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# Employee Responses to Job Dissatisfaction

Kristine Vangel

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Over the past several years, high unemployment and limited job mobility prospects have kept voluntary employee turnover statistics relatively low. In more favorable job markets, dissatisfied employees are likely to leave undesirable work situations and move on to what they perceive will be more satisfying work relationships. In tight labor markets, dissatisfied employees often find that they are unable to leave dissatisfying jobs. This paper explores two questions pertaining to retention of dissatisfied employees. What can we expect, in terms of turnover, when the job market becomes more favorable to job seekers and how do dissatisfied employees who remain with employers respond behaviorally while continuing to work in a dissatisfying work environment?

In the workplace, employee turnover carries a negative connotation. Turnover can be costly to a firm because the organization loses its investment in human capital. Turnover can be voluntary or involuntary. It can be the decision of the employee or at the hand of the employer. Employers continually work to reduce voluntary turnover costs through various human resource functions including training, performance management, compensation strategies, and selection methods. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), the current voluntary turnover rate for private industry is 1.4%, compared to 2.5% 10 years ago.

Although the prior statistic appears beneficial to employers, looks can be deceiving. In recent years, job markets have bottomed out and unemployment rates have risen significantly resulting in poor employment prospects for job-seekers. This not only has an impact on turnover rates but also a substantial impact on employers. Although employers strive to reduce turnover, some percentage of voluntary turnover is healthy for an organization; especially when the employees who are not engaging in voluntary turnover are dissatisfied in their jobs and displaying negative job behaviors. Excluding failing job markets, turnover would typically be subject to an employee's job satisfaction and/or organizational commitment.

## **JOB SATISFACTION & ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**

The topics of job satisfaction and organizational commitment have received considerable attention from human resource professionals, organizational psychologists and sociologists throughout the past fifty years.

Although both terms tend to have intuitive, common-sense meanings, the two concepts have been examined and reconceptualized in many academic papers, scholarly journals and various studies. Much of the interest stemming from job satisfaction and organizational commitment falls in the realm of behavioral consequence, as it has been argued that these two concepts relate to productivity, attendance at work, participation and turnover (Camp, 1993). Thus, job satisfaction and commitment are potential predictors of future employee behavior.

Job satisfaction, defined by Locke, is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (1976: 1304). It can be measured globally or by facet by job satisfaction measurement scales such as the job descriptive index (JDI) or other measurement instruments (Brown & Peterson, 1993). Job satisfaction has long been thought to have a significant effect on job performance. However, support for this hypothesis has been hard to obtain (Christian, Iyer & Soberman, 2006). In their 2006 study, Christian, Iyer and Soberman; somewhat counter-intuitively, found a significant, positive effect of job performance on job satisfaction. This has important implications for firms because it implies that actions to increase job performance can also increase job satisfaction. Additionally, job satisfaction has also been strongly, positively correlated to organizational commitment (Brown & Peterson, 1993).

Organizational commitment yields two schools of thought: behavioral and attitudinal. One of the first definitions of commitment comes from Becker's (1960) work on the concept of side bets, whereby commitment is seen as a force displaying continued organizational membership

due to extraneous interests. Subsequent research on this behavioral school of thought later termed the concept of “investments,” a contribution in which a future gain will lead to continued membership (Kantor, 1968). The attitudinal school of thought views commitment as a set of intentions involving a strong belief in the organization’s goal, a willingness to exert high levels of effort, and a desire to maintain membership (Steers, 1977). Meyer and Allen (1991) later revamped this concept and proposed a three-component model highlighting an emotional attachment or identification with the organization (affective commitment), a realization of the costs associated with leaving (continuous commitment), and a feeling of obligation to continue employment (normative commitment). But what contributes to an employee’s decision-making

process in regards to membership, or for that matter, turnover? One credible answer is the motivational model of expectancy theory (Graen, 1969).

**Expectancy/Commitment Theory**

Expectancy theory is based on the belief that an individual’s effort will result in valued rewards, thereby explaining membership and performance in organizations. Scholl (1981), however, argues that commitment is an independent force that also explains employee behavior. Scholl identifies 4 non-exhaustive commitment mechanisms independent of behavior and expectancy: (1) investments, (2) reciprocity, (3) lack of alternatives, and (4) identification. What results is a 2 x 2 matrix as evident in Table 1:

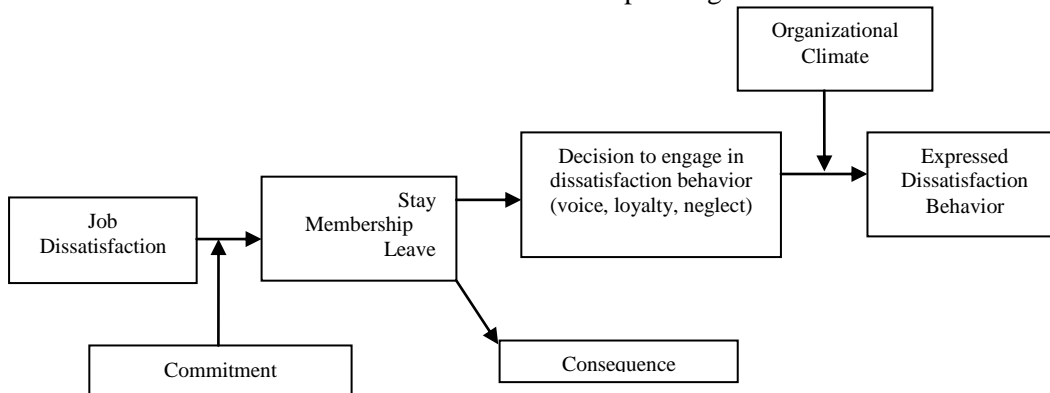
**TABLE 1**  
Relationship of Commitment and Expectancy as a Motivating Force

	Low Commitment	High Commitment
Low Expectancy	Dissatisfied-Leave	Stay-Dissatisfied
High Expectancy	Stay-Satisfied	Stay-Satisfied

As evident above, the expectancy/commitment model results in 3 potential behaviors: leave the organization because one is dissatisfied, stay with the organization because one is satisfied, or stay with the organization despite that one is dissatisfied. The interest of this paper is the behavior of those individuals that are dissatisfied but decide to maintain membership in an

organization, and the question of particular interest is: *Can the behavior effects of dissatisfied employees be predicted in various workplace climates?* Specific attention to the nature of the organization is warranted because it is presumed that the organization is the focus of an individual’s commitment (Reichers, 1985). The model of this question is seen in Figure 1 as follows:

**FIGURE 1**  
Job Dissatisfaction Process in Expressing Behavior



To answer this question, the behavioral response of dissatisfied employees must first be identified as well as the various types of workplaces to which workers may be exposed. To begin, we examine Hirshman's concept of exit, voice and loyalty.

