



**Full Length Research Article**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB STRESS, PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND  
TURNOVER INTENTION**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examined relationships of job stress, perceived organizational politics and turnover intention among employees using a cross-sectional design. Two hundred and fifty eight (258) non-teaching staff (124 male and 134 females) from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, with a mean age of 42.07 years, SD of 9.59 participated in the study. One hundred and forty six (146) of the respondents were married while sixty four (64) were single and 48 were widows. Two hypotheses were tested in the study: There will be no statistically significant relationship between job stress and turnover intention; there will be no statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational politics and turnover intention. Three instruments were used for data collection, namely: Role-base Stress Inventory, Perceived Organizational Politics Scale and Turnover Intention Scale. Result of hierarchical Linear Regression analysis revealed that job stress was significantly related to turnover intention ( $t = 1.10, p < .05$ ). The implications and limitations were highlighted, and recommendations and suggestions for further research were made.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Organizations or managements today face many challenges with the growing integration of the world economy into one single, huge market place resulting in intense global competition. Besides needing to keep pace with technological advances, it is also crucial for an organization to be able to retain its best employees in the face of globalization and workforce diversity (Chandrashekhara, 2006). Collectively an organization's employees can provide a source of competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to imitate. Firm resource model of sustained competitive advantage suggests that in order for a firm's resources to generate sustained competitive advantage, the resources must add value to the firm, is particularly rare, cannot be imitated and is not substitutable, (Barney, 1991). Employee turnover intention is among the strongest predictors of actual turnover and work/job stress in one of the important antecedents to turnover intention (Barney, 1991). Turnover intention is the conscious willfulness to seek other alternative job opportunities in other organizations (Meyer 1993); and according to Tett and Meyer (1993), it is the conscious and

deliberate decision to leave the organization. Employee turnover intention is a mental decision prevailing between an individual's approach with reference to work to continue or leave the work (Jacob and Roodt, 2007). Turnover intention as stated by Sousa-poza and Henneberger, (2002) is the reflection of the (subjective) probability that an individual will change his or her job within a certain period of time. Ali (2009) holds that turnover intention may be seen as the intention of employees to quit their organization. Similarly, it is an individuals' own estimated probability that they are permanently leaving the organization at some point in time in the near future (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999). Employee turnover may be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary turnover is an employee's decision to terminate the employment relationship. Involuntary turnover is an employer's decision to terminate the employment relationship (Dess and Shaw, 2001). Thus, for the purpose of this study, turnover intention is an employee's decision to leave the organization voluntarily. Hence, turnover intention has instant connection to turnover behaviour (Boles, Madupalli, Rutherford and Wood, 2007). Turn over intention is considered the last point in a sequence of withdrawal behaviour and preceded by searching for another job. It is equally shown to have a significant positive relationship with actual turnover such that it is regarded as a good predictor of actual turnover. Some of the indirect cost of

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turnover intention includes diminution in morals among remaining staff, work overload as well as loss of social capital (Meyer, 1993). This is why Mobley (1977) opined that turnover intention may be due to unfavourable work condition/environment, better career objective and more attractive financial source. An Organization on its own may want to terminate the employment of an employee due to incompatibilities or retire the person due to certain reasons. This is known as involuntary turnover (Mobley, 1997). Employee turnover intention has received substantial consideration in industrial and organizational psychology (Campion, 1991). According to researchers such as Abbasi and Hollman (2000); Watrous, Huffiman and Pritchard (2006) as far as organizations are concerned, employee turnover may result to/in terrible negative concern. Reviews on the antecedents of turnover intention have highlighted intent to leave rather actual turnover as the outcome variable.

Employees decide in advance whether to leave the organization or not before their eventual exit. This is supported by Attitude Behaviour Theory (Fishben and Ajzen, 1975) which posits that an individual's intention to engage in a specific behaviour is the likely predictor of such behaviour. Thus, to remain competitive, in the rapidly expanding global economy, and to keep pace with the technological advances required of a work force with robust institutional knowledge, therefore employee retention is of great importance to business and academic institutions (Benko and Welberg, 2007; Becker, 2007). Over the years, researchers have examined the possible causes of employee turnover intention; in doing so, researchers have come to notice the relationship which exist between turnover intentions and job/work stress. For the past few decades, employee retention has been of interest to researchers and employer in various fields. Employee turnover overtime has been observe as a phenomenon which is detrimental for the smooth running of organization as it places the organization at the risk of recruiting and training people every time and this on a long run weigh down the organizational standards.

