

Employer branding indirect effect on the intention to quit through job satisfaction

ABSTRACT

Companies' employer branding is of great importance when recruiting and maintain workers. Nowadays, the IT component of companies is fundamental. As such, maintaining those workers is essential, yet difficult, since the job market is full of opportunities for this type of workers. The objective of the current study was to investigate the impact of employer branding (direct and indirect via job satisfaction) on the intention to quit. This cross-sectional study measured the perceptions of 211 IT workers in a big IT Portuguese company. The tested predictors were openness towards organizational changes, job satisfaction, and employer branding. The results of the latent structural model revealed that employer branding had a direct negative ($\beta = -0.165$; $p = .019$) and an indirect negative effect ($\beta = -0.183$; $p = .001$) on the intention to quit. The results alert to the protective importance of employer branding regarding IT workers' intentions to quit their current job.

Keywords: turnover; employer branding; IT workers.

Introduction

Strategic human resource management involves the improvement of processes that enable the acquisition, development, and retention of high-performance employees, who have skills that allow them to deal effectively with change and current instability in the world of work. The recruitment and retention of information technology (IT) specialists continues to concern both organizations and researchers (Moquin, K. Riemenschneider, & L. Wakefield, 2019; Oehlhorn, Maier, & Weitzel, 2020). Despite several studies on turnover in IT companies and recommendations to organizations on how to retain their employees, the overall turnover trend of IT professionals remains high. The need for more research on IT turnover has been requested by many, but much of the literature continues to conduct similar studies using the same constructs (Lo, 2015). Academics, management, and IT professionals have researched the factors affecting employee turnover and behavior to better understand these issues. According to the meta-analytical review of the IT literature (Joseph, Ng, Koh, & Ang, 2007) the research developed on turnover is based on three classes of individual attributes: a) demographic data, b) human capital, and c) motivation.

Openness towards organizational change can be decisive to the successful implementation of new policies, processes, and structures in the workplace. Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that employee optimism, perceived control, information received about changes and self-efficacy for coping with changes were related to higher levels of change acceptance. Openness towards organizational change also depends on both individual variables (e.g., self-esteem, optimism, perceived control) and context-specific variables (e.g., information, participation, change self-efficacy, social support, personal impact). Further, Lenberg et al. (2017) report that workers' feelings of participation in the change process, the knowledge about

the intended changes outcomes, and their understating of the need for organizational change can all impact on the attitudes towards said change.

H1. The openness toward organizational change has a positive relationship with the turnover intention.

Job satisfaction can be influenced by several factors, both at the individual (mainly one's values, but also personality and mental health) and the organizational level (work, payment, promotions, peers/colleagues, supervisor, top leadership and benefits/policies) (Locke, 1976). More job satisfaction is positively related to greater organizational commitment (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001). In the opposite direction, more stress in the workplace is related to less job satisfaction (van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, & Frings-Dresen, 2003). Lack of job satisfaction on the other hand leads to turnover (Irvine & Evans, 1995; Lance, 1991), reduced health and life happiness, it can cause reduced performance and be caused by it (Locke, 1976).

H2. Job satisfaction has a negative relationship with the turnover intention.

Barney (1991), stresses that organizations are able to create competitive advantage when they implement a set of resources and practices that are difficult (or even impossible) to be replicated by their competitors. The notion of employer branding EB was initially introduced by Ambler and Barrow (1996) in order to explain the factors that can have relationship with the attraction of the best employees in job search. The employer brand can be defined as the sum of the efforts that an organization uses to communicate to current and potential employees that it is a desirable workplace (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002; Minchington, 2010). Being a protective variable of turnover intentions (Mandhanya & Shah, 2010). The employer brand builds job satisfaction to reduce intention to quit.

H3. Employer branding has a negative relationship with the intention to quit.

H4. Employer branding has a negative indirect relationship with the intention to quit via job satisfaction.

