

Psychological ownership in relation to workplace trust and turnover intent

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between workplace trust, psychological ownership and turnover intent within a South African professional services organisation. The measurements used were the Psychological Ownership Questionnaire, Workplace Trust Survey, and Turnover Intentions Scale. A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used to collect data from a purposive sample ($N = 302$) of skilled, highly skilled and professional employees in a professional services industry. Pearson product-moment correlations and structural equation modeling (SEM) results confirmed that psychological ownership was significantly related to workplace trust (positively) and turnover intent (negatively). In addition, the study showed that psychological ownership fully mediated (large effect) the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent. By implication, work environments that fostered workplace trust would increase the level of psychological ownership that employees' experienced, which, in turn, would reduce employees' intent to leave their workplace. The research contributes to new knowledge about the way contextual factors could influence employees' psychological ownership.

Key words: Workplace trust, psychological ownership, turnover intent, structural equation modeling

Introduction

For organisations to be competitive, it is essential that they attract and retain talent (Arnold & Randall, 2010). Indications are that the new generation of employees entering the workplace no longer look at only the monetary package offered, but also at how the work environment will assist them in developing their skills, gaining experience, and making them feel that they belong within the company (Jamrog, 2004). Therefore, employees look for organisations that

give them the opportunity to form a strong psychological connection with the organisation. Having such a psychological connection makes employees feel the organisations regard them as valued assets, a feeling which is known as psychological ownership.

Psychological ownership, as originally defined by Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2001), is a state of mind of an individual who feels psychologically attached to an object. Psychological ownership is associated with positive attitudinal and behavioural consequences, such as increased job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to remain in the organisation (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009; Olckers, 2013). Therefore, it would be to the advantage of a company to provide an environment conducive to psychological ownership (Avey et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the experience of psychological ownership relies on the relationship and encounters that a person has with an object (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004); an employee's relationship with an organisation being a case in point. It can be said that an employee-employer relationship is influenced by the employee's consistency in performing job-related tasks well. Pierce, O'Driscoll, and Coghlan (2004) point out that an employee's consistent performance is dependent on the employee's situational awareness.

Trust can be said to be pivotal to any relationship, whether this relationship is personal or work related. Therefore, in a workplace where employees trust each other, their supervisors and the organisation, such trust will positively affect teamwork, communication, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and the intention of employees to remain in the organisation (Wang & Lu, 2012). Employees who trust their organisation have a sense of pride in being associated with that organisation (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), if an employee trusts an organisation, they make themselves vulnerable in the belief that the organisation will follow through with its promises.

According to Martins (2000), and Esterhuizen and Martins (2008), most South Africans experience a lack of trust in the workplace. Should an employer not deliver on promises made to employees, the employees would tend not to call the organisation their own; in other words, they would not experience psychological ownership. This scenario is detrimental to an organisation's effectiveness and performance (Lämsä & Pucetaite, 2006).

According to Pierce et al. (2004), the work environment might influence the relationship formed between the employees and their organisation over the period of employment. In this sense, workplace trust, being a work environmental factor, could be considered as an antecedent contributing to the development of psychological ownership and having a possible impact on employees' intention to remain with the organisation.

The preceding discussion has introduced the objective of this study, which is to explore the relationship between workplace trust, psychological ownership, and turnover intent in a large professional services organisation. With a view to achieving the stated objective, this study aims to develop a structural model for predicting the influence of workplace trust and psychological ownership on turnover intent, and to determine if psychological ownership has a mediating effect on the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent. It is expected that employees' perceptions of workplace trust as expressed by the participants in this study will have a direct effect on their perceptions of psychological ownership as well as on their intention to remain in the organisation. It is also expected that psychological ownership will mediate the effect of perceptions of workplace trust and turnover intentions on one another.

Based on the objective of this study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1a: Psychological ownership has a direct negative relationship with turnover intent.

Hypothesis 1b: Workplace trust has a direct negative relationship with turnover intent.

Hypothesis 1c: Workplace trust has a positive relationship with psychological ownership.

