

Policing, Emotional Intelligence and Turnover Intentions

ABSTRACT

Retention of police officers in most countries has been a critical issue. Police officers in many OECD countries are experiencing an increasing level of occupational stress due to their heavy workload and the emotional nature of policing (such as dealing with people and having to make speedy decisions that could have serious physical, health, social or other impacts on the community). There is also an increase in the level of accountability being placed on policing by the community and the government, as a result of the implementation of new public managerial reforms. The current study examines the effect of emotional intelligence upon the job satisfaction, wellbeing and engagement of police officers in explaining their organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Survey responses from 193 police officers in Australia were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Path Modeling. As predicted, the emotional nature of policing leads to emotional intelligence, which leads to job satisfaction and wellbeing. These paths also have a positive relationship leading to employee engagement and organizational commitment. These relationships resulted in lower turnover intentions. Organizational commitment was found to partially mediate the causal relationship between employee engagement and turnover intentions. The findings of this research have important theoretical and practical implications for police officer retention.

Keywords: Policing, Turnover, Emotional intelligence, Engagement, Wellbeing, Organizational commitment, Australia.

Policing is typical of social occupations that are considered stressful because it involves dealing with people and having to make speedy decisions that could have serious physical, health, social or other impacts on the public (Kyriacou, 2001). Others such as Bakker and Heuven (2006) and Hochschild (1983) noted that police officers, as emotional workers, are exposed to emotionally demanding interpersonal interactions (such as death and illness, accidents, crimes, etc) on a daily basis, which required them to regulate their feelings and expressions as part of policing.

In additional, police officers in many OECD countries such as Australia, UK and NZ have experienced increased stress because of increased workloads – predominantly resulting from a major shift in governance aimed at a new focus on output and accountability (Dick, forthcoming; Hoque et al., 2004; Long, 2003). Public sector reform rhetoric has focused on improving service delivery, but in practice the driving force of change has been in achieving efficiencies - sometimes at the expense of quality service delivery (Long, 2003). The problem of multiple agendas has received considerable academic attention because there is a growing disparity between management's expectation of meeting particular performance indicators on the one hand, and the capability and capacity of employees to deliver services to the public with reduced per capita resources (Long, 2003). In particular, researchers have identified the stress involved for employees delivering services to an increasingly vocal public demanding more services, when employees operate in an environment of rationalized budgets (Hoque et al., 2004; Long, 2003; Wright, 2002).

Increasingly, police officers are in the spotlight to behave and act in particular ways and preliminary research suggests that the outcomes for police officers have been negatively affected. Policing, a form of emotional labor, has been shown to have negative impact upon police officer engagement and job outcomes (e.g., Wright, Powell, & Ridge, 2006). Research has continued to show that employee retention among police officers is a significant problem for senior

management. While much research has shown that the emotional intelligence of police officers has an impact on their work outcomes, there are few empirical studies which show the effect of emotional intelligence upon the turnover intentions of police officers. Hence, the current study seeks to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on the job satisfaction, wellbeing and engagement of police officers in explaining their organizational commitment and subsequently, their turnover intentions. The primary research question is:

“How does the emotional intelligence of police officers affect their job satisfaction, wellbeing and engagement and in turn, their perceptions of organizational commitment and turnover intentions”?

This paper has four parts. The first part provides a targeted review of the literature from which the hypotheses emerge. The second part describes the sample and methods to test the research questions. The third part reports the results and uses the discussion section to identify pattern-matching with relevant past research, outlining implications for management. Fourth, we conclude the paper by identifying the limitations and providing an overview of the study.

POLICING AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Work

Emotions are an important part of being human and they affect our actions and motivation for behavior and practices (Stanley & Burrows, 2005), which in turn, affect our perceptions of psychological health (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Mayer and Salovey (1997: 10) argued that emotional intelligence (EI) comprises the interrelated skills of self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and handling relationships. They defined EI as:

the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Law and Wong (2004) used EI as a construct separate from personality dimensions and showed it could predict job performance. They argued for more research examining the relationship between EI and other workplace variables. This is an important management issue because without the ability to understand our emotions and those of others, employees faced with numerous interactions with the public (often under intensive and/or difficult situations) are likely to control their exposure to negative emotions (such as working with child abuse cases as discussed in Wright, Powell & Ridge, 2006). They may do this by avoiding or manipulating their exposure to negative situations (antecedent-focused emotion regulation) or by controlling how they respond to negative situations (response-focused emotion regulation). However, if employees cannot successfully manipulate either their exposure or reactions to negative emotional situations, then such exposure is likely to negatively impact upon their job satisfaction and performance. Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006) found that there was a positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction and the relationship was stronger for those with low EI. However, not all occupations require EI to perform job-related tasks well. The extent to which employees are required to manage their emotions in the workplace in order to achieve their preferred job outcomes is referred to as "emotional labor" (Law & Wong, 2004; Wong & Law, 2002).

