The Influence of Affective Organizational Commitment and Global Job Embeddedness on Job Search Behaviors and Turnover Intentions for Employees of Minor League Baseball Organizations

Raymond Cotrufo, University of Connecticut
Laura Burton (Advisor), University of Connecticut

Management/leadership Abstract 2012-067 Thursday, May 24, 2012 1:10 PM Poster

Since the late 1990s, many authorities within baseball at both the major and minor league levels laud the increasing popularity of and attendance levels in the sport (Brown, 2009; Jones, 2011). Yet, this optimism about the state of minor-league baseball (MiLB) belies concerning trends within the industry. As most teams search for ways to turn a profit while attempting to be an affordable and family friendly option for consumers (Minor League Baseball, 2011; Rayasam, 2007), teams in recent years have been plagued by rising operational costs and inconsistent revenue streams.

As the cost of doing business has risen sharply in recent years, one area in which MiLB clubs have managed their operational costs is by limiting the salaries of front office staff. Entry-level salaries, in particular, are quite low, despite the fact that employees commonly endure 80+ hour work weeks during the season (Leventhal, 2010). Considering that many new employees enter the field due to the perceived allure of being involved with a professional sports team, the reality of working in MiLB is frequently incongruous with employees’ initial expectations (Hofacre & Branvold, 1995). Cunningham and Sagas (2004) noted that this discrepancy could lead to negative affective reactions toward the organization and the employee’s career path. This expectancy disconfirmation may account for the high rate of turnover experienced by employees working in MiLB (O’Connor, 2007).

An employee’s commitment to his or her organization, specifically affective organizational commitment, defined as “the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1997, p. 11) influences an individual’s desire to remain working with his/her employer, thus reducing his/her intent to turnover. Management scholars have noted that affective commitment is negatively correlated with employee detachment from the culture of the organization (Meyer et al., 2002) and with voluntary turnover intentions (Vandenberghhe & Bentein, 2009), which is of principal interest in this study.

Job search behaviors and intentions to leave an organization are related but are unique constructs in relation to organizational outcomes (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994). Job search behaviors are considered antecedents to turnover intentions (Kopelman et al., 1992), but are important to examine even if such behavior does not lead to voluntary turnover, as there are costs associated with such behaviors including time loss and energy shifted away from work, as well as the development of thoughts reducing commitment to the organization (Bretz et al., 1994). Understandably, just as job search behaviors negatively affect an employee's level of commitment, high levels of commitment have been found to prevent job searching. Affective commitment, in particular, has shown to be a significant negative predictor of job search behavior, finding that employees with low affective commitment are more likely to proactively seek out job alternatives (Moynihan et al., 2000).

Another characteristic that scholars have identified as averting turnover intention is job embeddedness, described as “the combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job” (Yao et al., 2004, p.256) and includes personal and community-related issues in addition to job-related issues, such as marital status, community involvement, and community attachment (Mitchell, et al., 2001, p.1106). Job embeddedness represents all of the forces that keep employees at their current jobs, going beyond those that affect the individual in the context of their careers (Mitchell, et al., 2001).

Crossley et al.’s (2007) global measure expanded upon the traditional understanding of the job embeddedness construct. Specifically, as individuals evaluate their situations and weigh both the on-the-job and off-the-job factors relative to their employment, they can consider a multitude of external factors as well as allowing emotion to sway how they weigh each of these factors. It was subsequently determined that the global measure of job embeddedness
predicted unique variance in intentions to search, intentions to quit, and voluntary turnover. This negative association between global job embeddedness and job search behaviors and turnover indicates that, “highly embedded people search less” (Crossley, et al., 2007, p.1040; Felps et al., 2009; Mitchell, et al., 2001, p.1117).

The purpose of the current study was to determine the influence of organizational commitment and job embeddedness on job search behaviors and subsequently, voluntary turnover intentions within Minor League Baseball organizations. We hypothesized that (1) affective organizational commitment will moderate the relationship between job search behaviors and intentions to quit the organization such that the relationship will be stronger when affective commitment is low; and that (2) global job embeddedness will moderate the relationship between job search behaviors and intentions to quit the organization such that relationship will be stronger when embeddedness is low.

Participants were 38 female and 59 male (n = 97) randomly selected employees working within various minor league baseball organizations. Participants were asked to rate their affective organizational commitment, job embeddedness, turnover intentions, and job search behaviors within their positions in their minor league organizations. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert type scale.

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to evaluate turnover intention (α = .87) based on affective organizational commitment (α = .82), global job embeddedness (α = .89), and job search behaviors (α = .89). There was no support for Hypothesis 1, as affective commitment did not moderate the relationship between job search behaviors and turnover intentions, nor was there support for Hypothesis 2. However, the main effects of years in current position (β = .229, p < .05), job search behaviors (β = .257, p < .01) had significant positive relationships to turnover intentions. Job embeddedness (β = -.448, p < .000) had a significant negative influence on turnover intentions. Affective organizational commitment had no significant relationship to turnover intentions.

Our findings indicate that when individual employees engage in job search behaviors, there is a positive relationship to turnover intentions. This has implications for managers of MiLB organizations, as job search behavior could result in an employee leaving the organization and, perhaps even more troubling, could lead to other individuals within the organization looking for other job opportunities. As Felps et al. (2009) indicated, a co-workers job search behavior could act as a contagion that influences the turnover intentions of other members of that organization. While our findings were unable to establish that job embeddedness had a moderating influence on the relationship between job search behaviors and turnover intentions, it is important to note that we did extend support for the influence of job embeddedness on turnover intentions in sport. Job embeddedness was negatively related to intentions to leave the organization, and this influence was more significant than the influence of affective organizational commitment on turnover intentions within a sport organization context.