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“I don’t complain, but I am ready for any eventuality”

Intention to leave a profession

How job search and sportsmanship interact in the prediction of intention to leave a profession

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the extent to which the influence of professional commitment on intention to leave a profession is contingent on the combined effect of job search and sportsmanship.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is based on a sample of professional employees ($N = 327$). Moderated moderation was the approach used for testing the hypotheses.

Findings – Findings showed that the moderating effect of job search on the relationship between professional commitment and intention to leave a profession is higher at a low level of sportsmanship and lower when sportsmanship is high.

Originality/value – The research indicates that job search does not necessarily constitute a sign of acceleration of intention to leave one’s profession. In the case of professionals expressing a high level of sportsmanship, job search appears more like a precaution.

Keywords Employee turnover, Employee attitudes, Professional commitment, Job search, Intention to leave a profession, Moderated moderation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Professional employees provide organizations and society with crucial expertise (Blau *et al.*, 2008; Wallace, 1995); therefore, early exits and labor shortages observed in various professions constitute a serious concern (Eberhardt *et al.*, 1995; Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Flinkman *et al.*, 2010; Krausz *et al.*, 1995; Rouse, 2001; Wermeling, 2009). A change of employer occurs when an employee disengages from a work environment perceived as physically or psychologically unsatisfactory; in a change of profession, a profession rather than a work environment is perceived to be unsatisfactory. Previous literature has highlighted the fact that many professions are demanding, causing significant stress, exhaustion and anxiety (Gardner and Fletcher, 2009; Guerrero *et al.*, 2017), and professional employees’ vocations and expectations about their jobs often change over time (Flinkman *et al.*, 2010). These individual-related and job-related factors all potentially have an effect on professional commitment, which in turn has been identified as one of the main reasons for leaving a profession (Blau, 2009; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2001; Snape and Redman, 2003). The decision to leave has been described as a final manifestation of the withdrawal process (Mobley *et al.*, 1978); therefore, more research is needed to identify factors that might help

