

Full Length Research Paper

The relationship between perceived organisational support and turnover intentions in a developing country: The mediating role of organisational commitment

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This study investigates the role played by organisational commitment in the relationship between perceived organisational support and turnover intentions. The study sample comprised 297 postgraduate students at Uganda Management Institute employed in private, public and NGO sectors in Uganda. Mediated regression and path analysis were used to test the direct and mediated relationships among the variables. Results highlight significant relationships between (a) perceived organisational support and organisational commitment, (b) organisational commitment and turnover intentions, (c) perceived organisational support and turnover intentions. Results reveal that whereas support is positively related to organisational commitment, both organisational commitment and support are negatively associated with turnover intentions. The results provide evidence that organisational commitment has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived organisational support and turnover intentions. Managerial implications of the findings are highlighted.

Key words: Perceived organisational support, organisational commitment, turnover intentions, turnover.

INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover has both direct and indirect costs to an organisation. Direct costs include the recruitment and selection costs and costs associated with training of new staff (Staw, 1980). According to Dess and Shaw (2001), indirect costs of turnover include reduction in morale among remaining staff, work overload, and loss of social capital. Employee turnover can be both voluntary and involuntary. This study considers voluntary turnover in which the employee chooses to leave the organisation of his own volition, either to escape negative experiences in the work environment or to pursue better opportunities that are more rewarding, either in terms of career growth or financially. Literature indicates that turnover intention is the most immediate precursor of turnover (Mobley, Horner and Hollingworth, 1978; Mobley et al., 1979; Bluedorn, 1982; Steel and Ovalle, 1984). It is therefore widely acknowledged that identifying and dealing with antecedents of turnover intentions is an effective way of reducing actual turnover.

One of the antecedent factors of turnover and turnover intentions is believed to be organisational commitment.

The search for an understanding of the causes and consequences of organisational commitment has continued for over five decades (Becker, 1960; Brown, 1969; Morrow, 1983; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Allen and Meyer, 1990). One of the reasons why commitment has attracted research attention is that organisations depend on committed employees to create and maintain competitive advantage and achieve superior performance (Mowday et al, 1979, 1982; Meyer and Allen, 1995). It is also acknowledged that commitment is a significant predictor of employee behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), absenteeism (Brooke and Price, 1989) turnover (Jaros, 1997).

Commitment is a multi-faceted concept (Etzioni, 1961; Morrow, 1993; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Allen and Meyer, 1993; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1991) developed a three dimensional model comprising affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment was defined by Meyer and Allen (1997) as emotional attachment to an organisation; a

strong belief in, and acceptance of the organizations goals and values which results in willingness to exert optimal effort to achieve the organizations goals. Normative commitment is an employee's feeling of obligation to continue working for an organization. Employees with normative commitment feel that it is their moral duty to continue to work for an organization (Jaros et al., 1993). The third component, continuance commitment, refers to the desire to maintain membership in an organisation for fear of forfeiting valued rewards (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Thus, employees whose primary attachment to an organization is based on continuance commitment remain with the organization because they need to maintain the benefits they derive from the organization.

Affective, normative and continuance commitment, which are concerned with employees concern for and commitment to the organisation, have been widely researched. However, Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that the organisations's concern for and commitment to its employees was also important. Thus, another stream of research pioneered by Eisenberger et al. (1986) on employee attitudes concerned perceived organisational support (POS). They defined POS as ones beliefs about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare. Eisenberger et al. (1986) and (Eisenberger et al., 1990) reported that employees who perceive that their organization offers them support and cares for their well-being are likely to show less absenteeism and exert greater effort to achieve organisational goals. Furthermore, in a study of two Korean organisations Yoon and Thye (2002) found evidence of a strong positive relationship between POS and organisational commitment. It is reasonable that when employees perceive that the organisation cares for their well-being, they reciprocate with higher levels of commitment. In Uganda, POS was also found to have a positive relationship with organisational commitment (Onyinyi, 2003) and negatively related to turnover intentions (Okello-Ouni, 2004). However, these studies do not bring together, in one model, the three constructs of POS, organisational commitment, and turnover intentions.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to test the mediating effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between perceived organisational support (POS) and turnover intentions in a developing country. Despite abundance of evidence that POS is a positive predictor of organisational commitment, not much has been done to relate POS to turnover intentions in Sub-Saharan Africa. This study therefore seeks to integrate theory on POS, organisational commitment and turnover intentions. It assesses the mediating effect of commitment dimensions

on the relationship between POS and turnover intentions in the Ugandan context. The study will test a model that includes perceived organizational support both as a direct predictor of turnover intentions and as a distal (indirect) predictor working through the intervening power of organisational commitment components.