### **Exit, Voice, and Loyalty**

Hirshman's concept of exit, voice and loyalty addresses how members within organizations, whether a business, a nation or other groups of people, discern their wrongdoings before decline and failure. Hirshman notes that's "under any economic, social, or political system, individuals, business firms, and organizations in general are subject to lapses from efficient, rational, law-abiding, virtuous, or otherwise functional behavior" and that by understanding these reactions, organizations can craft the means to address their members' concerns and issues, thereby improving the organization (Hirshman, 1970: 1). The basic concept of Hirshman's model is that members of organizations will have two possible responses to organizational decline, exit or voice, and that loyalty can have an effect on those responses.

Exit is defined as a withdrawal of membership from an organization, whereas voice is defined as an attempt to repair or improve the workplace through communication via complaint, grievance or proposal for change (Hirschman, 1970). The general principle is that the greater the availability of exit, the less likely voice will be used. However, an employee's measure of loyalty, or private support to the organization, can have an effect on both exit and voice. As a rule, loyalty activates voice and is seen as a more passive reaction in which employees stay with an organization, waiting for conditions to improve (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992).

Throughout the past 40 years, Hirshman's concept of exit, voice and loyalty has been examined by researchers and theorists resulting in various perspectives and controversies on the model. We now review each component separately and examine the current research and theory on dissatisfaction in organizations.

### **Exit**

In some of the earlier research on turnover studies, Porter and Steers (1973), in their work on employee turnover and absenteeism, show that a multiplicity of organizational, work and personal factors are associated with an employee's decision to withdraw. They produce very strong evidence to support that overall job satisfaction represents an importance force in an individual's participation decision. They define satisfaction as the sum total of an individual's met expectations on the job, and propose factors that make up the employee's expectation set (Porter & Steers, 1973). The four general categories in the organization in which factors can be found that affect withdrawal that Porter and Steers propose are: organization-wide (e.g., pay and promotion policies), immediate work group (e.g., unit size, supervisor, and co-worker relations), job content (e.g., nature of job requirements), and person-based (e.g., age and tenure). They conclude that the major roots of turnover appear to be fairly widespread throughout the various facets of an organization as they interact with particular types of individuals (Porter & Steers, 1973). Porter and Steers (1973) also note that role clarity and receipt of recognition and feedback may also be inversely related to turnover, however results were tentative and further research was required.

In their analysis, Porter and Steers (1973) suggest that other variables could mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and the act of quitting, and Mobley (1977) suggests that there are several possible intermediate steps in the withdrawal decision process. Mobley's (1977) model suggests that thinking of quitting is the next logical step an employee experiences after dissatisfaction, but there are several other steps an employee might undergo before actually quitting. Those steps include: evaluation of expected utility of search and cost of quitting, intention to search for alternatives, search for alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, comparison of alternatives vs. present job, and intending on leaving (Mobley, 1977). Mobley notes a lack of research of evaluation in the withdrawal decision process and recommends more emphasis be placed on the psychology of that process.

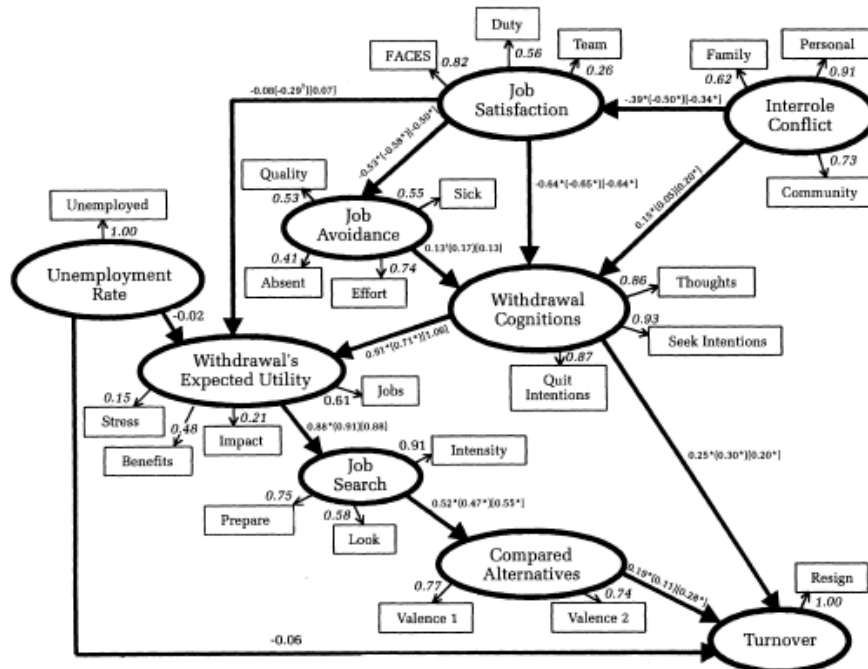
In continuation of his research, Mobley collaborates with Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979) to form a better understanding of the psychology of the employee turnover process by proposing a joint-collaborated, clear conceptual model of the process. Because past research has revealed that age, tenure, overall satisfaction, job content, intentions to remain on the job, and commitment are all negatively, and consistently, related to turnover; Mobley et al. (1973), provide a potential mechanism for integrating the research findings into an individual-level model of the turnover process. The resulting model is described as starting with turnover behavior and working back through its antecedents. The conceptual model calls attention to the main effects of satisfaction, the attraction and expected utility of the present job, and the attraction and expected utility of any alternatives (Mobley et al., 1979). Expected utility is conceptualized as “the individual’s valuation of the rewards offered by different alternatives and his appraisal of his chances of being able to realize each of the alternatives” (Blau, Gustad, Jessor, Parnes, & Wilcox, 1956: 533). In addition to their proposed complex conceptual model; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino conclude that integrative, multivariate longitudinal research is needed for

significant progress in understanding the psychology of the employee turnover process.

