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Identifying Organizational Factors that Moderate the Engagement-Turnover Relationship in a Healthcare Setting

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By

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It is essential for organizations to understand how turnover works within their business and the potential other organizational factors have on affecting turnover in order to know how to leverage these factors to effectively reduce turnover and the costs associated with it. The present study examined the relationship between employee engagement and turnover in clinical departments within a healthcare setting and the effects other organizational factors, such as respect, diversity, diversity climate and mission fulfillment have on that relationship. The results of the study demonstrate that although the relationship between engagement and turnover is significant, that none of the variables significantly interacted with engagement to predict turnover rates. Main effects existed for tenure and age, the two variables used to assess diversity, and engagement, but no other main effects were found. Implications for these results and future directions are explored in the discussion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is a persistent expense that all organizations face, regardless of industry. Controlling costs associated with turnover is beneficial to the success of organizations in today's economy (Moran, 2011; O'Connell & Kung, 2007; White, 1995). Turnover is especially costly when regarding new hire turnover because newly hired employees are not "100 percent productive from the time they start" (O'Connell & Kung, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, if a newly hired employee chooses to leave, the return on investment for recruiting, selecting, and training this individual evaporates (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Not only is turnover costly, but it has an effect on the employees left behind, such as decreased morale and productivity (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). In healthcare settings, which are demanding and stressful environments, turnover may lead to a decrease in the patient care experience (International Conference of Nurses, 2006). Therefore, understanding turnover, the organizational factors affecting turnover, such as interpersonal relationships, diversity climate, and mission fulfillment, and how to leverage these factors to effectively reduce turnover is essential to organizational success.

Turnover

Turnover, often associated with organizational withdrawal, has been a topic of research among organizational scholars for many years (Golden, 2006; Jones & Harter, 2005; Mobley, 1977; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) with a great deal of attention paid to the factors explaining turnover, as well as differentiating individual reasons for leaving an organization. O'Connell and

Kung (2007) describe four types of employee turnover based on the combination of two factors: voluntary versus involuntary turnover and internal versus external turnover. Employees may leave their current job on their own accord, referred to as voluntary turnover or they may be asked to leave due to something such as poor performance, referred to as involuntary turnover (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Employees may receive a promotion or transfer to another position within the organization, known as internal turnover, or they may exit the organization entirely, referred to as external turnover (Globerson & Malki, 1980). Thus, an individual may voluntarily or involuntarily move to another position within the organization or an individual may voluntarily or involuntarily leave the organization. Regardless, any combination of these four types will result in costs for the organization.

Although organizations and organizational researchers generally seek to minimize turnover, not all turnover has negative consequences for the organization (Dunn, 2007). Organizations that lose an employee due to poor organizational fit, self-selection, poor performance, or theft may be doing themselves a favor and saving themselves money in the end (McGarvey, 1997). Although these situations are less commonly studied, organizations should be aware that some turnover will actually benefit the organization more than it will hurt them (Dunn, 2007; McGarvey, 1997).

Regardless of the type, however, all turnover has costs associated with it (Globerson & Malki, 1980; Moran, 2011). Costs of turnover include direct financial costs, such the cost of recruiting a new incumbent to fill the vacant position, as well as more indirect costs, such as the possible effect employee turnover can have on morale of those still employed (Moran, 2011; O'Connell & King, 2007; White 1995). The most common direct costs associated with employee turnover are selection and replacement costs, separation costs, training costs, and the

cost of having an unfilled position (Globerson & Malki, 1980; Rousseau, 1984). The indirect financial costs of turnover include increased workloads of coworkers who must pick up the slack of empty positions and adverse publicity about organizations that have increasingly high levels of turnover. Indirect costs may be difficult to measure but they have a distinct impact on employee morale and productivity (White, 1995). Both direct and indirect costs of turnover can affect an organization's reputation, productivity and effectiveness (Lam, Chen & Takeuchi, 2009).

Early turnover research focused on identifying predictors of turnover such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Mobley, 1977). However, Mobley (1977) argued that it was more important to examine the process of voluntary turnover, and what an individual goes through to reach the decision to leave an organization. Mobley (1977) proposed a ten-step process which illustrates what an individual goes through before making the decision to quit a current position or to stay. The first step is to evaluate the existing position, and step two is to develop some degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with that existing position. If the resulting emotion is dissatisfaction with the current position, the third step is the initial thought of quitting. According to Mobley (1977) in steps two and three, alternative forms of withdrawal behavior can occur, such as increased absenteeism. The next step in the turnover process includes evaluating the expected utility of searching for a new position and the expected cost of quitting. If the individual's evaluation results in high utility, meaning the likelihood of finding a new position and the desirability of an alternative position is high, and the cost of quitting (losing seniority status, loss of vested benefits) is low, then the next step in the turnover process is to develop intentions to search. Intentions lead to the behavior of searching for alternative positions and evaluating those alternative positions. The current position is compared to

alternative positions and depending on the outcome of the comparison, behavioral intention to quit or stay is formed, followed by actual turnover behavior (Mobley, 1977). Mobley (1977) does mention however, that not all who leave their current position do so via the above process, but that some may act impulsively, thus, the model is more heuristic than descriptive. However, research has commonly identified a clear link between turnover intentions and actual turnover (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978; Youngblood et al., 1983), therefore, if an organization can thwart the turnover process by increasing the likelihood that the evaluation of the current position is positive, turnover will likely decrease throughout the organization.

