

Education Quarterly Reviews

Tumwesigye, Godfrey, Onen, David, Oonyu, Joseph, and Musaaazi, John C. S. (2020), The Mediating Effect of Affective Commitment on the Relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Turnover Intentions of University Employees. In: Education Quarterly Reviews, Vol.3, No.4, 538-554.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.03.04.160

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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The Mediating Effect of Affective Commitment on the Relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Turnover Intentions of University Employees

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Abstract

In this study, we explored the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between human resource management practices (HRMPs) and the turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda using the theoretical lens of social exchange theory. The study was instigated by reportedly persistent increase in the cases of employee attrition in higher education institutions in Uganda in spite of Government's attempts to improve the working conditions of the university employees. Using the cross-sectional survey research design, data were collected with the use of an adapted self-administered questionnaire from a sample of 722 academic and non-academic employees of three public and three private universities in Uganda. The results of structural equation modelling (SEM) indicated that HRMPs were significant positive predictors of affective commitment (rewards: $\beta = .225$; $p < .001$), promotions: $\beta = .228$; $p < .001$; and job security: $\beta = .141$; $p < .001$). However, HRM practices were negative predictors of turnover intentions (rewards: $\beta = -.228$; $p < .001$; promotion, $\beta = -.215$; $p < .001$; job security, $\beta = -.138$; $p < .001$). Furthermore, affective commitment was indeed a significant mediator of the relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions of university employees. These findings made us draw the conclusion that when university employees perceive the institution's HRMPs to be favourable, they will not only become committed to the organisation but also desire to remain working longer for it. Therefore, we recommend that the university managers in Uganda and similar countries should formulate and practise human resource management styles that do not only spur employee commitment but also enhance staff retention.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Human Resource Management Practices, Turnover Intentions, Universities

1. Introduction

Ideally, every work organization needs a stable workforce. This is aimed at, among others, cutting down on its cost of hiring replacements as well as maintaining stability in its production of good or services (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Unfortunately, many organisations usually experience difficulties in preventing neither the voluntary nor the involuntary turnover of their employees. This scenario is not any different with university organizations in Uganda. According to the Auditor General's reports of 2014 and 2016, public universities in

Uganda have been losing in the past two decades a large number of their senior employees to other sectors of the economy or to other countries altogether. This has not only left the delivery of quality university education in the hands of junior staff, but it has as well curtailed the contribution of the universities to the achievement of the country's national development goals. To make matters worse, private higher education institutions in the country - including universities - have also not been spared from this rising employee turnover challenge (Nabawanuka, 2011). Yet, no one seems to be certain about the factors that are responsible for the persistent increase in the turnover as well as turnover intentions of university employees in the country; thus, the need for this sort of investigation.

Historically, several researchers have attempted to look at the effect of human resource management practices (HRMPs) on the turnover intentions of university employees (see Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986; Panaccio, Verdenberghé & Ayed, 2014). Some of these studies suggest organisational commitment as a potential mediator in the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees (Mostafa, Gould-Williams & Bottomley, 2015; Chang, Nguyen, Cheng, Kuo & Lee, 2016; Dhar, Rahouma, Masruki & Absar, 2017; Kooij & Boon, 2018). Unfortunately, many of these studies were conducted in the context of developed nations. The current study was undertaken among university employees in Uganda – a developing country. This was premised on the belief that the difference in contextual factors could yield different findings.

Theoretically, this study was anchored on Blau's (1964) social exchange theory (SET) which states that when two parties are involved in a social relationship, the beneficial acts of one party towards another must be reciprocated by the other party. In the event that the second party does not reciprocate the beneficial acts of the first party, then the social relationship between the two parties is bound to weaken (Gouldner, 1960). In the case of this study, we looked at the employee and the organization (or the university) as the two parties that are involved in some sort of mutual relationship in order for the institution to function and serve its purpose. In this case, we hypothesized that if the university (or organization) performs some beneficial acts towards her employee, this will create an obligation on the part of the employee to favourably reciprocate with an action equally beneficial to the organization. However, if the employee negatively perceives the action(s) of his/her employer (the university), this is likely to draw an equally negative reaction(s) from the employee; thus, jeopardizing the social exchanges that will take place between the organization and the employee. In this case, the employee may decide to quit the organization altogether or increase his/her commitment to the organization depending on his/her perception of the treatment received from the employer (Guchait & Cho, 2010). Therefore, staff turnover intentions will always tend to be high in a work scenario where the employees perceive the actions of their employers to be less beneficial to them and low where the employees perceive their employers to perform things that are beneficial to them (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). It was this kind of assumption that prompted us to anchor this study on SET.

Conceptually, there were five key concepts in this study, namely: turnover, turnover intention, human resource management practices (HRMPs), organizational commitment and affective commitment. According to Chang, Wang and Huang (2013), the term turnover refers to an act of employee leaving an organisation. This is not any different from the way Lambert and Hogan (2009) who defined turnover as the actual behaviour of an employee leaving employment in an organization. In this study, however, our focus was not in studying employee turnover itself but the turnover intentions of university employees.

The second key concept in this study was turnover intention. In human resource management, the term turnover intention is variously referred to as 'intention to quit' or 'intention to leave' or just employee 'turnover intention'. According to Chang et al. (2013), turnover intention refers to an employee's wish to leave an organisation; that is, an employee's wish or desire to leave the organisation even though the intention may not turn into actual turnover. According to Lambert and Hogan (2009), turnover intention refers to the last part of a sequence of cognitions in the withdrawal process that culminates into actual turnover. This means that turnover intention is the most proximal precursor of actual turnover; and therefore, a good measure of actual turnover. In this study, turnover intention was looked at in terms of the employee's desire to leave the current job and his/her searching for a new job.

The third major concept in this study was human resource management practices (HRMPs). According to Schuler and Jackson (1987), HRMPs refer to a system that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains employees to ensure the effective implementation and the survival of the organization and its members. Meanwhile, according to Wright and Kehoe (2013), HRMPs refer to the ways through which the management of an organization enhances employee ability, motivation and opportunities by increasing employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment; and thus, reduced labour turnover intention. In this study, HRMPs were looked at in terms of the way by which the university employees were rewarded, promoted and made to feel secure in their jobs.

