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**ANALYZING THE EFFECT OF ANTECEDENTS OF TURNOVER
INTENTION ACCORDING TO GENERATIONS**

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Abstract

There are many predictors that determine the turnover intention of employees. Among these predictors, mobbing behaviour can be disruptive in the workplace since workplace deviance is a matter which most organizations wrestle today. Organizational commitment is an important variant for employees to achieve organizational success whereas ethical climate is the picture of an organization which demonstrates its' moral philosophy. This study examines the main effects of ethical climate, mobbing, and organizational commitment in predicting turnover intention among the sample of 166 employees, working in a municipality, particularly in Istanbul province, Turkey. The findings indicate that mobbing affect turnover intention positively, while ethical climate has no effect in estimating turnover intention. Study results also suggest that commitment (continuance and affective) is also found to be negatively related to turnover intention of employees. In addition, for Generation-X members, continuance commitment and for Generation-Y members, affective commitment has a significant effect on turnover intention.

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Keywords: Turnover intention, mobbing, organizational commitment, ethical climate, generations.



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1. Introduction

Turnover of employees is a serious problem for all organizations and due to this many research conducted on the factors that affect employees' turnover intention, which is the strongest indicator of turnover (Mobley, Homer, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Employees' turnover is influenced by numerous factors. According to a meta-analyses conducted by Cotton & Tuttle (1986), demographic factors (age, tenure, salary) and job satisfaction are found as reliable correlates of turnover; whereas by another meta-analyses (Tett & Meyer, 1993) it was demonstrated that job satisfaction to be a better indicator of turnover intention than organizational commitment. While there exists many research on the relation between turnover intention and the factors such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction; recently due to the growing interest on other factors, research based on the relation between other factors and turnover intention also increased.

On the other hand, turnover intention of employees is affected by their values; since different generations have different values and beliefs, it is important to consider the effect of the factors on turnover intention, according to different generations. Generations are defined as "a group of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context, who experience the same formative experiences and as a result develop unifying commonalities" (Lyons & Kuron, 2014, p.140). In most of the organizations, employees belonging to different generations (Baby Boomers, Generation-X and Generation-Y) are working together (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009). Since this issue is permanent; with this study, generational differences of the factors affecting turnover intention are addressed.

The major component of the model evolves from the need to examine mobbing at work that may be related to intentional behaviours. Workplace mobbing is a type of mistreatment from group members, subordinates or managers in the workplace that causes not only physical but also emotional harm. Mobbing at work can take shape many different ways and appears as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, physical abuse and humiliation. If employees feel as though they are experiencing kind of mobbing, this can be a very devastating issue causing the thought of quitting work. According to Workplace Bullying Institute, workplace mobbing is an increasing problem that influences all employees. A report of Workplace Bullying Institute (2014) states that female targets bullied by men comprised the largest group (39%), followed by men bullied by men (30%), women bullied by women (21%), and the rarest of all, men bullied by women (10%).

Another popular phenomenon is related with ethical issues in organizations. Ethical climate constitutes the individual moral reactions and intentions of group members as well as reflecting the organizational values and practices (Martin & Cullen, 2006). In this sense, both profit and non-profit organizations operate with some type of ethical climate. When the organization is managed by codes of conduct and indicates highly ethical behaviour, employees perceive they are part of an ethical climate. Drawing on the previous study of Schwepker (2001) and others, this study suggests that employees' perceptions of ethical climate in their workplace affect their intention to quit.

Furthermore, since decades one of the major drivers of employees' motivation has been acknowledged as organizational commitment (Cohen, 2003). It is often measured through behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes; and growing amount of research examine the relations between employee relevant outcomes and organizational commitment. In particular, it is expected, based on prior research, that

commitment would be a predictor of turnover intention. If employees have positive attitudes and feel strong commitment to their organization, then they more likely have a strong desire to come to their work.

Within this frame, with this study, the role of organizational commitment, ethical climate and mobbing behaviour on turnover intention among municipality employees, is examined according to different generations. After this introductory part, the second part of the study covers conceptual background of the modelled predictors; research methodology and findings are included in the third part; fourth part covers conclusion and discussion about the findings.