In an effort to examine and validate Mobley’s research, Griffeth and Hom (1991) conducted cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses of Mobley’s theories and concepts. Their comprehensive examination supported many of Mobley’s basic views but compelled them to make some revisions. In particular, Griffeth and Hom (1991) proposed that dissatisfaction may stimulate a general predisposition to withdraw, thus mobilizing more specific withdrawal intentions. They suggest that such withdrawal decisions may occur simultaneously, even if the act of withdrawal occurs at a different time.

Griffeth and Hom’s work was later expanded upon by Hom and Kinicki (2001) as they used structural equation modeling and survival analysis to examine how dissatisfaction drives employee turnover. Hom and Kinicki (2001) validated previous findings that withdrawal cognitions and job comparisons have direct effects on terminations and can mediate the influence of other antecedents. Additionally, they integrated job avoidance, interrole conflict, and employment conditions into the Hom-Griffeth model, as seen in Figure 2 (Hom & Kinicki, 2001).

**Figure 2**  
How Dissatisfaction Translates into Turnover: Expanded Hom-Griffeth Model



Interrole conflict, as defined by Kossek and Ozeki (1998) is the collision between work and nonwork role demands, or more specifically, the extent to which one's job interferes with community and personal endeavors. Hom and Kinicki's (2001) research showed support that interrole conflict decreases job satisfaction and increases withdrawal cognitions. Additionally, their research supported the prediction that job satisfaction reduces job avoidance, and job avoidance increases with withdrawal cognitions (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Hom and Kinicki (2001) concluded that interrole conflict and job avoidance directly influence turnover and they suggest future research should broaden the concept of withdrawal acts to include behavior such as tardiness or acts of vocal complaint. Another finding from their research showed support that unemployment rates also act to moderate turnover, in that recessions could weaken the control that withdrawal cognitions had over an employee's expected withdrawal utility (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). In other words, during periods of high unemployment, employees thinking about quitting would become pessimistic about the benefits of leaving and their chances of finding another job.

### **Voice**

The term voice refers to how employees are able to communicate their opinions of work activities and whether they have a say in decision making issues within the organization. Hirschman defined voice as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape, from an objectionable state of affairs" (1970:30). Worker voice within an organization can be communicated in a variety of ways. For instance, the presence of a union can function to unite the needs and wants of those employees within the bargaining unit. Employees can also serve as their own voice when no union is present by speaking directly to their employer via open-door policies, grievance procedures and suggestion boxes. In cases where employees hire lawyers to file class action suits against their employer for differences regarding pay, dismissal or harassment; the lawyer functions as the employee voice (O'Toole, 2006). Federal and state legislature has also operated for worker voice by implementing regulations and improving the conditions and terms of employment. In short, the term "employee voice" has a broad range

definition that is used to summarize several approaches to employee relations.

A multidimensional construct of employee voice was proposed by Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003) that is based on employee motives. They differentiate between three different kinds of voice: acquiescent voice, defensive voice, and prosocial voice, which differ according to whether an employee is passive or proactive, or whether the behaviors are self-protected or not (Van Dyne et al., 2003). In essence, prosocial voice is other-oriented (not intended to benefit the self) behavior based on cooperation and suggestion for change, defensive voice is self-protective and based on fear (e.g. when employees engage in self-defensive behavior such as blaming others), and acquiescent voice is disengaged and based on resignation (e.g. automatically supporting management proposals due to the belief that one is unable to make a difference) (Van Dyne et al., 2003). As evident from these definitions, prosocial voice is the most consistent with Hirschman's concept of voice. Van Dyne et al. also propose a similar construct for employee silence and recommend future research on the constructs with special attention to their antecedents and consequences in workplace atmospheres.

Recent research suggests that the opportunity for voice is closely linked to organizational commitment, particularly when positive relationships exist between employee/line-manager, and when there is trust in senior management (Farndale, van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). Farndale et al. (2011) make note that when employees perceive themselves as having an impact on organizational decisions, they show higher levels of organizational commitment. Another example of recent research on voice comes from the work of Avery, McKay, Wilson, Volpone and Killham (2011) as they examine the effect of tenure on employee voice. Avery et al. (2011) suggest that employee voice diminishes with tenure but is particularly important for employees with less tenure. Other studies have also shown that job dissatisfaction can lead to creativity when voice is expressed and when employees are committed to remaining in their organizations (Zhou & George, 2001).

Voice, however, may not always be constructive as Van Dyne and LePine (1998) would suggest it is. They define voice as an expression of constructive criticism meant to make innovative suggestions and modifications for change. However, research conducted on the use of informal voice systems, such as open-door policies, does not support this theory. Karen Harlos (2001) found in her research a strong evidence of deaf-ear syndrome and frustration effects on employees utilizing informal voice systems. Deaf-ear syndrome refers to the organization's failure to respond to employees' complaints whereas frustration effects are defined as a pattern of increased dissatisfaction with perceptions of unfairness (Harlos, 2001). In essence, Harlos (2001) found that voice complaint systems can foster exactly what they are intended to prevent. Thus, Hirshman said it best when he said voice is "messy and full of heartbreak" (1970: 107).

### **Loyalty**

According to Hirschman's concept of exit, voice, and loyalty, the behaviors of exit and voice are moderated by an employee's loyalty (1970). His theory suggests that loyal people are less likely to exit and more likely to use voice to change the relationship or wait patiently until the situation improves. The concept of loyalty, according to Hirshman (1970), is predominately portrayed as an attitude that affects the use of exit or voice, but other times loyalty is described as a behavior in which employees act to support the organization. This dual concept of loyalty has resulted in minor controversy among researchers, as some have conceptualized loyalty as an attitude while others have interpreted it as a distinct behavioral response (Saunders, 1992). Therefore, researchers and theorists have worked to enhance or refine Hirschman's concept of loyalty due in no small part to the fact that it is the most elusive of the three concepts.