Perceived organisational support and commitment

POS has long been considered a key predictor of organisational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986; 1990). More specifically, Currie and Dollery (2006) found that POS was significant in predicting affective commitment and normative commitment; higher scores on POS were associated with higher commitment scores. However POS did not significantly predict continuance commitment (Currie and Dollery, 2006). In a similar recent study, Allen et al. (2003) reported that POS mediated the relationship between human resource practices and organisational commitment. Social exchange and reciprocity theories (Gouldner, 1960; cited in Allen et al., 2003) suggest that employees feel an obligation to help those who helped them. It is reasonable, therefore to expect that in organisational settings, POS will trigger a desire to repay benefits offered by the organisation by greater identification with the organisation (affective commitment), a feeling of obligation to the organisation (normative commitment) and relative increase in the costs of leaving the organisation (thereby increasing continuance commitment).

In Uganda, Onyinyi (2003) investigated the relationship between POS and organisational commitment among health workers and found a weak but significant relationship between the two variables. Similarly, Makanjee et al. (2006) found that POS positively influenced radiographers' organizational commitment in South African hospitals. Earlier, Ssemogerere (2003) had found that affective commitment was positively correlated with high quality psychological contract which has aspects of perceived organisational support such as fairness and meeting the individual's needs and expectations on the job.

Compared to other predictors of commitment and turnover (e.g. leader-member exchange, job satisfaction, rewards, leadership style, etc) POS is arguably one of the least researched, especially in the developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In this study we seek to test the proposition that:

H1: POS will induce a positive effect on affective commitment, normative commitment continuance commitment and overall organizational commitment.

According to organisational support theory, if employees perceive more support from the organisation, they are

likely to develop more positive attitudes towards the organisation (Eisenberger et al., 1986). For example Eisenberger et al. (1986) found that perceptions of support from the organisation reduced absenteeism and increased organisation citizenship behaviour and employee performance (Eisenberger et al., 1990). High levels of POS are believed to induce feelings of trust and strong feelings of identification with the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Since employees often reciprocate to their organisations in kind (Sherony and Green, 2002), it is reasonable to expect that, POS will induce a strong desire to stay with the organisation. Eisenberger et al. (1990) suggested that individuals with high POS would be less likely to seek alternative employment in other organisations. On the other hand, Allen et al. (2003) found that POS was negatively correlated with turnover intention and actual turnover. They concluded that employees who feel that their organisation does not value their contribution or care about their well-being, would be expected to develop withdrawal feelings and exhibit negative attitudes such as intention to leave.

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) used the hedonistic approach-avoidance theory to explain turnover. The theory contends that people are hedonistic, seeking to maximize pleasure and avoid pain. Thus “people tend approach situations that make them feel good and avoid situations that make them feel bad” (Maertz and Griffeth, 2004; pp. 670). Moreover, in a recent study, Lavelle et al. (2009) found that POS positively predicted organisational citizenship behaviour. Thus, an employee who feels that an organisation does not value his or her contribution will be inclined to leave that organisation. Conversely, a person who feels that an organisation offers him or her support by caring for his or her well-being will be motivated to stay with that organisation.

In the African context, research on correlates of turnover intentions has identified factors such as trust in management, supervisory support, employee participation, and autonomy (Gbadamosi et al., 2007). In Uganda, Okello-Ouni (2004) investigated the relationship between POS and salesforce turnover intentions among four manufacturing companies. His findings reveal that turnover intentions and actual turnover of salesforce are significantly and negatively related to POS. Thus we predict that:

H2: POS will significantly and negatively influence turnover intentions.

Research has suggested that organisational commitment is one of the major predictors of turnover intentions (Clegg, 1983; Meyer et al., 2002; Felfe et al., 2008) . Allen and Meyer (1990) argued that employees who are highly committed are less likely to leave the organisation. Also, Allen et al. (2003) study found that scores on

organisational commitment were negatively correlated with turnover intentions. With regard to affective commitment, a meta- analysis by Meyer et al. (2002) confirms that affective commitment is negatively related to withdrawal behaviours. Jaros et al. (1993) found a negative relationship between continuance commitment and turnover.