1.1. Conceptual Framework and Development of Hypotheses

One of the major challenges that the organizations face is employee retention (Agoi, 2015). Because of possible existence of the detrimental effects on important organizational outcomes, organizations deal with the issues related with employee turnover and its antecedents. This is true for whole industries. This intention can be a critical problem for the organization especially when the high performing employees leave the organization. Undeniably, turnover has significant costs for the organizations (Waldman, Kelly, Aurora, & Smith, 2004). Organizations are being affected by employee turnover via training new hires, recruiting, administrative expenses, exit interviews costs and severance pays (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Interrieden, 2005). In general, turnover intention is often defined as “a conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the organization” (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Many studies concluded that there is a high correlation between actual turnover and turnover intentions even intention doesn't necessarily lead to an actual turnover (Parasuraman, 1982; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Theoretically, turnover intention is developed upon the theory of reasoned action based on beliefs-attitude-behavioural intention model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This theory is useful in terms of adequate prediction of intention and behaviour because it surrounds one's cognitions and judgments (Ajzen, 1991; Agoi, 2015). Many determinants leading to employees' turnover intention had been identified by previous research.

Organizational commitment is one of the important determinants of turnover and turnover intentions of employees. Commitment was tackled by various scholars' approaches (Becker, 1960; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). Many of them, including one of the most cited one of Meyer & Allen (1997), have contributed to the development of the concept of organizational commitment (Cohen, 2007, p.2). Organizational commitment is defined through three factors which are: “(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization” (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979, p.226). Organizational commitment concept has received increased attention among scholars and practitioners since organizations seek ways to increase employee retention. Employees who have a strong willingness to work are the highly committed people to organizational goals and have positive attitudes toward it. Employee commitment is not only a link to organizational success but also a major construct that forms the fundamentals of human relations in an organization. Above all, commitment is often a better predictor of turnover (Porter et al., 1974; Steers, 1977). For more than 20 years, numerous researchers studied organizational commitment in the light of three-dimensional (affective, normative, continuance) scale that was interpreted by Meyer & Allen (1984; 1997). Employees ought to remain within the organization that feels high level of normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p.67). This is mostly because they do not begin working in a given organization without some attitude toward commitment.

Attitudes are general perceptions of commitment that are often developed in the socialization process (Cohen, 2007, p.352). Affective commitment should have normative commitment prior to the strongest positive relation. Here, employee is emotionally attached and identifies himself with the organization. Continuance commitment is either unrelated or negatively related to these desirable workplace behaviours (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolyntsky, 2002, p.22).

Studies mostly argued that if the employees are highly committed then they have a strong desire and intention to remain with their organizations (Steers, 1977; DeGieter, et al., 2011; Lambert & Hogan, 2009; Paré & Tremblay, 2007; Perryer, Jordan, Firms, & Travaglione, 2010; Vandenberghe & Tremblay, 2008; Yücel, 2012). There is also growing evidence that employees' positive attitudes are important predictors of their behaviours such as turnover (Jaros, 1997). Most of the studies indicated that commitment to the organization is a strong predictor of turnover (Yang, 2008). In the light of the previous literature, we argue that organizational commitment has a negative effect on turnover intention and hypotheses are proposed as below:

H₁: Organizational commitment negatively affects turnover intention.

H_{1a}: Affective commitment negatively affects turnover intention.

H_{1b}: Normative commitment negatively affects turnover intention.

H_{1c}: Continuous commitment negatively affects turnover intention.

Apart from the individual factors, organizational factors also affect turnover intention of employees. Ethical climate is one such framework that revives growing emphasis for both theory and practice (Martin & Cullen, 2006, p.175). Since the ethical climate framework's theoretical emergence (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988), the concept received a considerable amount of interest. Basically, ethical climate is a type of organizational work climate (Martin & Cullen, 2006, p.176). The ethical climate of an organization refers to "the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behaviour and how ethical matters should be handled in the organization" (Victor & Cullen, 1987, p.51-52). Related literature supports the positive relation between the perception of a climate based on ethical roots and positive employee outcomes (Tsai & Huang, 2008). When employees perceive the strong roots of moral conduct in an organization, they perceive alignment with their personal values that improves their productive inner and outer life (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). On the other hand, weak ethical guidelines cause the employees to perceive their work as meaningless and create an unproductive life experience (Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2008, p.569). Thus, both ethical behaviour and deviant workplace behaviours might be predicted by organization's ethical climate.

