 152 high school math teachers from 17 counties in a western U.S. state using the Job Embeddedness Questionnaire and a demographic survey. The results indicated statistically significant relationships between turnover intention and the sacrifice/job and turnover intention and links/community.

Managers should ensure a good working environment and minimize work stress to address the critical element of sacrifice. The manager should appreciate the work of the team members.

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

The study on how leaders relate with their followers has been an important area of research for many years [15].

Prior to the 1970s, most research studies were on the assumption that leaders behave in the same way to their followers. However, in 1975, Dansereau, Graen and Haga argued that leaders do not manage their followers using the same style, but instead develop unique relationships with different employees. Therefore, this theory explains the nature of relationships leaders have with their followers and the impact. According to the Leader-member-exchange (LMX) theory, leaders end up creating in-groups and out-groups due to limited time and resources. The in-groups enjoy high-quality exchanges while the out-groups have low-quality exchanges characterized by less trust, respect, and obligation.

The leadership exchanges developed between both the leader and followers will benefit both. Effective outcomes will be realized in a relationship characterized by a high level of respect, mutual trust, obligation, and respect.
This two-way relationship-based approach to leadership explains the nature of the leader’s relationship and team members of the different groups under him. LMX theory sheds light on the potential of leaders to develop quality teamwork which eventually increase productivity in organizations. These relationships between leaders and their followers influence various attitudes and behaviors [16].

According to [17], there are three stages during the formation of relationships. The stages include role taking in which the leader evaluates the abilities and talents of the members while the follower starts to develop relationship with the manager; role making where the followers and leaders are involved in unstructured and informal negotiations and role routinization where there is routine.

What defines a leader is the consequence of the relationship between him/her and the followers and hence leaders should build good relationships across the team so that there is mutual trust and respect. This is important for the wellbeing and effectiveness of the employees. Knowledge on LMX theory can practically be used to improve relationships between leaders and their followers to promote better performance at work [18].

**Critical Review**

Although considered a robust explanatory theory as it describes the role of quality relationships between leaders and followers, and it’s valid and practical approach, the LMX theory has limitations. First, the LMX theory is not fair because it makes a distinction between in-group and out-group which may lead to unhealthy competition.

Secondly, LMX theory tend to focus more on the nature of the relationship rather than the why or how of the relationship. organizations, which can lead to favoritism and inequality.

**Implications to Organizations**

Managers should be aware that the quality of leader-member relationship has bearing on the member’s turnover intention, performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

As stipulated in the theory, creation of in-groups and out-groups can have negative consequences especially for the out-groups. Therefore, managers should re-evaluate out-group members and give them a chance to improve while giving them the necessary support. This enables him/her to transition from out-group to in-group.

**Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange theory was founded by George C. Homans identified the concept in 1958 and other figures such as John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, and Peter Blau developed it [19].

Since many scholars were involved in the development of the theory, it has been applied in social situations such as television viewing, politics, decisions to terminate romantic relationships, organizational management, consumer buying decisions, and marriage [20].

Social Exchange theory is a concept that uses psychological and economic principles, like maximizing profit and minimizing costs or punishment to determine the success or failure of relationship [21]. Central to Social Exchange Theory is the idea that people engage in social interactions to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Rewards can include resources, enjoyment, emotional support, and companionship. Costs include time, sacrifices, emotional stress, and effort [22]. After people have evaluated their relationship and analyzed the benefits they might obtain, then they make decisions by comparing alternatives.

According to Social Exchange Theory a person’s behavior is the consequence of a cost-benefit analysis. A behavior is likely to be exhibited again when it yields greater rewards than costs. According to theory, the greater the rewards and the fewer the costs, the greater the profit a person gains from the relationship.

The theory identified two components that every relationship has- costs and rewards/benefits. The costs are those elements of
a relationship which has negative value to the person. Rewards/benefits are those elements which have positive value to the person [23].

Homans put it as follows:

“Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods, but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige. Persons that give much to others try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them”.

According to Holman people choose relationships that cost them less and provide them with more rewards. He came up with the following propositions to summarize social behavior system:

Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory

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<tr>
<th>Assumptions based on human nature</th>
<th>Assumptions based on nature of human relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td>As rational beings, humans like rewards and avoid punishments.</td>
<td>Relationships are interdependent and function as a process.</td>
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<td>Humans evaluate costs and rewards using standards that change over time and vary person to person.</td>
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Therefore, the theory assumes that relationships continue when the benefits outweigh the costs for those involved.

At organization level is level, employee do cost and benefit analysis of the relationships. If the relationship is not so rewarding, they will begin to survey potential alternatives and do cost and benefit analysis of the alternatives to determine if they are better [25]. Therefore, positive relationships are said to be happening when the benefits are greater than the cost. If the cost of the relationship is greater than the benefit, the relationship is abandoned.

Using social exchange theory as a theoretical framework, [26] conducted a study to explore the relationship between social capital and the failure or success of entrepreneurs who own businesses in Beckley, West Virginia. The study found out that application of social exchanges by entrepreneurs increased the longevity of small businesses.

Examining the applicability of social exchange theory to the practice of social work administration in hospitals, [27] analyzed the relationship between the social work director’s contributions to other subunit chiefs in the hospital and returns to the social work department in the form of allocation of resources and increased opportunities for collaboration. The study found out that social exchange theory was useful to hospital social work administration.

Critical Review

Although Social exchange theory can be applied to many situations, it has the following limitations:
First, the theory is overly simplistic because there are many more factors to consider before people terminate a relationship.

Secondly, the theory assumes that relationships are abandoned in favor of alternatives. Therefore, it has failed to account for people who leave relationships although they have no alternatives. Moreover, there are people who persist in the relationship despite undesirable costs.

