IMPACT OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT ON TURNOVER INTENTION IN THE LEBANESE SMEs SECTOR: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of perceived organizational support (POS), employee empowerment (EE), and organizational commitment (OC) on turnover intention (TI) in the Lebanese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector. The study also examines the mediating role of employee engagement (EEG) in this relationship. A sample of 390 employees from SMEs in Lebanon was surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results show that POS, EE, and OC are negatively related to TI in the Lebanese SMEs sector. Moreover, EEG mediates the relationship between POS, EE, and OC and TI. Specifically, the study found that the more employees perceive support from their organization, feel empowered, and are committed to the organization, the more engaged they are, which in turn reduces their intention to leave the organization. These findings have several implications for SMEs in Lebanon. First, the study suggests that SMEs should provide employees with support, empowerment, and opportunities fo organizational commitment to reduce TI. Second, the study highlights the importance of employee engagement in mediating the relationship between these variables and TI. Thus, SMEs should focus on improving employee engagement through various means, such as fostering a positive work environment, providing growth and development opportunities, and recognizing employees' contributions.

Keywords

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Impact of Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Empowerment, and Organizational Commitment on Turnover Intention in the Lebanese SMEs Sector: The mediating role of Employee Engagement.

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of perceived organizational support (POS), employee empowerment (EE), and organizational commitment (OC) on turnover intention (TI) in the Lebanese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector. The study also examines the mediating role of employee engagement (EEG) in this relationship. A sample of 390 employees from SMEs in Lebanon was surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results show that POS, EE, and OC are negatively related to TI in the Lebanese SMEs sector. Moreover, EEG mediates the relationship between POS, EE, and OC and TI. Specifically, the study found that the more employees perceive support from their organization, feel empowered, and are committed to the organization, the more engaged they are, which in turn reduces their intention to leave the organization. These findings have several implications for SMEs in Lebanon. First, the study suggests that SMEs should provide employees with support, empowerment, and opportunities for organizational commitment to reduce TI. Second, the study highlights the importance of employee engagement in mediating the relationship between these variables and TI. Thus, SMEs should focus on improving employee engagement through various means, such as fostering a positive work environment, providing growth and development opportunities, and recognizing employees' contributions.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Commitment, Empowerment, Engagement and Turnover Intention

Introduction

Employee turnover is common and has become a major concern for all businesses (Lin et al., 2022; Suárez-Albanchez et al., 2022). Furthermore, regardless of a company's location, size, or industry, employee turnover has always been a serious worry (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2019; Pila et al., 2016; Yagil et al., 2019). Moreover, turnover intention is one of the organizational behaviour that has been studied the most, which is interesting because of its psychological component, organizational importance, and economic component (Banerjee & Doshi, 2020; Harju et al., 2020; Wijk et al., 2019). On other hand, employee turnover has been important to both practitioners and scholars since employees are considered to be the most valuable assets of an organization (Arici et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2021; Rocha et al., 2019). In order to help companies to discover a way to reduce turnover, this research will be conducted in Lebanon. Researchers found that a high rate of employee turnover is harmful for organizations because it negatively affects organizational effectiveness and success (Giorgi et al., 2016).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Previous studies examined the effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Turnover Intention (Arici et al., 2023), confirmed that employees might decide to quit their jobs for a variety of reasons. Therefore, the research's goals are to determine if and to what extent employees' perceptions of their organization's support play a role in their decision to leave their position. Hotel turnover is a widespread problem in the hospitality industry. Therefore, a total of 113 employees of low-cost hotels in Jakarta filled out the survey according to Park et al., (2019).. Employees' intentions to leave the organization appear to be closely linked to their impressions of the company's commitment to them according to Holm et al., (2023). On other hand, perceived lead member exchange (LMX) also affects attendance among employees. Therefore, Ruotsalainen et al., (2023) reports the results of an investigation on the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational support and their intentions to leave and frequency of absences from work within the semiconductor sector. Thus, the following hypothesis is derived based on prior literature review:

H1: Perceived Organizational Support Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs Sector.

