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# The Role of Perceived Organizational Support and Supportive Human Resource Practices in the Turnover Process

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*A model investigating antecedents of perceived organizational support (POS) and the role of POS in predicting voluntary turnover was developed and tested in two samples via structural equation modeling. Both samples of employees ( $N = 215$  department store salespeople;  $N = 197$  insurance agents) completed attitude surveys that were related to turnover data collected approximately 1 year later. Results suggest that perceptions of supportive human resources practices (participation in decision making, fairness of rewards, and growth opportunities) contribute to the development of POS, and POS mediates their relationships with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Further, POS is negatively related to withdrawal, but the relationships are also mediated.*

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Research suggests that employees develop global beliefs about the extent to which their employing organization both values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). Rooted in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), greater perceived organizational support (POS) is expected to result in greater affective attachment and feelings

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of obligation to the organization (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Perceptions that the organization, an individual works for, supports and cares about them are positively related to work attendance (Eisenberger et al., 1986), job performance (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), citizenship behaviors (Shore & Wayne, 1993), job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armelo & Lynch, 1997), and especially affective commitment to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Although POS is related to a variety of important work-related attitudes and outcomes, two issues requiring further attention are the relationship between POS and voluntary turnover, and the factors leading to the development of POS (Shore & Shore, 1995; Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Regarding turnover, Eisenberger et al. (1990) specifically suggested that individuals with high POS would be less likely to seek out and accept jobs in alternative organizations. Although there is some evidence that POS is negatively related with intentions to quit (e.g., Wayne et al., 1997), only one study has examined the relationship between POS and turnover behavior (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001), and more research is needed to empirically demonstrate the nature of the relationship between POS and turnover (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Regarding the development of POS, research has shown that several types of antecedents are related to POS, including (1) perceptions of the organization, such as justice and politics (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997; Moorman, Blakely & Niehoff, 1998), (2) job conditions (Eisenberger, Rhoades & Cameron, 1999), (3) supervisor support (Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne et al., 1997), (4) personality (Aquino & Griffeth, 1999), and (5) human resource (HR) practices (Wayne et al., 1997). Building on Wayne et al., we focused on HR practices that imply the organization values and cares about employees. Specifically, HR practices that suggest investment in employees and show recognition of employee contributions (e.g., valuing employee participation, Eisenberger et al., 1986) signal that the organization is supportive of the employee and is seeking to establish or continue a social exchange relationship with employees. Perceptions that one's organization offers these practices should thus be positively related to POS (Shore & Shore, 1995).

Interestingly, organizational HR practices have received increased attention of late for their effects on organizational turnover rates (e.g., Huselid, 1995). However, little explanation has been offered for how these practices influence individual turnover decisions. To the extent that HR practices directly influence POS, POS might help explain such relationships. Thus, we propose and test a model aimed at clarifying relationships among HR practices, POS, and turnover, as well as the role of POS in the turnover process.

As can be seen in Figure 1, we propose that employee perceptions of supportive organizational HR practices that signal investment in employees and recognition of their contributions (i.e., participation in decision making, fairness of rewards, and growth opportunities) contribute to the development of POS. Further, POS mediates the impact of these practices on the turnover process. We also suggest that POS is positively related to commitment and satisfaction, which in turn are negatively related to turnover intentions, which are positively related to actual turnover behavior. This sequence is consistent with contemporary turnover process models and research (see Hom & Griffeth, 1995, for a review), but the role of POS requires empirical verification.