Factors Affecting Turnover

To improve an individual's evaluation of his/her current position, and understand how to avoid and prevent the costs associated with turnover, organizations should be aware of the different factors affecting turnover decisions, or intentions to leave. Researchers have been investigating the factors that affect employees' decisions to stay or leave organizations for quite some time (Lam et al., 2009; Peterson, 2006; Wuang, 1995; Youngblood, Mobley & Meglino, 1983). The most frequently studied is satisfaction and its relation to intentions to leave and actual turnover (Leiter, Laschinger, Day & Oore, 2011; Suzuki et al., 2010; van der Heijden et al., 2010; Waung, 1995; Youngblood et al., 1983) followed closely by engagement (de Lange, De Witte & Notelaers, 2008; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008). However, researchers are now looking to other organizational factors that impact turnover decisions, such as recruitment and socialization processes (Morse & Popovich, 2009; Youngblood et al., 1983), perceived organizational support (Kinnuen, Feldt & Makikangas, 2008; Pazy, Ganzach & Davido, 2006; Waung, 1995) organizational climate (McKnight, Phillips & Hardgrave, 2009; Peterson, 2007;

Tsai & Huang, 2008) interpersonal relationships (Laschinger, Leiter, Day & Gillin, 2009; Leiter et al., 2011; Simpson, 2009; Suzuki et al., 2010; van der Heijden et al., 2010), diversity climate (Buttner, Lowe & Billings-Harris, 2010; Kaplan, Wiley &Maertz, 2011; Stewart, Volpone, Avery & McKay, 2010) and mission fulfillment (Suh, Houston, Barney & Kwon, 2011). These factors are especially evident for newly hired employees because they are "highly responsive to organizational influences during their initial encounters with the organization" (Pazy, Ganzach & Davido, 2006, p.80).

Engagement

Although much of the existing turnover research focuses on employee satisfaction as a predictor, many organizations have replaced their standard employee satisfaction surveys with employee engagement surveys (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Although the two concepts are related, numerous studies have demonstrated their distinctiveness (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009). As a result, employee engagement has become the focus of current research regarding turnover and turnover intentions (Freeney & Tiernan, 2009; Vinje &Mittlemark, 2007). Simply put, engagement is the relationship an individual has with his/her work (Maslach Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). More specifically, Maslach et al. (2001) suggest that engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor is understood as high energy, resilience, and persistence without being easily fatigued. Dedication consists of feelings of significance, enthusiasm and pride, along with increased involvement in one's work. Absorption is understood as a pleasant experience in which an individual lacks the ability to detach from one's work. As stated earlier, engagement is distinct from job satisfaction, and also from, other similar concepts such as job involvement and organizational commitment (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). Both concepts of organizational commitment and job involvement

possessed a much weaker relationship with health complaints when compared to employee engagement (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). Their findings suggest that engagement is a much more robust concept not only addressing attachment to work and the personal factors and job factors that contribute to that relationship, but optimal functioning and employee health. For example, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) reported strong negative correlations between employee engagement and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depressive symptoms, somatic complaints, sleep disturbances and turnover intentions. From these findings it is easy to conclude that engagement should have a positive effect on employees and their health.

Engagement is important to individual employee health, but it also has been related to employees' decisions regarding their employment, their commitment to the organization, and their behaviors and/or interactions in the workplace (de Lange et al., 2008; Harter, Schmitt & Hayes, 2002; Saks, 2006). In a longitudinal study looking at engagement and resources, de Lange et al. (2008) found that employees who change jobs do so because of low departmental resources, low autonomy and low engagement. Saks (2002) also demonstrated that employee engagement is related to organizational citizenship behaviors, job satisfaction, and intentions to quit. Along with these benefits of employee engagement, Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) demonstrated that engagement is related to meaningful business outcomes, such as profitability, productivity, safety and turnover. These findings provide evidence that engagement is related to improved health, a stronger commitment to the organization, higher job satisfaction, and an improved work environment. Given that these resources have all been linked to reduced turnover intentions, it is reasonable to expect a link between engagement and actual turnover.

It is generally anticipated that engagement and turnover will be negatively related to one another; however, this is not always the case. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) found that

despite what was expected, when examining engagement and embeddedness, (defined as a collection of forces keeping an individual in a given job such as links within the organization, fit with the job and sacrifices associated with leaving the job p. 242), only job embeddedness provided a unique prediction of turnover intentions in a sample of employees from a wide variety of industries. Simpson (2009) proposed a different kind of relationship between turnover intentions and engagement. More specifically, Simpson (2009) found that job satisfaction and turnover intentions were the best predictors of work engagement, suggesting that in order for an employee to become more engaged with work they must be satisfied with their work, and have fewer cognitions of quitting, not the other way around. Lastly, Vinje and Mittlemark (2007) observed that engagement may actually put nurses at a higher risk of fatigue and burnout, because of their feelings of dedication and calling to the nursing profession. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of engagement, it has been stated that the relationship between engagement and turnover is intricate and may be affected by other variables (Jones & Harter, 2005). These findings suggest that the relationship between engagement and turnover is complicated and worthy of further study in all industries, but especially those with notoriously high rates of turnover such as the healthcare industry.

Nursing, Interpersonal Relationships, and Turnover

The nursing community, in particular, has been concerned about turnover (Laschinger et al., 2009; Suzuki et al., 2010; Tsai & Huang, 2008) as turnover rates may directly affect the quality of patient care (International Conference of Nurses, 2006). Existing research in clinical care population's reports that the factors affecting turnover in these environments are similar to factors affecting turnover in other populations, however because of the stressful and demanding environment clinical care professionals work in, the exact nature of these relationships may

differ. For example, the quality of interpersonal relationships at work, which may include things such as civility, social support, and respect, have been shown to relate to turnover intentions in nursing populations (Duddle & Boughton, 2008). Laschinger et al. (2009) suggests that a major cause of turnover in nurses is unhappiness with the workplace due to uncivil behavior and that organizational commitment may depend on civil relationships among coworkers as well as supervisors. They found that support provided from colleagues influenced intent to quit, beyond job satisfaction and age. Furthermore, support from one's supervisor may in fact prevent premature leave (van der Heijden et al., 2010). Leiter et al. (2011) found that interventions designed to increase civility and respect in the workplace does improve interpersonal relationships, job attitudes, and absences. Because these are all associated with turnover, interpersonal relationships in the workplace clearly play an important role in the process.

