



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong
Research Online

Sydney Business School - Papers

Faculty of Business

2014

Mixed methods to the rescue: addressing the problem of employee turnover using marital research

Irit Alony

University of Wollongong, ia120@uowmail.edu.au

Helen M. Hasan

University of Wollongong, hasan@uow.edu.au

Andrew J. Sense

University of Wollongong, asense@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

Alony, I., Hasan, H. & Sense, A. (2014). Mixed methods to the rescue: addressing the problem of employee turnover using marital research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 8 (2), 190-200.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Mixed methods to the rescue: addressing the problem of employee turnover using marital research

Abstract

Decades of turnover research have identified sets of factors that lead to voluntary employee separation. However, the predictive power of existing turnover models is extremely limited, and does not go far beyond 30%. In contrast, marital research has developed a MMR tool for predicting dissolution which has an accuracy of over 90%, based on a couple's reflections on their past. This paper presents this complex prediction method in current MMR terms, and details the process of adjusting it into employment setting. The paper presents the main issues to consider when adjusting this tool, and provides a detailed description of the concurrent, sequential, conversion, and integrated aspects of it. The paper concludes with remarks highlighting the value this description offers to the MMR toolkit, and to researchers of relationships in general.

Keywords

turnover, employee, problem, methods, addressing, mixed, rescue, research, marital

Disciplines

Business

Publication Details

Alony, I., Hasan, H. & Sense, A. (2014). Mixed methods to the rescue: addressing the problem of employee turnover using marital research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 8 (2), 190-200.

Mixed Methods to the Rescue:
Addressing the Problem of Employee Turnover Using Marital Research

Abstract

Decades of turnover research have identified sets of factors that lead to voluntary employee separation. However, the predictive power of existing turnover models is extremely limited, and does not go far beyond 30%. In contrast, marital research has developed a MMR tool for predicting dissolution which has an accuracy of over 90%, based on a couples' reflections on their past. This paper presents this complex prediction method in current MMR terms, and details the process of adjusting it into employment setting. The paper presents the main issues to consider when adjusting this tool, and provides a detailed description of the concurrent, sequential, conversion, and integrated aspects of it. The paper concludes with remarks highlighting the value this description offers to the MMR toolkit, and to researchers of relationships in general.

Key words: mixed methods, employee turnover, turnover prediction, employment relationship

Mixed Methods to the Rescue:
Addressing the Problem of Employee Turnover Using Marital Research

Introduction

Employee turnover remains a problem associated with great costs and disruptions to organisations, and has been estimated to range from US\$10,000 (for about half the jobs in the US) to over US\$100,000 (Vaiman, 2008). It also involves intangible costs which include potential loss of valuable knowledge, skills, and organisational memory, and so remains a critical issue for contemporary organisations (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). Predicting employee turnover is one of the main strategies recommended for pre-empting its costs and disruptions and thus is of great value to organisations (Mowday, 1984), and is therefore a valuable ability for organisations.

Although scholars generally agree on the various factors that lead to voluntary turnover (Allen, Renn, Moffitt, & Vardaman, 2007; Maertz, 2004), their current ability to predict such turnover is far from impressive. Most prediction methods rely on self-reported answers, and offer modest accuracy. For example, attitudes typically only explain around 5% of turnover variance (Allen, et al., 2007; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Similarly, intentions to quit rarely explain more than 15%, which means that even the majority of employees who report intending to quit their jobs do not actually do so (Allen, et al., 2007; Griffeth, et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). These limitations of existing prediction models mean that they offer modest benefits, if any, to organisations.

A different type of separation that has been extensively studied is marital separation. Much like voluntary turnover, marital voluntary separation was initially studied using self-reported surveys. However, it was only when an *interactional* perspective was employed that predictive empirical results emerged. One tool, which is based on a mixed-methods approach, showed particularly impressive results. The tool converts qualitative interview

data into quantitative measures of positive and negative affect expressed and displayed. The ratio between positive and negative affect was found to successfully predict, with an astounding accuracy of over 90%, not only *if* a married couple will separate and divorce, but also *when* this separation will take place (i.e., within 7 or 14 years) (Gottman & Notarius, 2000). When considering the modest success turnover prediction models have had, such impressive prediction accuracy is, at the very least, intriguing.

The successful prediction of the dissolution of a marriage relies on identifying affective and relational indicators. The diagnostics of the marital relationship is performed by observing an interaction of the couple. The interaction is then analysed and the affect displayed by the marital parties is coded for “positive” and “negative”. The portions of positive-to-negative affect is then calculated. In addition to the affect, relational processes are identified (such as fondness, negativity, criticism, contempt, etc.). It has been found that a positive-to-negative ratio of affect which is below five-to-one is predictive of a divorce (Gottman, 1994), as well as the presence of several negative relational processes (criticism, contempt, withdrawal, defensiveness, and belligerence) (Gottman, 1994, 1999). Similar results were observed for gay couples as well (Gottman et al., 2003). Examining the usefulness of this prediction tool in employment setting is therefore of great interest to researchers and managerial practitioners alike.