Although considerable effort has been committed to relating organisational commitment to employee outcomes such as turnover intentions, absenteeism and actual turnover, not much work has been done in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa. Only a few studies (Gbadamosi, 1995; Gbadamosi et al., 2007; Makanjee et al., 2006) investigated this relationship and found that components of organisational commitment were negatively related to turnover intentions. On the other hand, Okello-Ouni (2004) found that POS was positively correlated with intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction of sales forces staff.

Thus, given that previous literature suggests that commitment decreases the likelihood of turnover intentions, it is reasonable to anticipate that in the Ugandan context:

H3: All the three dimensions of organisational commitment will significantly and negatively predict turnover intentions.

Previous researchers (Hom and Griffeth, 1995) contend that distal antecedents of turnover often operate through mediating variables (such as organisational commitment) to influence behavioral intentions and actual turnover. As already explained, it is expected that POS induces high levels of commitment, which in turn results in reduction in withdrawal behaviours and turnover intentions. This expectation is consistent with contemporary turnover theory (Mobley, 1977; Hom and Griffeth, 1995). Thus, organisational commitment could be expected to mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. As such, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions.

Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of the hypothesised relationships among the study variables. First, as already explained, it is expected that the relationship between POS and each of the components of organisational commitment will be positive. Secondly, it is expected that that POS will be negatively related to perceived turnover intentions. Thirdly, on the basis of the reviewed literature, turnover intentions should be negatively related to components of organisational commitment. Finally, it is anticipated that the relationship between POS and turnover intentions will be mediated by organisational commitment as a composite construct and



Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.

by each of its individual constituent constructs in commitment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

METHOD

Measurement of variables

The main variables of the study were organisational support, organisational commitment, and turnover intentions. This research used standard questions adopted from previous studies to measure the variables. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) the extent to which they agreed with the statements. The purpose of a 7-point Likert scale was to offer respondents more choice and better capture variability in their attitudes and feelings (Hinkin, 1995). To check response bias, a few statements were negatively worded and later reverse-scored.

Perceived organisational support

Perceived organisational support was measured using seven items adopted from the scale of Eisenberger et al (1986). The questions were worded to tap the extent to which respondents believed their organisation valued their contribution, considered their goals and interests, made help available to solve personal problems, and cared about the employee's well-being. The reliability coefficient (Chronbach alpha) for this scale was 0.865.

Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment was measured using 15 items adopted from Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Moday et al., 1979). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) identified Allen and Meyer's (1991) three components of organisational commitment: affective commitment (6 items), normative commitment (5 items) and continuance commitment (4 items). The three indices were generally highly reliable with the following Cronbach's alphas: 0.810 for affective commitment, 0.720 for normative commitment and 0.767 for continuance commitment.

Turnover intentions

Turnover intentions is the strength of an individual's intention to leave the organisation and in this study it is a criterion variable. Respondents' turnover intentions were operationalised using Hom and Griffeth's (1991) conceptualization: thinking of quitting, intent to search for a new job and intent to quit. Turnover intentions were measured by five items adopted from scales developed by Cammann et al. (1979) and Cowin (2002). The Chronbach alpha

for this scale was 0.786.

The study sample

The sample comprised postgraduate students of Uganda Management Institute employed by a variety of public and private sector organisations. A total of 600 questionnaires were given out to the students in their lecture rooms. In all 297 questionnaires were returned and considered usable. This gave a response rate of 49.5%. The respondents were 46 percent males and 51 per cent female, while 4% missing cases. Also, most of them had worked in their current organization 1 - 5 years (59%) and the majority described themselves as middle managers (42%). The average age of respondents was 33.7 years, minimum age was 23 and maximum age was 65 years. The average job tenure in current organization was 6 years and respondents held various positions ranging from non-managerial technical positions, through lower and middle management to top managerial positions. A summary of descriptive statistics is presented in Table 1.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics, which include frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among the main variables, are used to present the main characteristics of the sample. To test the study hypotheses, multiple regression analysis and mediated regression analysis were used. The researcher also used path analysis, a technique in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Klem, 1995) to test a theory of cause and effect relationships among the main variables of the study and build a model relating POS, dimensions of commitment and turnover intentions. According to Byrne (2001), the hypothesized model is supported if Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), and Adjusted Goodness of Fit index (AGFI) are each greater than .90. A well-fitting model also has Comparative Fit Index (CFI) greater than 0.95 (Hu and Bentler (1999) and χ^2/df greater than 1.0 but less than 5.0. The researcher used these fit indices to test the goodness of the model in Figure 1.