Finally, the key concept in this study was organizational commitment. According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979), organizational commitment is a uni-dimensional construct characterised by one's: (a) strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to remain in the organization. Meanwhile, Allen and Meyer (1990) defined organizational commitment as an employee's emotional attachment, connection and sense of belonging to the organization for which he/she works. The two authors characterized organizational commitment in terms of affective, normative, and continuance commitments. Whereas affective commitment refers to the voluntary desire by an employee to remain in his/her current job, normative commitment meanwhile refers to an employee's sense of obligation to remain in the current job while continuance commitment refers to the situation where the employee is forced to remain with an organization due to the perceived costs associated with leaving to work with that organization (Rahman, Ferdousy & Karan, 2015). In this study, we focused on exploring the mediating role of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. Specifically, affective commitment was looked at in terms of the way by which each employee expressed his/her senses of belonging to his/her work organization. As a result, it was characterized by one's belief and trust in organizational values and goals, and his/her willingness to invest extra effort on behalf of the organization.

Generally until 1990, Uganda had only two public universities (Makerere and Mbarara University of Science and Technology) and one private university (Islamic University in Uganda). At that time, university employee turnover as well as turnover intentions were reportedly low. However, after the liberalization of the economy as well as the higher education sector in the early 1990s, the number of both public and private universities in the country exponentially grew rapidly to the current 53 universities. According to the national council for higher education (NCHE, 2019) by 2018 there were 53 universities in Uganda: nine public universities and 44 private universities. In addition there were 9 private and one public other degree-awarding institutions. Unfortunately, with this development, the problem of employee turnover and turnover intentions equally grew. This has caused many universities in Uganda to suffer from the shortage of qualified academic and administrative staff. According to Ssali, Onen and Gyaviira (2019) [while citing Kajjubi, 1990], a total of 18 professors and 34 PhD holders left Makerere University within a period of just three years between 1986 and 1989. Unfortunately, this kind of trend did not stop. According to the Auditor General's reports (2014; 2016; 2019), several public universities in Uganda have continued to lose some of their best staff through staff turnover. In fact, some of these universities are reportedly currently operating at less than 50% of their staff establishment (Nabawanuka, 2011; Office of the Auditor General; 2019). Yet, the enrolment of students in these institutions has been on the increase over the past two decades (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2018). This means that if the current scenario of rising rates of staff turnover and turnover intentions continues, the universities will not have the capacity to sufficiently contribute to the realization of Uganda's Agenda 2040 as well as the goals of the National Development Plan [NDP 3] 2020-21/2025-26. Yet, if universities employed effective HRMPs, their staff will not only become committed to their jobs but also wish to stay and work longer for them, This was why we decided to explore the effect of affective organizational commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda.

1.1. Study Objectives.

The overall objective of this study was to explore the mediated effect of affective commitment on the relationship between human resource management practices (HRMPs) [rewards, promotion, and job security] and the turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. Specifically, the study was intended to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) Explore the relationship between HRMPs and affective commitment;

- (b) Determine the relationship between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions;
- (c) Establish the relationship between affective commitment and employee turnover intentions; and
- (d) Explore the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions.

2. Literature Review

2.2. Theoretical Framework.

As we stated in the introductory part of this paper, this study was underpinned by the theory of social exchange theory (SET). According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), “SET stipulates that certain workplace antecedents lead to interpersonal connections, referred to as social exchange relationships (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Such relationships emerge when employers ‘take care of employees’, which thereby engenders beneficial consequences. According to Blau (1964), when two parties are in a social exchange relationship, the beneficial acts of one party towards another party are reciprocated the other party. Thus, an organisation which performs beneficial acts towards an employee creates an obligation that must be reciprocated by the employee. In the case of this study, we took the employer (the university) to be the first party and its employees as the other party. We thus hypothesized that if the university employees favourably perceived the HRMPs of the university where they worked, then their turnover intentions would be low. However, if the employees unfavourably perceive the HRMPs, then their staff turnover intentions would be high. Additionally, we also opted to anchor this study on SET because other earlier scholars such as Smart (1990); Ryan, Healy and Sullivan (2012), and Kehoe and Wright (2013) had successfully employed the same theory to investigate the linkages between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of employees - albeit in different contexts.

2.2. Conceptual Framework.

Based on the social exchange theory and the conceptualization of the key study variables as stated earlier in the paper, the following conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 1 was derived. Figure 1 shows that in this study, the independent variable (HRM practices) was conceptualized in terms of rewards, promotion and job security offered to employees. The effect of these variables on turnover intentions (the dependent variable) was believed to be mediated by affective commitment (the mediator variable).