Emotional labor has been defined as how employees manage their feelings in public to comply with the established rules about emotional expression for their particular profession (e.g., Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Hochschild, 1983; Wright, Powell, & Ridge, 2006). This usually requires employees to hide negative emotion, show empathy and to control emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labor can be categorized into two types: surface acting (SA) and deep acting (DA). The common form of emotional labor is the expression of SA which involves the physical expression of an emotion – however, the emotion is not actually felt. Police officers for example, are expected to maintain a civil manner (Bakker & Heuven, 2006) even when they

may feel enraged by a member of the public yelling expletives at them. It is not surprising that such surface acting may therefore appear superficial and/or insincere at times (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). In contrast, DA describes where employees manipulate their own feelings so as to display a specific emotion in place of an original felt emotion. For example, police officers may loathe attending domestic violence situations; however, they may re-program their emotions, modifying their internal thoughts and feelings (i.e. emotional dissonance), to fulfill expectations of emotional display and perhaps adopt more acceptable emotions of hatred of violence against women and children. Further, there are two types of deep acting. If there is a big difference between what they feel and what they display as their emotions (active deep acting) then some management of their cognitive emotions is necessary.

Hochschild's (1979) seminal work on emotional labor, noted the difference between what employees' experience and what they display at work has implications for how they are managed. In particular, the study of emotional labor is important for managers because it affects work outcomes such as job satisfaction, burnout, commitment and turnover. For example, past research suggests that SA is positively linked to burnout and negatively linked to job satisfaction, whereas DA is positively linked to job satisfaction, but unrelated to burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Thus, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) and Brotheridge and Lee (2002) concluded that while both SA and DA require a conscious and determined effort to be successful, the act of DA can lead to improved outcomes for employees, such as increased job satisfaction (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction in the current study is defined as what employees feel about their work, which may be negative or positive (Spector, 2003). Past research suggests that satisfied employees are time-effective at work, likely to minimize their sick leave and have reduced

turnover intentions (Spector, 1997). Other researchers have found an inverse statistical relationship between work stress and other job-related outcomes (such as job satisfaction) for Australian nurses (Joiner & Bartram, 2004). Police officers are similar to nurses to the extent that their occupations require extensive interaction with the public and both often require quick decision-making that can impact significantly on the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of the public. Therefore, we expected that there will be a negative relationship between emotional labor and police officers' job satisfaction.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing has been examined by numerous researchers across a few disciplines and therefore has multiple definitions, conceptualizations and measurements. An assessment of available literature identifies three categories: a) psychological wellbeing (which examines employees' levels of satisfaction with processes and practices in the workplace), b) physical wellbeing (which examines employees' health outcomes, from stress and accidents for example) and c) social wellbeing (which examines the quantity and quality of workplace social networks as well as employees' perceptions of fairness and equity) (Grant et al., 2007). Psychological wellbeing is defined as employees' attitudes and feelings about the work context (Diener, 2000). It differs from job satisfaction because it encapsulates more than an employee's satisfaction with the job, and includes satisfaction with both tangible and intangible aspects of the work context. It is expected that there will be a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and police officers' reported wellbeing.

Additionally, researchers have identified a link between wellbeing and job outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1993; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). This is of particular relevance for policing as police officers have been shown to suffer from negative wellbeing, as a

result of the emotional nature of their daily work (e.g., Wright, Powell & Ridge, 2006). Hence, we expect police wellbeing to be negatively associated with their job satisfaction.

Engagement

The concept of engagement is relatively new to management and consequently there is a lack of empirical research findings about this new construct and the factors it affects (Saks, 2006). However, it is recognized as important to examine within the public sector because it influences employees' performance, which affects how satisfied the public are with services provided (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). In this study, we followed Kahn (1990) to define engagement as a work situation where employees find work meaningful, and consequently they want and can invest in their work to achieve personal and career benefits. The end product of being engaged is an energetic and passionate employee. May et al. (2004) argues that engagement describes employees experiencing the antithesis of "burnout", because they are involved in work at a cognitive and emotional level.

It is management's responsibility to provide a working environment that generates and maintains employee engagement. Research suggests that the antecedents of employee engagement are effective leadership and co-worker relationship, interesting work tasks and resources to perform it, as well as just rewards (May et al., 2004). In particular, Richman (2006) argued that engagement is likely to be influenced more by management practices, the work environment and climate, than by the age, gender or the personality of employees. Further, Bakker et al. (2007) found that when job resources (in the form of high supervisor support and/or a supportive organizational climate) were plentiful, it helped to shield teachers against the negative effects of high job demands. They argued that this was because the job resources helped to reduce stress, in turn, addressing the trend towards burnout. Hence, we expect police officers who reported a lower level of wellbeing to be less engaged with their organization.