RESULTS

The study used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine distinctive variables within each scale. The results of CFA maintained perceived organisational support and turnover intentions as single-component constructs. In line with Allen and Meyer's (1991) three-component model of organisational commitment, CFA identified three factors in the commitment scale: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N = 297).

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	136	45.8
	Female	150	50.5
	Missing	11	3.7
Age	Below 30 years	104	35.0
	30 - 40 years	136	45.8
	41 - 50 years	43	14.5
	Over 50 years	3	1.0
	Missing	11	3.7
Marital status	Single	96	32.3
	Married	190	64.0
	Missing	11	3.7
Tenure	1 - 5 years	178	59.9
	6 - 10 years	54	18.2
	11 - 15 years	25	8.4
	16 - 20 years	14	4.7
	20 years and above	8	2.7
	Missing	18	6.1
Position	Top management	31	10.4
	Middle management	119	40.1
	Lower management	82	27.6
	Non managerial staff	47	15.8
	Missing	18	6.1
Type of organisation	Public Sector	128	43.1
	Private sector	75	25.3
	NGO	60	20.2
	Parastatal	19	6.4
	Missing	15	5.1

Means, standard deviations and correlations between the study variables are presented in Table 2. Reliability coefficients (Chronbach's alpha) are presented in the diagonal cells. The correlations between demographic variables (respondent's age and tenure in current organization) and perceived organisational support was not significant. Also age and tenure demonstrated insignificant correlations with normative commitment. However, age and tenure were significant positive correlates of affective commitment and continuance commitment. It is further noted that the correlation between age and turnover intentions was significant and negative, but tenure was not significant predictor of intention to quit.

Table 2 also shows that the correlations between the independent variable (perceived organisational support)

and the dependent variable (turnover intentions) is negative and significant. It is clear that affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment are significant correlates of perceived organisational support. Overall organizational commitment which is a composite construct of the three dimensions of commitment was also negatively correlated with turnover intentions but positively perceived associate with organisational support. In all, the pattern of correlations was consistent with the hypothesised relationships between the variables.

Regression analysis

To test the hypotheses, this study employed mediated

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among variables.

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	33.6	7.11	-							
2. Tenure in current organization	6.0	5.29	.559**	-						
3. Perceived organisational support (7 items)	4.235	1.320	.040	-.030	(.865)					
4. Affective Commitment (6 items)	3.629	1.343	.138*	.128*	.507**	(.810)				
5. Normative Commitment (5 items)	4.357	1.279	.072	.064	.556**	.578**	(.720)			
6. Continuance Commitment (4 items)	3.604	1.106	.231**	.155**	.379**	.610**	.454**	(.767)		
7. Overall Commitment (15 items)	3.897	1.067	.174**	.149*	.574**	.907**	.777**	.800**	(.783)	
8. Turnover Intentions (5 items)	4.193	1.439	-.163**	-.109	-.442**	-.660**	-.598**	-.539**	-.732**	(.786)

** P < 0.01 level (1-tailed); * P < 0.05 (1-tailed).

regression analysis. The results of regression analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Regression analysis with perceived organizational support (POS) as the independent variable and affective, normative, continuance and overall organizational commitment as dependent variables demonstrated that all three equations (Equation 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d respectively) were significant at 0.01 levels. POS explained 25% of the variance in affective commitment (Adj $R^2 = 0.255$), 30% of the variance in normative commitment (Adj. R-Square = 0.307), 14 percent of the variance in continuance commitment (Adj. $R^2 = 0.141$) and 32% of the variance in overall organizational commitment (Adj. $R^2 = 0.327$). Thus, the first hypothesis, *H1*, which predicted that POS would induce positive effects on components of organisational commitment, is fully supported.

Under Equation (1a) in Table 3, POS explained 19.2% of the variance in turnover intentions. The negative t-value ($t = -8.453$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrates that POS is a significant negative predictor of turnover intentions. Thus, the second hypothesis, *H2*, which predicted a significant negative relationship between POS and turnover intentions, is upheld by findings of the current study.