Interpersonal relationships provide employees with a social support that directly influences their intentions to remain in their current position (Hansung & Stoner, 2008; van der Heijden et al., 2010) and may buffer the negative effects of burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Burnout is conceptualized as, "a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" that consists of three key elements: overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001 p.399). Due to the demanding nature of the work nurses and clinical practitioners do, they are more likely to experience burnout and the negative psychological and physical symptoms associated with it (Vinje & Mittlemark, 2007). This research evidence suggests that improving relationships and increasing the availability of social support in nursing and clinical staff populations may then reduce turnover.

Diversity and Turnover

Along with the relationships established in clinical settings, the diversity of a work group may also affect turnover intentions and decisions (Jones & Harter, 2005). In an organization, diversity can be examined in many ways. The actual diversity of a workgroup's makeup may be examined at either a surface level (gender, age, and ethnicity), or deep-level (value dissimilarity; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004). In addition, many researchers have examined perceptions of diversity or diversity climates in organizations (Buttner et al., 2010; Kaplan, Wiley &Maertz, 2011; Stewart et al., 2010). Perceptions of diversity and/or diversity climates are generally defined as the extent to which an employee perceives that the organization values diversity (McKay et al., 2007).

In regards to surface level diversity in the workplace, Jones and Harter (2005) found that when the supervisor-subordinate dyad was heterogeneous, the subordinate was more likely to be unsatisfied and expressed a weaker intent to remain than if the dyad was homogeneous. These findings were moderated by perceived openness (Jones & Harter, 2005). Similarly, Sacco and Schmitt (2005) described workgroup diversity to be the proportion of various racial groups, women, and average age of employees, and found that for all three variables, if an employee was demographically dissimilar from his/her workgroup he/she would be more likely to turnover. Sacco and Schmitt (2005) also found that this relationship between demographic dissimilarity and turnover was not only strongest for newer employees but that these effects began to weaken, and in some cases became reversed, as tenure increased. Age, gender, ethnicity, and group tenure are highly visible attributes in workgroups, especially during early employment and group development, and although they may be unrelated to task performance, they are salient for the new employees (Pelled, 1996).

In research on diversity attitudes or diversity climate, it is becoming increasingly more evident that in order for diversity initiatives to be successful, the organization must emphasize the value of the initiative and communicate its fairness (Buttner et al., 2010; Stewart et al., 2010). McKay et al. (2007) found that across the ethnicities observed (Black, White, and Hispanic), diversity climate perceptions were negatively related to turnover intentions. Buttner et al. (2010) supported this idea by demonstrating that if the diversity climate of an organization is perceived as unfair, employees are more likely to leave the organization. This was particularly true for employees of color (US-born professionals of color, including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans). In order to promote positive perceptions of diversity climates, Kaplan et al. (2011) suggests focusing on gaining more than compliance when using diversity initiatives and emphasizing the tangible outcomes of the initiatives. Kaplan et al. (2011) goes on to say that "putting people together who differ in terms of demographic characteristics cannot, by itself, help retention and may even damage it (p. 272)." Individuals need to feel that the organization values all the characteristics of a person that makes them diverse, and that these characteristics promote rather than hinder advancements (Kaplan et al., 2011). The results of this study showed that demonstrating the tangible benefits of supporting a diversity climate increased retention rates of employees. These findings reach beyond the need for affective appeals when organizations look to support diversity initiatives and focus more on the actual benefits that employees can see. Lastly, Kaplan et al. (2002) provided significant evidence that diversity climate has an effect on all individuals within the climate, regardless of sex and race, therefore understanding diversity climates and how they impact business outcomes such as turnover are essential to organizational success.

Mission Fulfillment and Turnover

Beyond improving diversity perceptions and respect among employees, it has been shown that organization mission fulfillment may increase organizational identification and the desire to affiliate, reducing turnover (Suh et al., 2011). Suh et al. (2011) define mission fulfillment as "the state in which an organization consistently acts (publicly and privately) in a manner that is congruent with and leads to the fulfillment of its corporate mission statement (p. 77)". A mission statement, which is defined as "a formal statement of philosophy, values and goals (Suh et al., 2011, p.77)" defines an organization. As a part of many socialization strategies, the mission, vision and core values of organizations are essential to integrating new employees into the organization. As shown by Morse and Popovich (2009), if the expectations formed during the recruitment and socialization phase are not upheld, employees are more likely to leave. In fact, creating realistic job previews (RJP) in order to minimize discrepancies between expectations and reality and decrease early turnover has been a strategy used by many organizations (Morse & Popovich, 2009; Pazy et al., 2006). This suggests that the communication around the mission during initial employment should be reflected in actions and continued communication in order to decrease discrepancies. Discrepancies between the mission and actual mission fulfillment may lead to cognitive dissonance, and added role stress for the employee (Suh et al., 2011). As demonstrated by Cunningham and Sagas (2004), value dissimilarity better predicts job satisfaction and turnover than surface level diversity, suggesting that if an individual's values are different than those shared by the organization, or become different through a lack of mission fulfillment, they are more likely to leave the organization. Although there is minimal research on this topic, if an employee is experiencing dissonance because an organization is acting in ways that are incongruent with the mission, or if an employee joined an organization because of their mission only to find that the stated mission is

not acted upon, it is plausible that this will lead to increased rates of turnover, especially in organizations where the mission is salient and focused on heavily.