Hypothesis 2: Psychological ownership mediates the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intentions.

Method

Participants

A purposive sample ($N = 302$) was drawn from skilled, highly skilled and professional employees in a professional services organisation. Of the 302 respondents, 40.40% were male ($n = 122$), and 59.60% were female ($n = 180$). In respect of ethnicity, 25.20% of the respondents were African ($n = 76$), 26.49% were Asian ($n = 80$), 9.60% were of mixed-race ($n = 29$), and 38.74% were White ($n = 117$). Of the respondents, the majority (68.20% ($n = 206$)) were aged between 20 and 39. In relation to the educational level of the respondents, the majority (71.52% ($n = 216$)) had obtained a university degree. Accountants and consultants represented 27.81% ($n = 84$) of the sample, while the majority of the sample (57.62% ($n = 174$)) operated as managers. Only 14.57% ($n = 44$) consisted of administrative and support services personnel. The majority of the sample (56.95% ($n = 172$)) had worked in the relevant organisation for less than 5 years. The demographic information is contained in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants (N = 302)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage
Gender	Male	122	40,40	40,40
	Female	180	59,60	100
Race	African	76	25,20	25,20
	Asian	80	26,49	51,69
	Mixed-race	29	9,60	61,29
	White	117	38,74	100
Age	20–29 years	95	31,45	31,45
	30–39 years	111	36,75	68,20
	40–49 years	56	18,54	86,74
	50+ years	40	13,25	100
Educational level	Grade 12	23	7,62	7,62
	Diploma	63	20,86	28,48
	University degree	61	20,20	48,68
	Postgraduate degree	155	51,32	100
Operating level in organisation	Accountant/Consultant	84	27,81	27,81
	Assistant Manager	74	24,50	52,31
	Manager	48	15,89	68,20
	Senior Manager	27	8,94	77,14
	Associate Director	16	5,30	82,44
	Partner	9	2,98	85,42
	Other	44	14,57	100
Years working in current organisation	Less than 5 years	172	56,95	56,95
	5–10 years	92	30,46	87,41
	11–20 years	26	8,61	96,02
	21+ years	12	3,97	100

Measures

To achieve the objective of this study, a biographical questionnaire, as well as the Psychological Ownership Questionnaire (Avey et al., 2009), the Workplace Trust Survey (Ferres & Travaglione, 2003), and the Turnover Intentions Scale (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000), was developed and used.

The *biographical questionnaire* was used to gather biographical information relating to participants' age, gender, race, educational level, operating level, and years working for the current organisation.

The *Psychological Ownership Questionnaire* (POQ), a multi-dimensional measure developed by Avey et al. (2009), was used to measure psychological ownership. The POQ comprises 16 items; three items for each of the four components that measure promotion-orientated psychological ownership (self-efficacy, self-identity, belongingness, and accountability), and four items that measure prevention-orientated psychological ownership (territoriality). On a six-point Likert scale, responses captured ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The construct validity for using the POQ on a South African sample has been confirmed by Alberts (2012). Cronbach's alpha values for all five dimensions ranged between 0.78 and 0.90.

Furthermore, items were used from the *South African Psychological Ownership Questionnaire* (SAPOS) developed by Olckers (2013), namely, two items from each component measuring promotive-orientated psychological ownership, and one item from the component measuring preventative psychological ownership. Velicer and Fava (1998 as cited in Wang & Wang, 2012) as well as Garson (2002), recommend the use of at least four to six items to measure each dimension, since sampling fluctuations play a role when there are only three items per dimension, and alpha coefficients might be lower. Such fluctuations have been confirmed in previous studies (George, 2015; Sieberhagen, 2015) that used the POQ on two independent South African samples. The SAPOS consists of 35 questions that measure four dimensions, namely, identity (16 items), responsibility (eight items), autonomy (six items), and territoriality (five items). A highly satisfactory Cronbach's alpha was found for each sub-scale, ranging between 0.78 and 0.94 (Olckers, 2013). A shorter, more refined

version of the SAPOS is currently under revision. The adapted POQ used in this study therefore consisted of 25 items, five items for each of the five components.