Affective Commitment and Turnover Intentions

Commitment is closely related to engagement, because committed employees are engaged in the job (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Allen and Meyer (1990) defined affective commitment as the emotional attachment to and identification with an organization, making the employee loyal and attached to the organization. Additionally, Coffman and Gonzalez–Molina (2002) argued that the greater an employee’s level of affective commitment, the stronger will be their engagement with the job. Affective commitment results from employees perceiving that they receive appropriate support from the organization and are treated and valued fairly and justly (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007), especially for public sector employees (Reid, Riemenschneider, Allen & Armstrong, 2008). Affective commitment is an important measure because Meyer and Allen (1997) and Pitt, et al. (1995) found a link between employees’ affective commitment and intention to leave. Supporting that earlier research, Hartmann and Bambacas (2000) found that affective commitment predicted intention to quit for casual academic staff in an Australian tertiary institution.

Despite the above empirical evidence on organizational commitment, scholars such as Dick claimed that there has not been many studies on organizational commitment in the police force and he claimed that more research is needed (Dick, forthcoming). In addition, the empirical findings on the antecedents of organizational commitment in policing are inconclusive. For instance, the study by Noblet et al. (2009) of an Australian police agency showed that job demand and control has inconsistent effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Dick’s (forthcoming) study on a sample of police officers showed that organizational and workplace experiences of how officers are managed were found to be the strongest influence on their organizational commitment.

Turnover in the law enforcement sector is a major issue (e.g., Lynch & Tuckey, 2008). Previous research identified a negative relationship between dis-satisfaction at work and turnover intentions (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). Organizational commitment was found by Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid and Sirola (1998) to have the strongest and most direct impact on turnover intention. Similarly, it has been shown that in organizations where employees exhibit higher levels of commitment, it resulted in lower absenteeism and turnover rates (Meyer and Allen 1997). Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found that affective commitment was the best predictor. For that reason, we use the measure of affective commitment in our study.

While there is a clear understanding of the antecedents of turnover intentions in the literature, few studies have focused on the antecedents of turnover intentions of police officers (Lynch & Tuckey, 2008). The research by Jaramillo, Nixon, and Sams (2005) in six law and enforcement agencies found that job satisfaction, among other factors is the best predictor of organizational commitment of law enforcement officers. Their study also showed that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and police officers' intention to leave. Others such as Brough and Frame (2004) found that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction of police officers and the amount of leave taken and the lack of opportunity for advancement in the organization. Despite these findings, there are few studies which examined the causal relationship between job satisfaction, affective commitment and the turnover intentions of police officers. Hence, we will focus on examining the causal relationships in the current study.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the current study will contribute to the literature by examining the strength and direction of the causal relationships from the emotional intelligence of police officers to job satisfaction, wellbeing, engagement, affective commitment, and turnover

intention. The hypothesized relationships will be tested by using Partial Least Squares (PLS) path analysis, a form of structural equation modeling (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 1. There is a negative relationship between emotional labor and police officers' job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Emotional intelligence fully mediates the negative impact of the negative aspects of emotional work in policing and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and police officers' reported wellbeing.

Hypothesis 4. There is a positive relationship between police officers' reported wellbeing and their job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5. There is a positive relationship between police officers' reported wellbeing and their engagement.

Hypothesis 6. There is a negative relationship between police officers' reported wellbeing and their turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 7. There is a positive relationship between police officers' reported wellbeing and their affective commitment.

Hypothesis 8. There is a positive relationship between police officers' job satisfaction and their engagement.

Hypothesis 9. There is a positive relationship between police officers' job satisfaction and their affective commitment.

Hypothesis 10. Police officers' affective commitment fully mediates the negative relationship between their engagement and turnover intentions.

Insert Figure 1 about here

METHODS

Data and Sample

Sample characteristics. A self-complete questionnaire was offered to police officers attending training in one region of an Australian state police service over a four month period. In total, 750 surveys were distributed and we received 193 usable surveys (representing a response rate of 26%). The majority of the respondents were male (N=132, 68.4 percent) and held the rank of senior constable (31.6 percent). The average tenure in their current police station was less than 5 years and most have been employed with this police force for 3-10 years.

We used *SmartPLS* (Ringle, Wende & Will, 2005), a form of latent path model, to test our path model. Survey data were input into SPSS v.17 for Windows to conduct descriptive statistical analysis. Mediation analysis was conducted using the Sobel's test (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Measures

We used previously validated scales to operationalize the constructs in the path model. These were measured on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Emotional Intelligence (reflective measure). We adopted the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) to operationalize emotional intelligence in our model. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation. It resulted in the same four sub-scales, such as self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion, similar to the original study by Wong and

Law (2002). These were then used to form a reflective measure within the path model (composite reliability coefficient of 0.84).