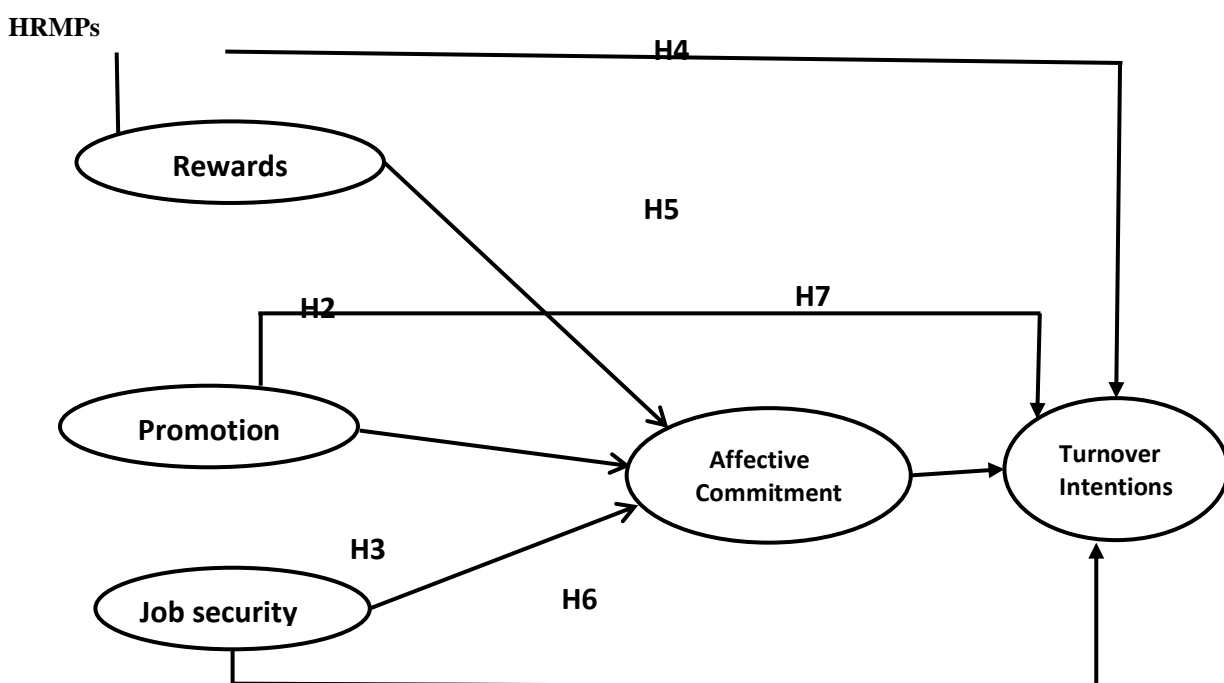


Figure 1. Conceptual model relating HRM practices, affective commitment, and turnover intentions
Source: Adapted from Kehoe & Wright (2013)

The assumed relationships among the variables represented in Figure 1 resulted in the generation of eight different hypotheses shown as arrows **H₁** to **H₈**. The results of the test of these hypotheses are presented ahead in sub-section 4.3 of this paper.

2.3. Related Literature

Over the years, scholars have examined the linkages between human resource management practices (HRMPs), organizational commitment and employee turnover intentions. Some of these studies specifically looked at the relationship between HRMPs and organizational commitment (Mostafa, Gould-Williams & Bottomley, 2015; Chang et al., 2016; Dhar et al., 2017; Kooij & Boon, 2018) while others focused only on studying the relationship between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions (Comm & Mathaisel, 2003; Xu, 2008). Some of the earlier studies, however, investigated only the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions (see Faloye, 2014; Agarwal & Sajid, 2017) while others examined the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions (e.g. Guchait and Cho, 2010; Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). All these studies produced different results regarding these linkages even if some of the study findings were related.

HRM Practices and Affective Commitment

Previous studies have reported that HRMPs are significant positive predictors of affective commitment (e.g. Meyer & Smith, 2000; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Daly & Dee, 2006; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). For example, in a study involving Canadian employees, Meyer and Smith (2000) reported that HRMPs were indirect but positive predictors of affective and normative commitments of employees. These results were not quite different from the work of Gould-Williams (2003) in the UK which also reported that the HRMPs had significant positive effects on organizational commitment of employees. In another study in New Zealand, Edgar and Geare (2005) discovered that HRMPs had significant positive relationships with organizational commitment among employees of different organizations. Similar results were also reported by Chang, et al. (2016) when they found that HRMPs had had significant positive influence on the organizational commitment of teachers in Taiwan.

However, there were also studies on the relationship between HRMPs and employee commitment in which contradictory findings were reported. For example, in a study of the relationship between HRMPs and organizational commitment in universities in Uganda, Mugizi, Bakkabulindi and Bisaso (2015) reported that rewards were not among the significant antecedents of employee commitment. This showed that not every HRMP has significant and positive effect on the commitment of employees; thus, calling for further investigations in this field. In addition, most of the studies reviewed above were conducted in the context of Europe, USA and Asia (Daly & Dee, 2006; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Guchait & Cho, 2010). Yet the contingency perspective emphasises that the context in which HRMPs are applied can affect their effect on employee and organisational outcomes (Guest, 1997). Basing on the preceding paragraphs, this study proposed and tested the following hypotheses:

H₁: Rewards are positively and significantly related with affective commitment.

H₂: Promotion opportunities are positively and significantly related with affective commitment.

H₃: Job security is positively and significantly related with affective commitment.

HRM Practices and Turnover Intentions

In earlier studies that examined the relationships between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions, different findings have been reported. For example, Eisenberger et al. (1986) revealed that when employees are favourably rewarded and recognized for the good work they do, then they reciprocate by developing an emotional attachment to the organization; thereby, reducing employee turnover intentions. In this study, the researchers looked at rewards as a demonstration by the employer that he/she recognizes and values the employee's contributions to the organization and cares about their well-being. In yet another study by Panaccio et al. (2014) on the relationship between rewards and employee turnover intentions, it was reported that effective reward strategies were positively related with employee job satisfaction but negatively related with employee turnover intentions. This assertion is true even among employees in the higher education sector (Comm & Mathaisel, 2003).

Previous studies have also indicated that promotion opportunities are negatively associated with likelihood of quitting (Xu, 2008; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Busari, Mughal, Khan, Rasool, & Kiyani, 2017). These authors report

that employees demonstrate organisational commitment when they are given opportunity for professional growth. According to Mosadeghrad, Ferlie and Rosenberg (2008), perception that an organisation uses underhand methods in promotions reduces organisational commitment and may lead to turnover. Cho and Poister's (2013) suggest that career development is associated with trust in the organisation and employees who have trust in the organisation are willing to maintain their membership in the organisation. In the context of higher education, empirical evidence has supported the view that opportunities for promotion are negatively associated with turnover intention (Daly and Dee, 2006; Xu, 2008; Tettey, 2009; Busari, et al, 2016). Similarly, Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) established that if lecturers see no possibility of promotion, they will be dissatisfied, which could lead to turnover. Although the above studies indicate that promotion opportunity is a predictor of organizational commitment, little empirical research has been conducted on promotion opportunities and how they relate to university employees' turnover intentions in the Ugandan context.

Job insecurity can be conceptualized as the overall concern about continuity of employment in one's organisation. Previous research suggests that there is a negative relationship between job security and turnover intentions (e.g. Kipkebut, 2010; Wong & Wong, 2017; Daly and Dee, 2006). For example, Wong and Wong (2017) reported that there was a significant negative relationship between job security and turnover intentions among Chinese manufacturing companies. Similar results were reported in universities settings (Kipkebut, 2010; Xu, 2008; Daly and Dee, 2006; Amposah, 2015). Joarder, Sharif and Ahmed (2011) reported that the assurance of an employee's job security was a negative predictor of turnover intentions among university employees in Bangladesh. From the foregoing literature review, the following hypotheses were proposed and tested in this study:

H₄: There is a negative and significant relationship between rewards and turnover intentions.