This mixed-methods approach to diagnosing relationships is part of a rapidly growing field of research methods. The field of Mixed-Methods Research has greatly developed over the last decade (Creswell, 2010), and has been able to provide a wide range of tools for studying human individuals and interactions. Researchers can greatly benefit from the maturity of this research approach. It has been shown to provide better tools for studying individuals, in comparison with a single research regime (Goerres & Prinzen, 2010). A mixed-methods research approach also appeals to human intuition (Creswell & Clark, 2011),

as it offers multiple ways of experiencing and investigating phenomena. Using such research approach has the potential to lead to the breakthrough that turnover research needs in order to advance in its predictive abilities.

These developments in mixed-methods literature offer useful tools to provide a generalised description of the divorce prediction method. This generalised description serves several purposes. To the turnover researcher, it provides a framework for understanding how the divorce prediction tool is examined in employment setting. To the MMR community, describing the divorce prediction tool in generalised MMR terms exposes it to a wider community of researchers, and makes it more transferrable to other disciplines and relationships (e.g., information systems research, see Alony, Hasan, & Paris, 2014). Since this developed and tested tool, which relies on MMR, is not currently categorised as an MMR tool, adding it to the MMR toolkit offers great benefits to the MMR research community.

This paper draws on mixed-methods terminology to describe the divorce prediction method, its adjustment to organisational setting, and the way its benefits for employment setting are examined. The paper is structured as follows: it begins by describing the conceptual foundation of the divorce prediction method, and a description of the method itself. The paper then provides a research context for the adjustment of the diagnostics method from marital to employment setting, and the questions that guide the research design reported here. The methodology is then described in detail, using current MMR terminology. It describes all MMR aspects of this method: concurrent multi-strand data, sequential, conversational, and integrational aspects. The paper also provides an MMR notation, and builds it gradually alongside the description of the method. Next, the paper describes differences between the marital and the employment relationship that are pertinent to the study. The paper concludes by describing the potential for wider application of this method, and the contribution of this MMR description to the MMR toolkit.

Diagnosing marital relationship

This section provides the conceptual foundation of the method for diagnosing marital relationships, and a succinct description of the method itself. The conceptual foundation for the method relies on two assumptions: one relates to the balance between positive and negative affect which sustains a successful marriage, and the other relates to the constructed and affect-biased nature of human memory and recall.

Balance in affect

The fundamental assumption of the diagnostics of marital relationships described here is that a successful marriage is sustained by a balance between positive and negative affect (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). Research using this method found that while negative affect is harmful to marital relationships, some forms of negative expressions are more destructive to relationships than others. Marital satisfaction and stability are at greater risk if criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal are present in marital communication (Gottman, 1999). Marital relationships are therefore not only sensitive to a balance between positive and negative affect in the relationship, but also to the presence of particular forms of negative communication.

Constructed memory and recall

The theoretical foundation of this method is anchored on the view that memories are constructed based on what is cognitively salient (Fincham & Bradbury, 1990), and are linked to experienced affect (Bradbury & Fincham, 1987). Therefore, stories of past events reflect the individual's cognitive and affective perception of the object. An example given by Fincham and Bradbury is a spouse with a highly integrated negative perception of their partner will easily retrieve a negative memory of the partner's behaviour, which is consistent with the integration. This research examines if, by the same logic, an employee with a

negative perception of an organisation will more easily retrieve negative memories about the organisation.

Diagnosing a marriage

To diagnose the marital relationship, the method uses the joint oral history interview, which examines, in addition to the interactions between spouses, the partners' memories and accounts of their marital history and their marital relationship, as well as their perceptions of characteristics of good and bad marital relationships (Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992). The method disregards the content of the interview (i.e., the events and the characteristics mentioned), and focuses on the affect associated with them. The affect identified in participants' qualitative stories is converted into quantitative percentages of positive and negative affect displayed during the interview (Buehlman, Carrere, & Siler, 2005). In addition, marital research was able to identify specific relational processes between the spouses that were significantly related to dissolution versus stability, and distressed versus non-distressed marriage (Buehlman, et al., 1992), some of which (disappointment, fondness, criticism, to name a few) also exist in organisational setting. This method is amenable to research in organisational setting, as meaningful events as indicators and predictors of voluntary turnover have been previously pointed out (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005). Therefore, prompting participants for examples of events that stand out in their mind, both positive and negative, provides the raw data for this method. Thus, this method is selected to be applied to employment relationship and turnover research. The interview questions are naturally designed for marital setting, and have to be adjusted. Other elements in this study have to be taken into account when adjusting the relationship diagnostics method into organisational setting, and these are described in the section *Pertinent differences between marital and employment settings*.