Emotional Labor (reflective measure). Following Wong and Law (2002), we operationalize emotional labor with their five item scale (sample items included, “I am a self motivated person” and “I would always encourage myself to try my best”). This scale has a composite reliability coefficient of 0.83.

Employee Engage (reflective measure). We used a nine-item scale from Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The sample items included, “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” and “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose”. This scale has a composite reliability coefficient of 0.91.

Job Satisfaction (reflective measure). Job satisfaction was measured using the four-item scale taken from Johlke and Durham (2000). The sample items included, “I feel that my job is valuable”. This scale has a composite reliability coefficient of 0.89.

Affective Commitment (reflective measure). We adopted the eight item affect commitment scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) to measure police officer’s commitment to their organization. Sample items included, “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization”. The affective commitment scale has a good internal reliability, as shown by a composite reliability coefficient of 0.87.

Turnover Intention (reflective measure). We adopted a three item scale adopted from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) to operationalize turnover intention. Sample items included “It is likely that I would search for a job in another organization”. This scale has a composite reliability coefficient of 0.95.

Wellbeing (reflective measure). We adopted a four item scale developed by Brunetto, Farr-Wharton and Shacklock (2011) to measure police psychological wellbeing. There were many

conceptualizations of psychological wellbeing (see Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Daniels & Guppy, 1994; 1997), using a range of measures (see Burke & Greenglass, 2000) who used psychosomatic symptoms (for example, headaches) while Parasuraman, Granrose & Greenhaus (1992) measured wellbeing based on job satisfaction and life stress. These previous measures are considered limited (Grant et al., 2007) because they lacked either a hedonic section (which focuses on employees' perceptions of pleasure invoking either negative or positive thoughts or feelings - usually measured by employees' levels of job satisfaction) and/or a eudaimonic section (which refers to employees' perceptions of whether they have reached their potential - measured by employees' feelings of fulfillment in reaching their goals). van der Doef and Maes (1999) criticized previous measures because they focused on job characteristics, largely ignoring the impact of the job situation itself. They argued for "more occupation-specific measurements for specific occupational groups" (van der Doef & Maes 1999: 110). This measure addresses the stated criticisms (sample items include "Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment in what I do at work" and "Overall, I get enough time to reflect on what I do in the workplace"). This scale has a composite reliability coefficient of 0.89.

Validity and reliability. The path model developed for the current study has six independent constructs and one dependent constructs (sample size of 193 cases). According to Green (1991: 503), they are considered to be sufficient to achieve a medium effect size of 0.80 for path analysis. We assessed the significance of PLS parameter estimates by using the bootstrap option incorporated within the *SmartPLS* (Ringle et al., 2005) software. Bootstrapping with 500 sub-samples is carried out to provide extra confidence that the results are not sample-specific. Discriminant validity of the reflective constructs is assessed by using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure of average variance extracted (AVE).

In the current study we tested for the effect of common method bias by conducting Harman's ex-post one factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). All the variables used in the study were entered into an unrotated factor analysis. The analysis showed that there were 10 factors (with eigenvalues greater than 1.0) which explained 72.4 percent of the variance.

We evaluated the quality of the structural model by using R-square of the dependent variables, the Stone-Geisser Q-square test for predictive relevance (Chin, 2010) and the global criterion for goodness of fit (Tenenhaus et al. 2005) for PLS models. Chin (2010) recommended that the communality and redundancy Q-square indices must be greater than zero, for the model to have predictive relevance. Two separate analyses with 10 and 25 omission distance were undertaken to test the stability of the findings. Since the values are stable for both omission distances and all of the Q-squares were greater than zero, we were confident that the model is stable and the predictive relevance requirement is satisfied.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, AVE and correlations between the variables. The model has discriminant validity as the correlation matrix shows that all the diagonal elements are greater than the corresponding off-diagonal elements. Using the formulae proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2005) for calculating the global criterion of goodness of fit, the model has a large goodness of fit (GOF=0.445). In addition, the path model explained 29 percent of the dependent variable, Turnover Intention.

Insert Table 1 about here

As shown in Table 2, the path from emotional labor to emotional intelligence was positive and statistically significant (coefficient=0.4575, t-statistic=4.5843, $p < .001$). While there was a

positive and statistically significant path from emotional intelligence to job satisfaction (coefficient=0.1668, t-statistic=2.5433, $p<.01$), mediation analysis showed that there was no support that emotional intelligence fully mediates the negative consequences of emotional labor to job satisfaction. Instead, emotional intelligence partially mediates the negative consequences of emotional labor to job satisfaction.