Third, the theory assumes that relationships are linear and yet they can progress, retreat, skip stages, or repeat certain stages.

Implications

Managers of organizations should be aware that there are always alternative jobs for which the employee can opt for if they are dissatisfied.

They should be aware that employees are looking for rewards within the relationship. They should make their relationships rewarding and minimize the cost to the employees to address staff turnover.

Discussions

Six employee turnover intention theories were critically reviewed and analyzed.

Maslow’s theory identified different physiological and psychological human needs in hierarchical order that must be met to motivate an employee. The theory can be applied by modern managers to design programs to address the different needs of employees to minimize turnover intentions. Key needs include career development opportunities, compensation and benefits and recognition.

Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory revealed two factors in an organization, namely, those that contribute to job satisfaction, also known as “motivation factors” and those that contribute to job dissatisfaction, also known as “hygiene factors”. The implication for the managers is that both factors should be addressed to avoid staff turnover. For example, organizations should address Hygiene factors which include pay, company policies and administrative policies fringe benefits, physical working conditions, status, interpersonal relations, and job security. The organization should also address motivational factors that yield positive satisfaction such as: promotion opportunities, opportunities for personal growth, recognition, responsibility, and achievement.

The theory of organizational equilibrium explains the need for an organization to be able to attract sufficient contributions from its employees and its ability to offer commensurate incentives so that it can survive. If such mutual benefits are maintained, then employee turnover is minimized. Managers should increase employee satisfaction to decrease their perceived desirability to leave.

Job embeddedness theory helps an organization to discover why employees stay in an organization and why others leave. According to this theory employees that are embedded within an organization are less likely to leave. Embedment can only happen if interconnections between the employee, others in the organization, and the organization’s larger network is addressed and if the employees are well suited to the roles. Job embedment also happens when conditions within the organizations are designed in such a way that it would be difficult for them to leave due to the loss that they would encounter. Organizations should make sure they have programs to encourage staff to stay. For example, organizations may develop programs that aim to develop cohesion and positive interactions at all levels.

According to Social Exchange theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of their social relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, they will abandon the relationship. Therefore, the purpose of the exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Employees weigh the value of what they receive (inducement) from the organization with their contributions. If the value of what they contribute is more than what they receive, they will start looking for alternatives. According to this Theory, turnover intentions is because of
non-compliance to the agreed rules by either the management or the staff. Therefore, managers should improve their relationships with the employees by providing attractive inducements. They should be aware that there are alternative jobs outside their organizations that their staff are more likely to consider joining if the inducements are not commensurate to what they contribute.

Leader Member Exchange (LMX) Theory sheds light on relationships between leaders and their followers and how the quality of such relationships influences various attitudes and behaviors in an organization. The knowledge on LMX theory can practically be used to improve the relationship between leaders and members and promote better performance at work and minimize staff turnover.

Each of the theories on employee turnover intention is important in guiding research on employee turnover intention and hence sources for theoretical framework. Each provides an insight to managers to design appropriate programs to motivate staff to minimize turnover.

Finally, the different employee turnover theories have emerged in different periods, and each has both strengths and weaknesses.

**Conclusion**

Six theories on voluntary turnover intention were reviewed and their implications on national organizations in South Sudan were also stated. The key findings under each theory are as follows:

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs represents five key human needs that drive human behavior. The needs are mapped onto a pyramid diagram with each occupying a different level. The first level needs are food, water, sex, warmth, shelter, and sleep.

The second level needs are safety needs, the third level needs are love and belonging needs, the fourth level needs are esteem needs (respect, recognition, self-worth, and dignity) and the fifth need is self-actualization which occupies the highest need on Maslow’s pyramid. According to Maslow, the lower-level needs must be met first before those at the higher levels. At the organization level, managers use Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to design staff retention strategies.

The two-factor theory argues that there are separate sets of mutually exclusive factors in the workplace that either cause job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The set of factors that cause satisfaction are known as motivator factors and they include career advancement, the work itself and recognition. The factors which decrease job dissatisfaction are called hygiene factors. Hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job function. They include salary, relationship with supervisors, company policies and working conditions.

Organizational equilibrium theory holds that employees make contributions to the organization in exchange for inducements. Equilibrium is attained when the employees feel that the value of the inducements equals the value of their contribution. At the level of an organization, employees are more likely to leave if they perceive that the inducements, they receive are not commensurate with their contributions.

Job Embeddedness Theory argues that when an employee is more embedded within their organization, they are less likely to quit. To get embedded employees should be suited to their roles (fit), they should be well-motivated so that it will be difficult for them to leave due to the loss they would experience if they left (sacrifice). Finally, employees should be connected to the organization and other people.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is a concept that focuses on the relationship between a leader and his/her followers. Having a high-quality relationship between a leader and his followers increases the team members’ job-related well-being and effectiveness.

According to the theory the relationship between a leader and team members goes through three stages (role-taking, role-making, and routine) during which in-groups and out-
groups are formed. The team members that prove themselves loyal, trustworthy, and skilled are put into the In-Group while those that prove incompetent are put in the out-group.

Social Exchange theory argues that people evaluate their relationship by analyzing the benefits they might obtain, then they make decisions by comparing alternatives. People will only exhibit a behavior when it yields greater rewards than costs.

At the organization level, if the relationship is not so rewarding, employees will begin to survey potential alternatives and do cost-benefit analysis to determine if the alternatives are better. If the alternatives are better the employees will quit.

**Conflict of Interest**

I do certify that I have no affiliation with or involvement or any personal relationship with any of the directors of the Publishing House or any entity with financial interest.

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