Altogether, turnover intention should present negative relationships with employer branding, and job satisfaction, and a positive relationship with openness toward organizational change (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Methods

Procedures

The survey was deployed using an online platform. The electronic informed consent was presented first and must had been accepted by the participant to proceed further in the questionnaire.

Participants

In this cross-sectional study, the sample included IT workers who work in a big IT company based in Portugal. The company has around 400 IT workers, 279 of them answered to the survey, with a total of 211 complete answers. The age mean was 37.12 ($SD = 7.59$) years old, 64.86% male, and the mean tenure was 3.51 ($SD = 4.88$) years.

Measures

Employer Branding Scale (EBS)

To measure the employer branding the Employer Branding Scale was used scale developed by Ito, Brotheridge, and McFarland (2013) was used. It comprises second-order latent factor with 20 items which are divided into six dimensions: satisfaction with pay, flexibility, security, development opportunities, promotion and people factors. Additionally, seven items regarding technology factors were added. Those items assess the perception of the IT worker regarding the organization technological capabilities. Research showed that IT workers give value to access to new technology as a way to improve their professional skills (Nayak & Suhan, 2017) which is a tendency of the information age (Dabirian, Berthon, & Kietzmann, 2019). All the items are scored on a 5-point ordinal scale (1- “Not important”, 2 - “Somewhat unimportant”, 3 - “Neutral”, 4 - “Somewhat important”, 5 - “Very important”).

Openness Toward Organizational Change Scale (OTOCS)

The OTOCS is a psychometric instrument proposed by Miller, Johnson, and Grau (1994). This is a self-report measure composed by five items (two of them are reversed) which should be answered on a five-point Likert-type scale anchors, ranging from 5 - “To a very great extent” to 1 - “To a very little extent”.

Short Index of Job Satisfaction (SIJS)

The SIJS by Judge, Bono and Locke (2000) is a self-report psychometric instrument with five items (two reversely scored). which has been proposed as a reduced version of the original Index of Job Satisfaction (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951) which has 18 items. Subjects are asked to

respond to each item by checking a five-point scale ranging from 1 - “Very untrue” to 5 - “Very true”, two of the five items are reversed.

Intention to Quit Scale (IQS)

The turnover intention was measured with Intention to Quit Scale (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). The IQS contains five indicators (one reverse scored) which manifest a single latent variable. Items should be answered using a seven-point ordinal scale from 1 – “Strongly disagree” to 7 – “Strongly agree”.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the R programming language (R Core Team, 2020) through the graphical user interface, *RStudio* (RStudio Team, 2020). The *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012) was used to produce all structural equation models analysis. The weighted least squares means and variances (WLSMV) estimation method (Muthén, 1983) was selected.

Results

Measurement Model

As it can be observed on Table 1, all items presented absolute skewness and absolute kurtosis values which were not indicative of severe univariate normality violations (Finney & DiStefano, 2013; Marôco, 2014).

Insert Table 1 about here

EBS

The EBS second-order model presented an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2(316) = 1,161.893$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.677$; $n = 215$; $CFI = 0.969$; $NFI = 0.958$; $TLI = 0.965$; $SRMR = 0.094$; $RMSEA = 0.112$; $P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) < 0.001$; 90% CI]0.105; 0.119[). Two residuals' correlation among items of the same factor were added ($p < .001$). Regarding the second-order latent factor, the internal consistency estimates were good ($\omega_{L1} = 0.848$; $\omega_{L2} = 0.906$; $\omega_{partial L1} = 0.952$).

OTOCS

The OTOCS showed an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2(3) = 9.461$; $p = 0.024$; $\chi^2/df = 3.154$; $n = 224$; $CFI = 0.994$; $NFI = 0.991$; $TLI = 0.980$; $SRMR = 0.043$; $RMSEA = 0.098$; $P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) = 0.100$; 90% CI]0.032; 0.172[). The reliability evidence in terms of internal consistency of the single latent variable was good for the α estimate ($\alpha = 0.794$) however the ω estimate was bellow expected ($\omega = 0.649$). Two residuals' correlations paths were added ($p < .001$).