H₅: There is a negative and significant relationship between promotion opportunities and turnover intentions.

H₆: There is a negative and significant relationship between job security and turnover intentions.

Affective Commitment and Turnover Intentions

The significance of organisational commitment has been well acknowledged in turnover in studies (Kehoe and wright, 2013; Guchait and Cho, 2010; Haque, Fernando & Caputi, 2019). In some of those studies, organizational commitment has been found to be negatively related with employee turnover intentions (e.g. Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Faloye, 2014; Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Similar results have been reported in the literature involving samples drawn from universities where the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions was also reported to be negative (Daly & Dee, 2006; Kipkebut, 2010; Joarder, Sharif & Ahmed, 2011). Some of these studies were actually anchored on the social theory of exchange – just like the current study. However, most of the available literature that reported on the effect of organizational commitment on the turnover intentions of employees in higher education institutions were based in the UK (e.g. Sturges & Guest, 2001), USA (e.g. Daly and Dee, 2006) and Asia (e.g. Joarder et al., 2011) - leaving the African context under-researched. Thus, the current study proposed and tested the hypothesis:

H₇: There is a negative and significant relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions.

Mediating Effect of Affective Commitment

Although many studies have examined the relationships between HRMPs, organizational commitment and employee turnover intentions, only a few have looked at commitment as a mediating variable in the relationship between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions (Guchait & Cho, 2010; Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). For example, in studies conducted by Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013) and Kehoe and Wright (2013) moreover in different study contexts, the researchers reported that the relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions is often mediated by different variables including employee attitudes, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. According to these researchers, HRMPs rarely directly influence employee turnover intentions; instead, HRMPs usually indirectly affect turnover as well as turnover intentions via other mediating variables such as employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This particular finding was corroborated Panaccio, et al. (2014) who reported that affective commitment mediated the relationship between pay satisfaction and turnover among human resource [HR] professionals.

Even in university settings, researchers like Daly and Dee (2006) Joarder et al. (2011) and Ababneh (2020) discovered that variables such as organizational commitment indeed significantly mediated the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions. However, Wood and de Menezes (2011) noted that very few studies have attempted to test the mechanism through which HRMPs and employee outcomes relate at the individual level. Also, Kehoe and Wright (2013) noted that existing empirical research provided limited insight into the effects of HRM practices on proximal employee attitudes, which has led to gaps in our understanding of the mechanisms linking HRM practices to more distal outcomes. Similarly, writers such as Gucahit and Cho (2010) suggested that more research is required in different organisations and in different countries to validate the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intentions. Thus, in this study, we proposed and tested the hypothesis:

H₈: Affective commitment significantly mediates the relationship between HRMPs (rewards, promotion opportunities and job security) and turnover intentions.

3. Methodology

This was basically a quantitative study in which the analytical survey research design was employed in order to explore the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees. Data were collected from a sample of 722 university employees drawn from three public and three private universities in Uganda using an adapted self-administered questionnaire. Part One of the questionnaire solicited information on the background characteristics of the study respondents such as gender, age, education level and current job position. Part Two of the questionnaire comprised of 13 items that measured three dimensions of HRMPs, namely: rewards (five items, $\alpha = .822$), promotion (four items, $\alpha = .826$), and job security (four items, $\alpha = .889$). Part Three of the questionnaire on the other hand contained four items that measured the respondents affective commitment adopted from Allen & Meyer (1990) with a reported reliability index of $\alpha = 0.919$. The last part of the questionnaire had four items for measuring turnover intentions from DeConinck & Stilwell (2004) with a reliability coefficient $\alpha = 0.954$. Overall, we considered these reliability indices to be high enough and suitable to be used in undertaking the current study.

Once the data were collected, we employed structural equation modelling (SEM) technique with AMOS Software V. 20 for data analysis. Following the guidelines of Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two step approach, we constructed a measurement model and path analysis structural models. In this study, four indices, i.e. CFI, TLI, RMSEA and normed chi-square (χ^2/df) were used to assess model fit. CFI and TLI values of .90 and above indicate satisfactory fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Bentler, 2006); normed chi-square (χ^2/df) values of less than 5.0 indicate good fit (MacCallum, Browne and Sugawara, 1996) and RMSEA values of less than 0.08 was adopted as cut-off point for adequate fit (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers, 1977).

However, since the study involved testing for mediation, we utilized Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step model for testing the different hypotheses. These four-step process involved:

- (a) Constructing a structural model of direct relationships between the independent variable (HRMPs) and the dependent variable (turnover intentions);
- (b) Constructing a model of direct relationships between the independent variable (HRMPs) and the mediator variable (affective commitment);
- (c) Constructing a model of direct relationships between the mediator variable (affective commitment) and the dependent variable employee (turnover intentions); and,
- (d) Constructing a structural model of relationships between the independent variable (HRMPs) and the dependent variable (turnover intentions) in the presence of the mediator variable (affective commitment).

To establish whether mediation occurred, again Baron and Kenny's (1986) counsel for establishing mediation was used. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) to prove mediation:

- (a) the independent variable must be a significant predictor of the outcome variable in the first model;

- (b) independent variable must be significant predictor of the mediator variable in the second model;
- (c) mediator must be a significant predictor of the dependent variable in the third model; and
- (d) in the presence of the mediator (in the fourth model), the independent variable must either be an insignificant predictor of the dependent variable (full mediation) or it remains a significant predictor but its predictive power must be reduced significantly (partial mediation).

4. Results

In this section, we have presented the findings of the study. These findings are presented in accordance with the research objectives. However, before presenting the results on the first objective of the research, we first describe the profile of our study participants.

