

## The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment in the Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Intention to Leave

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave. Additionally, the study aims to investigate quality of work life in College of Business Administration, at King Saud University, as faculty members have perceived it. Data Collected from faculty members in male campus. A set of multiple regression analyses have been conducted. Results showed the full mediation of affective commitment in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave the organizations. Moreover, results revealed that faculty members are perceiving college QWL to be above average. Detailed insights and recommendations are given to improve the level of QWL.

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### 1. Introduction

Turnover is a serious ramification for almost all types and sizes of organizations. High rates of turnover has been always associated with increasing administrative costs. These costs usually take many shapes such as costs of new recruitment activities and retraining for the new comers ( Zhao, et al., 2013). Literature shows that turnover takes place due to several reasons such as dissatisfaction with work, low organizational commitment, supervisor's behavior, and other wide set of variables. Yet, employees who perceive they are respected and valued are likely to reciprocate with loyalty (and, thus, not to leave) in the exchange relationship (Ng & Butts, 2009).

Further, a meta-analysis by (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000) showed that intention to leave remains the best predictor for turnover. That is why much focus have been given to the intention to leave as it can play the role of a leading indicator to the future turnover behavior.

For instance, research results by (Smith & Speight, 2006) revealed that, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and organizational commitment have shown to be conversely related to turnover intention. Individuals who experience job satisfaction; they tend to be more committed to their organization as well as being satisfied with their career path. Hence, less likely to leave the organization.

Moreover, quality of work life can play a significant role in employee's intention to leave. A study by (Elovainio , et al., 2005) showed that experiencing bad quality of work life was shown to increase intentions to leave in addition to decreasing motivation and performance especially at the earlier stages of career paths.

Current research is an attempt toward better understanding of the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave. This investigation involves the use of employee's affective commitment as a mediating variable between quality of work life and employee's intention to leave. The study aims to know whether affective commitment provides a better explanation for the relationship or not.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Quality of work life and Affective commitment

Quality of working life (QWL) is a multi-dimensional construct referring to overall satisfaction with general working life. This implies satisfaction with work-life balance, sense of belonging to a working group, and a sense of being worthy and respectable (Morin and Morin, 2004). Quality of Work Life includes a variety of perspectives that not only include work-based factors such as satisfaction with job, pay and relationship with work colleagues, but also include factors that reflects life situation and general feelings of wellbeing (Nair, 2013). It implies various facets such as employee satisfaction with regard to pay, supervisor and co-workers (Rainey, 2003). In other words, The QWL is determined by the desired favorable interaction among: *The worker*- as an individual person, member of a group, and being a part of the organization; *what the worker does*-job content; and the *condition or environment* within which the worker does this job which is the job context (Bagtasos, 2011).

In sum, it has been clear that there is a lack for consensus on the definition of the QWL construct. However, the dynamicity of the construct over the years can be perceived as a logical outcome for the

changing nature of the needs with regard to employees everywhere over the same period.

Current Study adopts the conceptual framework and definition developed by (Walton, 1975). Walton proposed conceptual categories of QWL. He introduced eight aspects in which employees perceive their QWL. These aspects included adequate and fair compensation; safe and healthy environment; development of human capacities; growth and security; social integration; constitutionalism; the total life space and social relevance. Hence, the College's quality of work life will depend on the extent to which the faculty members perceive the college with regard to each of these eight aspects.

On the other hand, affective commitment is simply defined as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement that an employee has with its organization and goals (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, (1979) and Meyer, Allen, & Smith, (1993). Porter and his associates (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) described affective commitment by three main characteristics, these characteristics are: (1) "belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) a willingness to focus effort on helping the organization achieve its goals, and (3) a desire to maintain organizational membership."

Previous research revealed a positive relationship between quality of work life and affective commitment. Using sample from banking industry, the study by (Asgari & Dadashi, 2011) revealed the positive relationship between the two variables. The same results have been shown with (Permarupan, Al- Mamun, & Saufi, 2013) and (Zhao, et al., 2013). That seems to be consistent assuming that higher level of work life quality will be associated with stronger involvement and emotional attachment of employees to their organizations. This may be attributed to their satisfaction with set of crucial aspects of working life such as remuneration, social integration, work life balance, etc.

## 2.2 Quality of work life and Intention to leave

According to Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), individuals who receive favorable treatments from others are likely to return the other party's favor based on the norm of reciprocity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, Employees who experience a high level of quality of work life tend to have less intention to leave than those who perceive low quality of work life ( Zhao, et al., 2013).

This explains why creating and maintaining a healthy work life is considered to be crucial for reducing turnover intention (Almalki, FitzGerald, & Clark, 2012). Almalki and his associates in this later study have used four dimension to express quality of working life; work life/home life, work design, work

context, and work world to study the relationship among primary health care nurses. Findings indicated that 26% of the turnover intention among the study sample was explained by knowing the scores for the four dimensions of QWL. Similar results were found of the inverse relationship between employees QWL and their turnover intention in (Mosadeghrad, 2013).