Research questions

A study of employee turnover was designed to examine the benefits of using the relationship diagnostics method, which was originally developed and used in marital research, in an organisational setting. The study aims to address the question:

What are the benefits of using the marital relationship diagnostics tool in organisational setting?

This question is further broken down into two sub-questions:

1. How well does the diagnostics tool predict a separation between the employee and the organisation?
2. What other benefits, apart from predictive abilities, are offered from the use of the diagnostics tool in organisational setting?

The first sub-question seeks to examine the predictive value of the method, and therefore calls for a longitudinal study. The second sub-question examines the content of the data collected by using the oral history interview, and the value that it can provide for researchers and practitioners.

This paper focuses on describing the method of the study. It provides a detailed description of the method in current MMR terms. The paper responds to a call for increased MMR training and education (Cameron, 2011) by describing this mixed-methods study using MMR terminology. Although it clearly employs an MMR approach, the marital diagnostics method has not been described in MMR terms before. This description conceptualises the diagnostics method and its testing into a generic study, which makes the diagnostics method more amenable for a wider application, beyond marital relationships.

MMR description of the employment relationship diagnostic tool

Before describing the study in MMR terminology, a short overview of the design of the study and its rationale is provided here. Once the structure of the study is understood, it is described in more detail in MMR terms.

An overview of the study design

This study examines the benefits of using the method for diagnosing marital relationships in employment setting. The research design is illustrated in detail in Figure 1. The study performs a diagnosis of the employment relationship (i.e., the relationship between the employee and the organisation). Similarly to a marital relationship, employees are interviewed using the oral history interview method, and asked about their past experiences in the organisation. Their responses are coded for positive and negative affect, and a ratio between these displays of affect is calculated.

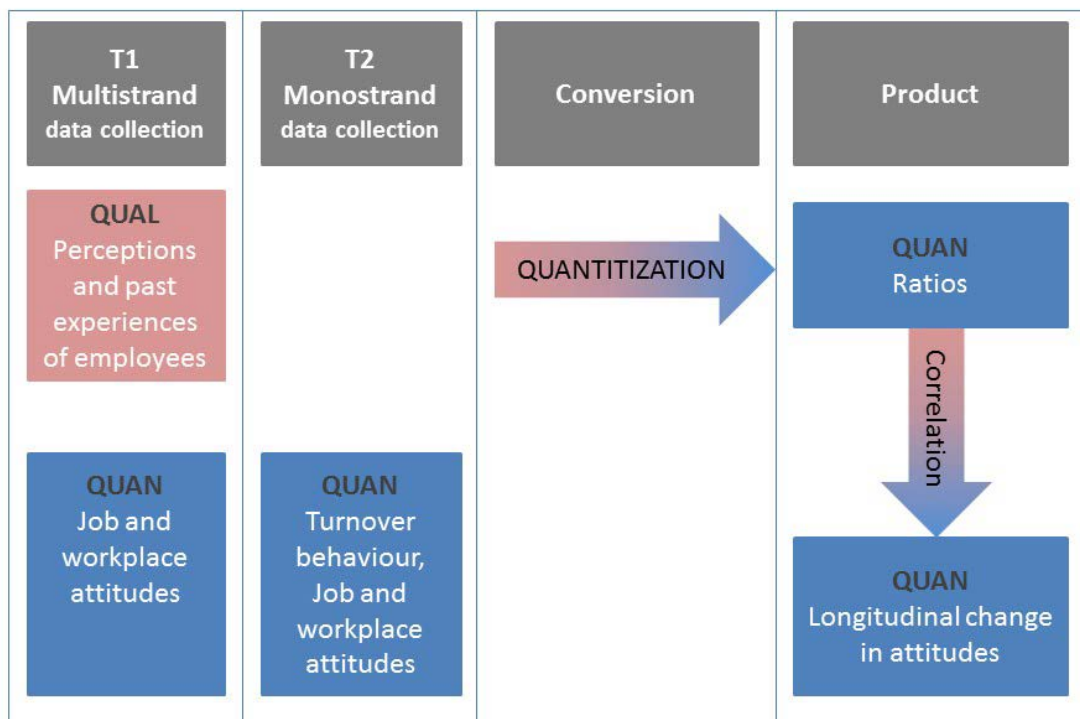


Figure 1: Research design for the study at hand - illustration

In addition to the diagnosis interview, a base-line measure of the employment relationship is collected using a quantitative survey of common job and workplace attitudes: commitment, satisfaction, burnout, engagement, perceived organisational support, and intention to turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Chau, Dahling, Levy, & Diefendorff, 2009; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The survey and the diagnosis interview are collected at T1. One year later, at T2, the survey is collected again. The differences between individual responses at T1 and T2 indicate the change in the relationship quality. The study seeks a correlation between the ratio of positive and negative affect detected at the interview, and a change in the relationship quality. This is a basic, simplified, and conceptual description of the study.