4.1 Background Information on Respondents

As we stated in the methodology section of this paper, a total of 722 respondents participated in this study. However, these respondents were of different background characteristics as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by their background characteristics

Background Variable	Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
Respondent's institution	Public university	479	66.3
	Private university	243	33.7
	Total	722	100
Staff Category	Teaching Staff	398	55.1
	Administrative Staff	324	44.9
	Total	722	100.0
Gender	Male	449	62.2
	Female	273	37.8
	Total	722	100.0
Age Group	Below 30 years	81	11.2
	30 - 39 years	233	32.3
	40 - 49 years	247	34.2
	50 - 59 years	139	19.3
	60 and above years	22	3.0
	Total	722	100.0
Tenure in Current Institution	Below 1 year	34	4.7
	1 -4 years	187	25.9
	5 - 10 years	267	37.0
	11 - 15 years	114	15.8
	More than 15 years	120	16.6
	Total	722	100.0
Tenure in Current Position	Below 1 year	92	12.7
	1-4 Years	306	42.4
	5-10 Years	233	32.3
	Over 10 Years	91	12.6
	Total	722	100.0

First, the results in Table 1 show that the majority of the study respondents (66.3%) were drawn from public universities and the remaining 33.7 percent came from private universities. This happened because there was reportedly more staff employed in the three selected public universities than their private counter-parts. Second, the results indicate that more than a half (55.1%) of the study respondents were teaching staff and the remaining portion (44.9%) was made up of non-teaching staff. Fourth, the majority of the respondents were males (62.2%). This occurred because the majority of university employees in Uganda are reportedly men. Fifth, the majority of the respondents (53.5%) were within the age group of 40 to 60 years, which is considered the prime age for active

university service. Finally, the majority of the respondents cumulatively had worked for their current university more than five years (67.4%). Of these, a large proportion of them (87.3%) had reportedly held their current position for a period exceeding a year. This meant that the majority of the study participants were individuals who had stayed in the universities studied for a reasonable period of time and, therefore, were able to provide authentic information regarding the subject under investigation.

4.2. Inter-variable Correlations, Reliability and Validity

As a precursor to testing the different hypotheses as indicated in Figure 1, we first verified whether there were significant correlations among the different variables that we investigated. The results of the correlation tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlational results and summary of descriptive statistics

Variable	REWARDS	PROMO	JOBSECU	AC	TOI
1 REWARDS	1.000				
2 PROMO	.417***	1.000			
3 JOBSECU	.190***	.375***	1.000		
4 AC	.360***	.414***	.290***	1.000	
5 TOI	-.342***	-.357***	-.262***	-.654***	1.000
Mean	3.350	3.880	4.257	4.240	4.089
Standard Deviation	1.283	1.339	1.541	1.689	1.831
Cronbach alpha α	.822	.826	.889	.919	.954
Composite Reliability	.805	.828	.891	.919	.955
Average Variance Extracted	.509	.548	.673	.741	.841

* **p < 0.001 (two-tailed test); AC = Affective Commitment; PROMO = Promotion opportunities; JOBSECU = Job Security; TOI= Turnover intentions

First, the results in Table 2 showed that there were significant positive inter-correlations amongst the HRMPs, namely: rewards and promotion ($r = 0.417, p < .001$); rewards and job security ($r = 0.190, p < .001$), and promotion and job security ($r = 0.375, p < .001$). Second, each of the HRMPs studied had significant correlations with the mediating variable: rewards and affective commitment ($r = 0.360$); promotion and affective commitment ($r = 0.414, p < .001$), and job security and affective commitment ($r = 0.290, p < .001$). Third, HRMPs had significant negative correlations with the dependent variable, turnover intentions: rewards and turnover intentions ($r = -0.342, p < .001$); promotion and turnover intentions ($r = -0.257, p < .001$), and job security and turnover intentions ($r = -0.262, p < .001$). Fourth, the results also indicated that the mediating variable (affective commitment) is significantly and negatively related with employee turnover intentions (the dependent variable) with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.654 (p < .001)$. All these results implied that a change in one variable is accompanied by a similar positive or negative change in the other variable depending on the results obtained. Finally, the results in Table 2 also showed the mean levels of HRMPs (Mean=3.350), affective commitment (Mean=3.3880) and employee turnover intentions (4.257) which were all above midpoint of the seven-point Likert scale.

We tested for validity and reliability using Chronbach alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 2 all Chronbach alpha and composite reliability coefficients were greater than 0.7 indicating that internal consistency reliability was not a problem (Chronbach, 1951; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All AVE for the variables in the measurement model were above the threshold of 0.50 indicating that the

measures satisfied the requirements for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Having achieved internal consistency reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model, we proceeded to test the study hypotheses as shown in the next section.

Table 2. Correlational results and summary of descriptive statistics

Variable	REWARDS	PROMO	JOBSECU	AC	TOI
6 REWARDS	1.000				
7 PROMO	.417***	1.000			
8 JOBSECU	.190***	.375***	1.000		
9 AC	.360***	.414***	.290***	1.000	
10 TOI	-.342***	-.357***	-.262***	-.654***	1.000
Mean	3.350	3.880	4.257	4.240	4.089
Standard Deviation	1.283	1.339	1.541	1.689	1.831
Cronbach alpha α	.822	.826	.889	.919	.954
Composite Reliability	.805	.828	.891	.919	.955
Average Variance Extracted	.509	.548	.673	.741	.841

* ** *p < 0.001 (two-tailed test); AC = Affective Commitment; PROMO = Promotion opportunities; JOBSECU = Job Security; TOI= Turnover intentions

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses we constructed a series of structural equation models in accordance with Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure.

Results on Objective One (H_1 , H_2 and H_3)

The first objective of this study was to explore the relationship between HRMPs and the affective commitment of university employees in Uganda. HRMPs in this study were rewards, promotion opportunities and job security. We tested the effect of individual HRMPs and employee affective commitment by constructing a structural model with the HRMPs as predictors and the mediator (affective commitment) as the dependent variable, as shown in Figure 2. The model fit indices ($\chi^2 = 420.495$; $df = 113$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.721$.; $TLI = .944$; $CFI = .954$; $RMSEA = .061$) indicated a satisfactory fit.