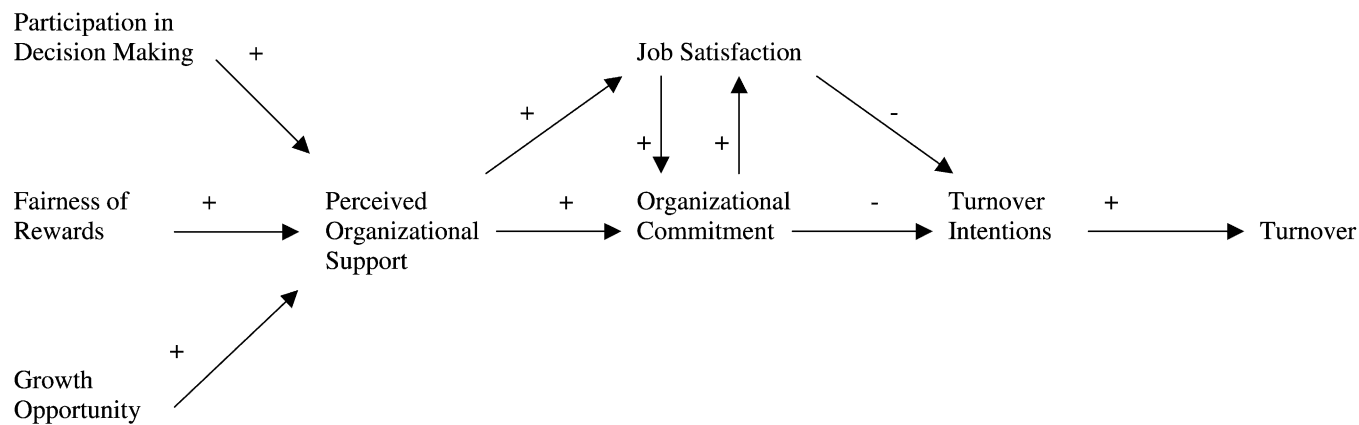


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

## Human Resource Practices and Turnover

Researchers have recently argued that organizational practices that signal investment in employees and their development should reduce organizational turnover. For example, [Huselid \(1995\)](#) argued that high performance work practices that contribute to employee development or motivation (e.g., promotion from within, labor-management participation teams) should enhance retention, and found evidence that these practices had a clear negative relationship with organizational turnover rates. Similarly, [Shaw, Delery, Jenkins and Gupta \(1998\)](#) suggested that HR practices that signal investments in human capital (e.g., pay and benefits systems) or are intended to enhance employee commitment (e.g., procedural fairness, participation) should reduce organizational quit rates.

Despite evidence that certain HR practices at the organization level are related to organizational turnover rates, it would be an ecological fallacy (cf. [Robinson, 1950](#)) to then assume that perceptions of such practices at the individual level are similarly related to individual turnover decisions. Relationships at one level of aggregation (e.g., voting district party membership and election outcomes) do not necessarily hold in the same way at another level (e.g., individual party membership and vote in a particular election). [Campbell \(1999\)](#) recently argued that it is critical to explain the relationship between these types of organizational HR practices and withdrawal at the individual level.

There is limited evidence linking these types of HR practices to individual turnover decisions. [Griffeth et al.'s \(2000\)](#) meta-analytic review of the causes of turnover indicated small negative effects of reward fairness, participation, and perceptions of growth opportunities on turnover from a relatively small number of empirical studies. The relatively small magnitude of the effects suggests that these practices might be somewhat distal determinants of turnover. [Mobley \(1977\)](#) suggested that many antecedents of turnover (e.g., job characteristics) are likely psychologically further away or more distal from turnover with effects that are mediated by closer or more proximal variables (e.g., turnover intentions).

## Human Resource Practices and Perceived Organizational Support

Interestingly, these same types of HR practices should be important for the development of individual POS. A supportive HR practice in this context is one that indicates investment in the employee or recognition of employee contributions, and is discretionary in the sense that the organization is not obligated to offer the practice to everyone ([Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995](#)). [Wayne et al. \(1997\)](#) argued that growth opportunities signal that the organization recognizes and values the employee's contributions and imply future support from the organization; they found a significant positive relationship between both promotions and developmental experiences and POS. Similarly, allowing employee participation should signal that the employee's contributions are valued. [Eisenberger et al. \(1986\)](#) suggested that having influence over policy should be examined as a possible precursor of POS. Being recognized and rewarded fairly would seem to signal that an organization cares about the well-being of the employee and is willing to invest in them ([Fasolo, 1995](#)), and [Rhoades et al. \(2001\)](#) found that perceptions of organizational rewards and procedural justice predicted POS.

Whitener (2001) recently argued for the importance of employee perceptions of such HR practices. Employees may not always perceive the objective existence of certain practices as the organization intends. For example, an organization may encourage participation in decision making, and may even have a formal mechanism for incorporating participation. However, if employees do not perceive that the organization or its agents are open to receiving input and likely to act on it, they are unlikely to feel the organization truly offers participation. Similarly, most organizations probably believe their reward systems are relatively fair; however, many employees would not agree. Thus, perceptions of the extent to which the organization offers supportive HR practices are likely to influence employee attitudinal and behavioral responses.

### Perceived Organizational Support and Turnover

Should we expect POS to affect turnover? Based on social exchange theory, because POS is expected to create feelings of obligation to support organizational goals, we might expect high POS to lower turnover (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1990; Wayne et al., 1997). The norm of reciprocity indicates that people tend to feel obligated to help those who have helped them (Gouldner, 1960), and in an organizational setting (Scholl, 1981), to repay benefits and opportunities offered by the organization. Thus, Eisenberger and coworkers (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990) argued that individuals who perceive greater support from their employing organization would be more likely to feel obligated to “repay” the organization (Shore & Wayne, 1993).

One way for an individual to repay the organization is through continued participation. Eisenberger et al. (1990) argued that perceptions of support would encourage the adoption of organizational membership as an important part of an employee’s self-identity. Thus, individuals perceiving greater support would be less likely to seek alternate employment or to leave the organization. Similarly, Wayne et al. (1997) argued that social exchange theory suggests that a pattern of reciprocity develops over time between an employee and their employing organization, and that employees who perceive low support may be more likely to leave the organization.

Such arguments are conceptually consistent with an inducements-contributions framework of voluntary turnover (cf. March & Simon, 1958) that serves as the foundation of much of contemporary turnover theory (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). March and Simon argued that the employee’s decision to continue to participate in the organization is based on the balance between the inducements offered by the organization and the contributions expected of the employee. An employee who perceives greater inducements would be less likely to desire to leave the organization. An organization that offers support may be seen as offering greater inducements; thus, an organization that values and cares about an employee (i.e., offers support) may be seen as offering a form of inducement to the employee and so may create a sense of obligation in the employee to repay the organization. Therefore, from both an inducements-contributions and a social exchange perspective, we would expect POS to play a role in the turnover process, such that individuals who perceive greater organizational support should be less likely to voluntarily leave the organization.