A more comprehensive description highlights the involvement of mixed-methods research. This mixed-methods study uses multiple strands of data (i.e., QUAN and QUAL), and hosts the most complex mixed-methods design – one which integrates four different aspects: *concurrent*, *sequential*, *conversion*, and *integrated* aspects (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The operations of each aspect is described next.

The concurrent aspect

The concurrent aspect in this study involves collecting two data strands simultaneously: a qualitative strand, and a quantitative strand. One strand of QUAL data is collected at T1, using the oral history interview. Employees are interviewed and asked to describe past experiences in their workplace, as well as their opinions and thoughts of the workplace's strengths and weaknesses. This strand of qualitative data is later quantified, as described in *the conversion aspects* section below.

Simultaneously, a QUAN data strand is collected - employees are asked to fill a survey of common job and workplace related attitudes. The survey is to be filled directly after the interview, for practical reasons - participants are far more likely to complete a survey when the researcher is near and awaiting. On the methodological side, attitudes are understood as structures in long-term memory (Tourangeau & Rasinski, 1988), and their stability relies on multiple different factors (Prislin, 1996). Thus, an interview is unlikely to bias individual responses to a later survey. In addition, a correlation between interview data and survey responses at Time 1 does not lead to consistent skewing of the results, since the correlation sought in this study is between interview data and the *difference* between Time 1 and Time 2 survey responses.

This quantitative data strand serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it is used to complement the understanding of the way the participants perceive and view their relationship with the organisation. On the other hand, the quantitative data strand is utilised to provide a longitudinal perspective on the employment relationship, as described later in the section *The sequential aspect* section below.

The MMR notation for this step is: **QUAN + QUAL**

The concurrent collection of the two data strands is denoted by the plus sign. Both strands are of equal importance, and therefore they are both denoted in upper-case (Creswell, 2010, p. 57, Table 2.2).

Concurrent aspect - adjustments

Both instruments used in the concurrent stage (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) have to be adjusted to employment setting. The quantitative instrument is adjusted by drawing on extant turnover literature, which offers many constructs as potential predictors of employee turnover, and as indicators of the quality of the employment relationship. This study selected

the following: overall job satisfaction (Eisenberger, et al., 1997), three-components commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), intention to quit (similarly to Chau, et al., 2009), perceived organisational support (Eisenberger, et al., 1986), work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), and burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). This adjustment is fairly straightforward.

Adjusting the qualitative instrument is more complex. The qualitative instrument is the oral history interview (Buehlman, et al., 1992; Carrère, Ruckstuhl, Buehlman, Gottman, & Coan, 2000). This semi-structured interview uses predefined questions, and is aimed to stimulate participants' views on their past in the relationship, including positive and negatives experiences that they have been through. These questions have to be adjusted not only semantically, to cover employment events as opposed to marital ones, but also to account for the differences in how people regard their employment relationship and their marital relationship. While couples generally like to reminisce and describe their marital history (Gottman, 1994), a pilot study of the adjusted oral history interview revealed that employees do not always feel the same about their history with their employing organisation (Alony, Hasan, & Sense, 2014). Therefore, some questions had to be removed, as they did not elicit responses with sufficient affective content. Others had to be adjusted and added, to stimulate a more affect-laden input from participants (for full description see Alony, Hasan, Sense, & Jones, Forthcoming).

The sequential aspect

The sequential aspect in this study involves repeating the measurement of the QUAN data strand. At T2, which is one year after the initial stage of data collection, employees are re-surveyed for their job and workplace related attitudes and opinions, using the same instrument as in T1. This provides a longitudinal view of the quality of the employment relationship. Although the use of change scores has been heavily criticised, statistical tools

have been developed for this purpose (Edwards, 2001). The change in scores is therefore worthy of examination.

The targeted organisations for this study are ones which employ professionals (academics, lawyers, nurses, police-officers, etc.), which are unlikely to leave their jobs in great numbers within one year. At T2, four categories of employees are expected to be identified: left the organisation, employed with better attitudes, employed with the same attitudes, and employed with worse attitudes. The study is not expected to identify indicators of immediate turnover, since marital predictions were made for even longer periods, from three to 14 years (Gottman, et al., 1998; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Markman & Notarius, 1987).

The sequential aspect is notated in MMR by using an arrow, indicating that the collection of one data strand is followed by the collection of another (Creswell, 2010, p. 57, Table 2.2). In this study, however, only the quantitative data is repeated at T2, and this data is analysed in comparison with quantitative data collected at the previous phase, i.e., at T1. Therefore, in this study, the sequential aspect is denoted in square brackets, to highlight its independence from the qualitative data strand. The notation chosen is therefore:

QUAL + [QUAN \rightarrow QUAN]

Sequential aspect – adjustments

The sequential aspect in marital research involved a longer delay between the data collection stages: between 3 and 14 years (Buehlman, et al., 1992; Gottman, 1994; Gottman, et al., 1998). This time delay was not possible in this project for practical reasons.