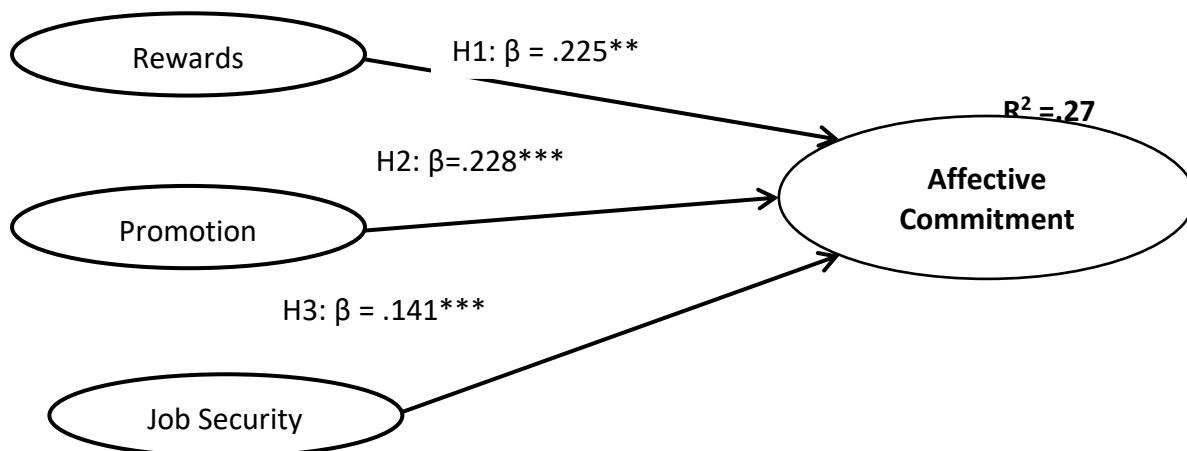


Figure 2. Standardised path coefficients for the direct relationships between HRMPs and affective commitment
Notes: **** p<.001

The results in Figure 2 indicate that all the three hypothesized relationships between HRMPs and affective organisational commitment were statistically significant and positive (rewards: $\beta=0.225$, $p < .001$; promotion: $\beta=0.228$, $p < .001$; and job security: $\beta=0.141$, $p < .001$). These results showed that HRMPs were significant joint predictors of affective commitment with an R-squared of (R^2) of 0.27. This implied that the three HRMPs explained 27 percent of the variance in affective commitment of university employees in Uganda. Therefore, the three research hypotheses, namely: H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 that are were supported. The summary of the results of the tests of hypotheses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of test of hypotheses between HRMPs and affective commitment

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	<i>Stand. coefficient</i>	<i>Critical Ratio</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
H_1	Rewards \rightarrow AC	.225	4.803.	< .001	Supported
H_2	Promotion \rightarrow AC	.288	5.576.	<.001	Supported
H_3	Job Security \rightarrow AC	.141	3.421.	< .001	Supported

AC = Affective commitment

Results on Objective Two (H_4 , H_5 , and H_6)

The second objective of this study was to determine the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. Again, in order to assess the direct relationship between the independent variables (HRMPs) and the dependent variable (turnover intentions), we constructed yet another structural model basing on Baron and Kenny’s (1986) procedure for studying mediations. The results indicating the relationships between the HRMPs and employee turnover intentions are presented in Figure 3. The model fit indices showed that ($\chi^2 = 366.850$.; $df = 113$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.246$; TLI = .960; CFI = .967; RMSEA = .056) the model fit the data well.

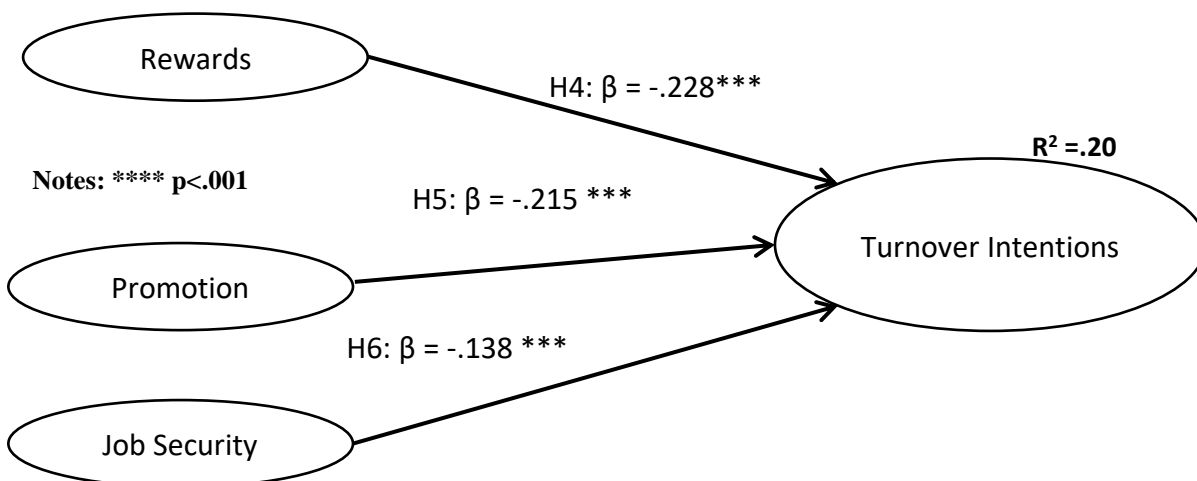


Figure 3. Standardised path coefficients for the direct relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions

The results in Figure 3 indicate that all the three hypothesized relationships between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions were statistically significant negative (rewards: $\beta = -0.228$, $p < .001$; promotion: $\beta = -0.215$, $p < .001$; and job security: $\beta = -0.138$, $p < .001$). These results showed that HRMPs were significant joint predictors of turnover intentions with an R-squared of (R^2) of 0.20. This implied that HRMPs explained 20 percent of the variance in turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. Therefore, the three research hypotheses, namely H_4 , H_5 , and H_6 were supported. The summary of the results of the tests of these hypotheses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of test of hypotheses between HRMPs and employee turnover intentions

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	<i>Stand coefficient</i>	<i>Critical Ratio</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
H4	Rewards → TOI	-.228	-4.855	.001	Supported
H5	Promotion → TOI	-.215	-4.228	<.001	Supported
H6	Job Security → TOI	-.138	-3.335	<.001	Supported

TOI= Turnover intentions

Results on Objective Three (H₇)

The third objective of this study was to establish the relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. In order to establish the relationship between the mediating variable (affective commitment) and the dependent variable (turnover intentions), we constructed yet another structural model. The model fit indices ($\chi^2 = 57.833$; $df = 19$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.046$; $TLI = .990$; $CFI = .993$; $RMSEA = .053$) showed that the model fit the data well. The results indicating the relationships between affective commitment and employee turnover intentions are presented in Figure 4 and Table 5.