The role POS plays in understanding turnover has yet to be completely specified. POS may lead directly to withdrawal cognitions and turnover. However, many turnover models suggest that organizational commitment and job satisfaction mediate relationships with withdrawal (see [Hom & Griffeth, 1995](#), for a review). Affective commitment, or emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with the organization, plays a critical role in both the turnover and POS literatures. Since POS and commitment are conceptually and empirically linked, and commitment is well established as an important antecedent in models of turnover (e.g., [Tett & Meyer, 1993](#)), we might expect POS to be related to turnover through its impact on commitment (e.g., [Wayne et al., 1997](#)). [Rhoades et al. \(2001\)](#) recently found evidence that commitment mediates the relationship between POS and turnover; however, they did not include job satisfaction or turnover intentions, important omitted variables given their importance in turnover research.

### Summary

We propose that perceptions of supportive HR practices affect withdrawal through effects on POS. Thus, perceptions of supportive HR practices are positively related to POS, which mediates relationships with commitment and satisfaction. [Meyer and Allen \(1997\)](#) indicated that a common theme linking such antecedents to commitment is the extent to which the antecedents signal that the company is supportive of the employee, consistent with the view that they operate *via* POS. [Rhoades et al. \(2001\)](#) recently found evidence that POS-mediated relationships of perceptions of organizational rewards, procedural justice, and supervisory support with commitment. We test this proposition with a different set of antecedents, and also include POS, commitment, satisfaction, turnover intentions, and turnover in the same process model. Satisfaction is an important omitted variable in the [Rhoades et al. \(2001\)](#) study, given its relationship with withdrawal (e.g., [Griffeth et al., 2000](#)) and evidence it is associated with POS (e.g., [Eisenberger et al., 1997](#)). We believe the HR practices under investigation are likely to be attributed by employees as being offered by the organization, not as necessarily being associated with a specific job. Thus, we propose that POS will also mediate relationships between HR practices and job satisfaction.

We expect POS will be positively related to both commitment and satisfaction, and they in turn will mediate relationships with withdrawal. Research and theory emphasize that POS is strongly related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and yet these are distinct constructs ([Eisenberger et al., 1997](#); [Shore & Tetrick, 1991](#)). [Rhoades et al. \(2001\)](#) provided longitudinal evidence that POS leads to commitment. Any complete model of the turnover process, then, would need to include POS as an important antecedent of organizational commitment. Job satisfaction is also included since commitment and satisfaction are two of the most important constructs in turnover research ([Hom & Griffeth, 1995](#)).

The suggestion that the relationship between POS and turnover is mediated is consistent with many contemporary turnover theories (e.g., [Mobley's \(1977\)](#) intermediate linkages model) that envision voluntary turnover as a process in which antecedents (e.g., job, person, or environmental characteristics) influence major attitudinal responses (e.g., organizational commitment and job satisfaction) which in turn influence intentions to leave which lead to actual turnover behavior. A great deal of research has validated this process approach

to turnover and the important mediating roles played by commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions (see [Hom & Griffeth, 1995](#) for a review).

Finally, commitment and satisfaction should be negatively related to intentions to quit, and turnover intentions should be positively related to turnover. The relationships among commitment, satisfaction, turnover intentions, and turnover, including the mediating role of intentions, have been well documented ([Hom & Griffeth, 1995](#)). We incorporate a reciprocal relationship between commitment and satisfaction. A number of studies have investigated the direction of causality between these constructs, with mixed results ([Vandenberg & Lance, 1992](#)). Several studies have suggested a cyclical or reciprocal relationship between the two (e.g., [Farkas & Tetrick, 1989](#); [Lance, 1991](#); [Williams & Hazer, 1986](#)), and since the exact nature of this complex relationship is not the focus of this study, a reciprocal relationship is examined.

### Alternative Models

We posit that several of the relationships among model constructs are mediated; however, there are plausible alternative models that include more direct paths. For example, POS might directly influence withdrawal. Such a proposition would be consistent with [Steers and Mowday's \(1981\)](#) multi-route model of turnover, which posits that some antecedents lead directly to quitting, as well as with conceptual arguments (e.g., [Eisenberger et al., 1986](#)) that POS should be related to turnover. Therefore, we test alternative models in which POS is directly related to turnover intentions and turnover.

We have also suggested that POS mediates relationships between supportive HR practices and commitment, satisfaction, and withdrawal. However, these HR practices may be directly related to such outcomes. [Meyer and Allen \(1997\)](#) note that only recently have the relationships between HR practices and commitment been empirically examined. However, they cite evidence that, for example, fairness of promotions and participation in decision making have been found to be positively related to commitment. Similarly, [Mathieu and Zajac \(1990\)](#) reviewed three studies that examined the relationship between participative leadership and commitment, and found a strong positive relationship. There is also evidence that participation in decision making, fairness of rewards, and growth opportunities are linked to satisfaction ([Spector, 1997](#)). And as noted earlier, [Hom and Griffeth \(1995\)](#) provided some evidence that these practices are related to withdrawal. Therefore, the theoretical model will be compared to alternatives that include direct paths from each of the antecedent HR practices to commitment, satisfaction, turnover intentions, and turnover.

