ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF PRESENTEEISM IN THE LEBANESE SMEs

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Abstract

Purpose

Based on review of literature it is found that presenteeism is one of the biggest management tests a business can face and the question that arises is to what extent does the perception of leadership style affects perceived intention to quit as mediated by perceived presenteeism, perceived work life balance and perceived job satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach

Based on review of literature, the researcher developed an instrument that was concise and easy to understand. This instrument was undergone a robust process of development and testing. The content of the questionnaire was based on review of literature and after piloting, the construct validity of the Likert 5- points scale items was established using factor analysis. Most of the items were drawn from previously tested questionnaires in the literature but were modified to suit the Arabic culture. The psychometric properties of reliability were determined using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument was distributed to a large sample of employees working for different SMEs in Lebanon. Furthermore, the researcher depended on highly trained girls to conduct structured face-to-face interviews by visiting respondents at their homes and/or work. The sample size was determined using the statistical confidence formula.

Findings

Almost half of the respondents reported that they don't perceive their leaders as role models that listen to employees or create a sense of community among them. Almost two thirds believe that employees in our country are trained to work under stress, demonstrate lack of loyalty and like to quit their job. Most employees still force themselves to go and be present at work even if they have health or non–health problems. Results show a weak negative correlation; perceived Intention to Quit decreases as level of perceived collaborative leadership, job satisfaction and presenteeism increase. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that decision makers at the surveyed Lebanese SMEs make presenteeism and job satisfaction a priority, because they are considered critical and highly important. What's more, leadership is the first step in reducing employees' turnover.

Originality

This article empirically tested structural equation model (path Analysis) within the context of leadership in a developing country.

Keywords: Leadership, Work- Life-Balance, Presenteeism, Job Satisfaction, Employees Intention to Quit.

Introduction

Experience shows that quality of our daily lives depends on the foundational habits that we routinely run on a daily basis. Ordinary people run into health problems and work life conflict that affect their daily lives, nevertheless they spend more time at work for fear of losing their jobs. That is what is happening to employees in

Lebanon! The population of Lebanon is young, the age of eighty five percent of them is less than 55 years(CIA World Fact, 2018), the majority of employees however, lack a more friendly working environment and they lack having supportive work-life balance policies. A recent study by Suzanne Charbaji noted that Lebanese business is a family business made of small and medium enterprises (SME) and this "leads to a lot of job complexities including role ambiguity, role conflict, stress, dissatisfaction which in turn leads to employees turnover"(Charbaji, ;pp:2-3). To deepen this problem, most families in Lebanon have changed from a family that consists of a mother as dependent homemaker and father as breadwinner, to a family characterized by dual-earner households. This in turn initiated an imperative requisite for help to take care of kids and elderly people at home. Consequently, more and more employees are expected to become emotionally and even physically ill. Janssens and associates concluded that "high job demands, high efforts, low support and low rewards were associated with presenteeism. Furthermore, a significant association could be observed for both bullying and work-to-home conflict in relation to presenteeism"(Janssens et al.,2016; pp:331). Previous research state that presenteeism covers a wide variety of health related issues like depression, common cold, toothache, etc.. as well as non-health related issues like family and financial concern. Equally, Rehman and Roomi believe that "Lack of sufficient time, gender bias, social and cultural norms as well as family responsibilities are the most significant challenges women face to achieve balance in a patriarchal Islamic society" (Rehman and Roomi, 2012; p. 209). It is believed that It is the duty of the researcher in this study to move forward and investigate the cause and effect of presenteeism in our SME culture. To this end, the researcher in this study is planning to implement the causal path analysis approach which focuses on seeking to understand the direct and indirect effects of the perception of type of leadership style that is developed at the Lebanese SMEs on intention to leave job. To put it another way, this study aims to bring conceptual and methodological understanding to the way that perception of Servant Leadership affects perceived Employees Intention to Quit via the intermediate variables perceived Work- Life-conflict, perceived Presenteeism, perceived Job Satisfaction in the Lebanese small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The challenge will be in determining which of these intermediate variables are significant causes. At best, Lebanon is a unique underdeveloped country and this study should offer a model for policy and decision makers in Lebanon to treat leadership style as a first step in determining employees intention to quit. This will extend beyond documents and will include recommendations to guide individual and collective behavior.