Barry (1974) argues that Hirshman's concept of loyalty is poorly developed and only holds credit in regards to 'brand loyalty' (i.e. the unwillingness of a customer to switch from one brand of product to another). Barry (1974) negates Hirshman's concept of loyalty as an attitude, claiming that loyalty does not typically mean a reluctance to leave but is more so a

commitment to further enhance the welfare of an organization through change. Thus, Barry (1974) concludes the concept of exit, voice and loyalty is presented through an incorrect relationship and in fact, voice is built into the concept of loyalty which requires non-exit as a means to exercise voice.

Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, and Mainous (1988) view loyalty as a passive constructive behavior (e.g. being quietly supportive and patient). Unlike passive voice as presented by Dyne et al., the concept of loyalty here incorporates a private support for the organization while remaining optimistic for conditions to improve. Rusbult et al. (1988) propose that loyalty is an attempt to revive or maintain satisfactory employment conditions. Their research provides support that loyalty is more apt to be used with employees who experience high levels of overall job satisfaction and high prior satisfaction and with employees who have high investment in their job (Rusbult et al., 1988).

In a revised model built on the behavior of business firms in the Polish economy in the late 1970's, Kolarska and Aldrich (1980) introduce the concept of silence in place of loyalty. The framework behind this model is that doing nothing is the most common response by dissatisfied employees because it is the path of least resistance (Kolarska & Aldrich, 1980). Reasons for doing nothing could include feelings of loyalty, apathy, withdrawal, or contentment (Kolarska & Aldrich, 1980). This model, therefore, supports the theory that loyalty is built into a separate construct but is not a direct behavioral response to feelings of discontentment. In conclusion, Kolarska and Aldrich (1980) suggest that staying silently and doing nothing is the standard against what authorities judge other responses of dissatisfaction.

Graham and Keeley (1992) also argue that loyalty is an attitude that yields behavioral consequences and they introduce three types of loyalty: unconscious, passive, and reformist. Unconscious loyalty is a term supported by Hirschman and could be the result of inattention, selective perception, or total ignorance (Graham & Keeley, 1992). Passive loyalty most closely resembles patience or the length of time members will passively wait for improvement, and reformist loyalty leads to organizational change as

participants become increasingly active in pressuring the organization (Graham & Keeley, 1992). Graham and Keeley (1992) note that empirical research can help determine the antecedents and consequences of loyalty and the multiple roles loyalty can play in relation to voice, however, it cannot determine which conceptual interpretation of loyalty is correct.

One suggestion to eliminate the confusion between loyalty as an attitude or a behavioral outcome is presented by Leck and Saunders (1992). They propose use of the term “patience” in replace of loyalty as a behavior. Leck and Saunders (1992) argue that Hirschman predominately described loyalty as an attitude, thus the rationale to change the concept of loyalty as a behavior was appropriate to better distinguish the two concepts. Additionally, they suggest patience better describes the construct of loyalty, and disentangles the cause (loyalty as attitude) from the effect (patience as behavior) (Leck & Saunders, 1992). However, this concept of patience has not been incorporated in further research and ultimately has not bridged the gap into an accepted formal definition.

### **Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect**

As evident, the concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty have been interpreted by theorists and researchers across various perspectives, however, none have had such an impact on the framework of the model as Farrell’s inclusion of the concept of neglect. Neglect, as adapted from a study involving romantic relationships, is described as a lax and disregardful behavior among workers (Farrell, 1983). Neglect differs from loyalty in that it is not derived from the hope of recovery; instead there is an implicit acceptance that recovery is not plausible (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Neglect is evident in work settings as very passive or moderately passive responses, such as when an employee exhibits reduced interest or effort, increased lateness or absenteeism, increased errors, or uses company time for personal business (Farrell, 1983).

The belief that neglect can be exceedingly passive and will lead to reduced interest or effort, lends support to the idea that neglect can also be evident in the concept of silence. Silence, according to Van Dyne et al. (2003), is defined as

the act of intentionally withholding ideas, information and opinions which could lead to improvements in an organization. As previously noted in the discussion involving employee voice, Van Dyne and colleagues presented three types of employee voice and employee silence. Mirroring employee voice, the three types of employee silence are: acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Only one of these presented constructs, however, fits the framework of neglect. Defensive silence and prosocial silence are based on proactive behavior due to fear or cooperation, whereas acquiescent silence, that which fits the mold of neglect, is based on employees feeling unable to make a difference and is considered a passive behavior (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Examples of acquiescent silence include withholding ideas based on resignation, or not expressing opinions due to low self-efficacy to make a difference (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Neglect in the form of silence has also been supported by Farrell (1983) as emphasized in a multidimensional scaling study that notes silence is a key characteristic of neglect and inaction.

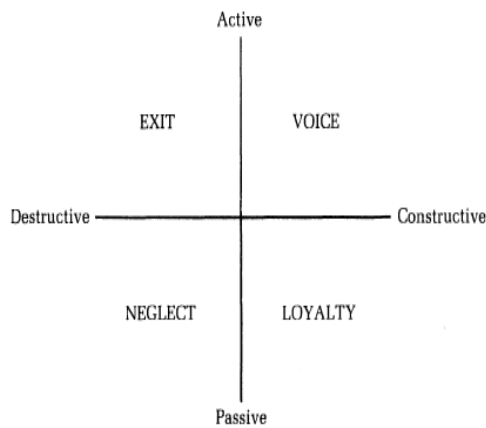
The categories in the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect (EVLN) model as presented by Farrell differ among two primary dimensions: constructiveness versus destructiveness, and activity versus passivity (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). As evident in Figure 3, voice and loyalty are constructive reactions, and exit and neglect are destructive reactions; whereas exit and voice are active reactions, and neglect and loyalty are passive reactions. Constructive reactions are defined as attempts to maintain or revive satisfactory working conditions and in contrast, destructive reactions can impede employee-organization relationships (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992).

### **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: PREDICTING EXIT, VOICE, LOYALTY AND NEGLECT**

In the continued analysis of the EVLN model, Rusbult et al. (1988) examined the effects of job satisfaction, investment size, and quality of alternatives on each of the four categories. They hoped to determine under what circumstances employees would engage in exit, voice, loyalty or neglect based on three complementary studies.