The path from emotional intelligence to self-reported wellbeing was statistically significant (coefficient=0.3757, t-statistic=3.9933, $p<.001$). There were three statistically significant paths from self-reported wellbeing to job satisfaction (coefficient=0.584, t-statistic=10.6148, $p<.001$), police officers' engagement with their organization (coefficient=0.4322, t-statistic=4.2914, $p<.001$), their levels of affective commitment (coefficient=0.3474, t-statistic=3.7205, $p<.001$) and turnover intentions (coefficient=-0.1885, t-statistic=2.069, $p<.05$). The path from job satisfaction to engagement was also found to be positive and statistically significant (coefficient=0.4019, t-statistic=4.6427, $p<.001$). The path from engagement to affective commitment was statistically significant (coefficient=0.3855, t-statistic=4.2658, $p<.001$). The path from affective commitment to turnover intention was found to be negative and statistically significant (coefficient=-0.465, t-statistic=4.6267, $p<.001$). The mediation hypothesis was not supported, as we did not find any statistical significant path between employee engagement and turnover intention. Instead, affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intentions.

Insert Figure 2 about here

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study reports the perceptions and opinions of police officers who are typically affected by the negative consequences of the emotional aspects from policing. Our path analyses showed a number of interesting findings which provided support for all but three of our hypotheses (exception H1, H2 and H10). This study suggests that emotional labor has a significant effect on police officers' work outcomes and impacts upon the way they exercise their emotional intelligence when performing their jobs. The causal relationships were found to affect police officers' perception of wellbeing, their job satisfaction and, their engagement with their employer. These led to a higher level of affective commitment which subsequently, reduces their turnover intentions.

Our study provides support for the notion of policing requiring the effective use of emotional labor. It highlights the importance for police officers to monitor their work experience and how they display their emotions at work could have the resultant causal relationships with work outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and turnover, via their engagement and commitment to the employer. Our finding also suggest that police officers exercise a degree of emotional intelligence in policing, which led to positive job performance, similar to Law and Wong's (2004) study. Our findings provided additional empirical evidence for understanding the relationship between EI and other workplace variables (Law & Wong, 2004). In addition to providing the resourcing required of police jobs, senior management must understand the negative consequences of policing, as an emotional occupation, and the associated stress in dealing with a high job demand and low job resources occupation, at the same time having to achieve the required performance targets in the climate of new public management.

Supporting previous research by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), our results similarly found that emotional labor is linked to job satisfaction. While our study found that there was a

link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, similar with previous research (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006; Wong & Law, 2002), emotional intelligence did not mediate the negative consequences of emotional labor to job satisfaction.

Third, as predicted, there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and police officers' reported wellbeing. This is not perhaps surprising, given that emotional intelligence is the capacity to regulate one's external behavior to appear appropriate to the circumstances (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), including negative situations (Law & Wong, 2004) of policing. Hence, this finding contributes to an understanding of the important part of what's required in the performance of police work in contemporary police organizations.

Fourth, as police officers' wellbeing increased, so did their job satisfaction, engagement at work and their commitment to the organization, which subsequently leads to a lower level of turnover intentions. These results support earlier research by Bakker et al. (2007), Luchak and Gellatly (2007), May et al. (2004), and Reid et al. (2008) about the relationships between some of these variables. However, other research has not identified the path relationship between all these variables. While there is minimal previous research linking wellbeing and affective commitment, there is research that links wellbeing with job satisfaction and in this study, job satisfaction is also significantly related to affective commitment (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). Notably, May et al. (2004) and Richman (2006) argued that engagement is influenced by the support and resources available at work, including supervision and management practices, while Luchak and Gellatly (2007) and Reid et al. (2008) argued similarly in the case of affective commitment. We have identified, on the one hand, the problem of a growing disparity between senior police management's expectations of meeting particular performance indicators (evident in traffic targets, crime solving rates, etc) and on the other, the capability and capacity of police stations to meet such targets with reduced per capita resources (Long, 2003). It appears there is a gap

between the rhetoric and the reality. The difficulty is for police departments to operationalize the new policing agenda focused in rhetoric on service delivery, but funded to enforce the reality of rationalized policing (Hoque et al., 2004; Long, 2003).

Additionally, supervisors are failing to perceive appropriate resourcing as one of their management duties, as is typical in policing when a management responsibility is missing both a performance indicator and a method of assessing and evaluating it (Coutts & Schneider, 2004). These pressures are impacting negatively on police officers with pockets of cynicism at the coalface as senior management continues to set unrealistic targets and expect supervisors in under-staffed police stations to ensure their police officers meet those targets. The increased accountability as a result of the on-going adoption of new public managerial practices in this particular police department in our study has relied heavily on supervisors and managers to develop, measure and assess performance of police officers of policing activities (Hoque et al., 2004). This approach has been found to further enhance centralized control, at the expense of empowering police officers to be innovative in achieving those performance targets (Wright, 2002). When supervisors and managers use harassing or bullying techniques to achieve targets, the outcomes are a reduction in productivity and employee wellbeing, coupled with lower job satisfaction and commitment, plus higher rates of absenteeism and turnover (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Hoel et al., 2003).