Review of Literature

Research on Presenteeism

Whitehouse (2005) defines presenteeism as reduced productivity as a result of events that disturb employees and distract them from full productivity. Previous research reveal that job satisfaction and work life balance are directly related to presenteeism. James and associates argue that "If workers have substituted presenteeism for absenteeism, then we would expect to see that stressful life events relate to presenteeism as they do to absenteeism"(Macgregor et all., 2008,p. 608). Biron and his associates reported that "Heavier workloads, higher skill discretion, harmonious relationships with colleagues, role conflict and precarious job status increased presenteeism, but decision authority did not. Workers reporting high psychological distress and more severe psychosomatic complaints were also more likely to report higher rates of presenteeism"(Biron et all., 2006, p.26). In year 2012, Collins and Cartwright investigated the issues that influence a person's decision to come into work despite being sick. Collins and Cartwright believe that "there are two facets to presenteeism: one where it is acknowledged that the individual is not working at full production as the organization and employee work together to return to work after an absence; and the another facet which is likely to be for short-terms in which the individual comes to work despite being ill because of organizational or personal reasons and the organization is likely to remain unaware that an individual is not working at full capacity"(Collins and Cartwright, 2012; p.440).) Demerouti and associates argue that " On the work floor, supervisors should encourage sick employees to stay at home and, as role models, they should also behave the same way themselves. The ultimate ideal is to reject a macho or workaholism culture and instead to emphasize the right of and the importance for employees to stay at home when sick"(Demerouti et all., 2009; p.64). Likewise, Lu and associates in 2013 note that their study is "the first cross-cultural study demonstrating

the universality of the act of presenteeism and its damaging effects on employees' well-being."(Lu and associates ,2013. P.440). Cocker and associates conducted an investigation to explore the cognitive processes underlying manager's answers, detect difficulties and their causes and suggest design solutions to yield a better comprehensible measure of presenteeism and more reliable valuation of lost productive time, they concluded that "Managers reported significant difficulty understanding and quantifying the impact of presenteeism for acute and chronic conditions despite recognising its occurrence and demonstrating awareness of how working through illness could detrimentally affect productivity"(Cocker et all, 2012; p.84). Siukola and associate believe that "the decreased risk for sickness absence among white-collar workers if there is no substitute during absence may mask presenteeism" (Siukola, 2013; p.153). Moreover, Simbula found that "An aspect that is positively associated to presenteeism is the work-to-family conflict (Simbula,2016; p.85). What's more, Cooper, and Lu believe that "there is still no consensus on the exact definition and satisfactory measurement of presenteeism among researchers"(Cooper, and Lu, 2016; p. 217).

Research on Intention to Quit

Employees turnover(Intention to quit) is defined as an employee's plan for intention to leave the present job and look for a different job in the near future Based on review of literature, one can say that Lebanese females are more opt to suffer the work –family conflict and quit their jobs. Mohan Raju Pamu believes that " quit intentions are not indicative of lack of commitment and vice versa"(Pamu, 2010; P 488). Moreover, "It was also discovered that there was no relationship between financial responsibility and retention cognitions" (Gow et all., 2008, p.26). Gächter and his associates find that "Higher levels of cooperation (trust), interactional justice and work-life-balance reduce police officers' intentions to quit" (Gächter, et al., 2013; p. 479). What's more, Valentine notes that "Women frequently complain of pay inequality, dead-end jobs, workplace apathy, sexual harassment, and interrole conflict. In some situations, these factors may still reduce job satisfaction and increase quitting"(Valentine, 2001; p. 141).

