

A COMPARISON OF BLACK AND WHITE MANAGERS ON INTENT TO LEAVE AND JOB MOBILITY.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this cross-correlational study was to determine how similar black and white managers were with regards to job mobility and whether high salaries was the main reason for excessive job mobility. Thirty black and thirty white middle managers from large companies completed the questionnaires assessing job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work values and intent to leave. The groups were significantly different on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intent to leave. The possibility of job hopping was greater for the black group. The two groups were similar in terms of work values they held in high regard.

OPSOMMING

Die doelwit van hierdie kruiskorrelasiestudie was om vas te stel in watter mate daar 'n ooreenkoms tussen swart en wit bestuurders is ten opsigte van hulle benadering tot werkmobiliteit en of hoë salarisse die hoofrede is vir oormatige werkmobiliteit. Dertig swart en dertig wit middelbestuurders van groot maatskappye het die vraelyste voltooi wat die volgende geëvalueer het: werkbevrediging, verbintenis tot die organisasie, werkwaardes en voorneme om die maatskappy te verlaat. Daar was beduidende verskille tussen die groepe wat betref werkbevrediging, verbintenis tot die organisasie en voorneme om die maatskappy te verlaat. Die moontlikheid van werkwisseling was groter onder die swart groep. Daar was 'n groot mate van ooreenkoms tussen die twee groepe ten opsigte van die werkwaardes wat hulle baie hoog stel.

South African legislation such as the Employment Equity Act (1998) has given black people career opportunities that they have lacked in the past. It is possible that one consequence of affirmative action is the emergence of the perceived phenomenon of excessive job mobility where black managers move from one job to another in the search of bigger and better prospects, commonly referred to as job hopping. Allegations of job hopping add to the numerous negative stereotypes that are associated with affirmative action and tend to label black managers as being greedy. Several writers have cited salaries and greed as the major motivating factors for job hopping (Matuna, 1996; Primos, 1994; Sibanda, 1995). The literature seems to suggest that job hopping is only a problem for black managers and fails to indicate whether it applies to their white counterparts as well. This study focuses on both black and white managers in an attempt to determine whether job hopping is indeed a "black manager" phenomenon. It also attempts to identify other factors that could influence job mobility, rather than focusing only on higher salaries.

While affirmative action may have positive economic effects for the target groups, it can also have a negative psychological impact and do more harm than good for the people it was designed to benefit (Crosby & Clayton, 1990; Heilman, Block & Stathatos, 1997; Heilman, Simon & Repper, 1987; Van Wyk, 1998). In South Africa there are several stereotypical beliefs and negative perceptions regarding black people, for example, that they are unreliable or not business-oriented. Another stereotype that has emerged is the excessive job mobility of black managers (Matuna, 1996; Primos, 1994; Sibanda, 1995), which is the focus of this study.

The reality in South Africa is that skilled black people, especially blacks in management positions, are simultaneously in short supply and high demand. Following this, many skilled black recruits are able to hop from one job to another and many choose to do so, sometimes for as little as one hundred rand (Sibanda, 1995). The term "job hopping" emerged to describe this behaviour. Job hopping refers to excessive movement between jobs, usually by managers and middle managers, from one management post to another (Sibanda, 1995).

Primos (1994, p. 33) has found that a common perception of job hopping among employers is that "affirmative action is breeding a gravy train mentality among black management candidates who are milking the system for inflated salaries at the expense of building solid expertise and a stable track record." Quanta (1995) and Sibanda (1995) agree that there is a perception of high job mobility among black managers which has become more pronounced since 1990, even amongst managers who are said to have been employed on the basis of merit. However, most of the information on job hopping in South Africa appears in popular literature sources and not in scientific literature. This poses questions as to the extent to which the observations are based on fact or grounded in stereotypes.

