

## ARE THE REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTIONS IN THE LANGUAGE SERVICES SECTION OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA JUSTIFIABLE?

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**Abstract:** Organisations are struggling to retain employees regardless of the sector in which they operate. Individual employees have their own reasons to leave organisations. However, it is important that an organisation examines reasons why employees are leaving. The study investigated whether there was a relationship between reasons for turnover intentions and turnover intentions and whether these reasons for turnover intentions are justifiable in Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. This study employed the quantitative approach using a survey in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the entire population  $N=70$  within the Language Service Section, which comprised of language practitioners. All questionnaires were completed and returned without errors. There were six hypotheses, which produced the following results: being overworked ( $r=.22$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.001$ ); low salary compared to other sectors ( $r=.22$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.000$ ); few or no opportunities for growth ( $r=.21$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.001$ ); lack of recognition ( $r=.20$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.011$ ), respectively. The results indicated that there is a strong relationship between being overworked; low salary compared to other sectors; few or no opportunities for growth; lack of recognition and turnover intentions. However, no relationships was established between inconsistent management style; poor company culture and turnover intentions, which produced, ( $r=.06$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.215$ ); ( $r=.07$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.384$ ), respectively. The results contributed to the available literature on human resource management and turnover intentions.

**Keywords:** Turnover intentions, employee retention

### Introduction

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) is the highest law-making institution in the country and its task is to conduct oversight over government departments and state-owned enterprises in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of SA (Act No. 108 of 1996). The organisation has a number of employees located in different divisions to assist members of parliament, who are elected representatives, to execute legislative and oversight duties. One of these divisions is the Legislative and Oversight Division (LOD), which consist of different sections, one of these divisions is the Languages Services Section (LSS). The section has been experiencing a high rate of employee turnover. The exit interviews reveal that the majority of employees resign because of inadequate recognition and rewards, lack of fairness and justice, inconsistent leadership and lack of personal growth and mobility. The limited literature available in the area of turnover in Parliament is an indication that little research has been done in this field in the organisation, and as such it is difficult to deal with this matter effectively. Many of the studies conducted focus on legislative related matters. In instances wherein studies on turnover intentions are conducted, they are conducted in other organisation, which have

proven that the findings assist organisations to retain their employee (Ozturk, Eryesil & Beduk, 2016). However, in situations where aspects such as job satisfaction, organisational citizenship and commitment have been found to be a direct predictor of turnover (Ozturk et al., 2016). Other areas have not yet been researched in full. It is for this reason that the study was conceptualised, which is to conduct analysis on reasons why language practitioners leave the organisations, and to establish activities that are able to keep employees in an organisation (Biswakarma, 2016).

#### *Research purpose and objectives*

The main purpose of this study is to establish reasons for the high turnover rate within the Language Services Section of Parliament of RSA and whether these reasons are justifiable, and to further recommend programmes that can be implemented to retain employees.

### **Literature review**

#### *Turnover intentions*

Employee turnover is defined by Belete (2018) as being both the entrance of new employees into the organisation and the departure of existing employees from the organisation. A similar definition of turnover is presented by Emiroglu, Akova and Tanrıverd (2015); Sokhanvar, Hasanpoor, Hajjhashemi and Kakemam (2016) an individual's voluntary termination of employment from an organisation. Emiroglu et al. (2015) raise an important point and view the intention to leave and tendency to leave as surrogate measures of turnover. According to Chowdhury (2015) intention to leave might be a predecessor of turnover but that it cannot be seen as a surrogate, and in some other instances an employee can intend to quit but stay in the job. Belete (2018) states that intention to search for a job is a better predictor of employee turnover than intention to leave. An employee's intention to do something is a determinant of the behaviour.

### **Reasons for high turnover rates in organisations**

#### *Low salary compared to other legislative sector and other departments*

Mokoena and Rust (2023) posit that compensation and reward could be powerful and effective tools that could be used to inspire employees' increasing their efforts in order to fulfil the organisational goals. Furthermore, Mokoena and Rust (2023) assert that compensation should be considered based on performance, and not on the basis of seniority or length of service in an organisation. Therefore, it is important that salaries should benchmarked with other organisations.

#### *Few Opportunities for growth*

Kelly (2022) posits that employees are likely to remain in an organisation for longer when an organisation creates opportunities for growth. Whereas in instances wherein the organisation does not provide such opportunities, they are likely not to be committed to the organisation. It is for this reason that when there is little professional and career growth within the organisation, that becomes a dead-end Kelly (2022).

### *Inconsistent management style*

Management has a duty to apply policies equally within the organisation. Decisions that are taken by management should have pass quality checks and be validated before they are implemented (Cooper, 2020). However, it is important to note that employees look up managers to provide a direction for the organisation (Cooper, 2020). Management behaviour is critical in that when such behaviour is unnecessary and unwanted can cause negative emotional stress to employees.