**FIGURE 3**  
Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect Typology  
o of Responses to Job Dissatisfaction



The first study examined causal impact of the category responses to dissatisfaction; the second study explored the effects of job satisfaction, investment size, and quality of alternatives towards each of the four categories in the EVLN model as well as tested for predictions among employees; and the final study focused on the causal impact of the categories in an experimental setting (Rusbult et al., 1988). These three studies consisted of different methodologies and measurements to increase construct validity and external validity. The results supported the theories proposed: that high job satisfaction promoted constructive voice and loyalty responses and inhibited destructive exit and neglect responses, that high levels of investment encouraged voice and loyalty responses and inhibited exit and neglect, and that high quality alternatives encouraged active exit and voice responses and inhibited loyalty (Rusbult et al., 1988). However, there was no significant link evident in the results between the quality of alternatives and the response of neglect (Rusbult et al., 1988).

Analysis of the Rusbult et al.(1988) study shows that in all three studies, investment size interacted along with satisfaction in influencing voice, and in particular, high investment size coupled with high satisfaction most often resulted in voice. It is suggested that perhaps voice is only used when employees are highly motivated to improve conditions because the use of voice may be regarded as a difficult and costly action

(Rusbult et al., 1988). One interesting thing to note was the difference in results for men and women. Men engaged in voice as predicted, when investment and satisfaction were high, whereas women engaged in voice under these same circumstances but also when it was perceived that they had nothing to lose, when investment and satisfaction were low (Rusbult et al., 1988). The third study in this research showed evidence that men engage in higher levels of neglect than women (Rusbult et al., 1988). This difference in reaction between men and women warrants further research to better determine if gender plays a role in predicting dissatisfaction behaviors.

Farrell and Rusbult (1992) continued the analysis of job satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size in influencing the reactions of exit, voice, loyalty and neglect in a meta-analysis of five studies designed to test current theories. Each predictor (i.e. job satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size) was associated with hypotheses regarding all four responses to dissatisfaction, resulting in 12 theory predictions (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). In an effort to enhance validity, the five studies employed multiple methodologies including survey research, laboratory experimentation and longitudinal investigation (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992).

The results of these studies show support that overall job satisfaction is consistently associated with each behavioral response to dissatisfaction, and that quality of job alternatives and employee investment can have an effect on the mode of response to dissatisfaction (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). In particular, high levels of job satisfaction supported constructive tendencies (i.e. voice and loyalty) and reduced destructive tendencies (i.e. exit and neglect), superior job alternatives supported active tendencies (i.e. exit and voice), and greater employee investment appears to promote constructive tendencies (i.e. voice and loyalty) (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). A summary of their findings can be found in Table 2.

Analysis of the Farrell and Rusbult study presents two theoretical predictions that were not supported by the results: (1) poor quality of alternatives would promote loyalty behaviors and, (2) high levels of employee investment would inhibit the tendency to exit (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992).

**TABLE 2**  
Summary of Findings: Farrell and Rusbult, 1992

	<b>Job Satisfaction (JS)</b>	<b>Quality of Alternatives (QA)</b>	<b>Investment Size (IS)</b>
<b>Exit</b>	Greater JS reduced tendencies of exit	Superior QA more likely to exit	No evident relationship
<b>Voice</b>	Greater JS increased tendencies of voice	Superior QA more likely to voice	Greater IS promotes voice
<b>Loyalty</b>	Greater JS increased tendencies of loyalty	No evident relationship	Greater IS promotes loyalty
<b>Neglect</b>	Greater JS reduced tendencies of neglect	Superior QA less likely to neglect	Greater IS inhibits neglect

The hypothesis of loyalty in relation to quality of alternatives was derived from the presumption that employees with low mobility were apt to passively and optimistically wait for conditions to improve, however, there was weak or no support for this based on the results; and suggestions were made for future research to assess multiple variables including organizational commitment and direct turnover intentions (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). The hypothesis of exit in relation to employee investment was based on prior research indicating a negative relationship, however, there was weak or no support for this based on the results; and suggestions were made for future research in determining a potential curvilinear relationship where exit behaviors just shy of actual turnover may be promoted with increased investment size but actual turnover is inhibited by high investment (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992).

Further discussion presented in the Farrell and Rusbult (1992) study stresses the importance of increasing employee satisfaction to promote desirable employee behaviors. The findings also suggest the importance of organizational interventions to promote greater employee-organization relationships, which again act to promote desirable employee behaviors (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). Additionally, it is proposed that in organizational settings with labor markets that are favorable to employees, employee reactions to dissatisfaction may be volatile based on active attempts to change or destroy the employee-organization relationship (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). This could lead to the belief that during times of tight and competitive labor markets, employee reactions may be passive and could result in behaviors of loyalty and neglect. Further research is needed to support or refute these theories.

Research conducted by Withey and Cooper (1989) compared the results of two longitudinal studies in regards to the EVLN model and three predictor variables: the cost of the action, the efficacy of the action, and the attractiveness of the setting in which the action occurs. The cost of the action related to both direct and indirect costs such as time and energy, lost income and benefits, lost skills, loss of reputation and other emotional costs (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Cost of action was then refined to voice costs (i.e. the effort required to bring about change and the likelihood of punitive response) and exit costs (i.e. skill specificity, sunk costs, and investment) (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Skill specificity refers to those skills learned on the job which are nontransferable, sunk costs refers to the economic losses due to turnover, and investment refers to the extent of which a person has devoted a part of themselves to the job. The efficacy of the action related to prior satisfaction, possibility of improvement, and locus of control (i.e. an individual's belief that his or her actions matter); and the attractiveness of the setting refers to commitment and alternatives (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Using longitudinal data from respondents in a sample of 1,000 randomly selected college graduates, Withey and Cooper (1989) tested predictions to data from a smaller sample to assess external validity. Additionally, semi-structured interviews, supervisory ratings, and access to company records were obtained in order to assess construct validity of EVLN responses (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

The results of the Withey and Cooper (1989) study provides support that exit is the most consistently predicted response. Employees are apt to turnover, or take steps towards exiting, when exit costs are low and voice costs are high, when satisfaction and the possibility of

improvement are low, when commitment is low, and when there are more attractive alternatives (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Analysis of these results shows that the economic costs of exit increase loyalty and neglect, and reduce exit; whereas psychological costs not only reduce exit but also reduce loyalty and neglect. This could lead to the belief that economic costs entrap people in their jobs, and psychological costs might act to engage employees in their job (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Additionally, people are more prone to turnover when they are pulled out by attractive alternatives, or pushed out by dissatisfying conditions.