To further underscore the important role of supervisors, when management is effective, employees are likely to have higher perceptions of wellbeing, with past research suggesting that the better the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, the higher the perceptions of wellbeing (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Judge & Watanabe, 1993). Past research suggests that supervisors are in important positions and the way they carry out their responsibilities determine whether employees perceive their actions as harassment or legitimate management practice

(Einarsen et al., 2003; Robinson, 2008). In turn, this creates a perception of organizational justice or injustice in the workplace (Beugré, 2005; Aryee et al., 2007) which further affects perceptions of wellbeing. In other words, police supervisors are key to effective performance of their police officers, but equally as (if not more) importantly, to job satisfaction, wellbeing and affective commitment, and therefore to their retention – the very issue that senior police management are seeking to improve.

Fifth, we found a positive relationship between police officers' job satisfaction and their engagement at work plus their affective commitment. This result was expected by us and links between some of these variables are supported by other research (Judge & Watanabe, 1993); however, other research has not identified the path relationship between all three variables. Typically, policy states what level of support police officers have available when facing difficult work cases or injuries. However, resourcing of support is limited and the demand is growing.

Finally, our study found that police officers' affective commitment mediates the negative relationship between their engagement at work and their turnover intentions. This result provides some positive direction to partly address police officer retention challenges and there are clear implications for senior police management in these results.

Managerial Implications

The results of our study suggest a number of managerial implications regarding the role of emotional intelligence on turnover intentions. The findings suggest that when police officers are placed in difficult or negative situations, delivering services to a demanding public and simultaneously expected to achieve certain targets within tight budgets, the stress involved is likely to lower their perceptions of wellbeing and job satisfaction, which will negatively impact their commitment to the organization and hence increase their intentions to leave. To counter this, police officers need resources and support; for example, when dealing with difficult cases

involving personal injuries or dealing with tragic experiences. Senior management need to acknowledge these requirements are provide police officers with the resources needed. Further, senior management must not set unrealistic targets and expect supervisors in under-staffed police stations to ensure their police officers meet those targets. For example, police station management should increase the number of police officers available for work in operational police work in police stations to ensure the burden of police officers undertaking night and weekend shifts is not excessive. Another example is to rationalize the amount of paperwork and policies that police officers are required to adhered to, to create more operational time. Finally, senior management should undertake a comprehensive review of management skills required to provide effective management for contemporary police officers. An important contribution of our study is the notion that healthy psychological construct such as emotional intelligence is crucial for public sector employees who perform emotional work, as EI adds to job satisfaction, cultivates employee engagement, enhances affective commitment towards the job environment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and ultimately leads to a reduction to the level of turnover intention, which is crucial in contemporary policing OECD countries such as Australia.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study. Firstly, the study is limited to police officers in one police service and therefore further studies are required in other police services and using other types of employees. Another limitation is the use of self-report surveys causing common methods bias. To reduce common method bias when the criterion and predictor variable cannot be measured in different contexts, as in this study, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) recommend separating the measurement of the criterion and predictor variables psychologically and ensuring the survey is anonymous. The survey applied these recommendations. The relatively low response rate must be noted as a potential further

limitation. Additionally, the responses reported above cannot be assumed to represent the perceptions of all police officers or all police stations in that police service. One challenge of voluntary surveys is that the research does not uncover the reasons why some chose not to participate. These reasons may be significant, yet remain concealed. One explanation could be that some police officers were concerned for their own confidentiality within the results. Another reason could be that some felt that others would better represent their views. Secondly, there will be differences in the management of police officers between the various police stations, yet these differences are not identified within this report.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to understand the path relationship leading from police officers' emotional intelligence to various performance-related outcomes and finally to turnover intentions. Within a context of retention challenges within Australia's police forces, any guidance as to how better to manage police officers is keenly sought. This study clearly indicates that emotional intelligence and emotional labor warrant being included in retention strategies and plans because of their impact upon turnover intentions. In particular, these findings suggest that police officers' emotional intelligence does affect their job satisfaction, wellbeing and engagement and thereby, their perceptions of affective commitment and subsequently, their turnover intentions.

The results of this study underscore the complex role emotional intelligence plays in affecting employee turnover decisions. While we have made some progress in understanding why police officers leave and what factors may be important to that intention, there remains much to be learned. One issue that appears to be important is the extent to which resources are available to police officers to undertake their jobs, and also the supervision and management practices used to encourage such undertakings. Police management needs to ensure that police

officers are competent and trained, but also provided with sufficient resources and supportive supervision, so that their work performance can be optimized and, importantly, their likely retention increased.