Four regression equations (Equations 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d in Table 3) tested the relationships between components of organisational commitment and turnover intentions. Simple regression analysis in these equations indicates that affective commitment explains 43 percent of the variance in turnover intentions (Adj. $R^2 = 0.433$, $F = 227.454$), normative commitment explains 35% of the variance in turnover intentions (Adj. $R^2 = 0.356$, $F = 164.501$) and continuance commitment explains 29% of the variance in turnover intentions (Adj. $R^2 = 0.289$, $F = 121.032$), while overall organisational commitment accounted for 53% of the variance in turnover intentions. Consistent with the results of correlation analysis in Table 2, beta coefficients and t-values in each of the four

equations were negative and significant at 0.001 levels. Thus, as predicted the third hypothesis, *H3*, which predicted that components of organisational commitment would significantly and inversely predict turnover intentions, is fully supported.

Mediated regression analysis

The study used the guidelines of Judd and Kenny (1981); and Kenny et al. (1998) to test the mediating effects of the three facets/dimensions of organisational commitment on the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. According to Baron and mediating effects can be tested using a series of regression equations. Mediation is supported when four conditions are met:

- (1) The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable must be significant.
- (2) The relationship between the independent variable and the mediator/intervening variables must be significant.
- (3) The relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable must be significant.
- (4) The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable must be weaker (partial mediation) or insignificant (full mediation) in the presence of the mediating variable.

This method has been used in previous studies to test mediating effects of various constructs in social research (Jawahar and Hemasi, 2006; Rhoades et al., 2001; Yousef, 2000).

In this study it was proposed that components of organisational commitment mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. Thus, POS is the independent variable, components of organisational

Table 3. Mediated regression equations.

Equation	Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	T	Adj. R-square	F
1a	Intention to quit	Perceived organisational support	-.442**	-8.453**	.192	71.459**
2a	Affective commitment	Perceived organisational support	.507**	10.109**	.255	102.187**
2b	Normative commitment	Perceived organisational support	.556**	11.497**	.307	132.177**
2c	Continuance commitment	Perceived organisational support	.379**	7.029**	.141	49.412**
	commitment	Perceived organisational support	.327**	12.042**	.327	145.012**
3a	Intention to quit	Affective commitment	-.660**	-15.082**	.433	227.454**
3b	Intention to quit	Normative commitment	-.598**	-12.826**	.356	164.501**
3c	Intention to quit	Continuous commitment	-.539**	-11.001**	.289	121.032**
3d	Intention to quit	Overall organisational commitment	-.732**	-18.44**	.534	340.808**
4a	Intention to quit	Perceived organisational support	-.144**	-2.87**		
		Affective commitment	-.597**	-11.700**	.447	120.636**
4b	Intention to quit	Perceived organisational support	-.157**	-2.839**		
		Normative commitment	-.511**	-9.206**	.371	88.248**
4c	Intention to quit	Perceived organisational support	-.227**	-5.481**		
		Continuance commitment	-.434**	-8.595**	.352	81.494***
4d	Intention to quit	Perceived organisational support	-.032	-.661		
		Overall commitment	-.713**	-14.706**	.533	169.934***

*** $p < .001$;

** $P < 0.01$ level (1 tailed).

commitment are the mediating/intervening variables, and turnover intentions are the dependent variable. In Table 2 bivariate correlation demonstrated that the relationship between POS (the independent variable) and turnover intentions (the dependent variable) was significant. Also, in Table 3 the regression equation relating turnover intention to POS was significant (Adj. R Square = 0.192; $F = 71.459$, $p < 0.001$). Thus the first condition for mediated relationships is attained.

The second condition of mediation was tested by regressing facets of organisational commitment and overall organisational commitment on POS (equations 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d respectively). Simple regression analysis shows that affective commitment ($F = 102.187$, $P < 0.001$), normative commitment ($F = 132.177$, $P < 0.001$) and continuous commitment ($F = 49.412$, $P < 0.001$) are significantly correlates of POS. POS was also a significant positive predictor of overall organisational commitment ($F = 145.012$, $p < 0.001$). The positive beta and t-values in these equations demonstrate that an increase in POS is associated with an increase in commitment dimensions. Thus, the second condition for mediation is met.

The third mediation condition was tested by regressing turnover intentions on facets of organisational commitment (Equations 3a, 3b and 3c in Table 3). Beta coefficients in all the three equations were significant and negative. Thus, the third condition for mediation effects was achieved.