## 2.3 Affective commitment and intention to leave

According to (Meyer & Allen, 1991), organizational commitment consists of three main subcomponents: affective, normative, and continuance. Many researches have been conducted to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment (the whole construct) and the employee's intention to leave the organization. In general, a negative relationship has been concluded between the two variables through the majority of these studies. For instance, a study by (Salleh, Nair, & Harun, 2012) and (Jehanzeb, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2013).

However, Current research is concerned mainly by the Affective component of the organizational commitment. As mentioned earlier, affective commitment refers to an individual's identification with and involvement in the employing organization. It is best described by the emotional attachment to the organization. Previous research revealed an inverse relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention. That was clear in the study by (Lew, 2011) as well as the study by (Wasti, 2003). Moreover, results by (Kuean, Kaur, & K., 2010) showed that the affective was the most important predictor of the intention to leave.

## 2.4 The proposed mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave.

According to previous literature findings, there is a positive relationship between quality of work life and affective commitment. In contrast, research concluded a negative relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave from the other.

As shown, quality of work life covers the employee's satisfaction with regard to wide set of human as well as job aspects. Besides, by definition turnover intention is being driven by an emotional factor. Thus, the study argues that the quality of work life will generate the emotional attachment and involvement needed to reduce the faculty member's intention to leave. For all that, current study proposes that as employees tend to perceive a satisfactory level of quality of work life, they will be less likely to leave the organization through being affectively committed to it.

In other words, affective commitment is fully mediates the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave.

### 3. Purpose of the study

The study aims at investigating the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave. Additionally, the study will assess the quality of work life in the KSU College of Business Administration.

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Sample

Study sample has been chosen from male faculty members of The College of Business in King Saud University. A total number of 120 questionnaires have been distributed to the faculty members. Returned questionnaires were 82. Usable responses were 74 out of them. Convenient sampling method has been used due to the ease of reaching the respondents physically as well as the proportional small size of the population. Table (1) shows the respondents profile.

**Table (1) - Respondent's Profile**

<i>Respondent's Academic Rank</i>			
Rank	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Professors	12	16.2 %	16.2
Associate Professors	10	13.5 %	29.7
Assistant Professors	24	32.4 %	62.2
Lecturers	28	37.8 %	100.0
<i>Respondent's Nationality</i>			
Nationality	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Saudi	31	41.9	41.9
Non-Saudi	43	58.1	100

As Table (1) shows 41.9 % of the respondents were Saudis while 58.1 % were non-Saudis. We can also notice that 62.2 % of the respondents were professors with different rankings while 37.8% were lecturers holding a master's degree.

### 4.2 Measures

#### 4.2.1 Quality of work life

A thirty-five item questionnaire, derived and adapted from an earlier (QWL) study by (Walton, 1975) were used to represent the eight dimensions of the quality of work life. These dimensions are (1) Adequate and fair compensation, (2) Safe and healthy environment, (3) Development of human capacities, (4) Growth and security, (5) Social integration, (6) Constitutionalism, (7) The total life space, and (8) Social relevance. Each (QWL) dimension is measured by 3 to 5 items. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction level about each QWL question with anchors ranging from very satisfied (5) to very dissatisfied (1).

#### 4.2.2 Affective commitment

Eight- item measurement instrument, derived from the pioneering study by (Meyer & Allen, 1991) was used to measure the affective commitment of faculty members. Questions measured the degree of emotional and personal attachment of the respondents to the organization.

#### 4.2.3 Intention to leave

A three-item measurement developed by (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) has been used to assess the intention to leave among faculty members in the college. Respondents were asked to respond on a five-point agreement scale to questions such as, I often think of leaving the organization and it is very possible that I will look for a new job soon.

Scales for the three variables are based on a 5-point Likert scale. Regarding quality of work life, 1 represented (Very Dissatisfied) while 5 was (Very Satisfied). For Affective commitment, and turnover intention 1 represented (Strongly Disagree) while 5 represented (Strongly Agree).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Reliability Analysis

Table (2) reports Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the three variables in the study. The QWL over all Cronbach alpha was ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ). For affective organizational commitment (AOC) the same statistical coefficient is used and the result was ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ). Finally, the Alpha coefficient for turnover intention (TOI) is 0.88. The corresponding number of items used for each variable is shown at the right column of table (2).

**Table (2) – Reliability Statistics**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
QWL	0.93	35
AC	0.83	8
TOI	0.88	3

### 5.2 Analyses of the quality of working life in KSU College of Business Administration.

Means and standard deviations (SD) of respondent's perception for each quality of work life eight dimensions are summarized in table (3).

As table (3) shows, faculty members have above average perceptions in all the dimensions. The highest mean score of (3.68) corresponds to social integration while lowest of (2.95) represented their perception for the adequacy and fairness of compensation packages. The Total quality of work life is being perceived as above average with mean score of (3.42).