Current Study

As the research demonstrates, the relationship between engagement and turnover is complex (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Vinje & Mittlemark, 2007). Moderators of the engagement-turnover relationship have rarely been looked at in the literature; however, if engagement is the relationship between the individual and his/her work, organizational factors may affect that relationship between an individual and their work, thereby impacting their intent to remain on the job (McKnight, Phillips, & Hardgrave, 2009; Peterson, 2007). Therefore, it seems practical that levels of engagement and turnover may also be moderated by organizational factors, such as interpersonal relationships, diversity, and mission fulfillment. The current study aimed to address potential moderators of the engagement-turnover relationship by looking at departmental levels of both engagement and turnover, as opposed to individual employee levels, in order to get a better picture of what was actually happening with these variables. Harter et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of the actionability of the variables being measured, such as engagement and satisfaction, and suggested that the "process of averaging across individuals removes trait-related individual differences, leaving business-unit characteristics as the construct measured," which are malleable and related to bottom line business outcomes (p. 276). Using this framework, the current study tested the following hypotheses using data aggregated at the department level:

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: New hires will report different reasons for leaving than more experienced employees.

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative relationship between employee engagement and turnover.

Hypothesis 3: Respect in the workplace will moderate the relationship between engagement and turnover, such that turnover will be high if respect is low, regardless of engagement.

Hypothesis 4a: Heterogeneity of the department will moderate the relationship between engagement and turnover, such that if the workgroup is heterogeneous, then turnover will be high, regardless of engagement.

Hypothesis 4b: Perceptions of diversity climate will moderate the relationship between engagement and turnover, such that the negative relationship between engagement and turnover will be stronger when perceptions of diversity climate in the department are positive.

Hypothesis 5: Mission fulfillment will moderate the relationship between engagement and turnover, such that when mission fulfillment is low, turnover will increase regardless of engagement.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants. 11,933 employees from 649 departments from six healthcare systems within a large healthcare organization within the United States completed an online employee opinion survey including 16 items of engagement, as well as seven additional items addressing perceptions of diversity climate, respect and mission fulfillment.

The sample was trimmed to address the relationships in clinical departments only (see procedure for specifications). The final sample included 201 clinical departments (i.e. Radiology, Intensive Care Unit, and Oncology). Women made up 87.8% of the sample, and 88.5% of the sample was white. The average age of the sample was 40.32 years, and average tenure of employees was 9.08 years. The turnover sample included 1,040 employees, 249 were considered new hires (those that turned over in less than a year from their start date) and 791 were more experienced hires. Involuntary reasons accounted for 266 turnovers and voluntary turnover accounted for 774 turnovers. Although the sample also included 30 individuals who were terminated or quit prior to their official start date, these individuals were not included in any further analyses.

Procedure. An employee engagement survey was administered electronically to all hospital employees in spring of 2011. For the purpose of this study, departments were categorized into clinical departments (those departments within the hospital that have direct patient contact) and non-clinical departments in order for the sample to reflect the research regarding clinical care populations and the impact of turnover on the patient care experience

(International Conference of Nurses, 2006, Laschinger et al., 2009; Suzuki et al., 2010; Tsai & Huang, 2008). From the original 649 departments, 383 non-clinical departments were excluded from the sample. An additional 65 clinical departments were excluded because they had fewer than 10 responses on the engagement survey and thus were not considered to be representative of their respective departments. Once the data was trimmed to these specifications, the data was aggregated by department and linked to turnover rates and demographic makeup (tenure, gender, age, and race) of departments from company personnel records.

Measures.

Demographics. Participants were asked to complete demographic questions assessing age, gender, job title, tenure, and race.

Employee Engagement. The engagement index includes 16 items. Example items include "My supervisor regularly gives me feedback on my work performance," "My job gives me an opportunity to do the things I do best" and "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." The items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Diversity. Because the sample included a strong majority of females (88%) and white employees (89%), departmental diversity was calculated using age ($M = 41.7$) and tenure ($M = 10.1$). Tenure diversity and age within a unit is best conceptualized as separation, as suggested by Harrison and Klein (2007). Harrison and Klein (2007) describe the distinction as "the less separated team members are along the tenure continuum, the more likely they are to have similar attitudes, beliefs, and values, to be drawn to one another, and to identify with one another" (p. 1209). To operationalize separation, Harrison and Klein (2007) suggest indexing separation at the unit level "by cumulating absolute or squared distances between pairs of individuals…within

unit standard deviation reflects such cumulative distances" (p. 1210). Therefore, for the current study, age diversity and tenure diversity were determined by using the department standard deviation.

Diversity Climate. A three item diversity measure was also completed by the employees. An example item is: "Diverse people (differences in race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) are treated fairly at this organization."

Respect in the Workplace. Three items assessing interpersonal relationships and respect at work were completed by employees. An example item is: "My co-workers treat me with respect."

Mission Fulfillment. A single item measure of mission fulfillment was also completed by employees ("It is clear to me that decisions within my workgroup are based on this organization's Mission and Core Values").