The fourth condition of mediation effects was tested by simultaneously regressing turnover intentions on POS and each of the dimensions of organisational commitment. The results in Equations 4a, 4b, and 4c show that in the presence of the components of organisational commitment, the relationships between the independent variable (POS) and the dependent variable (turnover intentions) become weaker.

It is clear that the beta coefficient for POS in equations 4a (beta = - 0.144) is weaker than the beta coefficient in equation 1a (beta = -0.442, $P < 0.001$). Also in equation 4b the beta coefficient for POS (beta = -0.157) is weaker than beta coefficient in equation 1a (beta = -0.442); and in equation 4c beta coefficient for POS (beta = -.227) is weaker than beta coefficient for equation 1a (beta = - 0.442). The significant reductions in beta coefficients when POS and each of the three components of commitment are introduced in the equations, suggest that affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment partially mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. Thus the fourth hypothesis, H_4 , which predicted that affective, normative, and continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions is supported by the study results.

To test whether overall organisational commitment mediates the relationship between POS and turnover intentions, this study compared beta coefficients for POS in Equation 1a (beta = -0.442) and Equation 4d (beta = -

0.032; $p > 0.1$). This comparison demonstrates that in the presence of the overall commitment measure, POS becomes insignificant in predicting turnover intentions. Thus, whereas each of the three components of organisational commitment partially mediates the relationship between POS and turnover intentions, overall organisational commitment fully mediates the relationship.

The researcher also performed a path analysis using AMOS 5.0 to test the hypothesized path model shown in Figure 1. The results demonstrated significant path coefficients comparable to the regression coefficients in Table 3. As shown in Figure 2, the direct path coefficients between POS and dimensions of organisational commitment were positive and significant at 0.001. This result supported *H1* which predicted that POS would induce significant positive effects on each of the three dimensions of organisational commitment.

Path analysis further demonstrated that the direct path coefficient from POS to turnover intentions was not significant (path coefficient = 0.03; $p = 0.651$). This demonstrates that the direct regression weight for POS in the prediction of turnover intentions is not significantly different from zero at the .05 level. Therefore in our model, in the presence of the components of organisational commitment, POS does not directly influence turnover intentions.

Path analysis results also indicate that direct paths from affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment to turnover intentions are significant and negative at 0.001 levels. This result supports *H3* which proposed that dimensions of organisational commitment significantly and negatively predict turnover intentions. This result is consistent with results of regression analysis presented in Table 3.

Results of path analysis also indicate that dimensions of organisational commitment mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. The standardized indirect (mediated) effect of POS on turnover intentions is -0.461, with $p < 0.001$. That is, due to the indirect (mediated) effect of POS on turnover intentions, when POS goes up by 1 standard deviation, turnover intentions goes down by 0.461 standard deviations. Thus *H4* which stated that affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment will mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions is supported by the data. This result is consistent with the results of mediated regression presented in Table 3.

To assess how adequately the data fits the model, both inferential χ^2 per degrees of freedom test and a group of descriptive goodness-of-fit indices were consulted. According to Byrne (2001), the model achieves an acceptable fit to the data, when TLI, CFI, GFI, and AGFI equal or exceed 0.90 and χ^2/df values between 1.0 and 5.0 indicate a good fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend that RMSEA values of .06 or less indicate a close fitting model. The results suggest that the structural model fits

the data well ($\chi^2/df = 2.642$, TLI = 0.962, CFI = 0.975, GFI = 0.977; AGFI = 0.930) except for RMSEA (=0.078) which exceeds the maximum value of .06 recommended by Hu and Bentler, (1999) but falls within the range 0.0 - 0.8e recommended by Browne and Cudeck (1993). From the results of path analysis, the mediated model involving POS, affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment account for 45% of the variance in turnover intentions.

DISCUSSION

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment and provides insights into understanding of the mediating role of organisational commitment in the relationship between perceived organisational support and employees' turnover intentions. First the study demonstrates the positive relationship between POS and all three dimensions of organisational commitment (affective, normative and continuance). This implies that employees who feel that their organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being will report higher levels of affective, normative and continuance organisational commitment. These findings concur with previous studies linking POS to organisational commitment (Eisenberger et al, 1986; Yoon and Thye, 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Currie and Dollery, 2006; Pazy and Ganzach, 2009). In the African context, the study supports findings of Onyinyi (2003) and Makanjee et al. (2006) who reported that POS positively influenced health workers organizational commitment. Therefore it would be beneficial for organisations which want to attain high performance levels through committed employees to implement strategies that enhance perceived organisational support by creating a positive working environment.