The *Workplace Trust Survey* (Ferres & Travaglione, 2003), comprising 36 items, was used to measure participants' level of trust towards their organisation (12 items), their immediate manager (12 items), and their co-workers (12 items). Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) on a seven-point Likert scale. Ferres and Travaglione (2003) have validated this survey for use in South Africa and Australia. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.90 and 0.97 were reported.

Turnover intent was measured using the three-item *Turnover Intentions Scale* developed by Sjöberg and Sverke (2000). Responses were captured using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This Scandinavian-developed scale has been validated for use on a South African sample with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79 (Diedericks, 2012).

Procedure

A paper-based, self-administered survey was distributed to skilled, highly skilled and professional employees who attended training courses at the organisation's training centre. Training facilitators handed out the surveys at training sessions, collected them at the end of the sessions, and returned them to the researchers. Training facilitators informed the participants regarding their rights and responsibilities. Each questionnaire included a cover letter inviting subjects to participate in the study voluntarily, and assuring them that their responses would remain confidential and would be used for research purposes only. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from both the organisation and the research institution's research ethics committee.

Data analysis

A statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS program (IBM SPSS Statistics, 2012), as well as the statistical modelling program Mplus Version 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were derived in order to examine the basic features of the data.

The reliability of the four measuring instruments used was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficients using a cut-off point of 0.70 (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). Furthermore, relationships between variables were described by Spearman correlation coefficients, and the practical significance of the correlations was evaluated against effect sizes (Steyn & Swanepoel, 2008). The cut-off point for determining the practical significance was set at $p \geq 0.10$ (small effect), $p \geq 0.30$ (medium effect), and $p \geq 0.50$ (large effect).

In this research study, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the measurement and structural models. In order to test the hypothesised model, two SEM approaches were followed. Firstly, several measurement models were tested to evaluate the relation between the observed variables and the underlying latent variables (Weston & Gore, 2006). Secondly, a structural model was used to describe the relationship among the latent constructs, namely, workplace trust, psychological ownership, and turnover intent. The maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator was used because of its robust nature since the data was not normally distributed (Wang & Wang, 2012). In addition, observed variables were classified as being measured on a continuous scale.

Furthermore, to ensure the model fit to the data, the following absolute fit indices as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Andersen (2010) were used: the chi-square statistic (χ^2), the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardised root mean residual (SRMR). RMSEA values of <0.05 (Wang & Wang, 2012), and SRMR values lower than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) indicated a close model fit. The following incremental fit

indices were used: the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the comparative fit index (CFI). Acceptable values for the TLI and CFI should be higher than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010).

The model indirect function of Mplus was used to determine the mediation effect of psychological ownership on workplace trust and turnover intent. According to Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, and Petty (2011), the focus of mediation analyses should also be directed towards the extent and significance of the indirect effect. An indirect effect indicates the magnitude of mediation and equates with the decline of the effect the original variable has on the outcome. In addition, kappa-squared values (κ^2) were calculated to determine the magnitude of the mediating effects. The magnitude of kappa-squared values was interpreted similarly to correlation coefficients (R^2), and these values were categorised as having a small (0.01), medium (0.09), or large (0.25) effect (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

Results

Testing the measurement models

Although several theoretical models were compared thoroughly using SEM to establish which model was the best fit, only four of these will be reported on. The hypothesised measurement models were tested by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) so as to establish whether items had a significant loading on the scales used in the study. Subsequent to that, items that yielded poor factor loadings (≤ 0.30) and non-significant regression coefficients were removed to improve the fit of the measurement models.

The following models were tested:

Model 1: Model 1 was a second-order factor model representing psychological ownership comprising: three first-order latent variables, namely, accountability (three items), self-identity (four items), and belongingness (four items); three first-order latent trust

variables, namely, trust in the organisation (11 items), trust in management (nine items), and trust in co-workers (11 items); and one latent variable, namely, turnover intent (three items).

