

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

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GRANT TITLE: Occupational Stress and Turnover Issues Relating to Gender and Ethnicity: The Mediating Effects of Social Support, Locus of Control, and Employment Expectations

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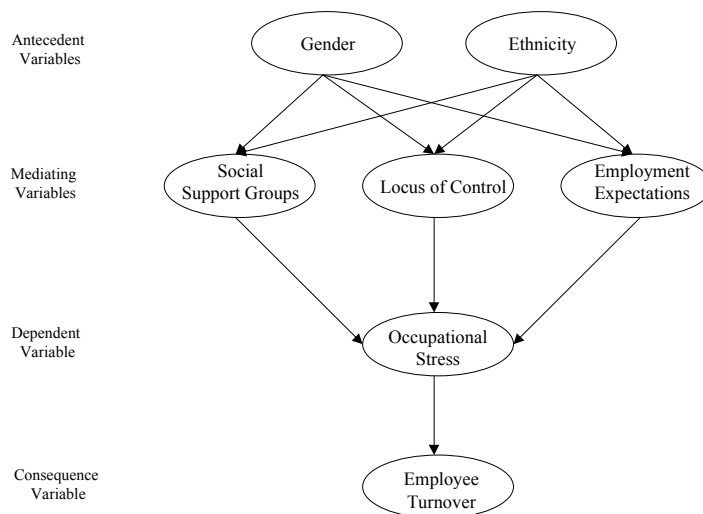
OBJECTIVE: To examine how personality (locus of control), social support groups (a source of additional information), and employment expectations (knowledge acquired at hiring) impact an individual's level of occupational stress and turnover intentions; to examine how gender and ethnicity differences also influence the effects of these variables of interest.

APPROACH: A theoretical model was developed linking social support, locus of control, and employment expectations to occupational stress and turnover intentions. Hypotheses were then formulated from the theoretical model. Data pertaining to the aforementioned constructs as well as several demographic variables were collected via a survey questionnaire that was constructed and sent out to 285 potential respondents. The collected survey data were then accumulated and a path analysis statistical approach was utilized to test the theoretical model and related hypotheses.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS (throughout award period): The traditional theory on voluntary turnover has extensively examined the effects of job-related stress on an employee's intent to leave the organization. Though much has been gained by this examination, this stream of literature has only been able to explain a modest portion of the variance in actual turnover (Hom et al. 1992). Guided by organizational behavior and social psychology-based literature and theory, the authors developed a behavioral-based, theoretical model of occupational stress and employee turnover. As shown in the attached Figure 1, gender and ethnicity are perceived as antecedents to occupational stress and employee turnover. Social support, locus of control, and employment expectations are all modeled as mediators of occupational stress. Testable hypotheses pertaining to the aforementioned relationships were formulated from the model. A survey questionnaire designed to capture the information required for model and hypotheses testing was constructed by the authors. The survey instrument was distributed to 285 potential respondents with a total of 96 usable responses being gathered. Path analysis was used to evaluate the theoretical model and proposed hypotheses. Results of statistical analysis indicate that gender and ethnicity are insignificant in the occupational stress/turnover model. This suggests that males and

females and Caucasians and Non-Caucasians alike are susceptible to occupational stress and subsequently prone to turnover. Results also indicate support for the proposed stress-buffering, meditating variables. Specifically, individuals who perceive that they have higher quantities of social support experience lower levels of occupational stress, individuals who possess an internal locus of control report lower levels of occupational stress, and individuals who perceive that their employers bestowed realistic employment expectations possess lower levels of occupational stress. Finally, results of the analysis reveal that occupational stress, locus of control, and employment expectations are all important predictors of employee turnover.

Figure 1
Theoretical Model



CONCLUSIONS: Results of the study suggest that an individual's personality type (locus of control), the perceived existence of social support groups, and the nature of the employment expectations established during the recruitment process can be important buffers of occupational stress. Contrary to expectations, however, the study finds that females and males as well as minorities and Caucasians possess similar levels of occupational stress. The mediating factors identified in the study look promising as components of the military's recruitment, retention, and career development processes. First, the locus of control variable appears to possess a significant ability to explain the reported level of occupational stress as well as turnover intentions. Because locus of control literature suggests that internals and externals react quite differently to similar circumstances and/or stimuli, it may be useful for supervisors to understand the personality types of their subordinates. Knowledge of this trait should enable supervisors to provide a better employee/job assignment match and be more effective during their interaction with subordinates. Second, the concept of co-worker social support groups could be introduced by the military during the recruitment process. Preconceived notions regarding the level of stress experienced during employment within the military could be

countered by recruiters with discussions of the positive, buffering roles that support groups have been able to provide members. It is expected that the results of the study could help the military identify a variety of formal and informal support networks that will decrease the level of occupational stress for employees and thus improve their retention and subsequently increase the overall diversity, experience, and quality of the military's workforce. Third, the bestowing of realistic employment expectations appears to have a significant impact on occupational stress and intent to turnover. Employers offering a realistic job preview will likely witness employees achieving a better initial organizational fit based on accurate expectations.

SIGNIFICANCE: The results of the study suggest that a certain portions of occupational stress and subsequent employee turnover are, in part, controllable by the employer. The study introduces several controllable constructs (e.g., social support and employment expectations) which could be further investigated and utilized by the military to improve recruitment, enlistment, and retention.

PATENT INFORMATION: Not applicable.

AWARD INFORMATION: None to date.

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS (for total award period): None to date.

BOOK CHAPTERS, SUBMISSIONS, ABSTRACTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS
(for total award period):

Donnelly, D. and J. Quirin. "Occupational Stress and Turnover Issues in Public Accounting: The Mediating Effects of Social Support, Locus of Control, and Employment Expectations." Accepted for presentation at International Applied Business Research Conference held March 14-19, 2002. Abstract will be published in conference proceedings.

Donnelly, D. and J. Quirin. "Occupational Stress and Turnover Issues in Public Accounting: The Mediating Effects of Social Support, Locus of Control, and Employment Expectations." Currently under review for presentation at the American Accounting Association (AAA) Annual Meeting held August 2002.

Donnelly, D. and J. Quirin. "Occupational Stress and Turnover Issues in Public Accounting: The Mediating Effects of Social Support, Locus of Control, and Employment Expectations." Currently under review at the Journal of Applied Business Research.