Furthermore, much shorter prediction horizons are typically used in turnover research: most turnover studies use a gap of 6 to 24 months (Allen, et al., 2007), which is long enough to allow a turnover decision to eventuate on one hand, and provides useful planning input for managers on the other hand. For practical reasons, this research took a 12 months gap.

The conversion aspects

This study converts the QUAL data strand collected at T1 (employee interviews) into QUAN form, through *Quantitisation*. Rather than a traditional thematic analysis, which analyses the *content* of the interviews, this study seeks *relational processes* of affective nature. Processes such as anger, disappointment, forgiveness, or hope, are identified and coded. The processes are assigned a positive or negative affect label. When the coding of the interview is completed, the duration of the expression of all affective processes is summed up: negative processes duration and positive processes duration. This is similar to how marital affect proportions were calculated (Krokoff, 1987)¹. A ratio between these durations is calculated. This ratio is then compared with the longitudinal change identified in the quantitative surveys.

The notation for conversion chosen here is that of a double arrow (i.e., =>), as it contains the equal sign (=). The equal sign typically denotes the rationale for the research (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). In this case, the conversion is the heart of the diagnostics method. The main purpose of this study is to examine the value of converting the qualitative data of employee interviews into a quantitative form, and to compare the result of the conversion to a quantitative longitudinal outcome.

Because the conversion occurs sequentially, following the data collection, it also warrants an arrow element, which is a typical notation of a sequential treatment. For this reason, a double-arrow is selected, and the notation is completed as below:

$$\text{QUAL} + [\text{QUAN} \longrightarrow \text{QUAN}] \Rightarrow \text{QUAN}$$

¹ Marital research used a close proxy of 'duration' to identify proportions of positive and negative affect. Proportions of affect display have been found to have the strongest correlation with marital satisfaction.

Although this notation captures all elements of this research, it is far from intuitive, and is difficult to interpret. This indicates that MMR terminology and notations require further development. Future research aiming for such development would benefit the MMR research community.

Conserving data richness. When data is converted, there is always a risk of losing its richness. It should be noted that apart from the conversion of the qualitative interview data, the study involves also a qualitative analysis, which yields qualitative results. The relational processes identified at this analysis stage are further utilised at the *integration*, described later.

Conversion aspects – adjustments

The quantitisation of the QUAL data strand is based on coding of the interview data. The codes were initially borrowed from marital research, however an additional process (delineation and reduction) was identified, which was not previously described (Alony, Hasan, & Sense, 2011). It is also expected that additional processes may emerge from the data, and that they can be related to existing turnover literature.

The integration

In this stage, the various products of the data conversion and data analysis are brought together and compared, to identify correlations between them. The following products are considered: quantitised ratios of positive to negative affect in the interviews (identified by converting interview data into quantitative form), quantitative differences in job and workplace related attitudes (identified by quantitative surveys), and qualitative relational processes identified in the interviews. These products are then used to test the following hypotheses:

- H1. Affect ratios identified in an oral history interview predict changes in job and workplace attitudes one year later.
- H2. Affect ratios identified in an oral history interview predict turnover behaviour one year later.
- H3. Relational processes identified in an oral history interview predict changes in job and workplace attitudes one year later.
- H4. Relational processes identified in an oral history interview predict turnover behaviour one year later.

To test these hypotheses, the participants are divided into groups, based on their positive-to-negative affect ratios (low ratios versus high ratios). A t-test comparing the changes in attitudes of individuals can then identify if the affect ratio predict such changes. A t-test comparing the presence or absence of specific relational processes among employees who left their jobs and those who have not can also identify processes which are indicative of upcoming turnover. In this stage, all evidence types available in this research are used: quantitative and qualitative data, converted, analysed, and direct. The comparisons at this stage integrate all these forms of evidence to produce a coherent picture of the value of the conceptualisation of turnover as a problem of relationship breakdown.

Pertinent differences between marital and employment settings

While adapting the diagnostics method to the study of employee turnover shows great promise, adjusting a research tool from one setting to another is never simple or straightforward. A transfer from marital setting into organisational setting requires many adjustments, as discussed in the sections above. Such adjustments must take into account four main complications due to the transferring of the diagnostics method from the marital field into the organisational setting: (1) the difference in research subjects, (2) the

relationships' content, (3) the researcher's role, and (4) the nature of the interview. This section discusses these differences and the way to address them in this study.