Model 1 was based on promotion-orientated psychological ownership dimensions only, since the prevention-orientated psychological ownership dimension of territoriality had an insignificant path. However, the second-order factor model of psychological ownership comprising three first-order latent variables did not yield the best fit. The results indicated several items with low R^2 -values (< 0.30), suggesting that the particular item/variable did not account for a large proportion of variance (Field, 2005). Therefore, a number of items were removed, namely, one item each from trust in the organisation, trust in management, and trust in co-workers. In respect of psychological ownership, the following items were removed: two items from the Accountability dimension; five items from the Self-efficacy dimension; and three items from the Identity dimension. Furthermore, as the Self-identity dimension and the Belongingness dimension correlated significantly, these dimensions were allowed to load together as one factor (labelled Identity). A similar finding relating to a significant correlation between these two dimensions is reported in a study conducted by Olckers (2013). According to Velicer and Fava (1998 as cited in Wang & Wang, 2012), at least three items per dimension are necessary for factor analysis to reflect the true dimension measured by the item pool. With regard to psychological ownership, too many factors had fewer than three items; therefore, a second-order model of psychological ownership was tested.

Model 2: Model 2 was a second-order factor model of psychological ownership (11 items); three first-order latent workplace trust variables, namely, trust in the organisation (11 items), trust in management (nine items), and trust in co-workers (11 items); and one latent variable, namely, turnover intent (three items).

However, based on the modification indices results, some items were removed since they seemed not to be clear indicators for the latent construct they were designed to measure

(Wand & Wang, 2012). The items removed from the dimensions were as follows: one item each from trust in the organisation, trust in management, and trust in co-workers; and nine items from the latent psychological ownership variable.

Model 3: Model 3 was a second-order factor model of psychological ownership (nine items); three first-order latent workplace trust variables, namely, trust in the organisation (four items), trust in management (six items), and trust in co-workers (eight items); and one latent variable, namely, turnover intent (three items).

When testing for model 3, some items were removed due to large (>2.58) standardised residuals suggesting that the particular items were poor representations of the data (Field, 2005). The following items were removed: two items from psychological ownership; five items from trust in the organisation; and three items each from trust in management and trust in co-workers

Model 4: Model 4 was a second-order factor model of psychological ownership (nine items), and a second-order latent factor workplace trust model comprising three first-order latent variables, namely, trust in the organisation (three items), trust in management (three items), and trust in co-workers (seven items), with one latent variable representing turnover intent (three items).

Model 4, the final model to be tested, consisted of a second-order factor psychological ownership model and a second-order latent factor workplace trust model comprising three first-order latent factors. However, due to large (>2.58) standardised error variances (Field, 2005) some items were removed from the variables mentioned, namely, one item from trust in the organisation, three items from trust in management, and one item from trust in co-workers. Furthermore, based on the results of the modification indices, the error terms of four items were correlated since the observed variables belonged to the same latent variable and displayed similar wording in the corresponding questions. By correlating these error terms,

the fit of the model was improved. The standard regression coefficients in model 4 were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The beta values for psychological ownership ranged from 0.72 to 0.87. The beta values for trust in the organisation ranged from 0.73 to 0.87, whereas those for trust in management ranged from 0.92 to 0.97. The lowest beta value for trust in co-workers was 0.75, and the highest value was 0.90. Turnover intent ranged from 0.71 to 0.90.

The baseline model used for deciding if the models tested displayed a statistically significant improvement was model 4. Since the MLR estimator was used, the Satorra and Bentler (2010) chi-square difference test was applied to test the fit statistics of the competing models. Table 2 displays the comparisons of the fit statistics for the four competing models.