**Table (3) – QWL Descriptive Statistics**

QWL Dimensions	Mean	Std. Dev.
(1) Adequate and fair compensation	2.95	0.74
(2) Safe and healthy environment	3.43	0.76
(3) The use of your capacities at the work	3.57	0.62
(4) Opportunities for Growth and job security	3.16	0.80
(5) Social integration	3.68	0.68
(6) Constitutionalism	3.47	0.78
(7) Work-Life Balance	3.50	1.01
(8) Social Relevance of Work	3.60	0.74
Quality of Work Life	3.42	0.57

**5.2 Analysis of the mediation effect**

A series of multiple Regression analyses were conducted to investigate the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave. The mediation test investigates the indirect effect of predictor (IV) on the outcome (DV) variable through mediator variable (Taboli, 2013).

The four-step Regression analyses approach proposed by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was conducted and significance of the coefficients is examined at each step.

In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of turnover intention on quality of work life, ignoring the mediator, was significant, ( $B = -0.88$ ,  $t = -4.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Step 2 showed that the regression of the mediator on the quality of working life, was significant, ( $B = 0.793$ ,  $t = 6.541$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Step 3 showed that the regression of the turnover intention on the mediator, affective commitment, was also significant, ( $B = -1.018$ ,  $t = -9.303$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator, Quality of work life is no longer a significant predictor of turnover intention, ( $B = -0.125$ ,  $t = -0.694$ ,  $p = 0.489$ ). Table (4) summarizes the regression analysis results for the four-step approach.

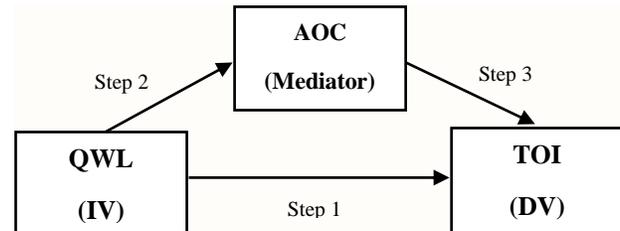
**Table (4) – Regression Analysis results**

Step	IV	DV	B	SE	T	P
1	QWL	TOI	-0.886	0.183	-4.83	0.000
2	QWL	AOC	0.793	0.121	6.541	0.000
3	AOC	TOI	-1.018	0.109	-9.303	0.000
4	QWL	TOI	-0.125	0.180	-0.694	0.489
	AOC	TOI	-0.959	0.139	-6.918	0.000

These results confirm the full mediation of the affective commitment between the relationship of quality of work life and intention to leave. This can be concluded because when a variable fully mediates a relationship, the effect of IV on the DV disappears when controlling for the mediating variable. However, Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) using unstandardized coefficients and standard error values

was conducted to ensure the significance of the effect reduction of QWL after including the mediator, affective commitment in the model. Sobel test statistic = -5.350,  $P = 0.000$ .

A graphical representation for the variables and preceding steps are shown below in figure (1).



**Figure (1) – Mediation Model**

**6. Discussion and conclusion**

As shown, statistical results confirm the study’s proposition that the affective commitment mediates the relationship between quality of work life and employee’s intention to leave. Some studies used organizational commitment as a mediator such as the study by (Noor, 2011) which found that organizational commitment is partial mediator for the relationship between only one dimension of QWL, work-life balance, and intention to leave. However, it was obvious that a limited number, if any, studies used affective commitment as a mediator in the relationship between quality of work life and intention to leave.

Results also shed the light briefly on the status quo of quality of work life in a major Saudi Arabian educational institution. We concluded that the perception of the eight dimensions as well as the overall QWL fall on a sufficient level above average. This implies a more work needs to be done to improve the faculty member’s perception for their work place quality of life. Efforts of improvements may include, increasing faculty’s compensation packages, especially this dimension scored the least in the mean scores. The college also should work on offering an equal opportunity for faculty member’s future growth. This might imply empowering faculty members to occupy key administrative positions. Other efforts may include the enforcement of the feel of job security, slightly reducing the workload, and finally equal applications to rules among all faculty members. All these can be very helpful to increase the faculty member’s perception of college’s quality of work life.

As the case of every study, some limitation may arise in the present research. Limitation may stem from the study sample. As mentioned, the study used a sample from the male campus of college. That was

due to the segregation of male and female campuses away from each other. This situation prevented collection of sufficient data from female campus, and thus the researcher decided to exclude them from the analysis. One more limitation could be the sampling method used which is convenience sampling. For that, readers should be cautious for generalizing all the research results.

Findings of this study will help in terms of understanding the status quo of quality of work life of academics and its relationship with their intentions to leave. In addition, mediating variables help in providing better explanations for relationship's mechanisms. These findings would add to a larger body of studies of quality of work life and intention to leave, especially studies among Saudi Arabian academicians.

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