The nature of the research subject (the relationship)

The nature of the research subject (i.e., the relationship studied) is fundamentally different in the two settings. Marital relationships are between two people, whereas employment relationships are between a person and an organisation – not another person. Employees' turnover intentions and behaviour are affected by many of their inter-personal relationships in their workplace. While there is no doubt that an employee's relationship with their supervisor is important (Ballinger, Lehman, & Schoorman, 2010; Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, & Shacklock, 2010; Dupré & Day, 2007), employees' relationships with their organisations, as well as their turnover intentions and behaviour, are also affected by their co-workers (Brummelhuis, Bakker, & Euwema, 2010; Golden, 2007; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), their subordinates (Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005), and their customers (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). In addition to the effect of these inter-personal relationships with individuals, employees' turnover intentions and behaviour are also influenced by their interactions with groups within the organisation, which are perceived holistically, and not as a collection of separate individuals: co-workers (Groysberg & Lee, 2010), work-group (Whiteoak, 2007), and management (Bélanger, Edwards, & Wright, 2003). Furthermore, employees' turnover intentions and behaviour are influenced by the organisation's interactions with employees through policies and processes (Allen, 2001; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Ng & Butts, 2009). We term this relationship between the employee and their organisation as a whole the *employee-organisation relationship*, or EOR. It takes a holistic view of the organisation as it is perceived in the mind of the employee, for the sake of studying the nature and quality of this relationship.

The nature of the relationship

The nature of marital relationships is different to that of the employment relationship. Previous research has examined various elements of the EOR. Literature on industrial and employment relations has focused on the formal, contractual, and legal aspects of the relationship (Kaufman, 2008). The informal promises and expectations set by the employer have been covered under the psychological contract research (Guest, 1998; Rousseau, 1989). Although there have been practical attempts to capture the way an organisation is perceived by its members (e.g., Armstrong, 2005; Reed & Bazalgette, 2005), the nature of the relationship between an employee and their organisation as a whole (an EOR) has not been empirically compared with other interpersonal relationships.

The nature of the EOR can be inferred from the nature of inter-personal relationships *at work*. Work relationships, including relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates, have been found to be significantly less intimate than marital relationships (Argyle, Henderson, & Furnham, 1985). Both spouse and work supervisor were found to be high sources of conflict, but work supervisor did not offer the same satisfaction levels as spouse (Argyle, 1986). This suggests that people tolerate a lower ratio of positive-to-negative ratios of interaction in their workplace, than they would with their spouse. People are expected to show far more emotions (positive and negative) around their spouses than around their work mates (including co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates). It is therefore expected that emotions and affect will not be displayed to the same extent as they are displayed in marital relationships, and may not be as easy to tap into².

² The influence of emotional intelligence – the ability to manage one’s emotions – was not addressed in marital research. It would be an interesting factor to examine in both settings – marital and organisational. Such examination is beyond the scope of this research, which focuses on examining the usefulness of this method in organisational setting.

The nature of the researcher

The nature of the researcher is fundamentally different. In the marital setting, data were usually collected via therapeutic entities (by marital counsellors, or in a marital clinic, etc.), whereas in organisational setting, the interviewer is typically not a therapist. A marital therapist is very different to an interviewer. Therapists are expected to maintain secrecy and confidentiality, trained at displaying empathy, and are expected to discuss private events, thoughts, and emotions. Interviewers, particularly in work settings, are expected to stick to professional issues. In addition, despite a specific requirement to maintain confidentiality mandated by the ethics approval, the interviewers may be regarded as informants of the organisation's management. Thus, participants may be hesitant and reluctant to openly express concerns and criticisms. These differences are expected to influence the input gained from participants, and therefore the analysis of this input will need to take them into account. It is also expected that the ratios which indicate a breakdown will differ between marital and organisational settings.

The nature of the interview

The nature of the interview itself is different, due to the nature of the relationship studied. Marital research places a great emphasis on studying the interaction *between* the participants as they give their oral history, and seeks indicators such as: do they tease each other, do they complete each other's sentences, do they argue over the details? Since in organisational setting, one of the parties is not a person, but the organisation as a whole, such interaction between the participants is impossible³. This means that the interview is lacking one of the major sources of relational indicators. This study therefore examines if the method is still useful, despite this deficiency.

³ A direct supervisor may be a sufficient proxy for the organisation. For practical reasons, at this stage we chose to conduct a one-sided interview. An employee-supervisor interview would be an interesting direction of further inquiry.

Conclusion

The MMR field has successfully developed a range of tools for categorising, describing, and planning research. Several recent publications have made these tools available to researchers who seek to employ an MMR approach (Creswell, 2010; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). These tools offer a wide selection to novice and experienced researchers who seek to investigate human subjects. Additions to this toolkit further advance the maturity of this field, and this paper aims to contribute a method to the toolkit.

This paper combines an important innovative perspective on turnover studies with MMR approach. It argues for attempting to apply a research tool originally developed in marital research into employment and turnover studies. It describes an ambitious research methodology – an integrated MMR approach, which combines the other three types of MMR approaches: concurrent, conversion, and longitudinal. The paper describes the main differences between the two domains in which this MMR methodology is used in (i.e., marital and employment), and shows how these differences affect its various elements. This description makes the relationship diagnostics method accessible to researchers of human relationships beyond marital relationships. It clarifies and generalises each element of the research, so that it can be useful for a wider application. Such application can greatly enhance the understanding of human relationships, which are the backbone of human society.