The observations that have been made concerning the job hopping phenomenon amongst black managers appear to be congruent with stereotypical views. For instance, Madi (1995 cited in Matuna, 1996) notes that since more opportunities have been created for black people, greed has crept into black communities and that the people in these communities tend to accept anything they are offered. Sibanda (1995) states that this behaviour of excessive job mobility would not have been possible before the 1990s where the trend amongst young black professionals was to automatically put down roots in companies in order to gain experience. Black workers in managerial positions often find themselves being headhunted with offers of higher salaries and better prospects. Headhunting is one of the factors responsible for the so-called epidemic of job hopping with tokenism becoming more widespread (Roberts, 1997a). Black senior managers are being poached at premiums of forty to fifty percent above that of the prevailing market rate (Roberts, 1997b).

The literature referred to above suggests that job mobility among black managers is on the increase. However, there is a lack of statistical information to support this. Further, the literature referred to needs to be evaluated with caution. The main reason for job hopping that has been alluded to in the literature (Matuna, 1996; Primos, 1994; Sibanda, 1995) is the attraction of higher salaries and better benefits. This appears to be a narrow view. Since many black people still have to contend with issues of racism and hostility in the work-place (Matuna, 1996; Wood, 1995), one cannot assume that all black people who change jobs do so out of a desire for more money. Excessive job mobility is related to the general area of labour turnover. Primos (1994), Quanta (1995) and Sibanda (1995) fail to show how they came to the general conclusion that job

mobility amongst black managers is on the increase, or why it occurs. They appear not to have used any scientific research on labour turnover or any other area to reach their conclusions, and this makes their conclusions somewhat questionable.

While job hopping appears to have emerged as a trend in South Africa, there is a clear lack of research and literature regarding the issue. This is disconcerting in the light of the stereotypes that appear to be reflected in the popular literature. Two unpublished studies that have attempted to explain this phenomenon of excessive job mobility amongst black managers are those by Matsimbi (1995) and Matuna (1996).

Matsimbi (1995) examined the relationship between black managers' perceptions of organisational culture and organisational commitment, job involvement and propensity to leave. She concluded that organisational culture gaps were negatively correlated to organisational commitment but positively correlated to propensity to leave. The results of this study indicated that organisational culture gaps may explain job mobility. However, this represents only one possibility. Further, the study did not indicate whether a culture gap is reason enough for a person to actually leave their job or merely a reason to consider leaving one's job.

Matuna (1996) studied excessive job mobility amongst black managers. While the respondents were asked for their opinions on the perceived excessive job mobility amongst black professionals, the study placed greater emphasis on the effectiveness of black advancement programmes. Overall, his results indicated that there is a large range of reasons explaining job mobility and that contrary to popular belief, the number of black workers changing jobs is not alarming. While one can question the generalisability of this statement, one can also question the validity of the responses in that the responses were not necessarily based on the respondents' own experience. Respondents were asked why they believed black managers, rather than themselves would change jobs.

Many models of job turnover feature "intent to leave" as an important variable. This is based on the logic that an individual's behavioural intentions should be a good predictor of their behaviour (Mobley, 1982). Turnover intentions are usually presented as the immediate precursor to actual turnover (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth, 1992; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). Research has indicated that intent to leave is one of the best and strongest predictors of turnover (Chen, Hui & Sego, 1998; Fuller, Hester, Dickson, Allison & Birdseye, 1996; Gaertner & Nollen, 1992; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Mobley, 1982; Rosin & Korabik, 1995; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Mobley (1982) commented that there is a consistent negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover. Low job satisfaction has generally been regarded as one of the most important predictors of an individual's intention to leave (Gaertner & Nollen, 1992; Gerhart, 1990; Hellman, 1997; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Mobley, 1982; Rosin & Korabik, 1995). Job dissatisfaction alone or in combination with other factors can have a variety of consequences, such as absenteeism, grievances and turnover (Locke, 1983).

If one considers Matuna's (1996) and Wood's (1995) findings regarding the negative experiences of blacks in the South African workplace, it would not be unrealistic to expect their job satisfaction to be low. However, it does not necessarily follow that the job satisfaction of white South Africans will be higher.

Organisational commitment has also been cited as a predictor of turnover intentions (Cohen, 1993; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Rosin & Korabik, 1995; Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Somers, 1995). In South Africa, Matsimbi (1995) found that organisational culture gaps were positively related to propensity to leave, and negatively related to organisational commitment. This indicates that organisational commitment may have had

some bearing on the intent to leave the organisation, as literature in the area suggests.