When companies establish a high standard for ethical climate, employees know that they will be treated well. Mulki, Jaramillo & Locander (2006) report that employees who operate in an ethical organization are more likely to trust their supervisor, are happier with their jobs, and are less likely to quit. There are numerous studies that have investigated the relationship among these constructs (DeConinck, 2011; Hart, 2005; Jaramillo, Mulki, & Solomon, 2006; Mulki et al., 2006; Mulki et al., 2008; Schwepker, 2001; Stewart, Volpone, Avery, & McKay, 2011). Based on the literature, the hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₂: Ethical climate negatively affects turnover intention.

On the other hand, some of the organizational factors have a positive effect on turnover intention. Mobbing is one of the organizational factors that had been demonstrated to have a significant effect on the

behavior of employees. Today, a growing interest among researchers is based on negative workplace behaviors. This relies on the fact that counterproductive behavior in the workplace can harm organizations (Peterson, 2002, p.47). Workplace deviance is often known as voluntary behavior that threatens basic organizational norms and the wellbeing of an organization as well as organizational members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Peterson, 2002). In this sense, research that have been conducted, upon so far, examined the effect of socially harmful behaviors, such as abusive supervision, aggression, interpersonal deviance, social undermining, harassment, and workplace mobbing (Houshmand, O'Reilly, Robinson, & Wolff, 2012). Mobbing is recognized as a relevant and destructive phenomenon. In the literature, workplace mobbing is defined as: "the repeated exposure over time to mistreatment and acts of aggression by others within one's organization, including from subordinates, supervisors and colleagues" (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009, p.2). Since workplace mobbing has major negative consequences on turnover intention of employees (Van Schalkwyk, Els, & Rothmann, 2011), this phenomenon is addressed in this study. Workplace mobbing usually appears under various circumstances and in different forms of deviance (such as gossiping about fellow employees, physical abuse). The responsibility to cope with this issue does not only rely on the employees but also the organization to protect the employees and support them against such actions in the workplace (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2011). Thus, if workplace mobbing is under-reported, it may become a silent epidemic matter because of a lack of perceived organizational support.

Van Schalkwyk et al., (2011), in their study argued that when mobbing at workplace increases by superiors or colleagues, the employees' intention to leave the organization will also increase. This confirms the recent empirical findings of various studies that supported the similar assumptions (i.e. Houshmand et al., 2012; Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2008; Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Another contributing study, conducted among a sample of 357 hospital staff, indicates that employees are observed to report high turnover intentions when they are the direct target of mobbing (Lee, Lee, & Bernstein, 2013). Therefore, the hypothesis is developed as follows:

H₃: Mobbing at work positively affects turnover intention.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample and Data Collection

The municipality organizations are noteworthy for research. They employ many white collar workers, playing a key role in improving productivity for local economies. They also have various links with industrial and community activities. This study was carried out with 166 white-collar employees working in one of the municipalities of İstanbul. Survey method was used for the collection of data. Participants were chosen according to conventional sampling method. The data was gathered by online survey. The SPSS for Windows software was used for data analysis. The sample of the study consists of mostly female (79,5%), married (69,3%) and university graduate (36,9%) participants. 77,8% of the 166 participants are staff, 7,6% of them are mid-level managers. The average tenure of the participants is 9 years and the average age of the participants is approximately 37.

Based on their ages, 39,7% of the participants belong to Generation-X whereas 60,3% of them belong to Generation-Y. Differences between generations are confounded with changes due to age, life stage and career stage as there are numerous studies that have determined the generations. Cennamo & Gardner (2008) has identified the generations as Generation X (born between years 1962-1979), Baby

Boomers (born 1946-1961) and Generation Y (born 1980-2000). In this study, the year of birth has been the major fact of determination.

2.2. Research Model and Instruments

The purpose of this study is to determine the predictors of turnover intention. In this respect, the main effects of ethical climate, mobbing, and organizational commitment in predicting turnover intention was investigated. According to the theoretical background and robust rationales, the developed conceptual model is presented in Figure-1.