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Figure 1. Proposed Path Model

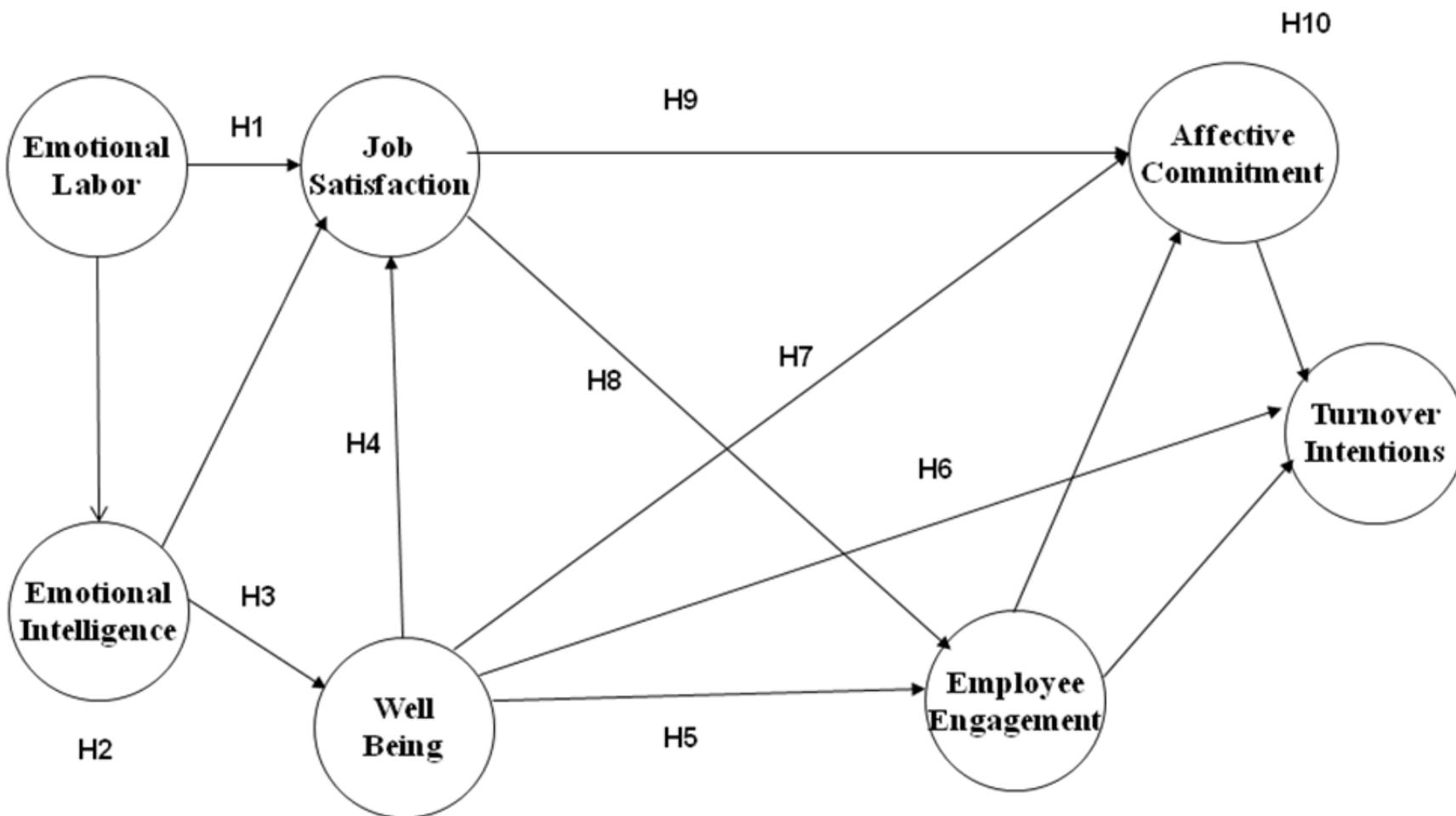
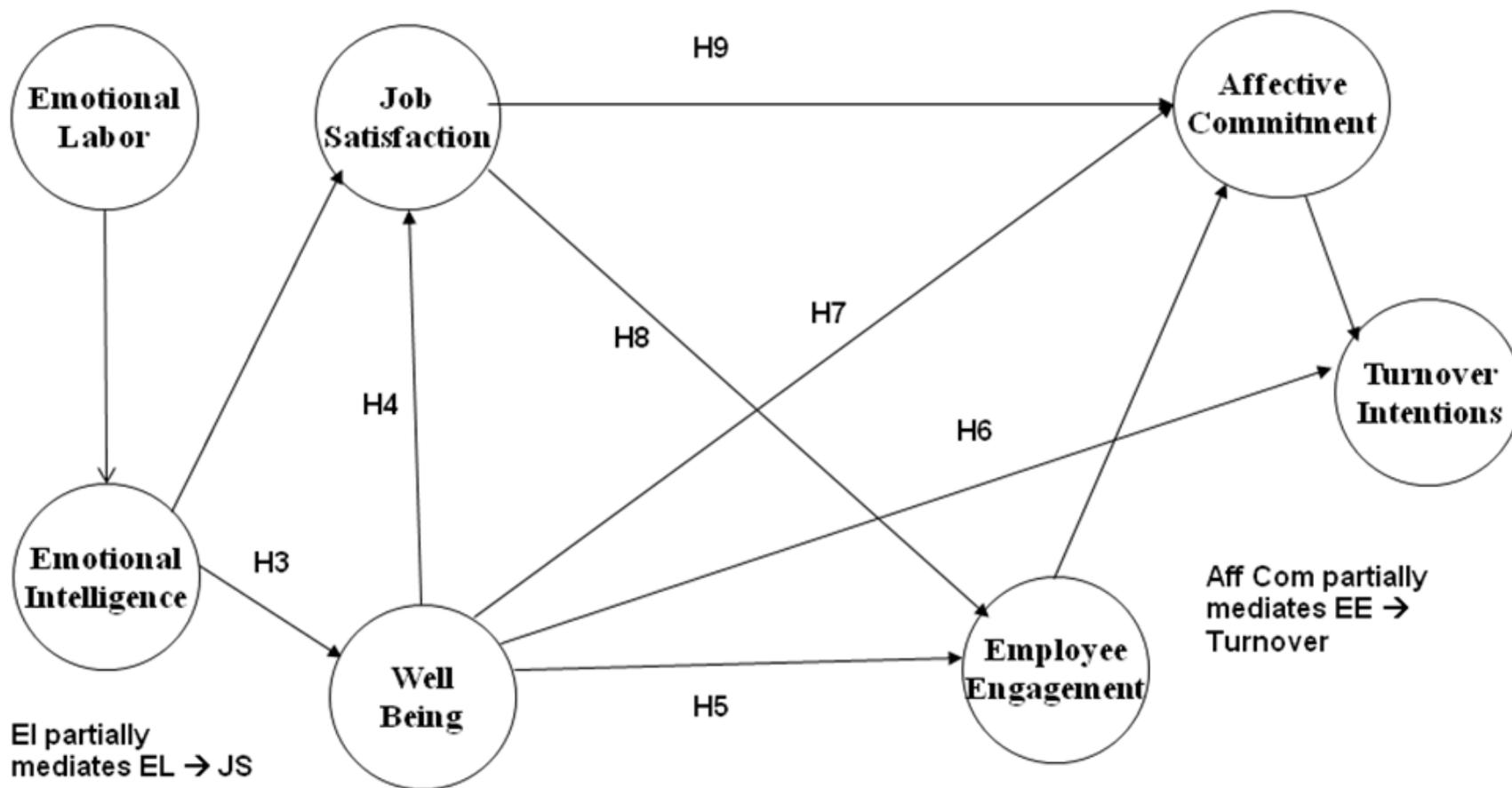