Voice was the hardest variable to predict in this study due to measurement difficulties and conceptual problems (Withey & Cooper, 1989). In particular, the researchers noted a reliance of a response to voice is, in essence, required by those exercising voice. Withey and Cooper (1989) suggest future research in regards to the extent employees are protected, beliefs about vocal reaction, and interpersonal barriers of voice to truly determine a predictor of voice.

The results of this study also show that loyalists are affected by prior satisfaction, possibility of improvement and locus of control; and neglectors are affected by cost of action and efficacy of response (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Withey and Cooper (1989) noted that during the course of their study, the concept of loyalty began to shift from quiet support to something that closely mirrored the action of neglectors, employees just biding their time who were ultimately entrapped. In fact, the results show that many of the same variables that predicted loyalty also predicted neglect (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Withey & Cooper (1989) acknowledge the possibility of their inability to detect loyalty, but also propose that perhaps employees who do not choose to exit are left with two choices instead of three: people can work to change the situation (voice) or become silent (loyalty shading to neglect).

Further analysis of the Withey and Cooper (1989) study shows possible sequences of behaviors suggesting the four responses in the EVLN model are not independent but are related. The first sequence begins with voice, and when voice does not act to solve the dissatisfaction,

employees will then choose one of the remaining three behavioral responses with the availability of another job playing a key role in their decision (Withey & Cooper, 1989). The second sequence starts with loyalty and if nothing changes, the next response is voice. If voice is also not successful, the employee then resorts to either exit or neglect, again with the availability of another job playing a key role in their decision (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Additionally, the study also supported the idea that exit and neglect are related as evident by a positive correlation between the two variables, suggesting that neglect could be seen as a precursor to exit (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Further research is suggested in supporting these theories.

In evaluating the response of exit, voice and loyalty in standard and nonstandard employment settings, Davis-Blake, Broschak, and George (2003) suggested that job insecurity as a form of dissatisfaction can evoke ENLN responses. Berntson, Näswall, and Sverke (2010) sought to refine this theory by investigating the role of employability and job insecurity in moderating exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. The results show that job insecurity has a major effect on exit, voice and loyalty, but not on neglect (Berntson et al, 2010). In particular, Berntson et al. (2010) indicate that employees who experience high employability (i.e. an individual's perception of viability in the labor market) show a higher intention to exit, less use of voice, and lower levels of loyalty. Analysis of these results suggests that insecure, employable individuals tend to focus on their own career path as opposed to general involvement in the organization (Berntson et al, 2010). In contrast, employees who report low employability but also suffer from job insecurity may show a greater loyalty to the organization.

Empirical research on the EVLN model is not restricted to workplace behavior. As previously mentioned, the concept of neglect was identified in a multidimensional scaling study investigating the behavioral responses of dissatisfaction in ongoing, adult romantic involvements (Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). Further research by Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982) in relation to romantic involvements supports the prediction that when prior satisfaction is high and/or when investment

size in increased, voice and loyalty are probable; also, lower levels of investment will inspire exit or neglect responses. The results also indicate that when more attractive alternatives exist, exit behaviors are promoted and loyalist behavior is inhibited (Rusbult et al., 1982). These results are in agreement with subsequent research on workplace dissatisfaction behaviors as previously mentioned.

Further research on the determinants and consequences of the EVLN model in adult romantic involvements show support that problems of greater severity can encourage active responses (i.e. exit and voice) and discourage loyalty behaviors (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). This research also finds that behavioral responses of voice and loyalty resulted in more favorable outcomes and greater evidence of satisfaction and commitment later in the relationship (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). Severity of problems and consequences of EVLN behavior, although touched upon briefly in empirical research with some preliminary findings, has not been narrowly duplicated in workplace dissatisfaction research to date. Further research is recommended to determine if parallels also exist for consequences of EVLN behavior and severity of the problem; as they do for other determinates such as satisfaction, investment size and alternatives.

### **Workplace Climate/Organizational Culture**

“The environment has long been recognized as a source of influence on the individual’s behavior (Downey, Hellrigel, & Slocum, Jr., 1975: 149).” In the past, organizational climate has been defined as an individual’s perception of his or her work environment (Downey et al., 1975). More recently, organizational climate has been viewed as a multidimensional construct that is influenced by organizational characteristics such as leadership style and job activities (Batlis, 1980). Debate has spurned over the years in regards to the differences in terminology between organizational climate and organizational culture. It has been suggested that organizational climate refers to a situation and its link to thoughts and behaviors of employees, whereas organizational culture refers to an evolved context within which a situation is embedded and is ultimately rooted in the values

and beliefs of organizational members (Denison, 1996). However, not all research adopts these definitions. Therefore, semantics aside, because the antecedents of EVLN behavior that could logically affect employee response to dissatisfaction may have its roots in culture or climate, this paper acknowledges the discrepancy of paradigm but focuses towards a bigger picture where either construct is valid.

Two proposed concepts of organizational culture come from Walton’s (1991) analysis of management work-force strategies. Walton (1991) proposed control and commitment based strategies that vary in regards to job design principles, performance expectations, organization structure and style, compensation policies, employment assurance, employee voice policies, and labor-management relations. Walton (1991) noted different behavioral and outcome responses to the two strategies. In particular, as Walton (1991) points out, the benefits of a commitment oriented atmosphere can boost product quality, cut waste, reduce turnover, and promote the development of skills and employee self-esteem.

The basis of a control oriented atmosphere, according to Walton (1991), is structured by a top-down allocation of authority which strives to establish order, exercise control, and achieve productivity and efficiency in the application of the work force. The basis of a commitment oriented atmosphere is structured with relatively flat hierarchies which promote job security and are founded on the belief that employee commitment leads to enhanced performance (Walton, 1991). Walton (1991) suggests a current transition happening, and has been happening, from a control based workforce towards a commitment based workforce, but also notes that most organizations adopt what is termed a transitional stage approach (i.e. a comprehensive version of a commitment based workforce). Walton (1991) alludes to the fact that commitment based strategies increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but research is not provided to confirm or deny these beliefs.