SIJS

The SIJS revealed a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2(5) = 9.978$; $p = 0.076$; $\chi^2/df = 1.996$; $n = 223$; $CFI = 0.999$; $NFI = 0.998$; $TLI = 0.998$; $SRMR = 0.038$; $RMSEA = 0.067$; $P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) = 0.267$; 90% CI]0.000; 0.128[). The internal consistency estimates were good both in terms of the α estimator ($\alpha = 0.901$) and in terms of the ω estimator ($\omega = 0.869$).

IQS

The IQS showed a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2(5) = 8.029$; $p = 0.155$; $\chi^2/df = 1.606$; $n = 220$; $CFI = 1.000$; $NFI = 0.999$; $TLI = 0.999$; $SRMR = 0.034$; $RMSEA = 0.053$; $P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) = 0.402$; 90% CI]0.000; 0.117[). The reliability of the scores in terms of internal consistency estimates presented very good values ($\alpha = 0.903$; $\omega = 0.885$).

Structural Model

The latent variable structural model (Figure 2) presented a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(803) = 1,747.138$; $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.176$; $n = 211$; $CFI = 0.979$; $NFI = 0.961$; $TLI = 0.977$; $SRMR = 0.87$; $RMSEA = 0.075$; $P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) < 0.001$; 90% CI]0.070; 0.080[). The direct effects of job satisfaction ($\beta_{IQ<-JS} = -0.714$; $p < 0.001$), employer branding ($\beta_{IQ<-EB} = -0.165$; $p = 0.019$) on intention to quit were statistically significant both presenting negative paths. The indirect effect of employer branding on intention to quit was negative and statistically significant ($\beta_{IQ<-JS<-EB} = -0.183$; $p = 0.001$) as so was the total effect ($\beta_{IQ<-EB+(IQ<-JS<-EB)} = -0.348$; $p < 0.001$). The unstandardized estimates, standard-errors and 90% confidence interval for the paths are presented in Table 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the employer branding presented a significant negative path on the intention to quit. Other authors found that EB and turnover intention are negatively significantly related (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Yadav, Kumar, & Mishra, 2020). Higher perceived value in employer brand reduced the levels of turnover intention. Interestingly Ahmad and Daud (2016) found a similar result, where only one EB dimension (among five) had a significant relationship with turnover intentions. The EB focuses on several issues, such as understanding employees' preferences when they are part of the organization and how those preferences can change as they build their careers (Ito et al., 2013). Despite the apparent importance of the EB findings must be constantly monitored. In the present paper EB was approached as second-order latent factor, it might be interesting further studies with a decomposition of the first-order factors, since not all EB dimensions seem to have significant relationships with turnover intentions (Ahmad & Daud, 2016).

The present study highlighted the importance of the global job satisfaction in the reduction of turnover intentions both in terms of direct effect and as a mediator of employer branding. The results showed a strong/moderate negative path, which might indicate that turnover intentions are linked to various job aspects. This finding stresses the importance of a multidimensional approach to the turnover issue among IT workers. And to the need to constantly auscultate the levels of job satisfaction among workers.

Future studies should compare the perceptions of employer branding and turnover intention in different time points, preferably since the beginning of the employment contract to understand the evolution of the relationships between variables.