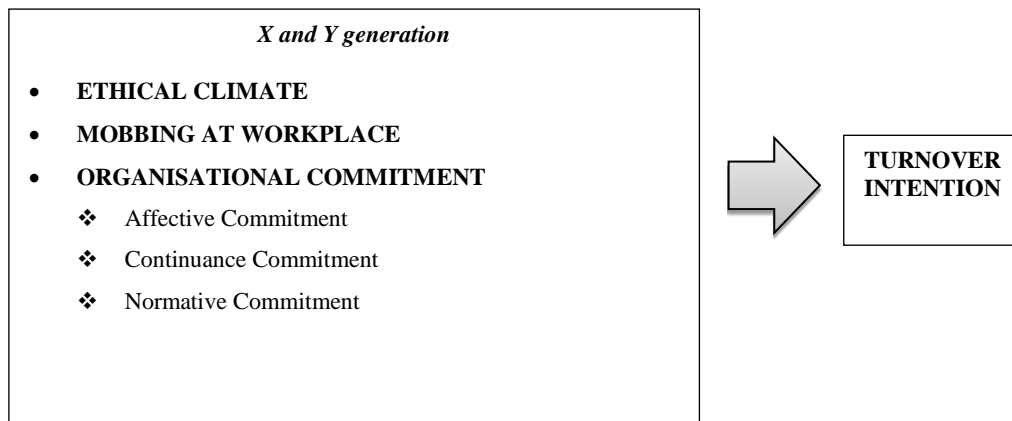


Figure 01. The Research Model

Turnover intention of employees was measured with 3-item scale of Mobley et al., (1978). 24 item scale developed by Allen & Meyer (1990) was used to measure organizational commitment; constructs of organizational commitment scale are; affective commitment (8 items); normative commitment (8 items) and continuance commitment (8 items). Ethical climate scale consists of 7 items and was developed by Schwepker (2001). Mobbing at work scale composed of 19 items and was developed by Park & Blenkinsopp (2009). A 5-point response format was used to measure all constructs, ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree".

2.3. Research Findings

According to the findings, the participants' affective commitment is higher than their continuance and normative commitments. The participants ethical climate perception is high (m=3,8) and their mobbing perception is low (m=2,25); besides their turnover intention is also low (m=2,23). When the findings are evaluated based on X and Y generations, it was found out that the level of all of the organizational commitment dimensions for the participants that belong to Generation-X is higher than the participants that belong to Generation-Y. However, the perception of ethical climate, mobbing and intention to leave is higher for Generation-Y when compared to Generation-X (Table-1).

Table 01. Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables

	General		Generation-X		Generation-Y	
	m	σ	m	σ	m	σ
Organizational Commitment						
Affective Commitment	3,9086	,86837	4,0309	,85050	3,8533	,93077
Continuance Commitment	3,3735	,81695	3,4012	,86845	3,3844	,85686
Normative Commitment	3,4618	,83800	3,5154	,86042	3,4111	,90682
	m	σ	m	σ	m	σ
Ethical climate	3,8090	,83885	3,7778	,88223	3,9029	,85332
Mobbing	2,2486	,93697	2,1121	,94461	2,1888	,91530
Turnover intention	2,2329	1,22459	2,0802	1,14547	2,1600	1,24886

In order to test hypotheses, a series of preliminary analysis were used. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951), and bivariate correlation analysis was used to determine the direction and significance of the relations. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and correlation levels of all the variables are presented in Table 2. When the reliability coefficients of the scales used in the research are analysed, it is noticed that the lowest value is 0,800. This suggests that all of the scales are in accordance with scientific standards. Correlation analysis proves that ethical climate has a positive relationship with each dimensions of organizational commitment. There exists a negative relationship between turnover intention and all dimensions of organizational commitment. At the same time, there is a negative relationship between the turnover intention and the ethical climate. Mobbing is correlated negatively with all of the variables except turnover intention, and a positive relationship was found between turnover intention and mobbing (Table-2).