Research conducted by Downey et al. (1975) found significant support that organizational climate interacts with an individual’s personality in predicting job satisfaction. Studies have also shown that culture can affect decision-making

processes which help to guide and shape behavior (Smircich, 1983). Additionally, recent research has suggested that costs associated with EVLN behaviors are a function of the organizational climate (Goldberg, Clark & Henley, 2011). Researchers have also indicated that the decision to express certain behavioral responses of dissatisfaction can hinge on perceived safety and acceptance of ideas (Van Dyne et al., 2003). These perceptions all speak to organizational climate. The question that then comes to mind is: to what extent does organizational climate affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment?

Lok and Crawford (2001), through empirical research investigating the relationship between perceptions of organizational culture, job satisfaction and commitment; found that subculture has a greater influence on commitment than organizational culture. Subcultures are defined as smaller clusters of values, beliefs and attributes which exist independent of organizational culture and are typically found in departmental designations (Lok & Crawford, 2001). It is important to note that the subculture of a group can include core values found in the organizational culture. Three particular types of culture were identified in this study: bureaucratic (e.g. power-oriented and regulated), innovative (e.g. creative and challenging), and supportive (e.g. sociable and relationship-oriented). Lok and Crawford's (2001) results show that innovative subcultures had strong positive effects on commitment, while bureaucratic subcultures had negative effects on commitment. Supportive subcultures, although originally displaying positively correlated results with commitment, did not have significant effects on commitment after having controlled for other independent variables (Lok & Crawford, 2001).

Analysis of these results suggest that factors such as hierarchical decision making, autocratic work environments, and restricted employee empowerment will negatively impact employee commitment (Lok & Crawford, 2001). Thus, organizational climate does in some respect have an indirect impact in the dissatisfaction process for employees, but does organizational climate have a direct impact on the behavior responses of those employees experiencing dissatisfaction? The research would indicate yes. Literature focusing

on voice system failures show support for the fact that if an organization is not supportive and will not act on employee concerns, then individuals will not engage in voice responses (Wilkinson, Dundon, Marchington, & Ackers, 2004). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the decision to engage in vocal responses are influenced by the climate (i.e. perception) in regards to choosing collective or individual voice forums (Goldberg et al., 2001). Therefore, it can be theorized, that organizational climate does directly impact the decision to express EVLN responses.

### **Organizational Climate Effects on EVLN Responses**

To determine the effects of organizational climate on exit, voice, loyalty and neglect, a clear construct of organizational climates must be developed. For the purpose of this paper, we adopt Walton's (1991) concept of control and commitment based workplaces and integrate Lok and Crawford's (2001) three-pronged model of bureaucratic, innovative and supportive cultures to result in three potential organizational cultures: authoritative, receptive, and progressive. An authoritative climate includes control and bureaucratic principles, and is defined as having a hierarchal atmosphere where management is commanding and compliance is absolute. A receptive climate includes commitment and supportive principles, and is defined as having more of an egalitarian structure where problem solving is emphasized through collaboration. A progressive climate includes innovative concepts with a moderate reliance on control and transformation forces. Progressive climates are defined as emphasizing and expecting progress through team-structured workplaces, where management dominates and focus is placed on pioneering skills with challenging objectives.

Before presenting an analysis of empirical research on EVLN responses to each of these three proposed organizational cultures, let us first provide an overview of the empirical research previously examined in this paper. Rusbult et al. (1988) and Farrell and Rusbult (1992) look at the effects of job satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size on EVLN responses. The combined results of these two studies are: high job

satisfaction will increase constructive behavior (i.e. voice and loyalty) and inhibit destructive behavior (i.e. exit and neglect), high levels of investment will encourage voice and loyalty and inhibit neglect, and high quality of alternatives will promote active behaviors (i.e. exit and voice) (Rusbult et al, 1988; Rusbult & Farrell, 1992). Withey & Cooper (1989) suggest that exit is apt to occur when exit costs are low, voice costs are high, satisfaction and chance of improvement are low, commitment is low, and attractive alternatives are available; additionally, they note that psychological costs can reduce the behaviors of exit, loyalty and neglect. Withey & Cooper (1989) also present possible sequencing of behaviors including voice leading to ELN responses, and loyalty leading to voice which in turn leads to exit or neglect. Finally, Berntson et al. (2010) note that employees with low job security and low employability are likely to experience high loyalty, whereas employees who consider themselves as having high employability are more apt to exit, less likely to use voice, and will have lower levels of loyalty. These antecedents of EVLN responses are now incorporated into authoritative, receptive, and progressive climates.

Based on the principles of authoritative climates, it is proposed that employees will experience lower levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of investment, higher levels of quality of alternatives, high voice costs, lower commitment, and low job security. The relationship between management and employees is likely to leave employees feeling that they are easily expendable, resulting in a detached work ethic. Thus, these factors would suggest that employees are most apt to engage in the behavioral response of exit when experiencing dissatisfaction. However, if employability is low or the labor market is tight, employee reactions may be passive and could result in behaviors of loyalty and neglect (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Due to the authoritative climate and regulatory atmosphere of the workplace environment, and the probably that employee investment is low; it is proposed that when exit is not appealing to employees they will be most apt to respond with behaviors of neglect in these environments. Therefore, exit is seen as the initial response in

authoritative climates and when not plausible, neglect is seen as a secondary response.

Receptive climates, however, are more suitable for employees to experience high levels of job satisfaction, low quality of alternatives, high investments, low voice costs, high efficacy of action, and greater commitment. The collaboration between management and employees will likely foster the belief that employee opinion is valued, resulting in increased employee investment and commitment. Thus, it is proposed that during times of dissatisfaction, employees are most likely to engage in behavioral responses of voice and loyalty. In particular, high investments and high satisfaction will most greatly produce a response of voice (Rusbult et al, 1988). Considering Withey & Cooper's (1989) sequencing concept, employees who engage in voice but do not have their needs met and dissatisfaction continues, will then resort to other responses. Due to the high levels of commitment and efficacy of action in receptive climates, it is presumed that when voice is not met, it will transition to the passive response of loyalty, where employees will wait out the suffering conditions for future improvement (Withey & Cooper, 1989; Rusbult et al, 1988; Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). Therefore, voice is seen as the primary response in receptive climates and when voice is not met, loyalty is seen as a secondary response.