### Method

#### *Sample and Procedures*

Two samples were used to test the proposed model. Procedures were similar in both samples, except measures in sample 1 were taken at two points in time, while those in sample 2 were taken at three points. Employees were given a confidential survey of



attitudinal measures on company time. Respondents were asked to provide their name and/or employee identification numbers so that we could later determine which respondents had left the organization. A letter accompanied the survey emphasizing the confidentiality of responses and assuring respondents that only members of the research team, external to the organization, would have access to individual surveys.

Sample 1 consisted of 264 salespeople working in the beauty and cosmetics areas of a large department store in the Southeastern US. Complete data in sample 1 was obtained from 215 individuals (81%). The sample was overwhelmingly female (96%), mostly White (78%), with an average age of 34 years, and average tenure with the organization of about 3.5 years. Approximately 1 year after the survey administrations, turnover data was collected from company records. Turnover in sample 1 was quite high: over 40% of the sample had voluntarily left the organization within 1 year. Ten individuals who had been involuntarily terminated by the organization were not included in the analyses.

Sample 2 initially consisted of 442 insurance agents of a large national insurance company. At time one, 345 individuals responded (79%), and the sample consisted of more men (78%) and a similar racial make-up (73% White) as sample 1, an average age of 30, and average organizational tenure of 4.5 years. In sample 2, an additional attitudinal survey was administered approximately 6 months after the time one survey, separating the measurement of perceptions of HR practices from POS, commitment, and satisfaction. At time two, 197 of the time one respondents (57%) provided follow-up data. Those who did respond at time two did not differ on any of the study variables collected at time one from those who did not. Approximately 1 year after time one, turnover data was collected from company records. Turnover in sample 2 was lower (4%); again three involuntarily terminated individuals were excluded.

### Measures

The measures used were identical in the two samples.

*Participation in decision making.* Participation was measured with a 3-item Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) used by [Steel and Mento \(1987\)](#). A sample item is “I am allowed to participate in decisions regarding my job.”

*Fairness of rewards/recognition.* Fairness of rewards was measured with a 3-item Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) developed by [Price and Mueller \(1986\)](#). A sample item is “I am rewarded (e.g., recognized) fairly for the amount of effort that I put in.”

*Growth opportunities.* Growth opportunities were measured with a 3-item Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) developed by [Price and Mueller \(1986\)](#). A sample item is “[Organization’s name] provides me the opportunity to improve my skills and knowledge.”

*Perceived organizational support.* POS was measured with a 16-item Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) drawn from the original 36 item SPOS

developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), and used by them in that research. A sample item is “The organization values my contribution to its well-being.”

*Organizational commitment.* Commitment was measured with a 9-item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979) proposed by Bozeman and Perrewé (2001). They suggested that several items in the OCQ may be confounded with withdrawal intentions and proposed a 9-item version that removes withdrawal-related items. We conducted all analyses using both the full and the 9-item OCQ and found no substantive differences in the results. We report results using the 9-item version that removes withdrawal-related items. A sample item is “I really care about the fate of this organization.”

*Job satisfaction.* Global job satisfaction was measured with a 4-item scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) developed by Price (1977). A sample item is “I feel satisfied with my job.”

*Turnover intentions.* Turnover intentions were measured with a 3-item scale (1 = definitely not to 5 = definitely yes) used by Hom and Griffeth (1991). A sample item is “I intend to quit my present job.”

*Turnover.* Turnover was assessed via organization records 1 year after surveys were administered. Respondents were coded as 0 for stayers and 1 for leavers.

## Analysis

Identical analyses were performed on both samples. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the distinctiveness of the measures. Each measure was specified as unidimensional with appropriate items loading only on their respective factors. LISREL 8 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) was used to evaluate the fit of the measurement model, using the sample covariance matrix as input. Following Bollen's (1990) recommendation to interpret multiple fit indices, we supplemented LISREL fit statistics such as the  $\chi^2$  test, root-mean-square residual (RMR), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) with the goodness-of-fit index (GFI; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1984), the normed fit index (NFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), and the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). In both samples, the CFA indicated an acceptable fitting measurement model. Although the  $\chi^2$  statistics were significant, all of the fit indices were within the recommended ranges (i.e., RMR, RMSEA < .08; GFI, NFI, and CFI > .90; Bollen, 1990).

After assessing the fit of our confirmatory factor model, we evaluated the complete structural model represented in Figure 1. Given the relatively modest sample sizes, a manifest variables model was evaluated, using the variance–covariance matrix for input and calculating the measurement loadings (square-root of the scale reliability) and error variances (one minus reliability times the scale variance) as suggested by Williams and Hazer (1986). The 1-item measure of turnover was assumed to be measured without error. Again, LISREL 8 was used and multiple indices of model fit were examined. In addition to assessing the overall fit and path estimates of the proposed theoretical model, we compared this model with

several nested alternative models (cf. Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), as discussed previously. The alternative models were compared to the theoretical model on the basis of  $\chi^2$  difference tests, as well as examining any changes in fit indices.