Table 2. Fit statistics of competing measurement models

Model	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δ df	AIC	BIC
Model 4	778.19	265	0.90	0.91	0.08	0.06	-	-	18969.65	19284.19
Model 3	1141.91	388	0.89	0.90	0.08	0.06	363.67	123	22616.95	23012.53
Model 2	3236.89	923	0.81	0.83	0.09	0.06	2462.65	658	33853.21	34433.65
Model 1	3184.73	916	0.81	0.83	0.09	0.06	2412.37	651	34043.28	34649.61

χ^2 = chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardised root mean square residual; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayes information criterion

When inspecting the comparison of the fit statistics of model 3 and model 4, model 3 showed a non-significant chi-square difference (M3 vs M4: $\Delta\chi^2 = 363.67$; Δ df = 123). Model 2 and model 1 also showed a non-significant chi-square difference when compared to model 4 (M2 vs M4: $\Delta\chi^2 = 2462.65$; Δ df = 658), and (M1 vs M4: $\Delta\chi^2 = 2412.37$; Δ df = 651). When comparing models based on the chi-square, a significant difference is

preferable; however, the model comparisons yielded non-significant differences. Consideration should, therefore, be given to other fit indices, and, taking all fit indices into consideration, model 4 fitted the data better. The better fit was based on the fact that the TLI (0.90) and the CFI (0.91) values were on a par with the conventional standard of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the RMSEA value (0.08) was within the range of fair fit (0.05–0.08), as were the confidence intervals (CI) (0.07, 0.08). The SRMR was (0.06), therefore, less than 0.08 which indicated good fit (Wang & Wang, 2012). The (χ^2 / df was 2.94, which was less than the standard of 5.00 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). In addition to the fit indices, the Akaike information criterion (AIC), a comparative fit-measure, and the Bayes information criterion (BIC), which provides an indication of model parsimony, were used. According to Muthén and Muthén (2012), smaller values indicate better fit. In comparison with the other models, model 4 displayed the lowest AIC and BIC values, and was therefore the best fit.

Testing the structural model

Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and correlations

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), alpha coefficients, and correlation results for the measured constructs, based on the best-fit measurement model (model 4), are displayed in Table 3. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the scales were acceptable (>0.70), ranging from 0.86 to 0.96 (De Vos et al., 2011).

As indicated in Table 3, psychological ownership showed a statistically significant positive correlation with workplace trust ($r = 0.60$, large effect), in particular with trust in the organisation ($r = 0.69$, large effect), trust in management ($r = 0.44$, medium effect), and trust in co-workers ($r = 0.45$, medium effect). Furthermore, psychological ownership ($r = -0.68$, small effect) as well as workplace trust ($r = -0.50$, small effect) showed statistically significant negative relationships with turnover intent.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and Pearson correlations of scales (N = 302)

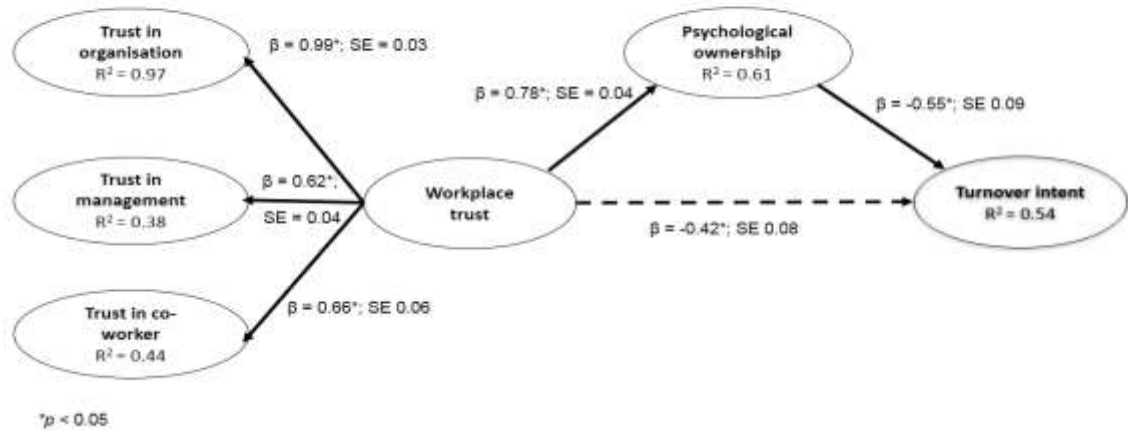
Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Trust in organisation	4.40	1.32	0.86					
2. Trust in management	5.02	1.52	0.96	0.56 **c				
3. Trust in co-workers	4.92	1.15	0.93	0.61 **c	0.56 **b			
4. Total workplace trust	4.83	1.08	0.94	0.80 **c	0.86 **c	0.83 **c		
5. Psychological ownership	4.00	1.09	0.95	0.69 **c	0.44 **b	0.45 **b	0.60 **c	
6. Turnover intent	2.86	1.14	0.88	-0.57 **a	-0.438 **a	-0.41 **a	-0.50 **a	-0.68 **a

