

Article Reviewed:

Moynihan, Donald P., and Noel Landuyt. "Explaining Turnover Intention in State Government Examining the Roles of Gender, Life Cycle, and Loyalty." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 120–43. doi:10.1177/0734371X08315771.

Fed up with your public sector job? Then quit. Or stay and either keep sucking it up or work to change the situation. For anyone who ultimately decides to move on, conditions existed in their organization which prevented job satisfaction enough that they chose the job market over their job. In Texas, those who made the "quit" decision included over ten percent of the public workforce in 2007. Their decisions, though surely personally justifiable, were not without serious implications to their former organizations.

Moynihan's and Landuyt's research found four themes among Texas state employees that influenced a decision to stay or go. First, external life circumstances played a significant role. Gender also contributed as it was found that women were less likely to state the intention of leaving. Organizational management trends in the areas of empowerment and loyalty were important. Last, organizational policies affect the person's decision. It is important for human resource managers to understand these considerations in order to reduce turn-over and improve the quality of employees' output to the public institution.

Life circumstances include such things as proximity to family, age, socio-economic stability, and other non-workplace factors are all part of the life cycle stability hypothesis. In other words, the emotional investments people have in important life considerations affect career decisions. Moynihan's and Landuyt's findings support the belief that individuals are less likely to leave their job if they are over 30, have more than six years of experience with the company, or are primary wage earners in their families. Additionally, they found that residential stability (how often one moves) had a positive relationship with sticking around.

As mentioned earlier, it was found that women, more so than men, were less likely to want to leave. For the Texan public sector, this equated to 23% more. Many men and women find service in the public sector appealing. This is particularly true for the latter who, as Moynihan and Landuyt point out, are particularly drawn to state services.

Merit promotions and supportive family policies were significant incentives to stay, but not family policies. Upward mobility, on the other hand, was. Employees wanted to know that paths for greater responsibility and pay were possible, especially if they had received one in the past two years. Conversely, pay scale and education had negative relationships with commitment. Perceptions of pay gaps between themselves and private sector cohorts increased with pay, thereby increasing an employee's likelihood to consider leaving. Additionally, more educated employees were more likely to keep their employment options open.

With regard to loyalty, empowerment, and voice, employees valued loyalty to their organization most. Whatever ties an organization makes to its employees, whether through mission or human resource policies, the investment pays off in a workforce committed to the institution. While voice did not seem to have a significant impact, autonomous opportunity did have powerful influence on retention.

The results are somewhat daunting for HR managers. Most factors significant to retention (like external life circumstances and relationships with supervisors) are outside of their direct control. However, such factors as employee professional development and flexible work environments do have an indirect impact. Training supervisors in these considerations is a way for HR to positively influence the organization. Through them, state agencies may be better equipped to foster environments that make employees want to stay.