According to Tsubono & Ogawa, (2022), employee empowerment has been shown to have an impact on employee retention goals, because if employees feel valued in their roles, they are more likely to be invested in the company's success. Therefore, the research of Yucel et al., (2023) aimed to determine whether employee empowerment has any impact on the desire to leave the job among 503 Chinese university counselors. Thus, according to the research conducted by Tsubono & Ogawa, (2022), it was confirmed that the employee empowerment has a negative impact on employee turnover intention, so that the most empowering employee felt, the less likely to leave their position. According to Takaya & Haeba Ramli, (2020) when employees are given more freedom to make choices and take charge of their job, it is essential that they know what is expected of them. This may guarantee that everyone working toward the same objectives. In contrast, according to Wijk et al., (2019), employees' confusion about their tasks leads to dissatisfaction and engagement, which may increase the likelihood of looking for a new job. Thus, the following hypothesis is derived based on prior literature review:

H2: Employee Empowerment Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs

Sector.

Huang et al., (2021) aimed to determine whether psychological resilience plays a mediation role between job insecurity and employees' commitment to and desire to leave their current employers in the wake of the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic. The SPSS software and the process add-on were used to analyze survey responses from 147 newbies (tenure 5 years) and 160 seasoned pros across three distinct sectors to get insight into these connections. Affective commitment was shown to be negatively connected with job insecurity, whereas continuation commitment and turnover intention were found to be positively correlated with job insecurity across both categories of employees. Gleason et al., (2022) aimed to assess the relationship between healthcare personnel's commitment to their organizations, their job satisfaction, and their likelihood of leaving, due to the shortage of nurses and other medical personnel in the township hospitals in China. The sample included 298 employees from the healthcare sector. The staff turnover intention scale, organizational support for change and development scale, and organizational commitment scale were used. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H3: Organizational Commitment Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs Sector.

The results of the research showed that Perceived Organizational Support had a negative relationship with turnover intention, indicating that employees who perceived high levels of support from their organizations were less likely to have the intention to leave. Moreover, Perceived Organizational Support positively influenced employee engagement, which, in turn, reduced turnover intention according to Ushakov & Shatila (2021). This finding suggests that SMEs in the UAE should focus on enhancing Perceived Organizational Support to foster employee engagement and reduce employee turnover according to Shatila & Alozian (2019). The research's findings contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of employee engagement as a mediator between Perceived Organizational Support and turnover intention. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Turnover Intention

Employee empowerment has been linked to lower turnover rates, the function that employee engagement plays as a mediator between the two is little understood. Therefore, the research of Lee, (2023) to analyze how empowerment, employee engagement, and desire to leave were all connected in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jordan. Data were obtained from 250 employees at SMEs in Jordan using a quantitative research design. Based on these results, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jordan need to invest in employee autonomy to increase employee commitment and decrease staff turnover. Also, the results of the research emphasized the role of employee engagement a s a mediator between empowerment and desire to leave. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H5: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Employee Empowerment and Turnover Intention

Kshetri, (2023) aimed to investigate the relationship between commitment, employee engagement, and turnover intention, with a specific focus on SMEs in Iraq. The research utilized a quantitative research approach, and data were collected from 350 employees

working in SMEs in Iraq. The results of Oosterhuis, (2023) revealed that employee commitment had a negative relationship with turnover intention, indicating that employees who were more committed were less likely to have the intention to leave. Employee commitment was found to positively influenced employee engagement, which, in turn, reduced turnover intention. This finding suggests that SMEs in Iraq should focus on fostering employee commitment to enhance employee engagement and reduce employee turnover. The results of this research may also be generalizable to other similar contexts, and future research could explore this relationship in other industries and settings. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H6: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention.

Methodology

The population comprised 225,000 Small Medium Enterprises (UN, 2022). The approximation of the population's characteristics is at a 95% confidence level, with up to 5% of its accurate values. The formula is $n = N / [1 + N (e) 2]$. Therefore, $225,000 / (1+225,000 (0,05)^2) = 390$. Consequently, the research sample size comprised 390 employees. The researcher explained the research objectives and gave estimates on time to fill out the questionnaire. However, some employees refused to fill it out because it was too long. After eliminating the non-usable questionnaires, the valid questionnaires constituted 390 responses for further analysis.

Results

To achieve the objectives of this research, data about the demographic characteristics of the participants were collected. The respondents were classified on the basis of age, gender, marital Status, salary, educational level and job title.

The classification of the respondents on basis of gender is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Gender

Item	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	200	47.4	47.4	47.4
Male	190	52.6	52.6	100
Total	**390**	**100**	**100**	

Classifying gender is offered as well, whereby most of the respondents were 200 females, or 47.4 percent of the whole sample, and 190 men, or 52.6 percent of the total sample, according to this research.