The prediction and understanding of employee turnover has been studied from many different perspectives. Most past studies have focused on single direct antecedents and examined their roles in the context of process model of turnover. Among such predictors are Job stress and perceived organizational politics. Hence, this research intends to examine how these variables are major contributors to voluntary turnover and probably their contribution to loss of employees. Stress, the experience of mental or physical tension is a universal construct in that it affects everyone; although it results from a variety of sources, many of which are not work- related, many as well are work- related. Employee stress level is of prime concern to organizations because they influence important organizational outcomes like employee well being, burnout, counterproductive behaviours, intention to quit, employee health care cost among others (Chen and Spector, 1997; Colligan and Higgins, 2005). Previous researches has indicated the predicting role of job stress on turnover intention among individuals in a work setting. According to Beehr, Johnson, and Nieva (1990) stress can be seen as any attribute of the workplace that makes an employee to experience discomfort, while Matteson and

Wancerich (1987) explain stress as an "adaptive response moderated by individual differences. That is, a consequence of any action, situation or event that places special demand upon a person. However, researchers like Kyriacou, (2001) have maintained that job stress is the experience of negative emotional state such as irritation, frustration and worry. Job stress is an inequitable outcome of economic complexity and to some extent it is a stimulant, or a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstance. Therefore, stress is synonymous with negative conditions. It's directly related to work as well as employee in the organization. Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, and Toth, (1997), argue that stress is the subjective feeling that work demands exceed the individuals belief in his or her ability to cope. Job stressed individuals are likely to have greater job dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism, increased negative psychological symptoms and reduced aspirations and self esteem. It is believed that the use of role concepts suggest that work stress is associated with individual, interpersonal and structural variables.

Stress is costly for employers and management, reflected in lower productivity, reduced motivation, job skills and turnover intention. It has, therefore, been evidenced that employees who experience more stress on their job have more intention to quit (Ahmad, Mohamad, Mohd, Ahmad and Abang, 2012). There is a clear stress management implication for individuals because of its deleterious effects on vocational decisions such as the desire to change professions, career choice satisfaction, perceived career outlook and career advancement (Hurti and Lindeman, 2002). It has been hypothesized that there will be no statistically significant positive relationship between job stress and turnover intention ( $H_1$ ). The present study also considered that perceived organizational politics may play a role in turnover intention. Perceived organizational politics is defined by Gandz and Murray (1980) as a "subjective state in which organizational members perceive themselves or others as intentionally seeking selfish ends in an organizational context when such ends are oppose to that of others. While Block (1988) sees organizational politics as a process followed by negative approach and described as negative feelings or insulting remark for a person if considered as a very political personality.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand how perceived organizational politics moderate the relationship between work stress and turnover intention. This will help one gain insight on the internal organizational dynamics that affect individuals and organizations as a whole. Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment (Robbins, Judge and Sanghi, 2008). Perception of organizational politics consists of an individual's observation of other people's self-interested behaviours such as careful manipulation of organizational policies (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). However, one's perception can largely be different from objective reality. In organizations, people behave on the basis of their perception about reality, not reality itself. Ferris, Fedor, Chachere, and Pondy, (1989) emphasized that organizational politics is a subjective perception but not necessarily an objective reality. This simply suggest that even if an individual's perception of political affect on organizational

activities and decision making process is a misperception of actual event, this perception is part of the individuals view of reality and therefore will draw their associated cognitive and behavioural responses. However, Bryne (2005) suggested that perception of organizational politics has negative outcomes and is harmful for employees as well as for organization. Poon (2002) observed that organizations that are live with politics provide an uncomfortable environment for people to work in and not good for promoting positive work related behaviours. Vigoda-gadot, Vinarsky-Peretz, and Ben-Zion (2003) held that 'perception of politics is usually individual view about the level of power and influence used by other organizational members to gain advantage and secure their interests in conflicting situations. It connotes attempts to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives (McShane and VonGlinow, 2003).' Organizational politics has been found to be positively associated with psychological variables like work stress (Ferris, Frink, Bhawuk, Zhou and Gilmore, 1996: Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson and Anthony, 1999) and negatively related with employee attitude like job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Cropanzano et al, 1997) Witt, (Kacmar, Carlson and Zivnuska, 2002) as well as Kacmar and Ferris (1991) further revealed organizational politics is a potential source of stress and naturally created an unpalatable atmosphere for people to work. It is hypothesized that there will be no statistically significant positive relationship between perceived organizational politics and turnover intention (H<sub>2</sub>).