### *Poor company culture*

Poor company culture points to an organisation that does not value its existence (Herway, 2022). An organisation that has a culture that toxic and wherein there is abuse of authority will be in a position retain employees. Employee would like to work in an organisation that has an excellent culture that values the diversity and their contribution (Garver, 2022). Poor culture leads to stressed workforce and as such will affect performance of employees.

### *Lack of recognition*

In most organisations supervisors and managers alike at a very alarming rate are not recognising employees for the effort they put in achieving organisational goals (Worline & Dutton, 2017). This to a larger extent an organisation lacks compassion and empathy towards employees. An organisation that does not value its employees is likely to face high turnover rates, thus affecting productivity. In most cases organisations ignore the signs and later pay dearly as employees depart (Worline & Dutton, 2017).

cite their companies' toxic top-down organizational culture as a reason why they are dissatisfied with their leaders (Matos, O'Neill, & Lei, 2018). Employees in such organizations complain of being subjected to systemic harassment, micromanagement, and abusive behavior and quickly become disengaged from their work (Aubrey, 2012).

## **Employee retention**

It is important that organisations develop and implement programmes that are intended to retain employees. This assist organisations to keep its best talent and to preserve institutional memory. Below are some but not exhaustive programmes that can be implemented retain employees.

### *Leadership*

Louis and Diochon, 2014 attest that a supportive leader who displays concerns for employees' needs and feelings, who provides positive feedback and encourages employees to voice their concerns, who develops employees' skills and solves their work-related problems, will enhance the self-determination of employees and their interest in their work such individuals will feel safer in engaging in their work (Louis & Diochon, 2014).

### *Onboarding and orientation*

New employees in any organisation should be taken through onboarding and orientation. This orientation should be tailor made to ensuring that new employees understand their roles within the organisation. Orientation period should be used to

demonstrate the strengths of the organisation in respect of how an employee benefit to be part of it (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Not so well though orientation can make or break new employees.

#### *Mentorship programs*

Wu, Lyu, Kwan and Zhai (2019), provides that mentoring is an instrument that organisations utilise to ensure that employees are well-equipped to perform their functional areas. Therefore, it is important that a mentor and the mentee have a relationship that allows the process of imparting knowledge is seamless. In this relationship, mentors pass on their knowledge, skills, and experience while also offering support, friendship, and guidance to their proteges (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Of significance is that mentors have an influence on how their proteges progresses within the organisation.

#### *Employee compensation*

Employee compensation may mean monetary rewards, including other rewards that are embedded in the salary of an employee. Molinaro and Weiss (2010) emphasise that recognition is another important driver of employee engagement and retaining employees in organisations. Molinaro and Weiss (2010) further attest that this recognition and appreciation demonstrates that employees are valued and that their contribution is acknowledged by the organisation. Recognition also means that leaders notice the often-unnoticed things that employees do, to make their organisations successful.

#### *Valued work*

Pen (2008) posits that gaining the loyalty of your employees is done by making them feel valued. Having a good employment relationship builds trust and value to the job. When employees feel respected, they perform better and respect their bosses and the company in return. Pen (2008) further states that people have feelings, aspirations and something to add to companies if given a chance to express themselves. The following areas: self-management and autonomy, helping others, being able to make decisions, taking control and responsibilities and being rewarded contribute, in part, to making work more positive and demonstrating that people are valued.

#### *Training and development*

Training and development that are not focused on problem areas inevitably fail to produce the desired results. MburuMaina and Waithfaka (2017) emphasise that the need to improve organisational productivity is pervasive and relies on the efficiency and effectiveness of training to achieve this goal. Jasson and Govender (2017) affirm the importance of training in developing knowledge, skills, and competencies within an organisation. However, a common question is whether organisations can track the return on investment (ROI) of their training activities based on their intended or received results (MburuMaina & Waithfaka, 2017).

#### *Continuous feedback on performance*

Performance appraisal is considered to be one of the predictors in the management practices, and performance feedback should be provided consistently. Ugwu and Okojie (2016) state that favourable performance feedback can create a favourable psychological

climate which will improve the level of employee performance. Similarly, Rao and Rao (2017) further posit that providing constant and honest feedback enables employees to improve their performance. Ugwu and Okojie (2016) found a positive and significant relationship between feedback-oriented performance appraisal and employee performance among the employees in the banking sector of Nigeria.

## Research methodology and design

### Research approach

This paper follows a quantitative approach wherein a questionnaire was used. This approach allows the researcher to collect data using a questionnaire wherein numerical data is collected and when analysed is generalise across groups in explaining the phenomenon under research (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). Descriptive studies are aimed at finding out "what is" and are designed to provide a bigger picture of a situation as it happens naturally (Rubin & Babbie, 2016).