It is important to note the limitations of the diagnostics method described here. The research described here examines the benefits of applying a diagnostics tool developed in marital research into organisational setting. This diagnostics tool relies on at least some cooperation of the employee interviewed. In a research setting, where the interviewer is independent of the organisation and its management, the employees are guaranteed confidentiality. If this tool is to be used for commercial purposes, and the interviewer is

internal, biased, or not bound by confidentiality agreements, employee cooperation may be greatly reduced, which may impact on the effectiveness of this tool. This point offers a direction of future research.

References

- Allen, D. G., Renn, R. W., Moffitt, K. R., & Vardaman, J. M. (2007). Risky business: The role of risk in voluntary turnover decisions. *Human Resource Management Review*, 17(3), 305-318.
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of occupational psychology*, 63(1), 1-18.
- Allen, T. D. (2001). Family-Supportive Work Environments: The Role of Organizational Perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58(3), 414-435.
- Alony, I., Hasan, H., & Paris, C. (2014). *Applying attribution theory to is research as a practical method for assessing post-adoption behaviour*. Paper presented at the Twenty Second European Conference on Information Systems, Tel Aviv.
- Alony, I., Hasan, H., & Sense, A. (2011). *Predicting turnover based on relationship diagnosis – lessons from marital research*. Paper presented at the The Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) Wellington.
- Alony, I., Hasan, H., & Sense, A. (2014). *Predicting turnover based on relationship diagnosis – Lessons from marital research*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of Informing Science & IT Education Conference (InSITE) Wollongong, Australia.
- Alony, I., Hasan, H., Sense, A., & Jones, M. L. (Forthcoming). My lawfully wedded workplace: identifying similarities of marriage and employment. *Personnel Review*.
- Argyle, M. (1986). The skills, rules, and goals of relationships. In R. Gilmore & S. Duck (Eds.), *The emerging field of personal relationships* (pp. 23–39). Lancaster, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, New Jersey.
- Argyle, M., Henderson, M., & Furnham, A. (1985). The rules of social relationships. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(2), 125-139.
- Armstrong, D. (2005). *Organization in the mind: psychoanalysis, group relations, and organizational consultancy: occasional papers 1989-2003*: Karnac Books.
- Ballinger, G. A., Lehman, D. W., & Schoorman, F. D. (2010). Leader-member exchange and turnover before and after succession events. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(1), 25-36. doi: DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2010.04.003
- Bélanger, J., Edwards, P. K., & Wright, M. (2003). Commitment at Work and Independence From Management. *Work and Occupations*, 30(2), 234-252. doi: 10.1177/0730888403251708
- Bradbury, T. N., & Fincham, F. D. (1987). Affect and cognition in close relationships: Towards an integrative model. *Cognition and emotion*, 1(1), 59-87.
- Brummelhuis, L. L. t., Bakker, A. B., & Euwema, M. C. (2010). Is family-to-work interference related to co-workers' work outcomes? [doi: DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2010.06.001]. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77(3), 461-469.
- Brunetto, Y., Farr-Wharton, R., & Shacklock, K. (2010). The impact of supervisor–subordinate relationships on morale: implications for public and private sector nurses' commitment. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 20(2), 206-225. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-8583.2009.00117.x
- Buehlman, K. T., Carrere, S., & Siler, C. (2005). The oral history coding system: A measure of marital cognition. *The sourcebook of nonverbal measures: Going beyond words*, 209–219.
- Buehlman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., & Katz, L. F. (1992). How a couple views their past predicts their future: Predicting divorce from an oral history interview. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5(3-4), 295-318.