Research on Work-Life-Conflict

The issue of work-life balance originally emerged in the 1970s, as a "women's issue" that began in the late 1980s, to focus more on the development of effective recruitment/retention policies (Hobson et al., 2001; p. 38) . Later on, Michielsens and her colleagues argue that flexible work arrangements (FWA) are not deemed to be problematical at managerial level, but might be for "lower-level" jobs (Michielsens, et al, 2013. Soon after, Na-Ayudhya and associates argue that "there is the challenge for HR to develop its role in organizations as strategic partner in WLB policies and practices and to convince senior management of the importance of such an agenda in times of crisis and austerity" (Na-Ayudhya et all., 2015; p.28). Previous research state that "women reported high workloads, requiring long working hours, which consumed time and energy otherwise available for other relationships and commitments and their own leisure"(Woodward, 2007; p.6). Murthy and Guthrie "found that management used "work-life balance" initiatives to manage both the physical and emotional health of employees" (Murthy and Guthrie, 2012; p.258). Burnett and colleagues argue that "work-life balance policies have not led to well-balanced, or "gender-neutral", work and family practices. This is for two reasons, both relating to gender" (Burnett, et al., 2010; p. 534). According to Albertsen et al. (2008) the effect of working hours and work-life balance was deeply supported among women. Fiona Moore reports that " the extant literature on work-life balance indicates that the impact of flexible working, and of family-friendly policies, on work-life balance is not clearly understood, and that differences at different levels of the organisation are noted but not empirically explored: it is simply assumed that there is a positive correlation between strong work-life balance programmes and loyalty to the company" (Moore, 2007; p.387).

Research on Job Satisfaction

Oshagbem "found that the teachers' jobs explain over 30 per cent of their job dissatisfaction! In essence, the findings show that the university teachers' job of teaching and research contributes significantly to both their job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Can the same factor contribute to satisfaction for some workers and contribute to dissatisfaction for some others? In the reality of the modern work environment, there is no reason why such a situation cannot occur. After all, people's interests and abilities differ"(Oshagbem, 1997; 358).   Koubova and Buchko argue "that the satisfaction of personal life is more important than job satisfaction and leads to better work performance and greater possibilities for careers. Since the emotions coming from our private life are stronger than those experienced at work, we argue that one who is able to achieve emotional calm by maintaining high quality relationships with a significant other and close family members or friends can better concentrate at work and become a high performer with professional growth opportunities"(Koubova and Buchko, 2013; p. 715). Oshagbemi believes that "It will be interesting to investigate how and why rank, among other factors, affects job satisfaction. It will be useful if rank and other effects can be quantified, as this will enhance the current literature on job satisfaction"(Oshagbemi, 1997; p. 511). Oshagbemi found that "Overall, female academics at higher ranks namely, senior lecturers, readers and professors, were more satisfied with their jobs than male academics of comparable ranks"(Oshagbemi, 2000; p. 331). What's more, Koustelios reports that "The results of the present study suggest that teachers were satisfied with the job itself and supervision, whereas they were dissatisfied with pay and promotional opportunities"(Koustelios, 2001; p. 355) and Menon declaress that "Job satisfaction may be influenced by variables not directly linked to school leadership due to the fact that the school leader does not offer rewards or benefits to teachers."(Menon, 2014; p. 524).

Research on Leadership Style

Historically, literature on leadership focused on characteristics and personality traits, but new leadership theories has shifted towards the perception of the leaders' relationships with followers (Robbins & Coulter,2005). The effect of Leadership style on presenteeism and employee turnover has been the subject of much investigation. Many companies are concerned about the costs resulting from leadership failures. Previous research define servant leader as the leader who does not see himself above those he leads, instead, he considers those he leads as peers to learn from and to teach. He doesn't accept as a fact that being the leader makes him better than others. Thus, instead of forcing upon their subordinates what they want, leaders act as servants. They do not use their authority to get things done, but use persuasion to convince employees and staff to do their job. Besides, servant leadership theory puts the leader in the role of a steward that serves the organization. With all that being said, Simmons on the one hand believes that "The empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of servant leadership is still underdeveloped but a few new and well done studies are very encouraging"(Simmons, 2011). Bright and Engelbrecht on the other hand, report that "Team effectiveness and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) are outcomes vital for team success. Servant leadership practices also play a critical role in team effectiveness and OCB" (Bright and Engelbrecht, 2014 ;p.1). In contrast, transformational leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Walt Disney lead by motivating their followers. Agbim reports that transformational leaders are proactive; they work to change the organizational culture by motivating and empowering employees to bring change in their personal as well as organizational life. Jung and his associates believe that transformational leaders increase followers' intrinsic motivation (rather than just providing extrinsic motivation) to perform their job (Jung et al., 2003   ; p. 528). By comparison, transactional leaders are responsive. They focus on detailed and short-term goals. Moreover, they make employees achieve organizational objectives through rewards and punishment (Agbim, 2013; pp: 57-58).