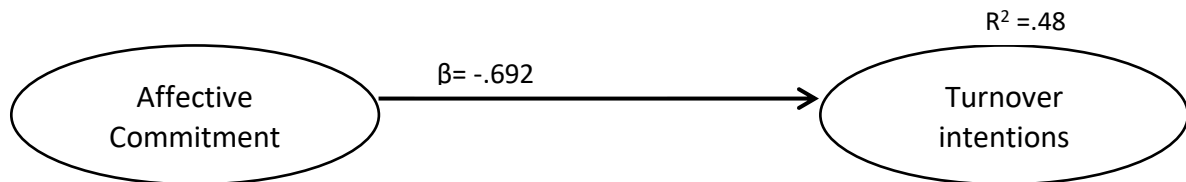


Figure 4. Standardised path coefficient for the direct relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions

Notes: ** p<.001**

The results in Figure 4 indicate that the hypothesized relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions was statistically significant but negative (affective commitment → turnover intentions: $\beta = -0.692$, $p < .001$). These results also showed affective commitment was a significant predictor of employee turnover intentions with an R-squared of (R^2) of 0.48. This implied that affective commitment explained 48 per cent of the variance in turnover intentions of university employees in Uganda. Therefore, research hypothesis (H_7) was supported. The summary of the result of hypothesis testing for H_7 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of Test of Hypotheses: Affective Commitment and Employee Turnover Intentions

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	<i>Stand coefficient</i>	<i>Critical Ratio</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
H ₇	AC → TOI	-.692	-18.514	.001	Supported

AC = Affective Commitment; TOI= Turnover intentions

The results in Table 5 indicate that the hypothesis derived from Objective Three which anticipated a negative relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions was supported. This result implied that when employees have higher affective commitment in an organization, then their turnover intentions are likely to decrease and the reverse is true.

Results on Objective Four (H₈)

The fourth and final objective of this study was to explore the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions of university employees. To achieve this objective, we

constructed yet another structural equation model (Figure 5). We employed the mediation analysis technique termed bootstrapping method (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) at a 95 percent confidence interval with bias correction method and 2000 bootstrapped samples. The results of the structural model showed that there was a satisfactory fit ($\chi^2 = 537.807$; $df = 179$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2/df = 3.005$; $TLI = .959$; $CFI = .965$; $RMSEA = .053$). The results are summarised in Figure 5 and Table 6.

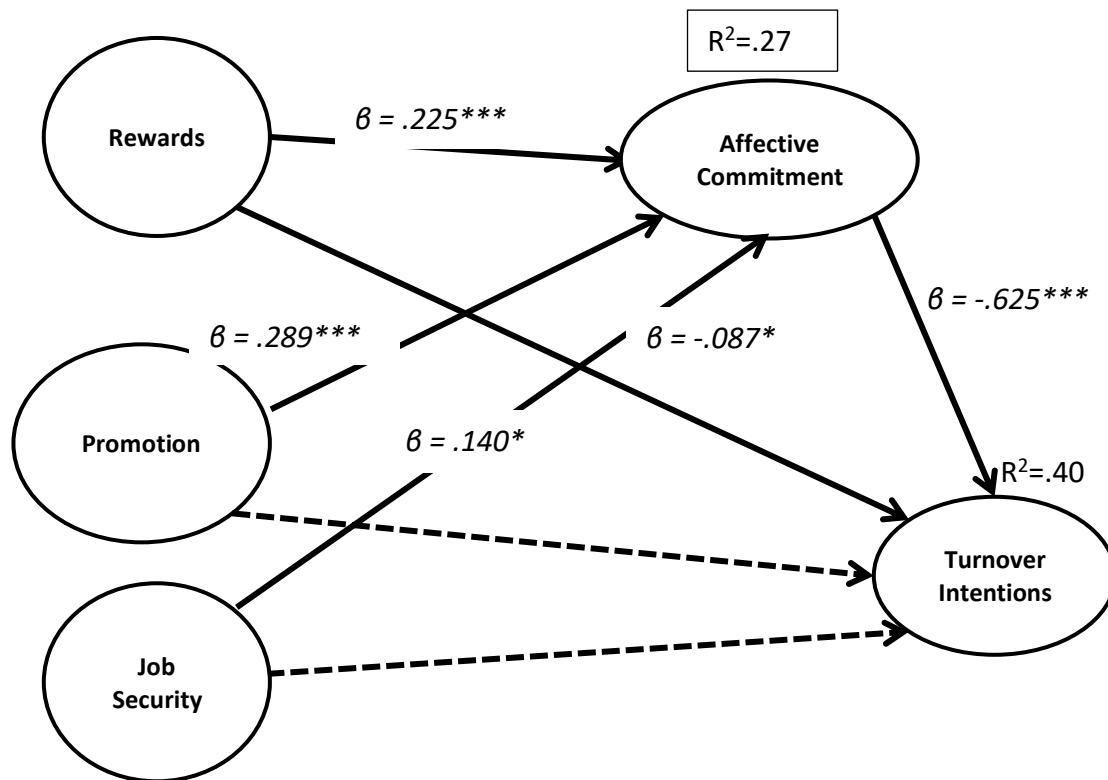


Figure 5. Hypothesis testing of the mediation model

Notes: $***p < .001$; $*p < .05$; Dotted lines depict insignificant relationships

Table 6. Summary of results on the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables

Equation	Direct Effect β	P-value	Indirect Effect β	P-value	Result
Direct Relationship between independent variable and mediator					
REWARDS \rightarrow AC	.225	<.001			Significant direct effect supported
PROMO \rightarrow AC	.289	<.001			Significant direct effect supported
JOBSECU \rightarrow AC	.140	<.05			Significant direct effect supported
Direct Relationship between mediator and dependent variable					
AC \rightarrow TOI	-.625	<.001			Significant direct effect supported