- Cameron, R. (2011). Mixed methods in business and management: A call to the 'first generation'. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 17(2), 245-267.
- Carrère, S., Ruckstuhl, L., Buehlman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., & Coan, J. A. (2000). Predicting Marital Stability and Divorce in Newlywed Couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14(1), 42-58.
- Chau, S. L., Dahling, J. J., Levy, P. E., & Diefendorff, J. M. (2009). A predictive study of emotional labor and turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 30(8), 1151-1163. doi: 10.1002/job.617
- Creswell, J. W. (2010). Mapping the developing landscape of mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavior Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (pp. 45-68): Sage Publications Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2 ed.): SAGE Publications.
- Dupré, K. E., & Day, A. L. (2007). The effects of supportive management and job quality on the turnover intentions and health of military personnel. *Human Resource Management*, 46(2), 185-201. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20156
- Edwards, J. R. (2001). Ten difference score myths. *Organizational Research Methods*, 4(3), 265-287.
- Eisenberger, R., Cummings, J., Armeli, S., & Lynch, P. (1997). Perceived organizational support, discretionary treatment, and job satisfaction. *Journal of applied psychology*, 82(5), 812.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of applied psychology*, 71(3), 500-507.
- Fincham, F., & Bradbury, T. (1990). Cognition in Marriage. *The Psychology of marriage: basic issues and applications*, 118.
- Goerres, A., & Prinzen, K. (2010). Using mixed methods for the analysis of individuals: a review of necessary and sufficient conditions and an application to welfare state attitudes. *Quality & Quantity*, 1-36.
- Golden, T. (2007). Co-workers who telework and the impact on those in the office: Understanding the implications of virtual work for co-worker satisfaction and turnover intentions. *Human Relations*, 60(11), 1641-1667. doi: 10.1177/0018726707084303
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce?: The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically-based marital therapy*: WW Norton & Company.
- Gottman, J. M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60(1), 5-22.
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The Timing of Divorce: Predicting When a Couple Will Divorce Over a 14-Year Period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737-745.
- Gottman, J. M., Levenson, R. W., Gross, J., Frederickson, B. L., McCoy, K., Rosenthal, L., . . . Yoshimoto, D. (2003). Correlates of gay and lesbian couples' relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45(1), 23-43.
- Gottman, J. M., & Notarius, C. I. (2000). Decade review: Observing marital interaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 927-947.
- Griffeth, R. W., & Hom, P. W. (2001). *Retaining valued employees*: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 463-488.
- Groysberg, B., & Lee, L.-E. (2010). Star power: colleague quality and turnover. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 19(3), 741-765. doi: 10.1093/icc/dtp049
- Guest, D. E. (1998). Is the psychological contract worth taking seriously? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19(S1), 649-664.
- Harris, K. J., Kacmar, K. M., & Witt, L. A. (2005). An examination of the curvilinear relationship between leader-member exchange and intent to turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 363-378. doi: 10.1002/job.314
- Hershcovis, M. S., & Barling, J. (2010). Towards a multi-foci approach to workplace aggression: A meta-analytic review of outcomes from different perpetrators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(1), 24-44. doi: 10.1002/job.621
- Hom, P. W., & Griffeth, R. W. (1995). *Employee turnover*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Wanberg, C. R., Glomb, T. M., & Ahlburg, D. (2005). The Role of Temporal Shifts in Turnover Processes: It's About Time. *Journal of Applied Psychology July*, 90(4), 644-658.
- Kaufman, B. E. (2008). The original industrial relations paradigm: foundation for revitalizing the field. In C. J. Whalen (Ed.), *New Directions in the Study of Work and Employment: Revitalizing Industrial Relations As an Academic Enterprise* (pp. 31-47). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1987). The Correlates of Negative Affect in Marriage An Exploratory Study of Gender Differences. *Journal of Family Issues*, 8(1), 111-135.
- Kuvaas, B., & Dysvik, A. (2010). Does best practice HRM only work for intrinsically motivated employees? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(13), 2339 - 2357.
- Maertz, C. P. (2004). Eight motivational forces and voluntary turnover: A theoretical synthesis with implications for research. *Journal of Management*, 30(5), 667-683.
- Markman, H. J., & Notarius, C. I. (1987). Coding marital and family interaction: Current status. In T. Jacob (Ed.), *Family interaction and psychopathology: Theories, methods, and findings* (pp. 329-390). New York: Plenum Press.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. (1986). Maslach burnout inventory. *Evaluating Stress a book of resources*, 31, 191-218.
- Morse, J. M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed method design: principles and procedures* (Vol. 4): Left Coast Pr.
- Mowday, R. T. (1984). Strategies for adapting to high rates of employee turnover. *Human Resource Management*, 23(4), 365-380.
- Ng, T. W. H., & Butts, M. M. (2009). Effectiveness of organizational efforts to lower turnover intentions: The moderating role of employee locus of control. *Human Resource Management*, 48(2), 289-310. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20280
- Prislin, R. (1996). Attitude stability and attitude strength: One is enough to make it stable. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(3), 447-477.
- Reed, B., & Bazalgette, J. (2005). Organizational role analysis at the Grubb Institute of Behavioural Studies: Origins and development. In J. Newton, S. Long & B. Sievers (Eds.), *Coaching in Depth : The Organizational Role Analysis Approach* (pp. 43-62). London: Karnac Books.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee responsibilities and rights journal*, 2(2), 121-139.

- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2003). *Test manual for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*. Unpublished manuscript, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. Retrieved from <http://www.schaufeli.com>.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2006). A general typology of research designs featuring mixed methods. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 12-28.
- Tourangeau, R., & Rasinski, K. A. (1988). Cognitive processes underlying context effects in attitude measurement. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*(3), 299.
- Vaiman, V. (2008). Retention management as a means of protecting tacit knowledge in an organisation: a conceptual framework for professional services firms. *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital, 5*(2), 172-185.
- Whiteoak, J. (2007). The Relationship among Group Process Perceptions, Goal Commitment and Turnover Intention in Small Committee Groups. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 22*(1), 11-20. doi: 10.1007/s10869-007-9047-8