What one values at work and the extent to which these values are perceived to be attained, has implications for the quantity of job satisfaction one enjoys (Mobley, 1982). A value is what an individual consciously or subconsciously desires, wants, or seeks to attain (Elizur, 1984; Elizur, Borg, Hunt & Beck, 1991; Locke, 1983). A work value reflects the degree of worth, importance and desirability of certain outcomes attained at work (Knoop, 1994; Sagie, Elizur & Koslowsky, 1996). An assessment of work values will give an indication of what the person feels is worthy of exertion and effort. An employee's value system has organisational implications in that the same work context can lead to different levels of productivity or satisfaction for individuals with different values (Mason, 1994). While some of the literature (Primos, 1994; Sibanda, 1995) suggests that black managers who are involved in job hopping appear to be motivated by the high salaries they are offered, this view appears to take insufficient cognisance of other possible factors.

There is a need to identify the likely reasons for job mobility for both black and white managers and to determine how similar or different they are in this regard. This study aimed to identify the variables that impact on job hopping. More specifically, it compared the black and white managers on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work values and intent to leave. The relationship of intent to leave with job satisfaction and organisational commitment was also examined.

METHOD

A non-experimental correlation research design was adopted in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed.

Participants

The sample included 30 black middle managers and 30 white middle managers from several large companies in Johannesburg. A non-probability convenience method of sampling was used whereby the managers' availability and willingness to participate were the main selection criteria. The managers were contacted in person or through a liaison person within the company. There were 43 male and 17 female subjects ranging in age from 27 to 58 years. Eighty-seven percent of the black managers had a degree or diploma compared to 73% of the white managers.

Measuring instruments

Data was collected through the use of questionnaires with both open-ended and closed response formats. The questionnaire had a covering letter, sections for biographical details and scales for job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work values and intent to leave.

Job satisfaction was assessed using a series of statements developed by Gerhart (1990). The scale showed a test-retest correlation over a one-year period of 0,67 ($p < 0,001$) for workers who did not change jobs (Gerhart, 1990), and a relatively high value of 0,83 in this study. Organisational commitment was measured using the Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (short form). The Cronbach alpha for the scale ranged from 0,82 to 0,93 at $p < 0,01$ (Mowday et al., 1979) and a value of 0,83 in South Africa (Matsimbi, 1995). The present study yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0,94 which is satisfactory. To assess work values, Elizur's (1984) questionnaire was used. This is a list of twenty-one items with a wide sample representation of values. Respondents were required to select their ten most important work values and rank them. Respondents were also asked to select and rank five values (out of 21) which, if not attained, would cause them to consider leaving their current job. The respondents also selected and ranked five values which, if not attained, would lead to actual turnover. Intent to leave was measured using items from Lee and Mowday (1987) and Gaertner and Nollen

(1992). Lee and Mowday (1987) report an alpha value of 0,59 for their scale. The Cronbach alpha for intent to leave in the current study was 0,47. This alpha value was lower than the other scales but intent to leave was also assessed qualitatively.

The open-ended questions assessed whether the respondents intended to leave their jobs in the next six months, and to explore whether the factors influencing this intention were internal or external to their current organisation.

Procedure

The middle managers were approached in person by the researcher or by the liaison person in the company. The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and were asked to post the completed questionnaires in the pre-addressed envelopes to the researcher. One hundred and thirty questionnaires were sent out and 69 were returned, indicating a 53% response rate. Nine spoilt questionnaires were excluded from the analysis.

RESULTS

The two independent sample t-tests were used to analyse the difference between the white and black groups. Where the assumption of equality of variances for the two groups was not met, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used instead. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used for the correlation between intent to leave and job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. The researcher focused only on the manifest content of the data to avoid over-interpretation (Berg, 1989).

The t-test for job satisfaction indicated that the black and white managers were significantly different from each other at the 1% level of significance ($T=3,097$; $df. = 58$). Black managers reported a higher level of job satisfaction (mean = 15,77) than white managers (mean = 13,07).