Mediation: Indirect relationship between independent and dependent variables through mediator			
REWARDS→AC→T OI	-.141.	<0.001	Mediation supported
PROMO→AC→TOI	-.181.	<0.001	Mediation supported
PROMO→AC →TOI	-.088.	<0.001	Mediation supported
Direct relationship between independent and dependent variables after controlling for mediator			
REWARDS→ TOI	-.087	<.05	Supported: implying partial mediation
PROMO → TOI	-.034.	.451	Not Supported: implying full mediation
JOBSECU→ TOI	-.049.	.136	Not Supported: implying full mediation

AC = Affective Commitment; PROMO = Promotion opportunities; JOBSECU = Job Security; TOI= Turnover intentions

The results in Figure 5 show that consistent with the results in Figure 2, the path coefficients linking HRMPs and affective commitment were statistically significant. Besides, the results also indicate that there was a significant negative relationship between affective commitment and turnover intentions ($\beta = -.625, p < .001$). Besides, as shown in Figure 5 and Table 6, the path coefficient for the direct relationships between HRMPs and turnover intentions after controlling for affective commitment was statistically significant for Rewards ($\beta = -.087, p < .05$). However, the standardised regression weights for the direct paths linking promotion to turnover intentions ($\beta = -.034; p > .05$) and job security to turnover intentions ($\beta = -.049; p > .05$) after controlling for affective commitment were *not* statistically significant (dotted lines). These results suggest that affective commitment had partial mediation effect on the relationship between rewards and turnover intentions and full mediation effect on the relationship between both promotion and job security and turnover intentions. Therefore, H_8 which anticipated affective commitment to mediate the relationship between HRMPs and turnover intentions is supported.

5. Discussion

This study sought to examine the mediating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees. The study came up with four key findings. First, the findings revealed that HRMPs (rewards, promotions and job security) are statistically significant positive predictors of affective commitment. Second, as expected HRMPs are significant negative predictors of turnover intentions of university employee. Third, the study results also revealed that affective commitment has a significant but negative effect on employee turnover intentions. Fourth, the study findings also showed that affective commitment is a significant mediator of the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees.

The finding that HRMPs (rewards, promotions and job security) are statistically significant positive predictors of affective commitment among university employees was not totally new. In fact, earlier scholars such as Meyer and Smith (2000), Gould-Williams (2003), and Edgar and Geare (2005) have reported the existence of significant correlations between HRMPs and organizational commitment among employees in different countries including in Canada, the UK and New Zealand respectively. Even outside America and Europe, other scholars (e.g. Guchait and Cho, 2010; Chang, et al. (2016) have reported the presence of strong positive relationships between HRMPs and affective commitment among employees. On the African continent these findings are consistent with Kipkebut (2010) who reported that university employees who received fair rewards were committed to their universities.

Nonetheless, the finding in this study are contrary to Mugizi et al. (2015) who reported that rewards were not among the significant antecedents of employee commitment among university employees in Uganda. This difference in findings could have emanated from various factors including the difference in the type of universities investigated; whereas the current study focussed on both public and private universities in Uganda, the Mugizi et al.'s (2015) study focussed at investigating only public universities.

Second, the finding in this study that HRMPs are negative predictors of university employee turnover intentions is also in congruence with the works of other researchers such as Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Panaccio et al. (2014). According to Eisenberger et al. (1986), when employees are favourably rewarded and recognized for the good work they do, they would respond by developing an emotional attachment to the organization; thereby, reducing employee turnover intentions. In this case, theory of social exchange would apply; thus, making the use of this theory in the current research is truly justifiable. Nevertheless, we were still able to fill some knowledge gap because most of the earlier studies on the effect of rewards as a dimension of HRMPs on the turnover intentions of university employees had been conducted in the context of developed nations – unlike the current study.

Third, the finding that affective commitment has a significant but negative effect on employee turnover intentions was in tandem with the works of earlier scholars such as Kehoe and Wright (2013), Faloye (2014) and Agarwal and Sajid (2017) who investigated the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions in different contexts. The findings of some of these studies actually revealed that organizational commitment was negatively related with employee turnover intentions.

Finally, the study findings that affective commitment is a strong mediator of the relationship between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees was also in congruence with the findings of scholars such as Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013), Joarder et al. (2011), and Ababneh (2020). Like in the current study, Joarder et al. (2011) and Ababneh (2020) reported that variables such as organizational commitment significantly mediate the relationships between HRMPs and the turnover intentions of university employees. This was also in agreement with work of Panaccio, et al. (2014) who observed that affective commitment mediates the relationship between pay satisfaction and turnover intentions among human resource [HR] professionals

5. Conclusion

Empirical evidence from the current study has shown that rewards, promotion, job security, and affective commitment are significant predictors of turnover intentions. The study has also shown that affective commitment fully mediates the HRMPs-turnover intentions relationship. On the basis of these findings and the discussion that ensued, we have concluded that this article extends the frontiers of knowledge about the role of HRMPs in universities in Uganda. The study also makes a contribution by addressing shortage of empirical studies on HRMPs in sub-Saharan context by involving both private and public universities in Uganda. Finally, we have also concluded that these study findings are important for HRM practitioners and other managers alike. Moreover, the results can also be applied to enhance retention of university employees which can increase the performance and international rating of universities in Uganda and other countries of similar nature.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In spite of the foregoing contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the study applied cross-sectional design whereby data on all variables were collected at one point in time. As such, it is not possible to accurately infer causality between the variables. Therefore, future studies may adopt longitudinal designs to provide a more valid assessment of causality. Second, although organizational commitment has been validated as a three-component construct as postulated by Allen and Meyer (1990), this study considered only affective commitment, which is one of the three dimensions of commitment. Future research may consider the mediating role of normative and continuance job commitments. Third, the three HRMPs included in this study are not representative of all the practices used by the universities from which the study sample was drawn; they are, in fact, a small fraction among the many practices of HRM in the literature (e.g. Daly & Dee, 2006). Future research may consider other HRMPs such as training, performance appraisal, work-life balance, and participation which have been shown in other

contexts to have significant effects on affective commitment and turnover intentions. Nonetheless, in spite of the above limitations, this study has shown that affective commitment is an important mediating construct through which HRMPs can help reduce undesirable turnover intentions.

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