The three items assessing diversity climate, the three items measuring respect, and the one item measuring mission fulfillment were added to the 16 item employee engagement survey in 2011. All these items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). All survey responses were aggregated to the department level because the preliminary analyses supported aggregation. See Table 5 for ICC(1) and ICC(2) support for aggregation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Principal components analysis. A principal components analysis using varimax

rotation on the engagement items used in the employee engagement survey revealed three

significant factors. The first factor included six items which represented engagement and was

used throughout this study as the engagement scale. The second factor included five items that

reflected feelings regarding the supervisor of the employee taking the survey. The last factor

included two items concerning the employees' coworkers. See Table 1 below for factor loadings

and item breakdown.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics for the main study variables (means,

standard deviations, and ranges) are provided in Table 2. Overall, the clinical departments

reported moderate levels of engagement ($M = 3.73$), moderate levels of mission fulfillment ($M =$

3.67), and fairly high levels of respect ($M = 3.92$) and diversity climate ($M = 4.17$). The mean

turnover rate across departments was 11% (minimum $= 0$, maximum $= 32\%$). Voluntary

turnover accounted for 74.9% of the turnover in the sample and involuntary turnover accounted

for the remaining 25.1%. New hire turnover (leaving position within the first year of

employment) accounted for 23.7% of the turnover observed, more experienced employee

turnover accounted for 73.6%. See Table 3 for frequencies of turnover statistics. Correlations

between all study variables are presented in Table 4.

Reliability analyses. Intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC(1) and ICC(2)) were calculated to determine the internal consistency of means in order to support the use of aggregation. ICC(1) values indicate the percentage of variability explained by group membership (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1982). ICC(2) values indicate the reliability of the ratings (Gillespie et al., 2008). Due to unequal groups sizes between departments, which would bias the ICC(1) statistic, the harmonic mean for group size was calculated using the formula provided by Blalock (1972) to calculate N_G. It is desirable to see ICC(1) values different from zero, with values approaching .20 considered high (Bliese, 1998) (the ICC(1) was low for the Diversity Climate subscale, .05, however this subscale was included for exploratory purposes). Reliability of group means was established through calculating ICC (2) (Bliese, 1998; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). Glick (1985) suggests values greater than .60 as a criterion for evaluating ICC (2). The results demonstrated sufficient reliability in the departments (ICC(2) ranging from .59-.81. See Table 5 for ICC(1) and ICC(2) statistics.

Subscales for engagement, diversity climate, and respect were created from the annual employment survey. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the subscales. The alphas ranged from .81 to .90 demonstrating good internal consistency within the subscales. See Table 2 for reliability analysis.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one indicated that the new hire population would turnover for different reasons than more experienced employees. A chi square test of independence was used to determine if type of turnover (voluntary versus involuntary) was related to the time of turnover

of the employee (new hire turnover versus more experienced employee turnover). The results

indicate that the relationship between these variables was significant, χ^2 (1) = 5.20, $p < .05$. This

suggests that new hires leave within the first year for voluntary reasons at a higher rate than

experienced hires. These results support hypothesis one, suggesting that new hires appear to be

an especially vulnerable population with high turnover for voluntary reasons when compared to

the overall population. See Table 3 for frequencies.

Hypothesis 2

A correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between department level

engagement and turnover rates. Hypothesis 2 predicted a negative relationship between

engagement and turnover. The results demonstrate that there is a negative relationship between

turnover rates and engagement levels, r (201) = -.16, $p < .05$. This suggests that the higher the

level of engagement within the department the lower the turnover rates, therefore supporting

hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3

To test the hypothesis that respectful interpersonal relationships moderate the relationship

between department level engagement and turnover rates, a hierarchical multiple regression

analysis was conducted. The overall model was not significant, R^2 = .03, $F(3, 197)$ = 2.01, p =

.11.

In the first step, the centered overall engagement scores and the centered respect scores

were entered. These did not account for a significant amount of variance in total turnover rates,

R^2 = .029, $F(2, 198)$ = 2.99, p = .05. In the final step of the regression analysis, an interaction

term between engagement scores and respect scores was created, which did not account for a

significant proportion of the variance in turnover rates, ΔR^2 = .00, $\Delta F(1, 197)$ = 0.09, p = .77.

See Table 6 for Beta estimates.

Hypothesis 4a

To test the hypothesis that departmental diversity (represented by age and tenure) moderates the relationship between department level engagement and turnover rates, two hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted, the first using departmental tenure as the moderating variable, and the second using age. The overall model including tenure was not significant, $R^2 = .21$, $F(3, 197) = 16.88$, $p = .11$.

In the first step, the centered overall engagement scores and the centered tenure variables were entered. These accounted for a significant amount of variance in total turnover rates, $R^2 = .195$, $F(2, 198) = 24.06$, $p < .001$. In the final step of the regression analysis, an interaction term between engagement scores and tenure was created, which did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in turnover rates, $\Delta R^2 = .009$, $\Delta F(1, 197) = 2.25$, $p = .135$. See Table 7 for Beta estimates.

The overall model including age was significant, $R^2 = .16$, $F(3, 197) = 12.17$, $p < .001$. In the first step, the centered overall engagement scores and centered age variables were entered. These accounted for a significant amount of variance in total turnover rates, $R^2 = .154$, $F(2, 198) = 18.06$, $p < .001$. In the final step of the regression analysis, an interaction term between engagement scores and tenure was created, which did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in turnover rates, $\Delta R^2 = .002$, $\Delta F(1, 197) = 0.48$, $p = .492$. See Table 7 for Beta statistics.

Hypothesis 4b

To test the hypothesis that diversity climate perceptions moderate the relationship between department level engagement and turnover rates, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The overall model was significant, $R^2 = .04$, $F(3, 197) = 2.88$, $p < .05$.

In the first step, centered overall engagement scores and centered diversity climate perception scores were entered. The model accounted for a significant amount of variance in total turnover rates, $R^2 = .04$, $F(2, 198) = 4.27$, $p < .05$. In the final step of the regression analysis, an interaction term between engagement scores and diversity climate perception scores was created, which did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in turnover rates, $\Delta R^2 = .001$, $\Delta F(1, 197) = .12$, $p = .73$. See Table 8 for Beta estimates.