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TABLE 1

Psychometric instruments items' descriptive statistics

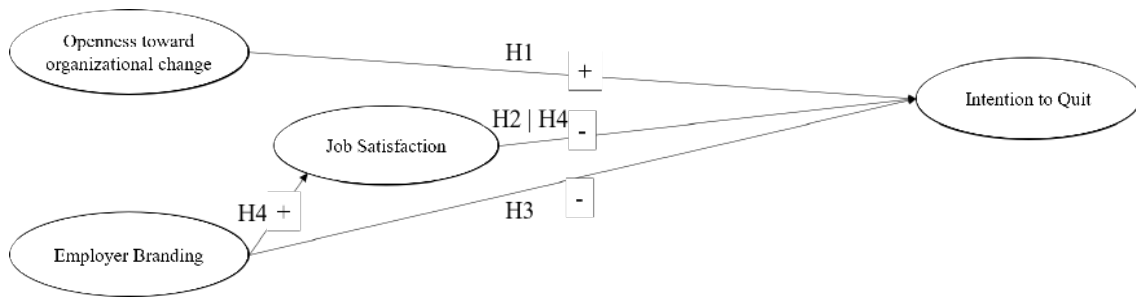
Item	N _{missing}	M	SD	Min	P ₂₅	Mdn	P ₇₅	Max	Histogram	SEM	CV	Mode	sk	ku
Short Index of Job Satisfaction														
Item 1	56	3.94	0.94	1	3	4	5	5		0.06	0.24	4	-0.75	0.39
Item 2	56	3.79	0.93	1	3	4	4	5		0.06	0.25	4	-0.66	0.41
Item 3	56	3.85	1.07	1	3	4	5	5		0.07	0.28	4	-0.80	0.06
Item 4	56	3.75	0.99	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.26	4	-0.56	0.04
Item 5	56	4.45	0.83	1	4	5	5	5		0.06	0.19	5	-1.59	2.42
Openness Towards Organizational Change Scale														
Item 1	55	3.75	1.08	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.29	4	-0.90	0.41
Item 2	55	3.74	1.11	1	3	4	5	5		0.07	0.30	5	-0.53	-0.55
Item 3	55	2.95	1.16	1	2	3	4	5		0.08	0.39	3	-0.05	-0.64
Item 4	55	3.83	1.07	1	3	4	5	5		0.07	0.28	5	-0.67	-0.22
Item 5	55	3.60	0.99	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.27	3	-0.49	0.19
Intention to Quit Scale														
Item 1	59	3.35	1.69	1	2	3	4	7		0.11	0.50	4	0.37	-0.69
Item 2	59	1.93	1.29	1	1	1	2	7		0.09	0.67	1	1.68	2.75
Item 3	59	2.06	1.50	1	1	1	2	7		0.10	0.73	1	1.63	2.05
Item 4	59	2.08	1.46	1	1	2	2	7		0.10	0.70	1	1.59	1.95
Item 5	59	3.82	1.69	1	3	4	5	7		0.11	0.44	4	0.05	-0.61
Employer Branding Scale														
Item 1	64	4.14	0.77	1	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.19	4	-1.01	1.94
Item 2	64	3.82	0.95	1	3	4	4	5		0.06	0.25	4	-0.72	0.38
Item 3	64	3.93	0.86	1	3	4	5	5		0.06	0.22	4	-0.76	0.82
Item 4	64	4.27	0.74	1	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.17	4	-1.13	2.05
Item 5	64	4.19	0.76	1	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.18	4	-1.10	2.27
Item 6	64	4.38	0.67	2	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.15	4	-1.00	1.31
Item 7	64	4.22	0.82	1	4	4	5	5		0.06	0.20	4	-1.05	1.03
Item 8	64	3.92	0.88	1	3	4	5	5		0.06	0.22	4	-0.55	-0.11
Item 9	64	3.53	1.09	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.31	4	-0.42	-0.41
Item 10	64	3.88	0.73	1	3	4	4	5		0.05	0.19	4	-0.53	0.80
Item 11	64	4.26	0.76	1	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.18	4	-1.37	3.11
Item 12	64	4.29	0.74	1	4	4	5	5		0.05	0.17	4	-1.16	2.17
Item 13	64	4.07	0.88	1	4	4	5	5		0.06	0.22	4	-1.05	1.29
Item 14	64	4.41	0.80	1	4	5	5	5		0.05	0.18	5	-1.67	3.34
Item 15	64	3.73	0.93	1	3	4	4	5		0.06	0.25	4	-0.56	0.13
Item 16	64	4.21	0.81	1	4	4	5	5		0.06	0.19	4	-1.20	1.95
Item 17	64	4.04	0.83	1	4	4	5	5		0.06	0.21	4	-0.87	1.02
Item 18	64	4.50	0.70	1	4	5	5	5		0.05	0.16	5	-1.55	3.07
Item 19	64	4.46	0.71	1	4	5	5	5		0.05	0.16	5	-1.50	3.09
Item 20	64	4.06	0.95	1	4	4	5	5		0.06	0.23	5	-1.01	0.92
Item 21	64	3.88	0.91	1	3	4	5	5		0.06	0.23	4	-0.74	0.39
Item 22	64	3.69	0.97	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.26	4	-0.52	-0.15
Item 23	64	3.22	0.98	1	3	3	4	5		0.07	0.31	3	-0.08	-0.03
Item 24	64	3.45	0.97	1	3	4	4	5		0.07	0.28	4	-0.50	0.22
Item 25	64	3.27	0.97	1	3	3	4	5		0.07	0.30	3	-0.27	0.17
Item 26	64	3.32	0.96	1	3	3	4	5		0.07	0.29	3	-0.40	0.23
Item 27	64	3.31	1.01	1	3	3	4	5		0.07	0.31	3	-0.51	0.02

