

The Role of Embeddedness in the Turnover Intention and Occupational Attrition

Intention of Physiotherapists

Ethics approval number: 2016/077

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Literature

Turnover and occupational attrition pose serious problems to the profession of physiotherapy and organisations which employ physiotherapists. There are significant costs associated with losing employees and replacing them, both financial costs, and costs to less concrete resources such as morale. Additionally, occupational attrition may pose a risk to physiotherapy amongst other health professions as there is some evidence to suggest a shortage of workers exists.

Previous research into what explains why physiotherapists leave or stay in their profession or job has focused on factors such as job satisfaction, work related musculoskeletal disorders, and job stress. New research has indicated that embeddedness may better explain why people leave or stay in occupations and jobs. Embeddedness is said to represent 'stuckness' in a specific role. It can represent the degree to which a person feels 'stuck' in place in their job (organisational embeddedness), in their profession (occupational embeddedness) or their community (community embeddedness).

This study tested the hypothesis that physiotherapists that are more embedded (in their organisation and occupation) will be less likely to want to leave their organisations or physiotherapy as a profession. This study also tested that hypothesis physiotherapists that are more 'stuck' in their organisations and occupations will be even less likely to want to leave if they are also 'stuck' in their community.

Method

The conducted study was a cross-sectional study. It observed the effects of organisational embeddedness and occupational embeddedness on turnover intention and occupational attrition intention as moderated by community embeddedness. Salient covariates indicated by the literature were also measured and controlled for in this study (age, gender, job stress, job satisfaction, WMSD incidence, and perceived employability).

The participants recruited for this study were a sample of 260 physiotherapists who were practicing in Australia. Several cases from the original data were found to be inappropriate for testing in the study reducing the final sample to 223 cases. The participants were mostly female (62.8%) and not male (36.8%), with one participant not stating their gender (.4%). The participants mostly worked in the private sector (72.6%), with the remaining working in the public sector (20.2%), and in the private and public not for profit sectors (3.6% each). The participants were employed mostly on a full time basis (65.9%), with some being employed on a part time basis (31.8%), and the remaining being employed on a casual basis (2.2%).

All participants completed an online questionnaire which contained items which measured their intent to leave their job or profession, their embeddedness in their organisation, occupation, and community, how employable they perceived themselves to be, job satisfaction, job stress, and the presence of work related musculoskeletal disorders; there were also several questions which addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Results and Conclusions

The data from the questionnaire was put through moderation analyses to test the hypotheses.

Physiotherapists who were more embedded in their organisations were generally less likely to intend to leave their organisation. Physiotherapists who were more embedded in their organisations were generally not more or less likely to leave the profession. Physiotherapists who were more embedded in their occupations were mostly not less likely to want to leave or stay in their jobs. However, physiotherapists who were more embedded in their occupations were for the most part less likely to intend to leave the profession of physiotherapy. This provides some support for the idea that embeddedness predicts turnover intention and occupational attrition intention amongst physiotherapists.

The results mostly showed a pattern of results which did not support or contradict the concept that physiotherapists who were more embedded in their jobs and professions would be less likely to want to leave if they were also embedded in their communities. There were a few exceptions to this however, as three of the 12 interactions were significant, all of these in predicting intent to leave the profession and not an organisation. The lack of moderation that community embeddedness showed on the effect of other embeddedness factors on intent to

leave other an organisation or the occupation may reflect a lack of interaction or the small sample size.

Despite their being some support for embeddedness as a reason that physiotherapists intent to leave job satisfaction appears to be a much better predictor of intent to leave both an organisation or the occupation (as this was shown to have universal support in the results). The presence of work related musculoskeletal disorders likely plays a smaller part in whether a physiotherapist chooses to leave their job or profession than factors which are not unique to the profession, such as job stress and satisfaction.