## Results

### Sample 1

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables can be found in Table 1. The antecedent HR practices were all significantly correlated with one another, but not so highly as to suggest that they are not distinct. Each of the antecedents was also significantly related to POS, commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions, though all were somewhat more correlated with POS. POS and commitment were the most strongly correlated variables; however, Shore and Tetrick (1991) demonstrated the independence of these two constructs despite their strong theoretical relationship.<sup>1</sup> All of the study variables were significantly negatively related to turnover intentions, although POS was more strongly related than the antecedent HR practices, and commitment was more strongly related than POS. Finally, POS, commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions are significantly related to actual turnover, although intentions are related most strongly. This is consistent with previous findings that more distal antecedents of turnover often operate through mediating variables such as commitment and behavioral intentions (cf. Hom & Griffeth, 1995).

The complete Figure 1 theoretical model fit the data quite well. The  $\chi^2$  statistic was non-significant ( $\chi^2$  (16 df) = 18.45,  $p > .05$ ), and the fit indices were quite good (RMR = .034; RMSEA = .027; GFI = .98; NFI = .97; CFI = .99). Additionally, all of the path estimates were significant and in the expected direction. Thus, participation (.34), fairness of rewards (.50), and growth opportunities (.20) were positively related to POS; POS was positively related to commitment (.69) and satisfaction (.42); commitment was related to satisfaction (.19) and satisfaction was related to commitment (.23); commitment (−.46) and satisfaction (−.18) were negatively related to turnover intentions; and intentions (.37) were

Table 1  
Sample 1 means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Participation in decision making	3.94	1.43	.89							
Fairness of rewards/recognition	2.93	.96	.44*	.85						
Growth opportunities	3.09	.96	.42*	.36*		.78				
Perceived organizational support	3.98	1.14	.63*	.68*		.50*	.94			
Organizational commitment	4.65	1.04	.54*	.53*		.41*	.73*	.88		
Job satisfaction	5.13	1.15	.37*	.32*		.31*	.51*	.57*	.83	
Turnover intentions	2.42	1.33	−.32*	−.36*	−.34*	−.44*	−.52*	−.43*	.95	
Turnover	.46	.50	−.05	−.04	−.14*	−.16*	−.19*	−.14*	.36*	−

Scale reliabilities (alpha) on the diagonal.

\*  $p < .05$ .

Table 2  
Sample 1 model fit and model comparisons

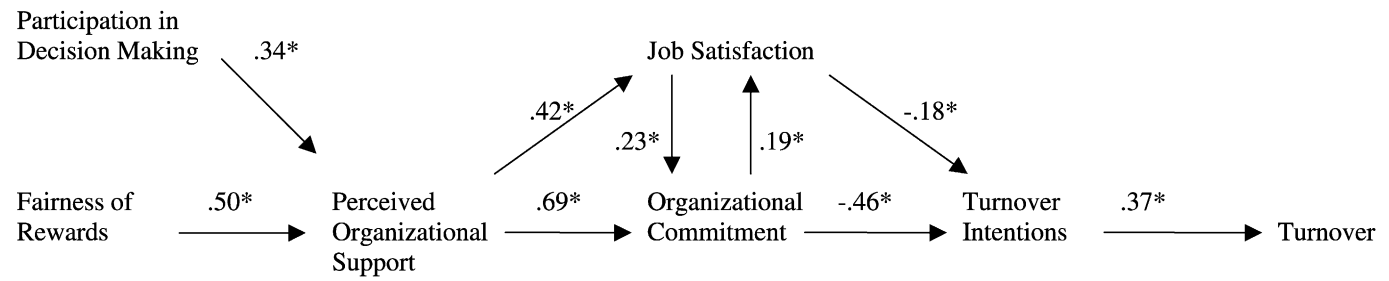
Model	$\chi^2$ (df)	$\chi^2$ difference (df)	RMR	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	CFI
Model 1: theoretical model	18.45 (16)		.034	.027	.98	.97	.99
Model 2: add HR practices → commitment		1.54 (3)					
Model 3: add HR practices → satisfaction		2.04 (3)					
Model 4: add HR practices → intentions		3.59 (3)					
Model 5: add growth → turnover		.01 (1)					
Model 6: add POS → intentions		.01 (1)					
Model 7: add POS → turnover		.59 (1)					

\* $p < .05$ ; each model compared to the theoretical model.

positively related to actual turnover. The completely standardized solution can be found in Figure 2.