*Standard deviation (SD); **Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed); ^aCorrelation is practically significant $r \geq 0.10$ (small effect); ^bCorrelation is practically significant $r \geq 0.30$ (medium effect); ^cCorrelation is practically significant $r \geq 0.50$ (large effect)*

Evaluating the proposed model

The structural model was tested based on model 4, which was the best-fit and most parsimonious measurement model. The hypotheses were tested using latent variable modelling. The structural model showed acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 783.52$, $df = 266$, TLI = 0.90 (>0.90), CFI = 0.91 (>0.90), RMSEA = 0.08 (<0.08), and SRMR = 0.07 (<0.08) (Hair et al., 2010; Wang & Wang, 2012). The structural model is displayed in Figure 1. Next, the structural model is discussed with reference to the hypotheses of the study.

Figure 1. Structural model



Hypothesis 1a: Psychological ownership has a direct negative relationship with turnover intent. In respect of the part of the model predicting a direct negative relationship between psychological ownership and turnover intent ($\beta = -0.55$; $p \leq 0.05$), the path coefficient was significant and had the expected sign. The MLR estimator equation counted for a large proportion of variance in turnover intent ($R^2 = 0.54$), a large effect being indicated by $R^2 \geq 0.25$ (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). Therefore, hypothesis 1a was accepted.

Hypothesis 1b: Workplace trust has a direct negative relationship with turnover intent. In respect of the part of the model predicting a direct negative relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent, the path coefficient was not significant, although it had the expected sign ($\beta = -0.23$; $p \geq 0.05$). Therefore, workplace trust had a non-significant negative relationship with turnover intent. These results did not support hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 1c: Workplace trust has a positive relationship with psychological ownership. In relation to the part of the model predicting the relationship between workplace trust and psychological ownership, the path coefficient was not only significant, but it also had the expected sign ($\beta = 0.78$; $p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, workplace trust had a significantly

positive relationship with psychological ownership. According to the MLR estimator equation, workplace trust counted for a large proportion of variance in psychological ownership ($R^2 = 0.61$). According to Preacher and Kelley (2011), such variance is indicative of a large effect ($R^2 \geq 0.25$). These results provided support for hypothesis 1c.

Hypothesis 2: Psychological ownership mediates the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intentions. In respect of the part of the model predicting the indirect effect of psychological ownership on the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent, the path coefficient was significant ($\beta = -0.42$; $p \leq 0.05$). Since the direct effect between workplace trust and psychological ownership, and the direct effect between psychological ownership and turnover intentions were significant, and the direct effect between workplace trust and turnover intentions was non-significant, full mediation was evident. In calculating kappa-squared, the effect size value for the mediating effect of psychological ownership between workplace trust and turnover intent was found to be large ($\kappa^2 = 0.45$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between workplace trust, psychological ownership and turnover intent within a South African professional services organisation.

The results ($\beta = -0.55$; $p \leq 0.05$) indicated that hypothesis 1a (Psychological ownership has a negative relationship with turnover intent.) was supported. Although categorised as a small effect, a statistical negative correlation ($r = -0.68$) was found between psychological ownership and turnover intent. By implication, employees were less likely to leave their organisation if they experienced feelings of psychological ownership for their jobs

and/or organisation. These results are consistent with the findings reached in studies conducted by Avey et al. (2009), Olckers (2013), and Van Dyne and Pierce (2004).