Figure 2. Figure of Statistically Significant Paths



Note: Only statistically significant paths are shown in this figure.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, AVE and Correlations

	Mean ^a	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emotional Labor	4.59	0.77	<u>0.70</u>						
Emotional Intelligence	4.92	0.54	.43***	<u>0.75</u>					
Job Satisfaction	4.40	0.87	.30***	.41***	<u>0.82</u>				
Wellbeing	4.30	0.87	.25***	.36***	.65***	<u>0.82</u>			
Employee Engage	4.32	0.80	.13**	.43***	.67***	.69***	<u>0.74</u>		
Affective Commitment	3.87	0.99	.21***	.29***	.52***	.59***	.62***	<u>0.75</u>	
Turnover Intention	2.87	1.40	.07	-.13	-.33***	-.41***	-.31***	-.49***	<u>0.93</u>

N = 193

^a Mean: '1' = strongly disagree, to '6' = strongly agreeNote: Square root of AVEs for reflective scales are shown in diagonal as underlined

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 2 Results of Path Coefficients

Paths	Path coefficients	t-statistic	Sig. level
Emotional Labor → Emotional Intelligence	0.4575	4.5843	***
Emotional Intelligence → Job Satisfaction	0.1668	2.5433	**
Emotional Intelligence → Wellbeing	0.3757	3.9933	***
Wellbeing → Job Satisfaction	0.5847	10.6148	***
Wellbeing → Employee Engagement	0.4322	4.2914	***
Wellbeing → Affective Commitment	0.3474	3.7205	***
Wellbeing → Turnover Intention	-0.1885	2.069	*
Job Satisfaction → Employee Engagement	0.4019	4.6427	***
Employee Engagement → Affective Commitment	0.3855	4.2658	***
Affective Commitment → Turnover Intention	-0.4658	4.6267	***

N = 193 Police Officers

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001