Despite the good fit of the theoretical model, it was important to test the proposed process through which HR practices and POS affect turnover. The results of the nested alternative model tests can be found in Table 2. Alternative models were compared to the theoretical model to test the mediating role of POS (models 2–5 in Table 2). In one model (model 2), a direct path was specified from each of the antecedent HR practices to commitment. In one (model 3), a direct path was specified from each HR practice to satisfaction. In one (model 4), a direct path was specified from one HR practice to turnover intentions. In one (model 5), a direct path was specified from growth opportunities to turnover; models were not tested specifying paths from participation or fairness with turnover since neither variable was significantly correlated with turnover. In none of these cases did the additional path significantly improve model fit. Thus, as hypothesized, although the HR practices are correlated with commitment, satisfaction, turnover intentions, and, in one case, turnover, there is evidence that the effects are mediated by POS. The standardized total effects of each HR practice on turnover intentions and turnover were: participation =  $-.16$ , and  $-.06$ , respectively; fairness of rewards =  $-.24$ , and  $-.09$ ; and growth opportunities =  $-.10$ , and  $-.04$ . Decomposing the effects associated with each path to withdrawal (i.e., POS to commitment to intentions; POS to satisfaction to intentions; POS to commitment to satisfaction to intentions; POS to satisfaction to commitment to intentions) indicates the path through POS and commitment accounts for 69% of the relationships with withdrawal.

To assess whether POS directly influenced turnover intentions, the theoretical model was compared with a less constrained alternative with an additional path specified from POS to turnover intentions. This alternative model (model 6 in Table 2) did not significantly improve the fit of the model. Similarly, a model specifying an additional path from POS to turnover (model 7) did not significantly improve the model fit. Thus, despite the fact that POS is significantly related to turnover intentions and turnover in a bivariate sense, there is evidence that these effects are mediated. The standardized total effects of POS on turnover intentions and turnover were  $-.48$  and  $-.18$ , respectively. Again, decomposing the effects associated with each path to withdrawal indicates the path through commitment accounts for 69% of the relationship.



Note: \*p<.05

Figure 2. Sample 1 theoretical model results.

Although illustrative, one concern about the validity of these results may stem from the perceptual and attitudinal variables being measured at the same point in time. Therefore, the same model and process was tested in a second sample in which the perceptions of HR practices were measured at time one, attitudinal responses at time two, and turnover behavior at time three.

### Sample 2

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables can be found in Table 3. The pattern of correlations among variables was comparable to that found in sample 1.<sup>2</sup>

The model fit the data quite well, and the results were similar to those found in sample 1. The  $\chi^2$  statistic was non-significant ( $\chi^2$  (16 df) = 17.10,  $p > .05$ ), and the fit indices were quite good (RMR = .028; RMSEA = .019; GFI = .98; NFI = .97; CFI = .99). The direction and magnitude of the standardized path estimates were very similar to those found in sample 1, and the completely standardized solution can be found in Figure 3.

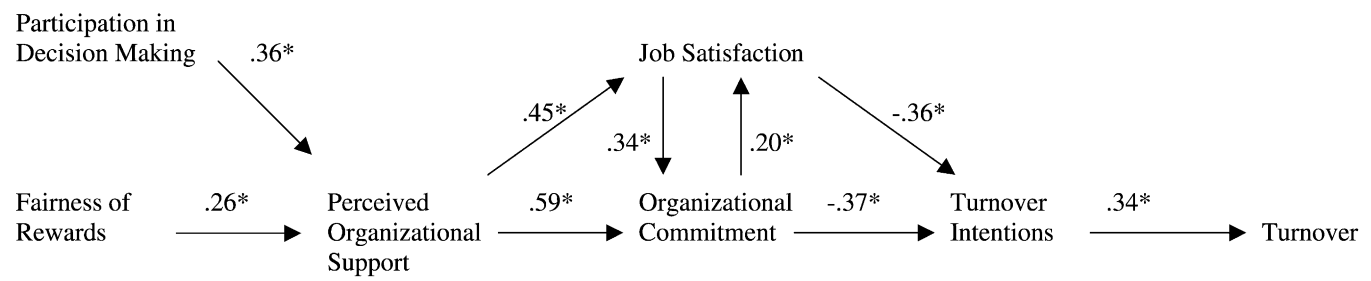
The same series of nested alternative models that were compared to the theoretical model in sample 1 were compared in sample 2. These results can be found in Table 4. Alternative models were compared to the theoretical model to test the mediating role of POS (models 2 and 3 in Table 4). In none of these cases did the additional paths significantly improve model fit. Thus, as hypothesized, although the HR practices are correlated with commitment and satisfaction, there is evidence that the effects are mediated by POS.<sup>3</sup> In another model (model 4), a direct path was specified from each HR practice to turnover intentions. No alternatives in this sample specified direct paths between HR practices and turnover since none of the three were significantly correlated with turnover, perhaps due in part to the low turnover rate. Model 4 did significantly improve the fit of the model in this sample ( $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}$  (3 df) = 8.43,  $p = .04$ ) and result in slightly better fit indices (RMR = .010; RMSEA = .010;

Table 3  
Sample 2 means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Participation in decision making	3.96	1.18	.85							
Fairness of rewards/recognition	3.24	.97	.44*	.85						
Growth opportunities	3.64	.84	.35*	.39*		.79				
Perceived organizational support	4.22	1.01	.55*	.51*		.49*	.94			
Organizational commitment	4.80	1.00	.41*	.42*		.37*	.72*	.90		
Job satisfaction	4.61	1.29	.32*	.30*		.26*	.55*	.65*	.85	
Turnover intentions	1.81	1.04	-.17*	-.33*	-.23*	-.43*	-.59*	-.57*	.92	
Turnover	.04	.14	-.04	-.06	-.04	-.09	-.13	-.08	.34*	–

Scale reliabilities (alpha) on the diagonal.