The Mann-Whitney U-test for organisational commitment indicated that the two groups were significantly different from each other at the 1% level ($M-W U = 238,5$; $Z = -3,132$). The white group showed a higher level of organisational commitment (mean = 33,3) than the black group (mean = 27,3).

In respect of work values that were most important to the participants, both groups selected job interest, pay and job security most often (Table 1). The values selected the least number of times were contribution to society ($n=2$) and working conditions ($n=2$) by the white and black groups respectively.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF RANKINGS OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VALUES

(N=30 black and 30 white managers)

Work value	Black	White
Job interest	25	26
Pay	23	22
Job security	22	22

Regarding work values which, if not attained, would lead to a consideration of turnover (Table 2) and those that would lead to actual turnover (Table 3), the white and black groups selected the same values and ranked them in a similar manner. Both groups ranked pay as the most important value which, if not attained, could lead to the decision to leave. This was followed by job security and job interest.

The Mann-Whitney U-test for intent to leave indicated that there is a significant difference between the two groups at the 5% level of significance ($M-W U = 298$; $Z = -2,28$). The black group has a higher score (mean = 8,43) than the white group (mean = 6,93).

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF RANKINGS OF VALUES FOR WHICH, IF NOT ATTAINED,
ONE WOULD CONSIDER LEAVING THE ORGANISATION

(N = 30 black and 30 white managers)

Work value	Black	White
Pay	20	21
Job security	19	19
Job interest	14	19
Benefits and social conditions	16	11

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF RANKINGS OF VALUES FOR WHICH, IF NOT ATTAINED,
ONE WOULD ACTUALLY LEAVE THE ORGANISATION

(N = 30 black and 30 white managers)

Work value	Black	White
Pay	21	22
Job security	21	18
Job interest	16	17

In both groups, job satisfaction was positively correlated to intent to leave, and organisational commitment negatively correlated to intent to leave (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
PEARSON'S PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATIONS

(N = 30 black and 30 white managers)

	Intent to leave	
	Black	White
Job satisfaction	0,49**	0,12*
Org. commitment	-0,64*	-0,30*

* $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$

Based on the open-ended questions, seven white managers and 18 black managers indicated that they would seriously consider leaving their jobs if they had the opportunity to do so. The white group reported more positive aspects of their jobs ($n=66$) than the black group ($n=34$). Conversely, black managers reported more negative aspects ($n=71$) than did the white managers ($n=29$). The problems affecting the black group most frequently were the perception that their knowledge was underutilised, unsatisfactory salaries, constantly having to prove themselves, and low job security.

Of the 25 managers who reported that they would like to leave their jobs, factors within their current organisations were cited more frequently by black managers than white managers. However, both groups claimed to be influenced by jobs offering better salary packages, chances of promotion and the prospect of working for a dynamic company. The aspects that were perceived as being most influential in convincing black managers to remain in their current jobs included better salaries ($n=10$) and being promoted ($n=6$). White managers stated that they would most likely be swayed by a salary increase ($n=3$), a change in management ($n=2$) and promotion ($n=2$). Based on the managers who would like to leave their current jobs, more black ($n=14$) than white ($n=5$) respondents had received other job offers.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant difference between the job satisfaction of the two groups. Based on the literature on workplace experiences (Matuna, 1996; Qunta, 1995; Weaver, 1998; Wood, 1995), the white group

was expected to experience higher job satisfaction because of the problems black employees are said to experience in the workplace. By contrast, this study indicated that the black group reported higher job satisfaction than the white group. There does not appear to be any literature to support this finding. However, a possible reason for this could be that black people are able to find better jobs today than they were able to in the past and therefore, find that they are more satisfied.

In terms of their current jobs, the black group reported more negative aspects and fewer positive aspects compared to the white group. This large difference would lead one to expect more job dissatisfaction among the black group. However, this is contrary to the current results where black managers reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than white managers. One possible reason for this is that some of the issues of dissatisfaction were not included in the job satisfaction questionnaire and this could therefore account for the black group showing more dissatisfaction in the qualitative part of the questionnaire.