Second, as expected, the study findings show that POS is negatively related to turnover intentions. This finding is consistent with Allen et al. (2003) and Okello-Ouni (2004) who showed that high scores on POS were associated with low scores on turnover intentions and actual turnover. In line with social exchange theory and hedonistic approach- avoidance theory (Blau, 1964; Settoon et al., 1996), the study results indicate that an employee who believes that his organisation does not care about his or her well-being has a higher tendency to want to leave and seek employment in more rewarding organisations. On the other hand, an employee who feels that the organisation values his contribution and cares about his well-being will be more likely to want to maintain membership in that organisation. Furthermore, the study findings concur with similar studies in the African context which indicated that positive organisational constructs such as trust in management and supervisor support (Gbadamosi et al., 2007) are negative

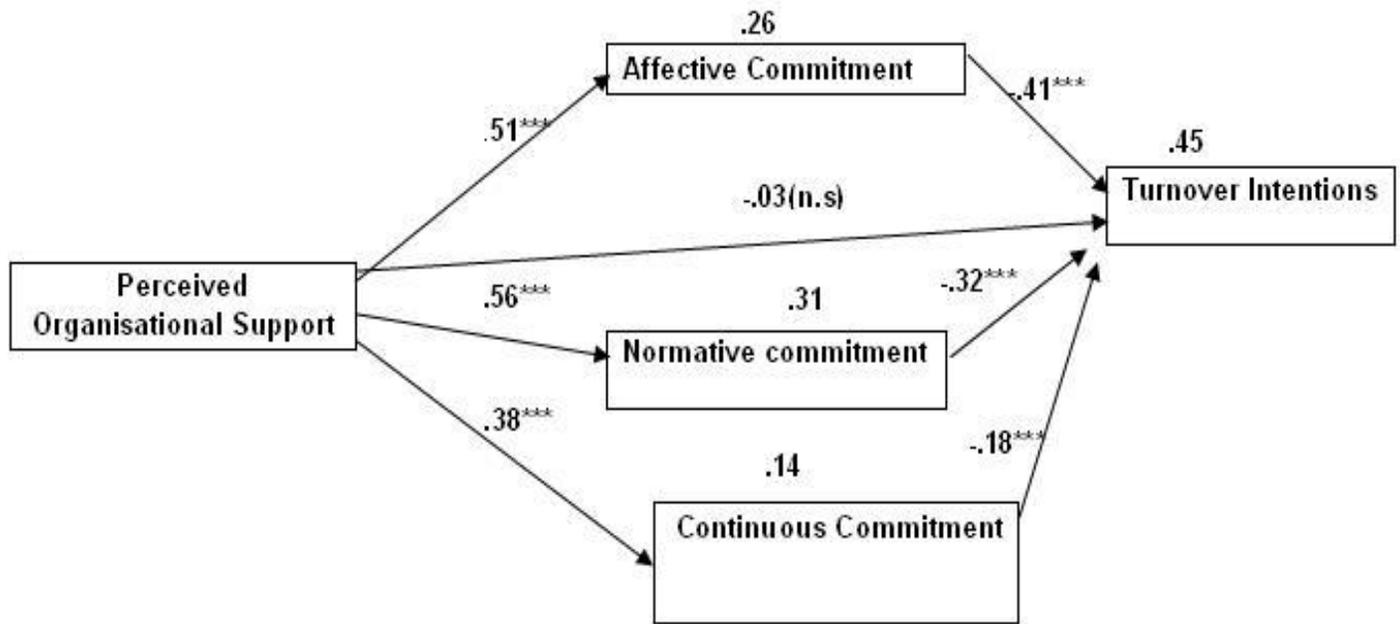


Figure 2. Standardised path coefficients of the structural model.

Notes: GFI =.977, AGFI =.930, CFI=.975, TLI = .962, RMSEA=.078, $\chi^2/df = 2.642$; ***p < .001
n.s. = not significant.

correlates of turnover intentions.