\*  $p < .05$ .



Note:  $*p < .05$

Figure 3. Sample 2 theoretical model results.

Table 4  
Sample 1 model fit and model comparisons

Model	$\chi^2$ (df)	$\chi^2_{\text{difference}}$ (df)	RMR	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	CFI
Model 1: theoretical model	17.10 (16)		.028	.019	.98	.97	.99
Model 2: add HR practices → commitment		1.61 (3)					
Model 3: add HR practices → satisfaction		.33 (3)					
Model 4: add HR practices → intentions		8.43 (3)*	.010	.010	.99	.99	.99
Model 5: add POS → intentions		.57 (1)					

Each model compared to the theoretical model.

\*  $p < .05$ .

GFI = .99; NFI = .99; CFI = .99). The paths for fairness of rewards and growth opportunities were not significant; thus, although perceptions of these practices are correlated with turnover intentions, there is evidence that these effects are mediated. However, the path from participation in decision making to turnover intentions was significant. Participation appears to have a more direct relationship with turnover intentions in this sample, although the improvement in model fit may be practically very small. The standardized total effects of each HR practice on turnover intentions and turnover were: participation =  $-.21$ , and  $-.02$ ; fairness of rewards =  $-.15$ , and  $-.05$ ; and growth opportunities =  $-.17$ , and  $-.06$ . Decomposing the effects associated with each path to withdrawal indicates for fairness and growth opportunities, the path through POS and commitment accounted for 46% and the path through POS and satisfaction accounted for 34% of the relationships with withdrawal (with the rest through the reciprocal relationships between satisfaction and commitment). For participation, these are somewhat lower as the direct relationship accounts for 18%.

Again, to assess whether POS directly influenced turnover intentions, the theoretical model (with the path from participation to turnover intentions included) was compared with a less constrained alternative model in which an additional path from POS to turnover intentions was specified. This alternative model (model 11 in Table 4) did not significantly improve the fit of the model. No alternative specified an additional path from POS to turnover since POS and turnover were not significantly correlated in this sample. Thus, despite the fact that POS is significantly correlated with turnover intentions, there is evidence that this effect is mediated. The standardized total effects of POS on turnover intentions and turnover were  $-.61$  and  $-.21$ , respectively.

Given the low turnover base rate in sample 2, we also evaluated relationships with turnover using hierarchical logistic regression. We entered perceptions of HR practices in step one, POS in step two, satisfaction and commitment in step three, and turnover intentions in step four. Only turnover intentions significantly predicted turnover, findings consistent with those reported using S.E.M. By contrast, the same logistic regression analysis in sample 1 resulted in each step of the analysis significantly predicting turnover. In step one, growth opportunities were significant. After entering step two, POS was significant while growth opportunities dropped out. After step three, only commitment was significant, while after step four, only turnover intentions were significant. These results are also consistent with those found using S.E.M.



## Discussion

This study contributes to both the POS and turnover literatures in a number of ways. Results in two independent samples indicated that perceptions of supportive HR practices (participation in decision making, growth opportunities, and fairness of rewards/recognition) were consistently positively related to POS, adding to our understanding of the factors leading to the development of POS. The results also indicated that, although each of these practices was significantly correlated with organizational commitment, they were more strongly correlated with POS, and POS-mediated relationships with commitment. These findings support our contention that organizational HR practices seen as supportive by employees increase POS and lead to affective attachment to the organization because of employee perceptions that the organization supports and cares about them.

This study also contributes to understanding the role of POS in the turnover process. Results indicated that POS was significantly negatively correlated with turnover intentions in both samples and actual turnover in one sample, supporting the contention that individuals who perceive greater POS are less likely to withdraw. The relationship between POS and withdrawal, however, was mediated by commitment and satisfaction, with the path through commitment accounting for most of the relationship. Thus, POS may be a more distal determinant of turnover that affects turnover as a critical antecedent to commitment.

We also argued that POS may be valuable in explaining relationships between supportive organizational HR practices and turnover. Perceptions of HR practices were negatively correlated with turnover intentions in both samples, but the results indicated that for two of the practices (growth opportunities and fairness of rewards/recognition) relationships with withdrawal were mediated. Results involving participation in decision making were less consistent in that the sample 1 relationship with turnover intentions was mediated, whereas in sample 2 there was some evidence that participation directly influenced intentions. In sample 1, growth opportunities were also negatively correlated with actual turnover. Again, the largest part of these relationships was accounted for by the path through POS and commitment. Thus, this research extends work showing that organizational reports of HR practices are related to organizational turnover rates by showing an empirical relationship between individual perceptions of HR practices and withdrawal intentions. Further, there is evidence that most of these effects are mediated by POS, suggesting that POS plays an important role in the turnover process as a mediator of more distal antecedents.