Table 02. Correlations between Variables and Reliability

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Affective Commitment	$\alpha = 0,924$					
(2) Continuance Commitment	,526**	$\alpha = 0,800$				
(3) Normative Commitment	,638**	,484**	$\alpha = 0,832$			
(4) Ethical climate	,535**	,348**	,565**	$\alpha = 0,900$		
(5) Mobbing	-,361**	-,173*	-,302**	-,351**	$\alpha = 0,962$	
(6) Turnover intention	-,392**	-,061*	-,302**	-,274**	,519**	$\alpha = 0,953$

N = 166, ** $p < ,01$ * $p < ,05$

The findings of the regression analysis presented in Table-3 indicate that affective and continuance commitment significantly affects the turnover intention, whereas the effect of normative commitment on turnover intention is insignificant. Besides, mobbing has a statistically significant positive effect on

turnover intention. On the other hand, the effect of ethical climate on turnover intention is not significant (Table-3).

Table 03. Regression Test Results

	β	T	p
Affective Commitment	-,297	-3,218	,002
Continuance Commitment	-,209	-2,713	,007
Normative Commitment	-,094	-1,042	,299
Ethical climate	-,015	,179	,858
Mobbing	,425	6,072	,000
R² = 0,349, F = 17,126, p=0,000			
Dependent Variable: turnover intention			

Variables affecting turnover intention of X and Y generations were examined by regression analysis and both of the models were found to be significant. According to the findings, mobbing perception is effective on turnover intention for both of generation X ($\beta=,611^{**}$) and generation Y ($\beta=,324^{**}$). On the other hand, for participants of generation-X, "*Continuance Commitment*" ($\beta= -,237^{**}$) has a significant negative effect on turnover intention, however, for participants of generation-Y "*Affective Commitment*" ($\beta= -,359^{**}$) has a significant negative effect on turnover intention.

Table 04. Regression Test Results according to Generations

Independent Variables	Generation-X			Generation-Y		
	β	T	p	β	T	P
Affective Commitment	-,050	-,305	,761	-,359	-2,743	,008
Continuance Commitment	-,237	-2,149	,037	-,209	-1,720	,089
Normative Commitment	-,182	-1,324	,192	-,113	-,849	,398
Ethical climate	-,179	-1,367	,178	-,001	-,010	,992
Mobbing	,611	6,207	,000	,324	2,933	,004
Dependent Variable: turnover intention	R² = 0,587 F = 14,186, p=0,000			R² = 0,325 F = 6,767, p=0,000		

3. Conclusion and Further Discussion

Turnover intention due to its associated costs is still an important research topic. A great deal of research has been devoted to studying the antecedents and consequences of turnover intention of employees in numerous sectors. Despite the evidence, there are limited studies that have been conducted among municipality organizations. Since municipality organizations are directly related to the welfare of the society, understanding employees' turnover intentions and how to retain them is important. The findings

of the research indicate a negative effect of affective and continuance commitment, a positive effect of mobbing on turnover intention of employees. These findings are in accordance with previous literature. Besides, with this research the difference of the effect of these factors on turnover intention among generations were tracked. Currently, Generation-Y members form the majority of organizations' employees. In this study, for Generation-Y members, it was found that affective commitment significantly affects their turnover intentions negatively. Therefore in order to increase their affective commitment, it is important for the organizations to develop new policies to retain these employees, Twenge (2010) suggests that Generation-Y members do not want to change their jobs frequently however in order to reduce their turnover intention they require more flexibility and work-life balance. On the other hand for Generation-X members, continuance commitment has a significant negative effect on their turnover intention. According to Gürsoy, Maier, & Chi (2008), Generation X employees expect recognition, pay and promotion in addition the findings of the study conducted by Lub, Bijvank & Bal, Blomme, & Schalk (2012) indicate that among other factors job security was valued by Generation-X employees. In accordance, for these employees the managers should address job security in the workplace. On the other hand, for employees of both of the generations, mobbing has a positive effect on turnover intention, although their perception of mobbing is low. Therefore, the organizations should develop policies for reducing and eliminating mobbing at the workplace.

With this study, some of the determinants of turnover intention were addressed and the relations were tested; however, some limitations also exist. One of the limitations is the sample size, the sample consists of only 166 employees and the research was undertaken only in one municipality. It is important to further implement the research in other types of organizations (i.e. profit organizations), in order to understand whether the relations between the variables differ. In addition, although in some of the organizations still Generation-X employees forms most of the workforce, representation of Generation-X employees in the sample is much lower than Generation-Y employees. Apart from these limitations, with this research, important findings about turnover intention were derived based on generational differences.

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