## METHODS

### Participants

Two hundred and fifty eight (258) employees (124 Males, and 134 Females) participated in the study. They were drawn amongst the non teaching staff of University of Nigeria Nsukka. 62% of the respondents were married, 48% were single and 18.6% are widows. Their age ranged from 27-55 years with a mean age of 42.07 and SD = 9.59. Working experience of participants ranged from 1-35years.

### Instrument

Three instruments were used for the study. They include; Role Base Stress Inventory, Perceived Organizational Politics Scale, and Turnover Intention Scale.

### Role- Based Stress Inventory

Role- based Stress Inventory by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970), was developed to measure job stress. The instrument contains 20 items designed to measure the degree of stress experienced by workers in different units based on the roles they perform in the work setting. It is scored on a 5-point likert scale. The scoring pattern for each participant was derived by summing up the scores corresponding with the individual's response to all the items. Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) reported split-half reliability index of 0.90. The instrument was validated for Nigerian samples by Ugwu (1995). He reported split-half reliability of 0.90.

### Perceived Organizational Politics Scale

Perceived Organizational politics scale, developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997) was used to measure perceived

organizational politics. The scale is a 15 item scale measured on a 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Undecided=3, Disagree=2 and strongly Disagree=1. The negatively worded items like items 3,4,10 and 11, were scored on reserve direction i.e, 1,2,3,4 and 5. A higher score entail perceptions of higher levels of organizational politics. Kacmar and Carlson (1997) reported that the scale has a conbach's alpha of 0.77. The instrument was validated for Nigerian samples by Emenike (2012) with a cronbach's alpha of .78. All the fifteen items were retained.

### Turnover Intention Scale

Turnover intention was measured using Turnover Intention Scale, developed by Bluedorn (1982). The instrument contains five items with responses on a 1-5 scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. The reliability coefficient obtained by Bluedorn (1982) was 0.90. The Turnover Intention Scale was validated for Nigerian sample by Kanu (2013). The inter item correlation of the 5 items ranged from .50 to .73, with internal consistency reliability estimate of Cronbach alpha=.82.

### Procedure

The three instruments were administered by the researchers to the participants during their working hours/days, with the assistance of some staffs in the university. They were selected using convenient sampling techniques which involves giving out the questionnaires on the basis of accessibility and convenience on the part of both the researchers and the respondents. Copies of these questionnaires were distributed to the non teaching staffs in their various offices. They were encouraged to fill the questionnaire after which the researchers collected the properly filled questionnaires. Three hundred copies of the questionnaires was distributed, two hundred and fifty eight copies were returned and was used for data analysis.

### Design/Statistics

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Regression analysis was used for data analysis. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was employed.

## RESULTS

**Table 4.1. Correlations of demographics, job stress, perceived organizational politics and turnover intentions**

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Turnover intention	-.07	-.17**	.21**	.21**	.11	.12
2.	Gender	-					
3.	Age	-.12	-				
4.	Job tenure	-.15*	.77***	-			
5.	Marital status	.02	-.14*	-.09	-		
6.	Job stress	-.05	-.08	-.08	-.11	-	
7.	POP	-.00	-.05	-.02	-.12	.27	-

\*=P < .05; \*\*=P < .01; \*\*\*=P < .001; POP = perceived organizational politics.

The correlations in table 1 showed that gender was negatively related to job tenure ( $r = -.15$ ,  $P < .05$ ) but there was no significant relationship between gender and turnover intentions ( $r = -.07$ , NS). Age had a significantly positive

relationship with job tenure ( $r = .77, P < .001$ ) and a negatively significant relationship with turnover intention ( $r = -.17, P < .01$ ). Older persons had lower turnover intentions. Job tenure was negatively associated with turnover intentions ( $r = -.17, P < .01$ ). Marital status had a positive association with turnover intentions ( $r = .21, P < .01$ ). Job status was positively associated with perceived organizational politics ( $r = .27, P < .001$ ) but did not have a significant relationship with turnover intentions. The relationship between POP and turnover intentions was not significant ( $r = .12, NS$ ).