TABLE 2
Structural model latent paths

Path	B	SE	Z	B	p	90% CI
JS <- EB	0.651	0.188	3.456	0.256	< 0.001] 0.282; 1.020[
IQ <- EB	-0.354	0.150	-2.352	-0.165	0.019] -0.648; -0.059[
IQ <- JS	-0.601	0.051	-11.763	-0.714	< 0.001] -0.701; -0.501[
IQ <- OTOC	0.187	0.065	2.879	0.220	0.004] 0.060; 0.315[
IQ <- JS <- EB	-0.391	0.120	-3.260	-0.183	0.001] -0.626; -0.156[
IQ <- EB + (IQ <- JS <- EB)	-0.744	0.175	-4.243	-0.348	< 0.001] -1.088; -0.401[

FIGURE 1

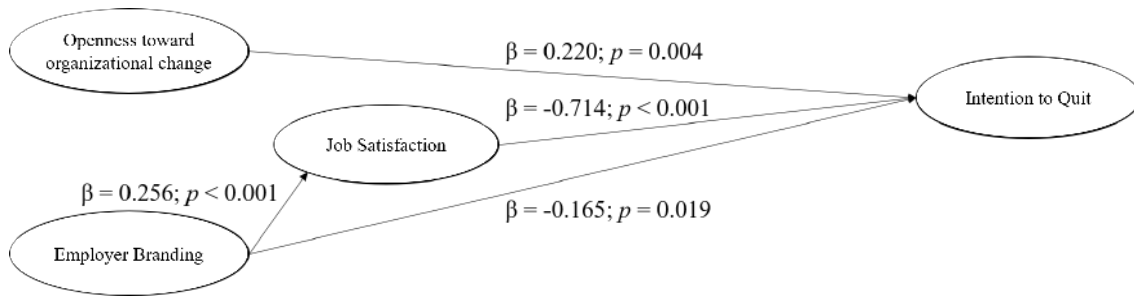
Conceptual model.



Plus symbol (+) represent positive expected paths and minus symbol (-) represent negative expected paths. It is expected that openness toward organizational change (H1), job satisfaction (H2), and employer branding (H3) predict intention to quit. And that employer branding shows a negative indirect effect on intention to quit via job satisfaction (H4).

FIGURE 2

Structural model



Only latent variables are shown it their direct effects. The model presented a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(803) = 1,747.138; p < 0.001; \chi^2/df = 2.176; n = 211; CFI = 0.979; NFI = 0.961; TLI = 0.977; SRMR = 0.087; RMSEA = 0.075; P(RMSEA \leq 0.05) < 0.001; 90\% CI]0.070; 0.080[$).