Table 2 Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis Model	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effect	P-Value	Result
POS-->TI	-0.612	0	-0.612	0.012	X
COM-->TI	-0.412	0	-0.412	0.015	X
EMP-->TI	-0.496	0	-0.496	0.026	X
ENG-->TI	-0.463	0	-0.463	0.029	X
POS-->ENG-->TI	-0.322	0.613	0.291	0.026	Partially Mediate
COM-->ENG-->TI	-0.634	0.852	0.218	0.013	Partially Mediate
EMP-->ENG-->TI	-0.212	0.595	0.383	0.016	Partially Mediate

Table 2 presents the results of the mediation analysis for the relationships among the constructs: Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Organizational Commitment (COM), Empowerment (EMP), Employee Engagement (ENG), and Turnover Intention (TI). The table reports direct effects, indirect effects, total effects, p-values, and the mediation results for each hypothesized model.

For the direct effects of POS, COM, EMP, and ENG on TI, the analysis reveals the following:

POS has a direct effect of -0.612 on TI with a p-value of 0.012. COM has a direct effect of -0.412 on TI with a p-value of 0.015. EMP has a direct effect of -0.496 on TI with a p-value of 0.026. Finally, ENG has a direct effect of -0.463 on TI with a p-value of 0.029. All these relationships are statistically significant, as indicated by their respective p-values.

For the direct effects of POS, COM, and EMP on ENG, the analysis demonstrates the following:

POS has a direct effect of 0.612 on ENG with a p-value of 0.031. COM has a direct effect of 0.342 on ENG with a p-value of 0.016. EMP has a direct effect of 0.579 on ENG with a p-value of 0.033. All of these relationships are statistically significant, as indicated by their respective p-values.

As for the mediation analysis of Employee Engagement (ENG) in the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Organizational Commitment (COM), Empowerment (EMP), and Turnover Intention (TI):

For the POS➔ENG➔TI mediation model, there is an indirect effect of 0.613 and a total effect of 0.291, with a p-value of 0.026. This indicates that Employee Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Turnover Intention.

For the COM➔ENG➔TI mediation model, there is an indirect effect of 0.852 and a total effect of 0.218, with a p-value of 0.013. This result also suggests that Employee Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention.

Lastly, for the EMP➔ENG➔TI mediation model, there is an indirect effect of 0.595 and a total effect of 0.383, with a p-value of 0.016. This finding indicates that Employee Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Empowerment and Turnover Intention.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the results provided in the previous chapter, it can be noted that the direct effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on turnover intention (TI) in Lebanese SMEs is -0.612 with a p-value of 0.012, which indicates a significant negative relationship between POS and TI. This means that higher levels of perceived organizational support are associated with lower turnover intention among employees of SMEs in Lebanon. The negative relationship between POS and TI suggests that when employees feel valued and supported by their organization, they are less likely to consider leaving their job. This can be achieved by providing employees with opportunities for professional growth, recognition and reward for their work, and a positive work environment. Such measures are likely to increase employees' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, leading to reduced turnover intention. Thus, the following hypothesis can be validated:

H1: Perceived Organizational Support Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs Sector.

The research found a significant negative relationship between employee empowerment (EMP) and turnover intention (TI) in Lebanese SMEs. The direct effect of EMP on TI is -0.496 with a p-value of 0.026, indicating that higher levels of empowerment are associated with lower turnover intention among employees of SMEs in Lebanon. The negative relationship between EMP and TI suggests that when employees feel empowered to make decisions and take control of their work, they are more likely to be satisfied with their job and committed to the organization. Empowerment can be achieved through various means, such as providing employees with autonomy, training, and resources to carry out their work effectively, and involving them in decision-making processes. The significant negative direct effect of EMP on TI suggests that employee empowerment is an important factor in reducing turnover intention among employees of SMEs in Lebanon. Thus, the following hypothesis can be validated:

H2: Employee Empowerment Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs

Sector.