Hypothesis 5

To test the hypothesis that mission fulfillment moderates the relationship between department level engagement and turnover rates, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The overall model was not significant, $R^2 = .028$, $F(3, 197) = 1.89$, $p = .13$.

In the first step, centered overall engagement and centered mission fulfillment scores were entered. The model did not account for a significant amount of variance in total turnover rates, $R^2 = .025$, $F(2, 198) = 2.58$, $p = .08$. In the final step of the regression analysis, an interaction term between engagement scores and mission fulfillment scores was created, which did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in turnover rates, $\Delta R^2 = .003$, $\Delta F(1, 197) = .51$, $p = .48$. See Table 9 for Beta estimates.

Table 1

Component loadings for engagement survey factor analysis

	1	2	3
My job gives me the opportunity to do the things I do best.	0.74	.14	.17
This organization provides me the opportunity to improve my professional knowledge and job skills.	0.67	.20	.18
This organization makes it possible for associates to directly contribute to its success.	0.66	.28	.27
The necessary materials and equipment are available when I need to perform my job.	0.66	.18	.11
Senior management of this organization is concerned about the associates.	0.64	0.32	.15
I know what is expected of me in my job.	0.60	.19	.15
I have thought of resigning in the last six months. (reverse coded)	-0.43	-.07	.17
My supervisor lets associates know when they have done a good job.	.25	0.85	.14
My supervisor regularly gives me feedback on my work performance.	.21	0.80	.21
My supervisor encourages my career growth.	0.35	0.73	.15
Associates here receive recognition for a job well done.	0.40	0.72	.19
I have an opportunity to participate in decisions made by my supervisor that affect my work environment.	.41	0.63	.15
My coworkers are friendly and helpful.	.06	.14	0.83
Associates of this organization show an attitude of genuinely caring about the customer.	.30	.08	0.75

Note: Component loadings below the .60 cutoff are highlighted grey.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for main study variables

	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD	Alpha (α)	Range
Engagement	2.67	4.68	3.73	0.34	0.90	1.00-5.00
Respect	3.21	4.68	3.92	0.29	0.76	1.00-5.00
Diversity Climate	3.59	5	4.18	0.24	0.87	1.00-5.00
Mission	2.06	4.64	3.67	0.41	1 item	1.00-5.00
Turnover Rate	0	0.32	0.11	0.07		
Avg. Dept. Age	29.75	56.5	41.7	4.99		
Avg. Dept. Tenure	1.98	22.2	10.1	3.97		

Note: N = 201

Table 3

Turnover statistics

	Voluntary Turnover	Involuntary Turnover	Total	Percent
New Hire	199	50	249	23.9%
Experienced Employee	575	216	791	76.1%
Total	774	266	1040	
Percent	74.4%	25.6%		

Table 4

Intercorrelations between all main study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Engagement	1	-0.16*	-0.33**	-0.42**	0.87**	0.81**	0.70**
2. Turnover Rate		1	-0.42**	-0.35**	-0.14	-0.09	-0.21
3. Tenure			1	0.73**	0.02	0.07	0.14
4. Age				1	-0.09	-0.02	-0.03
5. Mission					1	0.80**	0.70**
6. Respect						1	0.79**
7. Diversity Climate							1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5

Evidence for aggregating the healthcare data at the department level

	ICC(1)	ICC(2)
Mission Fulfillment	.136	.789
Respect	.119	.762
Diversity Climate	.059	.598
Tenure	.090	.702
Age	.177	.837
Engagement	.152	.810

Departments (N) = 266; Total People (N) = 6,378

Table 6

Moderated regression coefficients and significance values for engagement and respect as predictors of turnover

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	β	*p*	β	*p*
Engagement	-.25	.04*	-.24	.05
Respect	.11	.37	.10	.40
Engagement x Respect			.02	.77

Note: * denotes $p < .05$, ** denotes $p < .01$, *** denotes $p < .001$

Table 7

Moderated regression coefficients and significance values for engagement and diversity as predictors of turnover

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	β	*P*	β	*p*
Engagement	-.14	.03*	-.14	. 03*
Tenure	-.41	.000***	-.42	.000***
Engagement x Tenure			.10	.14
Engagement	-.18	.008**	-.18	.008**
Age	-.36	.000***	-.37	.000***
Engagement x Age			.05	.49

Note: * denotes $p < .05$, ** denotes $p < .01$, *** denotes $p < .001$

Table 8

Moderated regression coefficients and significance values for engagement and diversity climate as predictors of turnover

	Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	β	*p*	β	*p*
Engagement	-.28	.004**	-.28	. 006**
Diversity Climate	.18	.07	.17	.07
Engagement x Diversity Climate			.03	.87

Note: * denotes *p* < .05, ** denotes *p* < .01, *** denotes *p* < .001

Table 9

Moderated regression coefficients and significance values for engagement and mission fulfillment as predictors of turnover

	Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	β	*p*	β	*p*
Engagement	-.17	.22	-.19	. 19
Mission Fulfillment	.02	.90	.05	.74
Engagement x Mission Fulfillment			.06	.48

Note: * denotes *p* < .05, ** denotes *p* < .01, *** denotes *p* < .001

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to further understand and contribute to the existing research on the relationship between turnover and engagement in a healthcare context. The research suggests that there is an unclear understanding of this relationship, and what other factors may influence it (Jones & Harter, 2005; Vinje & Mittlemark, 2007). More specifically, the purpose of the current study was to understand the relationship between engagement and turnover and how this relationship may be affected by other organizational factors such as diversity climate and mission fulfillment. Within the study I paid attention to the new hire population as well as the more experienced employees who had exited the organization. The new hire population, as the research suggests, is a population to pay special attention to because of the diminishing effect their turnover may have on financial performance and overall morale (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Because of these extreme costs, both direct and indirect costs, associated with turnover and the impact turnover may have on the patient care experience (Globerson & Malki, 1980; International Conference of Nurses, 2006). Specifically, this study examined the relationship between engagement and turnover and how diversity climate, surface level diversity, mission fulfillment and respect in the workplace may impact that relationship within patient facing departments.