The study results indicated that the changing demographics of employees entering the workplace these days were bringing about changes in organisational dynamics. It was evident that the new generation of employees did not focus only on financial remuneration, but also on opportunities to develop and grow their skills. The effect of that change in mind-set could lead to employees developing a greater sense of belonging in the organisation if the organisation provided them with opportunities to grow (Jamrog, 2004). This appeared to be the case in the organisation under study. Not only did most of the respondents in the sample belong to the new generation (68.20% of them were aged between 20 and 39), but the organisation involved in the study also afforded their employees with opportunities to develop and grow. This was corroborated by reports on the way middle management communicated with employees, continuously encouraging them with the mantra “it’s your time to shine”. As stated by Jamrog (2004), maintaining good relationships in an organisation leads to a lower rate of turnover intent. In the current study, psychological ownership contributed a 54% variance in turnover intent.

Although total workplace trust had a significant negative correlation with turnover intent ($r = -0.50$, small effect) and the direct effect of workplace trust on turnover intent was negative, the result was not significant ($\beta = -0.23$; $p \geq 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1b (Workplace trust has a negative relationship with turnover intent.) could not be supported. This result was surprising considering that, according to Albrecht and Travaglione (2003), trust in management has a direct effect on turnover intent, and employees who have trust in their organisation should by implication not display turnover intent.

However, when looking at the demographics of the sample, specifically the number of years of employment in the firm, the fact that 56.95% of the sample had been with the

organisation for periods less than five years could have influenced the result obtained for hypothesis 1b. As Cho and Park (2011), and Lewicki and Wiethoff (2000), have pointed out, trust and relationships based on trust develop over time and are grounded in the collaboration between parties. Building true workplace trust could take more than five years. The effect of time on the establishment of workplace trust could be an important area for further study.

The study set out to explore whether psychological ownership was affected by workplace trust. The results indicated that workplace trust not only showed a statistically significant positive correlation with psychological ownership ($r = 0.60$) with a large effect, but also had a strong positive relationship with psychological ownership ($\beta = 0.78$; $p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1c (Workplace trust has a positive relationship with psychological ownership.) was accepted. Workplace trust accounted for 61% of the variance within psychological ownership, which was indicative of a large effect (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). In this study, workplace trust consisted of trust in the organisation, trust in management and trust in co-workers. All of these indicated a positive correlation with psychological ownership: trust in the organisation ($r = 0.69$, large effect); trust in management ($r = 0.44$, medium effect); and trust in co-workers ($r = 0.45$, medium effect).

Trust in the organisation is an institutionally based trust that is connected to trusting the rules and procedures of an organisation (McCauley & Kuhnert, 1992). By implication, employees who have trust in their organisation will have faith in its system of management, and will believe in its organisational culture. These feelings create a sense of belongingness and organisational commitment, and once employees feel they belong in an organisation they develop a sense of psychological ownership for that organisation (Pierce et al., 2001).

Furthermore, when employees trust in management they develop a positive attitude and perform well (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Trust in management can be a reflection of effective leadership in an organisation. The organisation used in this study places a high

premium on effective and visionary leadership, an organisational culture which, based on the results obtained in the study, evidently has a positive effect on turnover intent. From the findings of this study it can also be concluded that improved workplace trust fosters the development of psychological ownership and the reduction of turnover intent.

A relationship of trust between colleagues enhances sharing, collaborating, and problem-solving as employees see themselves as being part of a team (Dirks, 1999). This kind of relationship creates a sense of belongingness and increases team performance, encouraging a culture of high performance and teamwork, as was evident in the organisation under study.

Pierce et al. (2003) refer to contextual factors that influence psychological ownership, among which are structural factors. They posit that feelings of psychological ownership are influenced by the structural parameters of a situation, for example, policies, procedures, and values, and the hierarchical structure of an organisation. In the organisation under study, a number of policies are in place aimed at fostering a strong sense of belongingness. The net effect of a visionary approach that fosters a sense of belongingness is an escalation of psychological ownership experienced by employees in the organisation. Promoting a belief that employees are working towards the greater good requires strong leadership. The managers in the organisation under study display their commitment to strong leadership by arranging and participating in a large number of coaching sessions, and assisting with, fostering and nurturing the growth of their employees.

