

Mediating Role of Experienced Meaningfulness in the Relationship between Person – Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Medical Workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

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Abstract: *This study examined the mediating role of experienced meaningfulness on the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave among medical workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital in Uganda. The review of literature revealed that many studies have been conducted on person – job fit, incidental variables and intention to leave. However, most of these studies have focused on the nature of fit perceptions, person – organisation fit and intention to leave the organisation, in which the organisation has been the unit of analysis and not the individual. These studies did not explain fully, the influence of person – job fit on intention to leave which created a gap that this study sought to address. The main objective of the study was to examine the mediating role of experienced meaningfulness on the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave. Hypothesis was formulated to address this objective. The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. A population of 1,007 was used for the study and a sample of 475 medical workers including Director, Deputy Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Medical Officer, Nurses and Other Allied workers was selected. A structured questionnaire with Likert type statements was used for data collection. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. The findings of the study confirmed that experienced meaningfulness partially mediates the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave. The results of this study have contributed to theory and better understanding of the antecedents of intention to leave providing reference for further studies. It is recommended that organizations improve the fit between employees and their jobs, make jobs more meaningful, and recognize the combination of antecedents of intention to leave.*

Key words: *Person – Job Fit, Experienced Meaningfulness, Intention to Leave, Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda*

I. Introduction

Experienced Meaningfulness is an attitudinal variable which represents a critical psychological state (Behson et al, 2000). It is a preferred state that triggers work-related outcomes and is the extent to which a jobholder considers his or her job of importance against their values system, and as generally meaningful, valuable and worthwhile. Jobs that offer meaningful experiences consistent with job holder’s standards trigger positive feelings and attitudes (Renn et al., 1995).

Experienced meaningfulness as a critical psychological state is an outcome of studies by Hackman and Oldham (1976) based on their Job Characteristics theory where they identified preferred and ideal critical psychological states and worked backwards to determine a group of fundamental job characteristics that influence critical psychological states such as experienced meaningfulness that led to a set of job-related outcomes (Behson et al, 2000). Hackman and Oldham (1976) used experienced meaningfulness to establish a theoretical relationship between perceived job features and job attitudes. As a result, jobs that have the five fundamental job constructs will activate stronger experiences of the job attitudes, which in turn lead to positive work outcomes. Job attitudes such as experienced meaningfulness may therefore be considered mediators of the job - fit and outcomes relationships.

Person – job fit has for long been a subject of discussion in the medical profession (Hagopian, 2009). A country with a good health care system will have medical workers whose skills, abilities and attitudes are aligned with the demands of their jobs resulting in a healthy dependable workforce and a thriving economy (World Health Organization, 2017). In Uganda, patients spend more than USD 200 million per annum on

medical treatment overseas (Omaswa, 2009). The inefficient health care system has affected wellbeing and slowed economic development, further affecting the health sector. Because of this situation, Mulago National Referral Hospital does not have staff, money and equipment needed for patients resulting in poor person – job fit and a workforce that is exposed to disease (Hagopian, 2009; Omaswa 2009; Lwamafa, 2006; Kitanda, 2008). Despite being the biggest and main referral hospital, Mulago National Referral Hospital has a high rate of attrition and yet Uganda has a significant shortage of medical workers. The hospital lacks resources and equipment, and is severely understaffed (Omaswa, 2009). Health personnel are constantly looking for improved opportunities and a more satisfying work atmosphere elsewhere (Kitanda, 2008; Lwamafa et al., 2006; Huang, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2007; Lwamafa et al., 2006).

Intention to leave characterizes a situation where employees think about quitting and generally lack continuity (Wheeler et al., 2007; Jourdian, 2010; Morrel et al, 2008). It is characterized by an employee's frequency of thought about leaving, willingness to leave amidst available opportunities, alternative career choices, and the likelihood that an employee will leave the organization (Wheeler et al., 2007). While actual quitting behavior is the focus of many employers (Morrel et al., 2008), intention to leave is argued to be a strong surrogate indicator of actual leaving (Purani, 2008). From a research perspective, there is practical merit that once people have left the organization, there is little likelihood to understand their prior situation. The validity of studying intention to leave is in the works of Jourdian (2010) in which intention to leave is found to be an accurate indicator of actual leaving (Carless, 2005).

II. Literature Review

Hackman and Oldham (1975) originally proposed the model on job characteristics that has five job dimensions that determine critical psychological states such as experienced meaningfulness, which influence work related results. Hackman and Oldham worked with critical psychological states to establish a theoretical link between perceived job features and work outcomes. Work outcomes such as intention to leave may result from a job that stimulates experienced meaningfulness. Experienced meaningfulness refers to the extent to which an individual considers his or her job important against their value system, and largely has meaning, is valued and worthy. When employees perceive and feel a sense of accomplishment for their work, they develop the belief that their work is important. According to Behson et al, (2000), experienced meaningfulness is an attitudinal variable that explains the relationship and mediates the effects of the person-job fit (PJF) on outcomes such as intention to leave.