As expected, the study finds a strong negative relationship between all three dimensions of organisational commitment and turnover intentions. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Williams and Hezer, 1986; Cohen, 2000; Elangovan, 2001; Meyer et al., 2002; Gbadamosi et al., 2007; Felfe et al., 2008). Thus, managers who want to reduce turnover intentions and related withdrawal behaviours, need to take steps to understand factors influencing organisational commitment. Moreover, by verifying that organisational support is a significant predictor of organisational commitment, the study makes a contribution in our understanding of turnover intentions in a developing country. Besides, since turnover intention has been suggested as the most significant immediate predictor of actual turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Steel and Ovalle, 1984), paying attention to factors that promote commitment could also reduce actual turnover of competent staff.

As expected, the study findings confirm the mediating role of affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment in the relationship between POS and turnover intentions. This finding is consistent with Maertz et al. (2007) who found that POS had significant effects on turnover mediated through normative commitment, as well as affective organizational commitment. A survey of literature revealed no study that has previously assessed the mediating effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between POS and turnover intentions in the sub-Saharan region. Thus the study demonstrates that Ugandan turnover

employees' behavioural outcomes resulting from perception of organisational support is consistent with findings in the western world where much research on these constructs has been conducted. The findings of this study suggest that Ugandan employees who perceive lack of support from their organisation will feel less committed to their organisation and lack of commitment will induce stronger turnover intentions. As pointed out by Allen et al. (2003) and Dawley et al. (2008) human resource practices such as participation in decision making, open communication, recognition of employee contributions and fairness of rewards should be encouraged since they are usually regarded as genuine indicators to employees that the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being.

There are a several managerial implications of the findings. To reduce turnover intentions, which are often likely to turn into actual turnover, managers are encouraged to enhance its negative correlate identified in the study. From the findings in this study, these would include enhancing levels perceived organisational support, affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. It is implied that employee performance will be enhanced if managers pay increased attention to building trust from staff by ensuring open communication and fostering equitable social exchange relationships which can go a long way in raising the level of perceived organisational support and organisational commitment. Organisations facing the problems of employee withdrawal feelings and behaviours such as absenteeism, turnover intentions, and dysfunctional

must therefore take steps to show support and care for the well-being of their employees.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the mediating effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between perceived organisational support (POS) and turnover intentions of employees in a sub-Saharan context. To the best of the current researcher's knowledge, the relationship between POS, organisational commitment and turnover intentions has not been investigated in one integrated model in the sub-Saharan Africa context. The study therefore contributes to filling this gap. The results reported here indicate that western theories and behavioral expectations linking POS to organisational commitment and turnover intentions can be manifested in Uganda and those linkages between human attitudes might be similar across societies. Basing on the results of path analysis, this study concludes that affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment mediate the relationship between POS and turnover intentions and explain 45% of the variance.

However, the findings and conclusions of the study should be interpreted with caution because of a number of limitations. The first limitation concerns the sample which was drawn from postgraduate students at Uganda Management Institute. Although the sample reflected variety in terms of gender, position, type of organisation, and age distribution, it is possible that the findings are unique to employees who have a university degree. The potential for generalising the findings, therefore, is limited and the study would need to be replicated with a sample that includes non-university graduates.

The second limitation emanates from the use of self-reports, which are prone to common method variance problems and social desirability effects. However, since the study focused on individual perceptions, self-report was the appropriate way to measure the variables. After all, a study by Crampton and Wagner (1994) suggests that biases attributed to common method variance seem not to be as serious as literature seems to propose.

In spite of these limitations, this study provided evidence that organisational commitment is important in the turnover process as a link between perceived organisational support and turnover intentions. The findings imply that managers can significantly reduce turnover intentions among their competent staff by adopting management styles that increase the feeling that the organisation values staff contributions and cares about their well-being.

This study serves as a foundation for further studies on antecedents of withdrawal attitudes and behaviours (such as absenteeism, turnover intentions and actual turnover) in the African context. It is recommended that this study is repeated involving employees with more diverse

educational characteristics. The study could also be replicated in specific sectors that are experiencing dysfunctional turnover, such as public hospitals. Lastly, although the results of the current study show the role played by POS in the turnover process, it does not examine what factors induce a perception of organisational support. An investigation of factors that predict perceived organisational support in the Ugandan context would be very helpful for developing a more comprehensive model of the turnover intentions process.

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