Summary of Findings

As anticipated, the results demonstrated that the proportion of new hires that left the organization for voluntary or involuntary reasons was significantly different from the proportion

of more experienced employees who left the organization. This is consistent with previous findings by Pazy et al. (2006) showing that newly hired employees are acutely attuned to their surroundings and environmental factors during their initial moments and interactions with the organization. More experienced employees may simply be used to the way things are or may be too vested in the organization to exit as opposed to the recent hires. The new hires may be more apt to exit the organization entirely as opposed to hanging on to an organization that they do not quite identify with. To better understand these trends, a deeper analysis of specific voluntary and involuntary reasons clinical employees exit healthcare organizations would be beneficial. This could be accomplished using exit interview data.

Previous research demonstrates that, although it may be complicated, there is typically a negative relationship between engagement levels and turnover rates or intentions (de Lange et al., 2008; Harter, Schmitt & Hayes, 2002; Saks, 2006). The results of this study support this notion, such that departments who scored higher on the engagement scale tended to have lower turnover rates. Given that the definition of engagement is the relationship between the individual and their work, and that previous research links engagement to turnover, improved health, organizational commitment and higher job satisfaction, these results are not surprising (Harter, Schmitt & Hayes, 2002: Maslach et al., 2001).

Given the negative relationship between engagement and turnover, I examined other organizational factors that may influence that relationship. Interpersonal relationships, particularly in regards to respect and support within clinical populations, have been linked to unhappiness in the workplace, lack of organizational commitment and turnover (Duddle & Boughton, 2008; Laschinger et al., 2009). Thus, I expected to see a moderating relationship where the least amount of turnover would exist in departments where both engagement and

respect were high, but that turnover rates would increase as respect decreased regardless of how engaged employees were. In other words, an individual may have a positive relationship with his or her work, however if he/she does not feel respected at work he/she may be more inclined to leave. This hypothesis was not supported. In fact, there was no significant main effect for respect. The items that made up the respect subscale used in this study revolved solely around the exact idea of respect between coworkers, physicians, supervisors and leaders. The research demonstrated a broader sense of interpersonal relationships incorporating social support (Hansung & Stoner, 2008; van der Heijden et al., 2010) and civility (Leiter et al., 2011), therefore perhaps the effect of respect would be seen when including a broader range of interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

The second moderating relationship proposed in this study was between surface level diversity and the engagement-turnover relationship. The literature suggests that surface level diversity (i.e. gender, race, age), may lead to higher rates of turnover, especially in environments where the workgroup is dissimilar, or heterogeneous (Jones & Harter, 2005; Sacco & Schmidt, 2005). Because the sample used in this study lacked two major forms of surface level diversity (gender and race), age and tenure were the only diversity variables I was able to explore. The results demonstrated although there were significant main effects for both age and tenure, neither interacted with engagement. Therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Although the hypothesis was not supported, the negative beta weight for age and turnover suggest that the younger individuals are, and the lower their tenure, the more likely they are to turnover. This is consistent with the findings on new hires discussed earlier. One explanation for this may be that, as demonstrated by Sacco and Schmidt (2005), if the workgroup of an employee is dissimilar demographically, in this case older and more experienced than an

individual, that employee is more likely to exit the organization. Sacco and Schmidt (2005) also demonstrated that the relationship between demographic dissimilarity and turnover was strongest for new employees but weakened as tenure increased. Although this does not explain the lack of interaction between surface level diversity and engagement, it posits an area to be explored further. A reasonable explanation for why there is no interaction between age and tenure could be because of the lack of variability in overall engagement.

Diversity was also looked at as a moderator on a deeper level, from a diversity climate perspective as well. Diversity climate, defined as the extent to which an employee perceives that the organization that he/she works for values and supports diversity, has been linked to higher rates of turnover (McKay et al., 2007). These negative effects can be minimized when the organization demonstrates support for diversity by linking diversity with tangible benefits (Kaplan et al., 2002). Given existing research, I expected to see a moderated relationship between engagement and turnover where when diversity climate perceptions were positive and engagement was high, turnover would be the lowest, but that as diversity climate perceptions decreased turnover would increase, regardless of how engaged the department was. The hypothesis was not supported. Although engagement significantly predicted turnover rates, diversity climate did not have a direct effect nor a moderating effect on turnover. This may be explained by the lack of variance in diversity climate scores in the departments. The diversity climate scores ranged from 3.59 to 5.00, and the average score was 4.18. These scores fall on the high end of scale, showing that most departments responded favorably to the items on the diversity climate scale, and may have a positive view of the diversity climate in their healthcare system. The lack of variance in responses, as well as the lack of surface level diversity within the departments may contribute to the relationship demonstrated by these results.