The influence of POS in the turnover process has important implications for organizations. Managers need to be aware that HR practices may not directly affect turnover. Rather, as suggested by [Wayne et al. \(1997\)](#), HR practices serve as signals to employees about the extent to which the organization values and cares about them as individuals (POS), which then contributes to the withdrawal process ([Hom & Griffeth, 1995](#)). In addition, [Shore and Shore \(1995\)](#) suggested that an employee's history of treatment by the organization will likely influence POS. This implies that when supportive HR practices are instituted by an organization, the benefits in terms of influencing turnover may not occur immediately if an employee's history with the organization has indicated a lack of support. Clearly, future research needs to examine the impact of supportive HR practice interventions on POS using a longitudinal design.

Future research could also clarify relationships between HR practices and POS in at least two ways. One, theory underlying the development of POS emphasizes discretionary behavior. The extent to which an organizational practice is seen as discretionary influences the attributions that employees make about the organization's underlying motivation. More discretionary practices are more likely to be viewed as indicating support on the organization's part (Eisenberger et al., 1997). Future research on the development of POS would benefit from measuring perceptions of the extent to which organizational actions are discretionary. Two, this research focused on individual perceptions of HR practices, whereas previous research on HR practices and turnover has primarily examined the existence of certain practices at the organization level. An interesting avenue for future research is the extent to which individual perceptions match up with objective organizational reports. This has important practical implications for managers and organizations desiring to use progressive HR practices to increase POS.

Future research might also examine the context in which POS is more or less likely to lead to commitment and retention. For example, Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch and Rhoades (2001) recently found evidence that employees' felt obligation to care about the organization as well as positive mood mediated the relationship between POS and affective commitment. The individual exchange ideology also affected these relationships. Thus, there may be varying conditions under which supportive HR practices are more or less likely to affect commitment and withdrawal.

One limitation of the findings is the use of self-report questionnaires to collect data on all measures except turnover, particularly in sample 1 when the attitudinal data was collected at one point in time. This limits our ability to draw conclusions about the causal nature of the relationships. To partially address this, longitudinal data was used in sample 2 with POS, commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions measured about 6 months after perceptions of HR practices. The results in the two samples were strikingly similar, supporting our theoretical model. We also attempted to address the high correlations between POS and commitment by replicating previous research (e.g., Shore & Tetrick, 1991) demonstrating the distinctiveness of POS and commitment despite their strong relationships. Still, future research that uses objective measures of HR practices at the individual level is needed, as well as perhaps more extensive investigation of the discriminant and convergent validity of POS and organizational commitment.

Another potential limitation concerns the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (turnover), especially given the relatively low turnover rate in sample 2. There is some concern because this condition violates assumptions underlying the use of structural equation modeling. Common recommendations for models with a dichotomous dependent variable, however, (e.g., using polychoric correlations as the model input matrix) require much larger sample sizes than those available here. Cortina, Chen and Dunlap (2001) recently found that distribution free estimation techniques required sample sizes of at least 1000, and that results using maximum likelihood estimators were similar anyway. One factor that may mitigate concern regarding this issue is that the model in this case contains multiple endogenous variables, and the effects of other model variables are mediated through turnover intentions. Therefore, the dichotomous nature of the turnover variable primarily affects relationships between turnover intentions and turnover. To the extent the low base rate dichotomous variable does affect relationships, it would tend to attenuate relationships with

turnover. In this analysis, then, we might be less likely to find direct relationships from model variables to turnover. Thus, we also tested relationships with turnover in both samples using logistic regression, and obtained results consistent with those found using S.E.M.

Despite these limitations, this study provides evidence regarding the development of POS and suggests POS is important in the turnover process both as an antecedent of commitment and satisfaction, and as a crucial link between HR practices and turnover at the individual level. Supportive HR practices indicating investment in employees or recognition of employee contributions lead to POS, and POS mediates relationships between these practices and organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Further, including POS in turnover models provides greater understanding of the process by which distal organizational antecedents influence the turnover process. This is an important finding for organizations seeking ways of addressing employee retention.

### Notes

1. Given the high correlation between POS and commitment, we replicated portions of [Shore and Tetrick's \(1991\)](#) analysis of the construct validity of POS. We conducted a CFA with these measures comparing a one-factor model, in which all indicators loaded on a single factor, to a two-factor model, in which POS and OCQ indicators loaded on separate factors. Results indicated the two-factor model resulted in a significantly better fitting model, providing evidence of their distinctiveness.
2. Again, given the high correlation between POS and commitment, we performed a CFA comparing one-factor and two-factor models. Results indicated the two-factor model resulted in significantly better fit.
3. Given the high correlation between POS and commitment, we analyzed a model specifying direct paths from the HR antecedents to commitment instead of POS. This model did not fit the data as well ( $\chi^2 (16 \text{ df}) = 62.78, p < .05$ ), and nested alternative models specifying direct paths from HR practices to POS significantly improved fit in each case.

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