Based on the discussion above it was concluded that the participants who exhibited workplace trust demonstrated an increased sense of psychological ownership.

Lastly, the study set out to determine if psychological ownership mediated the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent. It was found that psychological ownership fully mediated the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent

($\beta = 0.42$; $p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 (Psychological ownership mediates the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intentions.) was accepted.

When an employee displays workplace trust, cynicism and turnover intent decrease whilst commitment to the organisation increases (Albrecht & Travaglione, 2003). Furthermore, empirical proof was found that a connection existed between psychological ownership and work outcomes, such as employee commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Avey et al., 2009; Olckers, 2013; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Taking into account that trust is the foundation of any relationship, it can be said that if employees in a workplace trust each other, the management and the organisation, then teamwork, communication, group unity decision equality, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour will be influenced positively (Wang & Lu, 2012). According to Esterhuizen and Martins (2008), employees who trust their organisation will be proud to be associated with that organisation.

The results of the study mentioned above proved to be true in the case of the organisation under study, and it was established that factors in the organisation gave rise to these positive findings. The policies implemented in the organisation and the high premium placed on coaching and development bolster employees' workplace trust, which, in turn, increases psychological ownership, and has the net effect of reducing turnover intent.

Therefore, it was found that workplace trust had an indirect effect on turnover intent via psychological ownership. This indirect effect was calculated to be large ($\kappa^2 = 0.45$). The influence of workplace trust on turnover intent was found to be stronger when psychological ownership acted as a mediator. It was concluded that workplace trust could also be considered as a work environment structural factor influencing psychological ownership. Thus, psychological ownership fully mediated the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent.

Implications for organisations

The alignment of an organisation's HR policies and practices to its business vision, strategy and beliefs could give an organisation a competitive advantage in an ever-changing and highly challenging corporate world. One of the greatest stumbling blocks an organisation can encounter is the problem of retaining talent and knowledge. By taking note of the research done in the areas of psychological ownership, workplace trust, and turnover intent, an organisation could ensure that it will grow rapidly and differentiate itself from other similar organisations in the complex market environment.

The recommendation is that HR managers and practitioners should create a work environment that is conducive to workplace trust and psychological ownership. The results of the study showed that employees who had a high level of workplace trust were more likely to experience psychological ownership, which, in turn, would decrease turnover intent. Furthermore, high-involvement HR practices have been shown to lead to the creation of an environment in which employees experience workplace trust and psychological ownership (Arthur, 1994; Gould-Williams, 2003). These high-involvement HR practices include job autonomy, information sharing and participation, job security, performance management, and training (Paré & Tremblay, 2007).

Limitations of the study

The sample was representative of only a small segment of the population of the country: the participants in the study were limited to skilled and highly skilled employees from one organisation. This means that the results obtained cannot be generalised. Any results obtained during the study would only reflect a brief moment in time of the organisational dynamic of

one organisation because the organisation under study was investigated by means of a cross-sectional design. Finally, self-reported questionnaires were used, which limited the richness of responses.

Conclusion

This study showed that workplace trust was positively related to psychological ownership, and, in addition, that psychological ownership was negatively related to turnover intent. This could indicate that employees who experienced higher levels of psychological ownership were less inclined to leave their organisation. Workplace trust also had an indirect negative effect on turnover intent via psychological ownership. The results of the study further indicated that psychological ownership fully mediated the relationship between workplace trust and turnover intent. By implication, work environments that fostered workplace trust would increase the level of psychological ownership that employees experienced, which, in turn, would reduce employees' intent to leave their organisation.

It is recommended that HR practitioners and managers should create a work environment that enhances employees' workplace trust and psychological ownership by investing in high-involvement work practices, thereby reducing the turnover intent of employees.

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