The good fit between the person and the job is critical for sustaining experienced meaningfulness. There is great support and evidence for the link between both demands – abilities fit and needs – supplies fit, and experienced meaningfulness (Cable and Derue, 2002; Kristof et al., 2005; Scroggins, 2007). In addition, self-concept measures were found to strongly correlate with job fit and other variables (Scroggins, 2007). Based on the structure proposed by Kristof et al., (2005), it is suggested that three types of fit may justify and be responsible for unique inconsistencies and variations in experienced meaningfulness. Needs-supplies fit accounts for experienced meaningfulness, and demand-abilities fit accounts for other forms of critical psychological states. In addition, the self-concept - job fit accounts for experienced meaningfulness and experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. While research consistently supports the meaningful and important results that arise from a greater sense of fit, it is assumed that person-job misfit necessarily leads to intention to leave (Kristof et al., 2005) and therefore concluding that person-job fit and experienced meaningfulness share a strong positive relationship (Wheeler et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996; Chatman, 1991).

Wheeler et al., (2004) built on these findings and theorized that person – job misfit results in negative attitudes and states which lead to a systematic sequence of mental evaluations starting with intention to leave the organization. While researchers generally accept this process, it is ambiguous and there is evidence to show that intention to leave is complex and not straightforward. Additionally, research findings indicate that experienced meaningfulness of workers mostly triggers intention to leave the organization, and less intention to leave the occupation or profession (Purani, 2008; Nur, Can and Yalcin, 2011). As such, the latter phenomenon requires more research that is empirical because intention to leave can be intended for not only a specific organization but also the profession. Other studies beyond the model of job characteristics reveal that other variables are important moderators of the job – outcomes relationship (Karatepe and Demir, 2014). This is supported by the works of Fried and Ferris (1987) who found a strong relationship between specific variables and work-related results and outcomes.

III. Research Methodology

The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. The target population of the study was all medical workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital. Mulago National Referral Hospital employs

approximately 1,007 medical workers who include Director/ Deputy Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Medical Officer, Nursing, Other Allied Health Workers. The other allied health workers include Technician, Attendant, Radiographer, Sonographer, Physicist, Laboratory Technologist, Laboratory Assistant, among others (Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List, 2019).

Data compiled and obtained from Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List (2019) provided a total number of 1,007 medical workers in Mulago Hospital Complex. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), 475 (four hundred and seventy-five) respondents were selected to constitute a sample. A stratified random sampling method was used to sample the respondents. The strata comprised of Director/ Deputy Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Medical Officer, Nursing, Other Allied Health Workers (Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List, 2019). A simple random sample was obtained for each stratum using proportionate stratified sampling methods (Sakaran, 2003; Lenth, 2001). Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step regression analysis was used to test the mediating role of Experienced Meaningfulness on the relationship between Person-Job Fit and Intention to Leave (Barron and Kenny, 1986).

IV. Research Findings And Discussion

The hypothesis formulated was that:

H₁: Experienced Meaningfulness mediates the relationship between Person – Job Fit and Intention to Leave

To test this hypothesis, an index was created for Experienced Meaningfulness which had its own measures.

Baron and Kenny (1986) four step method was used to test the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table below

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.571	.326	200.935	14.175	-0.650	0.000
2	.410	.168	53.829	-7.337	-0.338	0.000
3	.086	.007	16.147	-4.018	-0.223	0.000
4	.573	.328	100.226	-0.653	-0.032	0.997

In step 1, the results show a statistically significant and positive relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave (R=.571). Coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.326$) shows that person – job fit explains 32.6% variation of intention to leave. The regression model is statistically significant as shown by F Ratio $F=200.935$, $P<0.05$. The result thus confirms the first condition in testing for the mediation of experienced meaningfulness in the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave. In step two, the results indicate that person – job fit has a significant influence on experienced meaningfulness ($R^2 = 0.168$, $F=53.829$, $P<0.05$). This finding indicates that person – job fit explains 16.8% variance in experienced meaningfulness. The results therefore suggest that the second step of testing for mediation met the requirements and therefore the process proceeded to step three. In step three, results indicated that experienced meaningfulness had a weak positive relationship with intention to leave (R=.086). Specifically, experienced meaningfulness explains 0.07% variation in intention to leave ($R^2 = 0.007$, $F=16.147$, $P<0.05$). The model had F value of 16.147 and P value < 0.05 , indicating that the model was statistically significant. Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.223$, $t = -4.018$, $p\text{-value} = .009<.05$) indicated that experienced meaningfulness had a weak negative relationship with intention to leave. The finding thus satisfies the third condition hence proceeded to step four. In step four, results show a relationship between person – job fit, experienced meaningfulness and intention to leave with a correlation coefficient of 0.573. This correlation coefficient increased from 0.571 when person – job fit was the only predictor in the regression model. The coefficient of determination increased from 0.326 to 0.328, depicting an R squared change of 0.002. The model in overall was statistically significant ($F= 100.226$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000<.05$). The beta coefficient for experienced meaningfulness ($\beta = -0.0032$, $t = -0.653$, $p\text{-value} = 0.997> 0.05$) was not significant. Thus, satisfying the condition that if the effect of mediating variable is controlled, then the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should not be significant. The results provided evidence that experienced meaningfulness partially mediated the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave.