### Research participants

A population is the sum of all units of analysis from which the sample is drawn (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). Population includes all the people or items that has specific characteristic the researcher intends understanding. This study is undertaken in Parliament of RSA. The target population for the study is N=70 comprising of control editors, language, and senior language practitioners. The researcher though it would be prudent to utilise the entire population (N=70) as the sample would have been too small. All questionnaires were returned. Table 1 below reflects the demographic profile of respondents:

**Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents**

Gender	Frequency
Female	35
Male	25
Age	
18-30 years	10
31-40 years	28
41-50 years	26
51-60 years	5
61 years and above	1
Level of employment	
Control Editor	10
Senior Language Practitioner	17
Language Practitioner	43
Education	
Diploma	8
Degree	32
Honours/BTech/Postgraduate Diploma	18
Masters	10
PhD/DTech	2
Years of employment	
Below 1 year	20
1-5 years	28

6-10 years	14
11-15 years	7
16 years and above	1

*Research instrument*

A questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data wherein a five-point Likert scale was used: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Neutral and 5=Strongly agree for the following variables: overworked, low salary compared to other sectors, few or no opportunities for growth, inconsistent, management style, poor company culture, lack of recognition, turnover intentions. The use of a five-point Likert scale is that it provides respondents various options to choose from, and as such provide a variety of responses. To establish validity and reliability a Cronbach’s alpha was used. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used. The constructs met the adequate reliability level of above 0.6 (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). The results of the Therefore, the instrument met both validity and reliability requirements.

**Table 2: Cronbach Alpha coefficients**

No	Reasons for turnover intention	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of items
1	Overworked	0.7	11
2	Low salary compared to other sectors	0.8	10
3	Few or no opportunities for growth	0.8	9
4	Inconsistent management style	0.7	12
5	Poor company culture	0.6	5
6	Lack of recognition	0.6	5
7	Turnover intention	0.9	10

**Table 3: Summary of descriptive statistics**

Variable	N	Mean		Std. Dev
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Err.	Statistic
Overworked	70	3.10	.113	1.413
Low salary compared to other sectors	70	2.97	.109	1.363
Few or no opportunities for growth	70	2.91	.115	1.438
Inconsistent management style	70	2.97	.109	1.363
Poor company culture	70	3.17	.112	1.399
Lack of recognition	70	2.97	.111	1.399
Turnover intention	70	3.41	.114	1.423
Valid N (listwise)	70			

*Research procedure and ethical considerations*

There were six hypotheses of this study. To collect data a questionnaire was used. According to Rubin and Babbie (2016) a questionnaire makes it simpler to collect data. The researcher is not expected to have a physical contact with the respondents. Prior planning and purposes of data collection tool and how data will be analysed is of great importance (Rubin and Babbie, 2016). The questionnaire was delivered to targeted respondents who are employees with the Language Services Section, and as such the completed questionnaire were to be placed in a box provided. The researcher collected the questionnaires form the boxes. Once that was done, questionnaires were validated on whether they were all fully completed. After validation data was captured on MS Excel

and thereafter transferred to SPSS. Ethical considerations were followed to the latter to ensure that the study did not compromise confidentiality of the respondents.

*Statistical analysis*

The demographics (gender, age group, years of experience, academic qualifications, and level of employment) of the sample and descriptive statistics are analysed using percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation through MS Excel and SPSS version 22. In establishing whether correlation existed between variables, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the strength of relationships, for instance strong to weak or positive to negative for reasons for turnover intentions (overworked, low salary compared to other sectors, few or no opportunities for growth, inconsistent, management style, poor company culture, lack of recognition, turnover intentions) and turnover intentions. The significance value was tested at a 95% confidence level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Data was presented using tables to indicate the strength of the relationships for each independent variable (Reasons for turnover intentions) and dependent variable (turnover intentions).

**Results**

Descriptive results in *Table 1*: gender representation comprised (35) female and (25) male, Age group showed that most employees were 31-40 (28), level of employment most were language practitioner (43). For academic qualifications most respondents have undergraduate degrees (32), experience, most respondents have 1-5 years-experience (28) Table 4 demonstrate relationships results.

