

Any port in a storm: Emotional stability as a stabilizer for the job performance-voluntary turnover relationship

How can organizations use personality assessments in hiring and retention practices to improve workforce stability, considering emotional stability's impact on job performance and turnover? What role does emotional stability play in turnover decisions, particularly in response to low or high-performance evaluations? How can the findings of this study inform and shape future HR management approaches?

Employee turnover remains a critical issue for organizations, with job performance often seen as a key predictor. In this study, In-Sue Oh and colleagues investigate how emotional stability influences the relationship between job performance and voluntary turnover. Using a multi-wave, time-lagged dataset spanning five years, they examine whether employees with higher emotional stability are less likely to leave their jobs, regardless of performance level.

The findings reveal that emotional stability acts as a stabilizing factor in employee retention. Among lower performers, those with higher emotional stability are less likely to leave compared to their more neurotic counterparts, who are prone to withdrawal due to heightened stress responses. Among higher performers, neurotic employees are more likely to leave despite their success, possibly due to anxiety about maintaining their performance or seeking new opportunities. In contrast, emotionally stable high performers show little inclination to quit, reinforcing the idea that emotional stability contributes to workforce stability.

Ultimately, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for HR professionals seeking to improve hiring and retention practices. By recognizing that emotional stability not only influences job performance (positively) and turnover (negatively) but also nullifies the downstream effects of job performance ratings, low or high, on turnover decisions, organizations are advised to attract, select, and retain employees with higher emotional stability to reduce abrupt turnover and maintain a more stable workforce. However, organizations need to ensure that personality assessments are reliable and valid, and they are robust to faking.

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

- Employees with higher emotional stability exhibit greater retention, regardless of performance level, underscoring the stabilizing role of emotional stability in workforce stability.
- Employees with lower emotional stability (higher neuroticism) are more prone to voluntary turnover, particularly at high and low performance extremes, highlighting the detrimental impact of neuroticism on abrupt job changes.
- Integrating emotional stability assessments into hiring and retention practices can help enhance workforce stability and reduce turnover-related organizational disruptions.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- HR Professionals
- Leaders and Managers
- Academics

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