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## Antecedents to Sales Associates Turnover in Apparel Retailing: Development of a Conceptual Model

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Retail managers are concerned with turnover as the cost associated with replacing lost employees is high. To replace a lost employee, you must recruit applicants, conduct interviews that pull current employees out of their regular work, and once a person is hired, invest in training and orientation. There is also the cost of lowered productivity during the time period when the untrained individual is learning the new job. Estimates of the price to replace a worker vary but a common estimate is upwards of twice an employee's salary ("How to reduce", 2013). Turnover can also damage morale among remaining employees. Bottom line is a high turnover rate eats into company profits.

Although researchers have provided a better understanding of the turnover process in some aspects of retailing, there is scant research on frontline salespeople working in apparel stores. Since it is known that the turnover process may be occupation specific (Tian-Foreman, 2009), the turnover models developed for salespeople in general should not be simply applied to apparel sales associates. Thus, our overall research purpose was to develop a model of contributors to sales associate turnover in apparel retailing. In this paper, we report the results of our review of extant literature on employee turnover in a range of industries; we identify key contributors to turnover as they may apply to apparel retailing and propose a conceptual model.

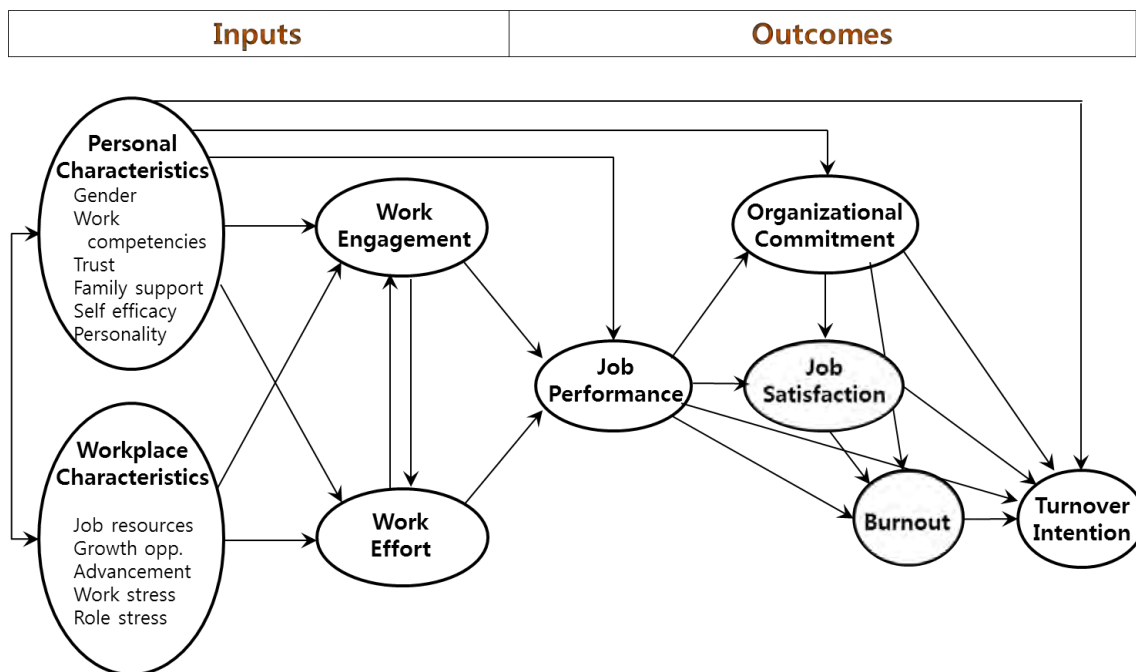
Through an intensive literature review regarding the employee turnover process in general occupation contexts, key input and outcome variables were identified. Input variables included personal characteristics, workplace characteristics, work engagement, and work effort. Outcome variables included job performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and burnout. Examples of personal characteristics highlighted in this presentation that may directly predict turnover or contribute to turnover through their impact on other variables in the model include gender, work competencies, organizational trust, family support, self-efficacy, and personality. Retail workplace characteristics include job resources, growth opportunities, advancement, work stress (i.e., work overload and job insecurity), and role stress (i.e., role ambiguity and role conflict). Work engagement is a positive, work-related state of mind and it is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work effort is "the amount of energy put into a behavior or series of behaviors" (Mohr & Bitner, 1995, p. 240). Job performance is the level to which an employee successfully fulfills the factors included in a job description (Carpenter, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2009). Job satisfaction is a person's general attitude toward his or her job or toward specific dimensions of his or her job. Burnout is a combination of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy.

According to our proposed conceptual model, employee characteristics have a direct relationship to employee turnover along with workplace characteristics. These relationships are

proposed to be mediated by work effort, work engagement, job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and burnout. (See figure 1 for conceptual model).

The proposed conceptual model in predicting retail sales associate turnover provides a foundation for research and theory development. The proposed relationships indicated in the model are empirically testable propositions. The proposed conceptual model can be used by future researchers to identify key variables that predict retail sales associate turnover within a specific organization as well as across organizations. The concepts can be operationalized several different ways to allow for the development of screening questionnaires that could be used at the time of hiring. Thus, significant findings can be used by human resource practitioners to develop strategies to reduce associate turnover.

**Figure 1. A Proposed Conceptual Model of Retail Sales Associates Turnover**



Carpenter M., Bauer, T., & Erdogan, B. (2009). *Principles of management*. Flat World Knowledge Inc.

How to reduce employee turnover (2013). *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://guides.wsj.com/management/recruiting-hiring-and-firing/how-to-reduce-employee-turnover>

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