The literature indicates a consistently negative relationship between job satisfaction and intent to leave (Hellman, 1997; Mobley, 1982; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). However, in this study job satisfaction was positively correlated with intent to leave. While this finding is contrary to the turnover literature, it does make sense in terms of excessive job mobility in South Africa. It could be explained by the notion that, in the case of job hopping, one does not necessarily have to experience job dissatisfaction in order to quit one's job. Job hopping would therefore imply a positive correlation between job satisfaction and intent to leave. The results of this study seem to suggest that the jobhopping phenomenon does exist among this group of respondents perhaps more so for the black group than the white group. However, statistical support is needed in order to draw a firm conclusion.

The organisational commitment results of the current study indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups, with white managers displaying higher organisational commitment than black managers. If one accepts Wood's (1995) and Matunak's (1996) description of the problems black managers encounter in their jobs, one would expect them to be less committed to the organisation and report low job satisfaction. However, it is possible that managers do not allow themselves to become highly committed to the organisation. In this way, if new job offers arise, it would be easier to break away from the organisation. Also, the fact that white managers have not received many job offers may be one reason for them remaining committed to their present organisation. In terms of their current jobs, the black group reported more negative than positive aspects and it is perhaps not surprising that the organisational commitment of the black group was lower. The correlation between organisational commitment and intent to leave was significant and negative for both the groups but stronger for the black group. The negative result supports the turnover literature (Cohen, 1993).

The organisational commitment results seem to support the argument that the black managers in this study are more likely to leave their organisation than white managers, even though they report higher job satisfaction than the white group. This again indicates that the potential for job hopping appears to exist in this sample of black managers.

The two groups were similar regarding values that they perceived as being important at work, with both groups selecting job interest, pay and job security most frequently (Table 1). Neither group ranked pay or benefits as the most important value even though it was a commonly held value. The fact that fewer white than black managers in this study have received other job offers may be an indication of the current demand for black managers. This, however, cannot be used as a true reflection of the job prospects of white managers.

Black managers were more dissatisfied with their salaries than

white managers. Many of the black managers who intended to leave their current jobs claimed that dissatisfaction with pay was a contributing factor. Most of the white managers who were intending to leave were doing so due to job offers with better salary packages, indicating that white managers were also lured by higher salaries. This is another example of the unique positive relationship between job satisfaction and intent to leave which is consistent with job hopping.

The significant difference between the two groups' intent to leave was also reflected in the qualitative results with far more black than white managers seriously considering leaving their jobs within the next six months. While intent to leave amongst black managers appeared to be frequent, most of the reasons for leaving related to problems in their current job. If managers accept good job offers with better prospects, it is possible that they may convince themselves that their current job really is the problem. Most of the black managers reported that they would be convinced to stay on if offered higher salaries and if given a promotion. Some of the white managers also cited a higher salary as a swaying factor. However, pay emerged once again as a leading factor in the decision to stay on or leave one's job.

The limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size since many companies were reluctant to participate in the study. This placed restrictions on the statistical analysis of the data as well as the generalisability of the findings. It also precluded random sampling.

This study has indicated that the possibility of job hopping does exist for the respondents of this sample more so for black than white managers. It also concluded that pay plays a major role in the decision to leave the organisation for both groups. However, pay needs to be placed in the context of supply and demand for black managers, as well as the difficulties that many black managers appear to be experiencing in their daily work environment. This has implications for the perpetuation of the jobhopping cycle as well as for the companies concerned.

Black managers in this study placed a high value on being trusted and recognised for their work, but felt that these values were not met in the work-place. Other problems included being placed in positions that are inconsistent with their academic background and being given insufficient opportunity to utilise their knowledge and skills. Given their perception that such problems are prevalent, it is perhaps not surprising that they were considering leaving their organisations. It implies that despite legislation, tokenism is still seen as being a problem. Further, companies contribute to the jobhopping phenomenon when they fail to utilise black managers, or subject them to a work environment where they are constantly second-guessed by colleagues and superiors. By addressing the organisational factors that contribute to jobhopping, rather than labelling black managers as being greedy, organisations may be able to increase their retention rates of black managers. Finally, the similarity of values held by black and white managers suggests that white managers would possibly also consider leaving their jobs if the same job offers and salaries were available to them.

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