Progressive climates are likely to result in employees experiencing high levels of job satisfaction, moderate to low quality of alternatives, high investments, moderate to high voice costs, high commitment, moderate job insecurity, and high levels of employability. Although team work is emphasized in progressive climates, goals and innovation rule the foundation between management expectations and employees; therefore, employees are apt to experience high levels of investment and satisfaction due to their contribution and performance in the organizations success, but fear of failure and reprisal may increase voice costs and lower job security. Thus, these factors would suggest that employees are most apt to engage in the behavioral response of loyalty when first experiencing dissatisfaction. High satisfaction and high investment has resulted in actions of loyalty and voice in empirical research (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult et al.,

1988). However, because voice costs may be considered high, employees in progressive climates are most apt to respond to dissatisfaction through means of loyalty. If conditions do not improve once loyalty exceeds its usefulness, it is proposed that employees are then likely to engage in the response of exit. This is due to the support of empirical research finding exit responses increase when employability is high, voice costs are high, and attractive alternatives exist (Withey & Cooper, 1989; Berntson et al, 2010). Therefore, loyalty is seen as the initial response in progressive climates and when conditions do not improve, exit is seen as a secondary response.

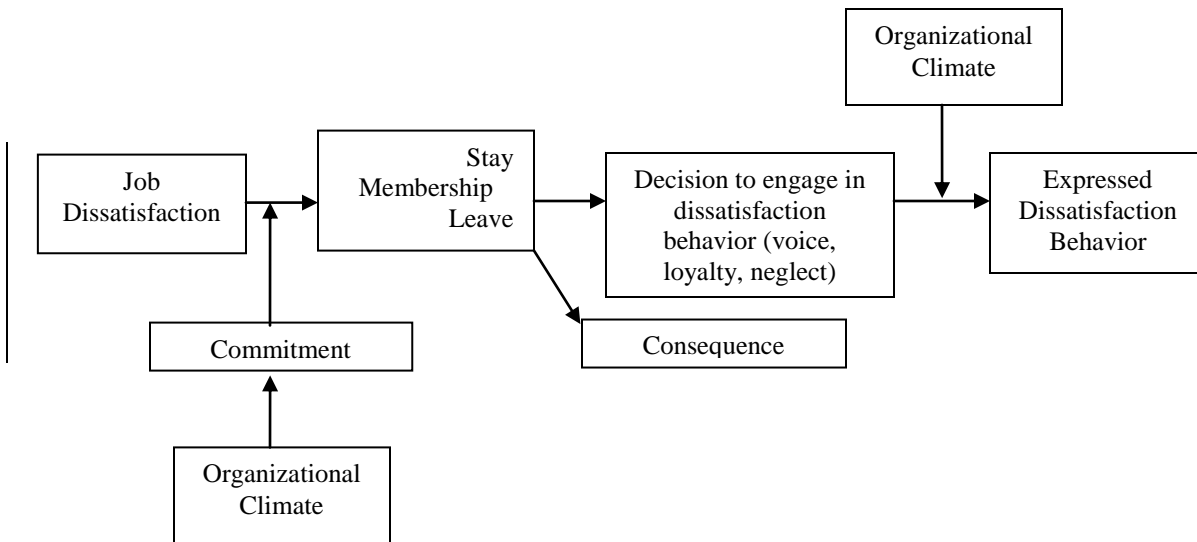
**CONCLUSION**

Empirical research is required in supporting these proposed hypotheses. It should be noted, however, that not all employees are prone to act the same in response to dissatisfaction for each individual is different, and exit costs and psychological costs can vary. Additionally, climate is perceptive, so although an organization’s culture may be definable, personal

experience can potentially filter organizational climate differently for each employee. Gender effects may also play a role in the dissatisfaction process as evident in the research conducted by Rusbult et al. (1986) on romantic relationships. However, this paper assumes that in general, employees are prone to respond to their environment in similar ways.

At this point, let us revisit the proposed model of this paper. We proposed that organizational climate would have an effect on an employee’s expressed behavior of dissatisfaction. Although we still support this theory, we now include that organizational climate also has an effect on an employee’s commitment. This is due to Lok and Crawford’s (2001) finding that subcultures can have positive and negative effects on commitment. Therefore, it is suggested that organizational climate can have multi-level effects on the dissatisfaction process. The revised model is portrayed in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**  
Revised Job Dissatisfaction Process in Expressing Behavior



It should also be addressed that the behaviors of exit, voice, loyalty and neglect may not necessarily represent the exclusive behavior reactions of dissatisfaction. Unusual behaviors,

such as accidents and sabotage, have also been suggested as responses to dissatisfaction and are not inclusive to the EVLN model (Farrell, 1983). Organizational cynicism has also been proposed as

an alternative response to employee dissatisfaction (Naus, van Iterson, & Roe, 2007). Organizational cynicism is defined as a negative attitude towards the organization based on belief, affect, and behavior (Naus et al., 2007). Further research is required to determine potential effects and antecedents of organizational cynicism.

In conclusion, understanding predictors and outcomes of the dissatisfaction process can allow organizations to better manage desired results. Turnover rates, employee surveys, and awareness of EVLN behaviors are examples in which organizations can determine dissatisfaction. Although companies do not strive to create dissatisfaction, it is a reality for some employees and researchers suggest coherent organizational practices that highlight integrity to promote employees to stay as members and remain involved (Naus, et al., 2007). For example, since loyalty has been shown to promote constructive responses and deter destructive responses, it would be wise for organizations to uphold procedures and policies that foster a sense of loyalty among their employees (Leck & Saunders, 1992). Walton (1991) suggested a transformation to commitment based workplaces to positively influence satisfaction, absenteeism, turnover and safety. Although a number of promising areas for further research have already been suggested, we stress the need for additional research in regards to the outcomes of dissatisfaction responses to promote a better understanding of the relationship between the workplace and employees, and determine a way to forge organizational success and accomplishment.

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