**Table 4: Relationships between reasons for turnover intentions and turnover intentions**

Variables	Pearson product-moment	Turnover intention
Overworked	Pearson correlation	.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	70
Low salary compared to other sectors	Pearson correlation	.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	70
Few or no opportunities for growth	Pearson correlation	.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	70
Inconsistent management style	Pearson correlation	.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.215
	N	70
Poor company culture	Pearson correlation	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.384
	N	70
Lack of recognition	Pearson correlation	.202*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
	N	70

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

## **Discussion**

### *Outline of results*

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between reasons for turnover intentions extracted from the exit interviews and turnover intentions in Parliament of RSA, in particular in the Language Services Section. There are six hypotheses of the study. Findings of the results in Table 4, *H<sub>o1</sub>*: There is a positive relationship between being overworked and turnover intentions. The results were: ( $r=.22$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.001$ ), which indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between being overworked and turnover intentions. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not supported, indicating that there is no statistically significant relationship between being overworked and turnover intentions and turnover intentions. The results indicate that employees quit because they are being over worked. Findings of the results in Table, 4 *H<sub>o2</sub>*: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between low salary compared to other sectors and turnover intentions. The results produced ( $r=.22$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.000$ ), which indicate a strong positive linear correlation, which is statistically significant, between low salary compared to other sectors and turnover intentions. Therefore, null hypothesis is not supported. Therefore, the results indicate that employees leave the employer due to low salary scale when compared with other employers in the same sector. Of importance then is that Parliament should benchmark the salaries of language practitioners with other institutions alike.

The results in Table 4, *H<sub>o3</sub>*: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between few or no opportunities for growth and turnover intentions. The results produced ( $r=.21$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.001$ ), which indicate a strong positive linear correlation, which statistically significant between few or no opportunities for growth and turnover intentions. Therefore, null hypothesis is not supported. The results indicate that employees leave the employer because there are no or there are few opportunities for growth. The organisation should ensure that opportunities that are created internal first benefit internal employees, however not overlooking the issue of attracting more talent.

The findings in Table, 4 *H<sub>o4</sub>*: There is no statistically significant positive relationship between inconsistent management style and turnover intentions. The results produced ( $r=.06$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.215$ ), which indicate that the linear correlation does not exist between inconsistent management style and turnover intentions, Therefore, null hypothesis is supported that there is no relationship between inconsistent management style and turnover intentions. The study could not conclusively, arrive at the conclusion stating that inconsistent management style has a negative effect on employees hence they leave the institution. However, this one area which is important because management decision are critical in keeping the organisation going, and certainty is required in any organisation.

The results in Table 4, *H<sub>o5</sub>*: There is no statistically significant positive relationship between poor company culture and turnover intentions. The results produced ( $r=.07$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.384$ ), which indicate that the linear correlation does not exist between poor company culture and turnover intentions, Therefore, null hypothesis is not supported. The results indicate that employees do not leave the employer because of poor company culture. However, this does not mean that the area of culture should not be attended to lest other studies to be conducted points out to this area as a concern. In an instance wherein the culture is excellent, the employer has a responsibility to ensure that activities that promote good culture are strengthened.



The findings in Table 4, *H<sub>06</sub>*: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between lack of recognition and turnover intentions. The results produced ( $r=.20$ ,  $n=70$ ,  $p=.011$ ), which indicate a strong positive linear correlation, which statistically significant between lack of recognition and turnover intentions. Therefore, null hypothesis is not supported. The results indicate that employees leave the employer because there are no programmes that recognise their work or performance. It is therefore important that Parliament develop programmes that will recognise employees' contribution to the organisation. Some of these programmes can be be monetary and non-monetary.

#### *Practical implications*

The study makes contribution to the body of knowledge in respect of the HRM, in particular employee retention. The knowledge generated by this study can be used as an example by other legislatures that have language section or units. The study furthermore contributes to Parliament of RSA by making recommendations that the legislature can apply to retaining language practitioners. The researcher believes that a better and clearer understanding of what keep language practitioners engaged in their work and improve the rate of retention will assist Parliament of RSA to have engaged employees.

#### *Limitations and recommendations*

The study focused only on the Language Services Section of Parliament of RSA, and not any other division, section, and unit within Parliament of RSA. Provincial legislatures did not form part of the study. The study focused on selected employees in Parliament. The Executive management, divisional, section, unit managers were not part of the study. Only the selected categories (language and senior language practitioners)

### **Conclusion**

This research focused on establishing reasons for high turnover rate, and to assist Parliament to point out at areas that need to be strengthened to improve the rate of retention. The findings were that there is a relationship between independent variables (being over, low salary compared to other sectors, few or no opportunities for growth, lack of recognition) and turnover intentions, wherein these relationships were statistically significant. However, relationship between inconsistent management style, poor company culture and turnover intentions is not existing in this context

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### **Author's contribution**

AJ Mokoena is the primary researcher of this paper, and this article was drawn from his Honours Degree Public Administration completed at Management College of Southern Africa (Mancosa) in 2013. He is solely responsible for conceptualisation of the research, collection of data, analysis, and interpretation of data. In the process he was assisted by his supervisor Dr Bertie Wicks who acted as a supervisor of the research and subsequently to the compilation of this article. Her role was more on guiding the process of writing the research paper and also with statistical procedures and reporting.

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