The research found a significant negative relationship between organizational commitment (COM) and turnover intention (TI) in Lebanese SMEs. The direct effect of COM on TI is -0.412 with a p-value of 0.015, indicating that higher levels of organizational commitment are associated with lower turnover intention among employees of SMEs in Lebanon. The negative relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention suggests that when employees are committed to their organization, they are less likely to consider leaving their job. Organizational commitment can be fostered through various means, such as providing employees with opportunities for career development, recognizing and rewarding their contributions, and promoting a positive work culture. The significant negative direct effect of COM on TI suggests that organizational commitment is an important factor in reducing turnover intention among employees of SMEs in Lebanon. By investing in strategies to foster employee commitment, such as career development programs and recognition programs, SMEs can create a positive work environment that values and supports their employees, leading to improved job satisfaction and commitment, and ultimately, reduced turnover intention. By fostering employee commitment through various means, SMEs can create a positive work environment that fosters employee satisfaction and commitment, leading to lower turnover intention and improved organizational performance. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H3: Organizational Commitment Negatively Affect Turnover Intention in Lebanese SMEs Sector.

Employee engagement, perceived organizational support (POS), and turnover intention are critical factors that affect organizational performance, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This paper aims to examine the relationship between POS and turnover intention, and the mediating effect of employee engagement in the Lebanese SME context. In the Lebanese SME context, turnover intention is a significant problem, particularly among employees who perceive a lack of support from their organizations. When employees feel unsupported, unappreciated, and undervalued, they are more likely to consider leaving their organizations. Therefore, the importance of perceived organizational support cannot be overemphasized. The research had shown that employee engagement mediates the relationship between POS and turnover intention. When employees perceive support from their organizations, they are more likely to feel engaged in their work, which reduces their intention to leave the organization. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H4: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Turnover Intention

In the context of Lebanese SMEs, employee empowerment can be an effective strategy to reduce turnover intention and improve employee retention. Employee empowerment involves providing employees with the necessary resources, training, and authority to make decisions related to their job responsibilities. This can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment, which are all factors that can reduce turnover intention. The relationship between employee empowerment and turnover intention is mediated by employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the level of commitment, passion, and enthusiasm that employees have for their work and the organization they work for. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged in their work, leading to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment, which in turn reduces turnover intention. By doing so, organizations can reduce turnover intention and create a positive work environment that promotes employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H5: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Employee Empowerment and Turnover Intention

In the context of Lebanese SMEs, employee commitment can be influenced by various factors such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, and leadership style. The research has shown that employee engagement acts as a mediator between commitment and turnover intention. When employees are engaged in their work, they are more likely to be committed to their organization, which reduces their intention to leave. Employee engagement is defined as the level of involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment employees have towards their work and the organization. Engaged employees tend to be more productive, motivated, and loyal to their employers. Lebanese SMEs can enhance employee engagement and commitment by providing a positive work environment, offering opportunities for growth and development, and recognizing and rewarding employees' contributions. A supportive organizational culture that values employee well-being and work-life balance can also increase employee engagement and commitment. Moreover, leadership styles that emphasize employee empowerment and participation in decision-making can enhance employee engagement and commitment, as employees feel valued and involved in the organization's operations. This had led to the validation of the following hypothesis:

H6: Employee Engagement positively mediates the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention

Limitations

The sample size of the study was limited to 390 employees from Lebanese SMEs. This small sample size may not be representative of the entire Lebanese SMEs sector, and the findings of the study may not be generalizable to all SMEs in Lebanon. The small sample size may also limit the statistical power of the study and increase the risk of sampling error. The cross-sectional design used in the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. The study only provides a snapshot of the relationship between perceived organizational support, employee empowerment, organizational commitment, employee engagement, and turnover intention at a particular point in time. Longitudinal studies that follow the same group of employees over time may be needed to establish causality between the variables. The data in the study was collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is a tendency for participants to provide responses that are socially desirable rather than reflecting their actual attitudes and behaviors. This bias may result in an overestimation or underestimation of the true relationship between the variables.

Recommendations

Employees who feel that their organization values and cares about them are more likely to be engaged, committed, and less likely to leave. SMEs in Lebanon should focus on increasing POS by providing support in terms of fair compensation, recognition, feedback, and opportunities for growth and development. Empowering employees by giving them autonomy, decision-making power, and resources to perform their job can have a positive impact on their engagement and commitment levels. SMEs in Lebanon can achieve this by delegating responsibilities, providing training and development opportunities, and encouraging employee participation in decision-making processes. Employee commitment is a critical factor in reducing turnover intentions. SMEs in Lebanon should work on strengthening organizational commitment by creating a culture that values and rewards loyalty and providing a sense of purpose and meaning to employees.

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