**Table 4.2. Hierarchical linear regression for the moderating role of POP on relationship of job stress and turnover intentions**

S/N	Variables	B	B	T	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Δ
1.	Job tenure	-.10	-.10	-1.58	.28	.08	.08
2	Marital status	-.05	-.05	-.54			
3	Gender	.19	.19	3.16*			
4	Age	-.12	-.12	-1.34			
5.	Job stress	.12	.12	1.10*	.30	.09	.01
6.	Pop	.12	.12	1.95	.32	.10	.01
7.	Job stress *pop	-.01	-.01	-.09	.32	.10	.00

\*P<.05

In the Hierarchical linear regression analysis, the demographic variables (job tenure, marital status, gender and age) were included in step 1 as control variables. Only gender was found to be significant predictor of turnover intentions. ( $t = 3.16, P < .05$ ). The control variables, however, explained 8% of the variance in turnover intentions – ( $R^2\Delta = .08$ ). Job stress was a significant predictor of turnover intentions ( $t = 1.10, P < .05$ ). The  $R^2\Delta$  of .01 indicated that it contributed a parent to the variance in turnover intentions. Perceived organizational politics was not a significant predictor of turnover intentions ( $t = 1.95, NS$ ). The intention of Job stress and perceived organizational politics was not statistically significant in predicting, turnover intentions ( $t = -.09, NS$ ) indicating that Perceived organizational politics did not significantly moderate the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions.

## DISCUSSION

The study examined the relationships between job stress, perceived organizational politics and turnover intention. In agreement with most previous studies, there was a positive relationship between job stress and turnover intention. The result of the study revealed that job stress had a significant positive relationship with turnover intention as high intensity of stress increases, turnover intention increases. The first hypothesis was not accepted as the result of the present finding indicated that people who view their work as being stressful will tend to look for an alternative job in future. This finding is in consistent with most recently related studies (Guangjin and Lee 2010, Andika and Imam, 2013, Kuen and Kaur 2010, Jacob and Roodt 2008, Cao-yu-ping, 2005) which showed significant positive relationship between job stress and turn over intention. In consistent with the matching theoretical framework (for example Henneberger and Sousa-Poza, 2002) employers tend to fill positions, so that they can maximize their benefit. Also, when workers perceive their working conditions to be in line with their personal capabilities, they tend to remain in that setting. This implies that a low stress working environment is essential for employee's continuity.

The finding of the study also showed that there was no significant relationship between perceived organizational politics and turnover intentions. Thus, the second hypothesis was confirmed. The finding is inconsistent with previous studies like (Guangjin and Lee 2010; Lasun and Nwosu 2011; Marjorie, Russel, Carol, and Andrew 1999). The inconsistency between the present finding and the previous can be attributed to differences in cultural settings in which both studies took place. In the western world, people are seen as being sensitive to certain kind of treatment owing to the fact that alternative opportunities abound, but in the Nigerian setting, such sensitivities does not always hold. One major contribution of this study was that it alerts management to become more knowledgeable about occupational stress, the risk factors, mechanisms and effects. Since occupational stress is correlated with employees' turnover intent, it is very important to reduce it by applying the right human resources polices. Managements can decrease the level of job stress in the organization by increasing workers' satisfaction with policies, work conditions, equal compensation and equal promotion.

Therefore, this study advocates that workers should be trained to appropriate strategies to cope with stress easily and effectively. Physical activity, meditation, healthy life style and time management can help employees to cope with their occupational stress. However, there are some weaknesses in the present study. The researchers selected only two hundred and fifty eight participants out of millions of workers. Also, only non teaching staffs of university of Nigeria, Nsukka participated in the study. Increasing the number of organizations/companies and participants in subsequent studies is recommended. Specifically, a large population of workers at different levels in different organizations is recommended for proper generalizations of findings. More so, using just all category of workers should be adopted. In conducting such studies, researchers may benefit from including other relevant psychological variables, while still the control variables or covariates. Longitudinal studies may also yield a more robust finding.

## Conclusion

Employee turnover intention is a mental decision prevailing between an individual's approach with reference to work to continue or leave the work (Jacob and Roodt, 2007). It has been observed that worker's experience of stress in their work place can be detrimental to management. Hence, the present finding emphasizes on the workers perception of stress and how it brings about the intention to opt out from the current job. People have their different ways of perceiving and interpreting stressful events and so it results into certain decision of either staying or leaving. It is therefore suggested that managements should work towards employing techniques that will reduce worker's stress levels, as stress has been shown to predict turnover intention.

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