The results are consistent with the findings of Huang, (2005); Sekiguchi, (2007); Edwards, (2008); Kristof-Brown et al., (2005) who found that relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave is influenced by incidental variables and attitudes such as experienced meaningfulness (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This was further confirmed by Wheeler et al., (2007); Resick et al., (2007) and Aktas (2014) who found a weak effect of person – job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job-related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting that there is an indirect relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave.

From a theoretical perspective, the job characteristics theory posits that job dimensions determine critical psychological states such as experienced meaningfulness, which influence work related results (Hackman and Oldham, 1975) and that experienced meaningfulness has a theoretical link with job features. The current study findings conform with this preposition because it proves that person – job fit influences experienced meaningfulness. The theory further posits that experienced meaningfulness is a core explanation of the relationship and mediates the effects of the person-job fit on work outcomes (Cable and Derue, 2002; Kristof et al., 2005; Scroggins, 2007). This is further confirmed by Behson et al, (2000); Wheeler et al., (2005); and Chatman (1991) who found that experienced meaningfulness as a critical psychological state mediates the effects of the person-job fit on work outcomes such as intention to leave. It is therefore concluded that person-job fit and experienced meaningfulness share a positive relationship. Experienced meaningfulness as a psychological state of workers mostly triggers intention to leave (Purani, 2008; Nur, Can and Yalcin, 2011).

V. Conclusion

A hypothesis was developed stating that experienced meaningfulness mediates the relationship between Person – Job Fit and Intention to Leave. The hypothesis was tested using Barron and Kenny's (1986) four step path analysis. The results indicated that experienced meaningfulness partially mediates the relationship between person – job fit and intention to leave. This means that the influence of person – job fit on intention to leave is indirect through experienced meaningfulness, and therefore experienced meaningfulness is a necessary condition for the influence of person – job fit on intention to leave. The hypothesis that experienced meaningfulness mediates the relationship between Person – Job Fit and Intention to leave was thus confirmed.

The results are consistent with the findings of Huang, (2005); Sekiguchi, (2007); Edwards, (2008); Kristof-Brown et al., (2005) in their studies found that the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave may be influenced by incidental variables and attitudinal variables such as experienced meaningfulness, leading to intention to leave (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This result further supported Wheeler et al., (2007); Resick et al., (2007) and Aktas (2014) who found a weak effect of person – job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job-related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting that there is an indirect relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, realistic job reviews for potential medical workers including medical students is important to align job dimensions with the potential professionals. This can be done through professional development and curriculum given that Mulago National Referral Hospital is the largest teaching referral hospital in Uganda. It is important to improve the perceived nature of fit between employees and their jobs. The degree to which a job holder's skills, abilities, and qualities are compatible with the demands of the job goes a long way in improving employee retention. This require that education, training, and continuous professional development are aligned to job demands. There is also a need to improve needs – supplies fit in which workers' requirements, needs and wishes are addressed by the jobs that they do improving the degree to which the intents, desires and needs of the employee are aligned to the supplies of the job for those intensions and the extent to which the job satisfies those desires.

It is recommended that managers make jobs more meaningful through ensuring frequent job reviews for employees to have a variety of tasks. This can be complemented by progressively moving away from order and predetermined tasks to focusing more on service delivery. In addition, managers can consider job rotation if it does not disrupt effective working relationships. It is further recommended that managers have within their control considerate leader behaviors and can provide feedback to employees to make up for failure to enhance experienced meaningfulness. As a result, employees who perceive meaningfulness are likely to activate stronger experiences of the job attitudes, which in turn can lead to positive work outcomes. Finally, managers have a responsibility to design jobs with a variety of diverse and challenging skills including decision making, critical thinking, research, analysis, and problem solving, in addition to a variety of methods for task execution to make work interesting.

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