The last moderated relationship this study examined was in regards to mission fulfillment. Suh et al. (2011) suggests that mission fulfillment, defined as, "the state in which an organization consistently acts (publicly and privately) in a manner that is congruent with and leads to the fulfillment of its corporate mission statement," may significantly increase organizational identification which is commonly related to a reduction in turnover rates (p.77). Cunningham and Sagas (2004), demonstrated that incongruent values better predicts turnover than surface level diversity. This posits that if an individual's values are different from the organizations, or become different through a lack of mission fulfillment, he/she are is likely to quit. We hypothesized that mission fulfillment would moderate the relationship between engagement and turnover such that when mission fulfillment and engagement were both high, departments would see the least amount of turnover, but as mission fulfillment decreased, turnover would increase regardless of the level of engagement. This hypothesis was not supported. The analysis revealed that when looked at simultaneously, neither mission fulfillment nor engagement have a significant impact on turnover rates, and the interaction between the two was also not significant. One potential reason could be because the measure used in this study for mission fulfillment was one single item. Getting a complete picture of mission fulfillment by asking participants more questions regarding the concept and how it is enacted in their current environment may have demonstrated a stronger relationship. This is something for future research to look into further, especially in regards to new hires because if the expectations formed during the initial stages of employment are not upheld, employees are more likely to leave (Morse & Popovich, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

As stated in the previous section, there were two limitations to this study. The first was the lack of diversity in the sample regarding race and gender. It is difficult to assess diversity climate perceptions and surface level diversity when the sample being analyzed is substantially homogeneous in terms of demographic makeup. However, at least in terms of race, the sample makeup was consistent with the level of racial diversity in the geographical regions of the healthcare systems used in the sample. Future research should look to include hospitals from more urban locations and larger regions where a diverse population is more common. According to Cartwright, Edwards, and Wang, in their study of gender distributions across industries and jobs in 2011, 82.2% of all nursing and residential care facility employees were women. Therefore, healthcare samples, especially those including large samples of nurses, typically will include more woman than men, so future studies should also pay careful attention to include departments with a wider variety of men and women.

Another limitation of the current study was the lack of variance in responses on the subscales. The means for all subscales were above the midpoint on the scale, suggesting positive ratings on each of the subscales, and the largest range of scores for the departments was 2.58 for mission fulfillment. Each other subscale had a range of less than 2.5 points. Future research regarding clinical care populations and moderators of the clinical care population relationship should look to increase the variability in responses. This may potentially be avoided by not limiting the sample to only the patient facing departments within the hospital in each healthcare system. More variability may be achieved by including ambulatory units, or departments whose work directly affects the patient's health and the patient care experience (i.e. environmental services, laboratory, and pharmacy) but who are not actual bedside with the patient. Similarly, multi-organizational samples would likely yield greater variability.

Other limitations of this study deal with the way variables were defined and measured. The research on interpersonal relationships at work includes many different aspects of relationships. This study assessed only one component of interpersonal relationship, which was respect in the workplace. The general construct is much more robust than the one used in this study. For example, research shows us that social support from coworkers and supervisors may not only lead to more positive thoughts about one's job, but may also buffer the negative effects of burnout, which has been shown to lead to turnover (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Hansung & Stoner, 2008; van der Heijden et al., 2010). Other research focused more on more serious interpersonal relationship characteristics such as civility. Unhappiness due to incivility in the workplace, especially within nursing populations, has been shown as a significant reason nurses leave their jobs (Laschinger et al., 2009). Civility initiatives have been shown to reduce absences and improve job attitudes, two things that have been shown to impact turnover as well (Leiter et al. 2011). Future research should consider using a more robust measurement of interpersonal relationships including social support and levels of incivility to get a more accurate depiction of how interpersonal relationships affect turnover.

Measurement limitations may also help explain why mission fulfillment did not produce the results we expected. A one item scale was used in the study to determine how the departments felt about how well the mission was being fulfilled in the organization. The item addresses decision making based on the mission. Again, in other research mission fulfillment has been measured in a broader way than this including interpersonal interactions that support the mission, organizational communication, and individuals' feelings that the work they do is contributing to the overall mission of the organization. In other words, mission fulfillment is all the acts within the organization that demonstrate the mission (Suh et al., 2011). This is a fairly

new topic in the literature, but future research could look at different aspects of mission fulfillment. Looking at mission fulfillment in a more comprehensive way may provide a more accurate understanding of the effects of a lack of mission fulfillment in organizations.

This study focused on subjective organizational factors that may affect the turnover-engagement relationship. Although this was the purpose of the current study, future research should look to understand how more objective and concrete variables may influence that relationship. For instance, a question on the engagement survey administered to the sample in this population, that was not used for the analyses in this study, was if you have thought of resigning in the last six months, please choose a reason why. The options were my supervisor/manager, pay, benefits, career advancement and other. For exploratory purposes, a frequency distribution was calculated for this variable. The results indicate that 41% of the sample thought of resigning in the last six months, and of those employees, 14.8% said it was because of their supervisor/manager, 19.9% said it was because of pay, 3.2% said it was benefits, 10.6% said it was because of career advancement, however, 51.4% chose "other". Other research has demonstrated that the most significant factors affecting turnover, particularly newly acquired nurses, were education, and undesired ward assignment (Suzuki et al., 2010). These examples of more concrete variables show that there are other variables that should be explored in regards to their relationship with turnover.

There are other variables, like the ones examined in the current study, that were not examined that may have significant impacts on the retention rates of employees in healthcare organizations. For example, Tsai and Huang (2008) demonstrated that perceptions of an ethical climate, in particular a positive caring climate, one of concern for others and their wellbeing could be affected by the ethical decisions made by the healthcare organization, leading to

improved job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, two variables typically associated with turnover. Further exploring this concept of an ethical climate, developed by Victor and Cullen (1987), may lead to more a better understanding of turnover processes in healthcare organizations.

Throughout this study it remained clear that turnover within healthcare organization poses a significant threat to the financial stability of the healthcare organization as well as the mission they choose to serve, which is creating a healing environment for patients. Although the current study's findings do not demonstrate a clear answer of where to focus energy in order to reduce the risks associated with high levels of turnover within healthcare organizations, it establishes the need for future research to continue to explore the relationship between organizational factors and turnover in order to ensure patients are receiving the best care possible.

CHAPTER V

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