Need (Significance) for the Study

The significance and need for this study is determined by the results published by various journals. A study such as the one suggested here is recommended by experts in this field. Panari and Simbula believe that "..there is a

need for more studies in order to better understand both personal and workplace antecedents and consequences of presenteeism and improve an instrument for its evaluation"(Panari and Simbula, 2016; p.92). In their study Frooman and colleagues argue that "Future research should evaluate psychological factors at the point at which employees are driven to take sick leave for actual illness or for other reasons. New research must develop statistically reliable absenteeism scales to measure the intent of employees to use sick leave either legitimately or illeitimately. Finally, ongoing research should assess the value of leadership style, its impact on job satisfaction and ultimately absenteeism in the workplace"(Frooman et all., 2012 ,p.459). George and his associates note that "Absenteeism has been the subject of much investigation but more research is required into the antecedents and consequences of presenteeism, the phenomenon of employees being physically present at work, but not fully functional and therefore unproductive"(George, 2017; p. 2071). Furthermore, Ferreira and associate argue that "Considering the importance of advancing in the field by studying presenteeism at the organizational level and, perhaps, introducing the more in-depth concept of presenteeism culture, further studies should consider different level analysis through hierarchical linear modeling approaches"(Ferreira et all, 2015; p. 296).

Purpose

Based on review of literature it is found that presenteeism is one of the biggest management tests a business can face and the question that arises is to what extent does the perception of servant leadership style affect presenteeism in the Lebanese SMEs and how does it affect employees' turnover? The purpose of this paper is to causally investigate the effect of the perception of servant leadership style on intention to quit as mediated by presenteeism, work life balance and job satisfaction.

The Statement of the Research Problem

The statement of the research problem formulated as a big research question is to determine "What is the relative importance of Servant Leadership, Work- Life-Balance, Presenteeism and Job Satisfaction on Employees Intention to Quit in the Lebanese SMEs?

The Statement of the Research Hypotheses

H_1:   the impact of Perceived Leadership on Perceived Intention to Quit is strengthened via the mediating variable Perceived Presenteism.

H_2:   the impact of Perceived Leadership on Perceived Intention to Quit is strengthened via the mediating variable Perceived Work – Life Conflict.

H_3:   the impact of Perceived Leadership on Perceived Intention to Quit is strengthened via the mediating variable Perceived Job Satisfaction.

H_4:   the impact of perceived leadership on Perceived Intention to Quit is strengthened via the mediating variable Perceived Regulation and Job description.

Procedures and Methodology

The researcher in this study attempted to answer the main single clear and explicit research question that was formulated in a statement of research problem. Based on review of literature, the researcher developed an instrument for this study that was concise and easy to understand. This instrument was undergone a robust process of development and testing. The content of the questionnaire was based on review of literature and after piloting, the construct validity of the Likert 5- points scale items was established using factor analysis. Most of the items were drawn from previously tested questionnaires in the literature but were modified to suit the Arabic culture. The

psychometric properties of reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha.   The instrument was distributed to a large sample of employees working for different SMEs in Lebanon. Furthermore, the researcher depended on highly trained girls to conduct structured face-to-face interviews by visiting respondents at their homes and/ or work. The sample size was determined using the statistical confidence formula. Assuming that the Precision or Margin of Error (how precisely we want to estimate the population proportion) is 0.05 and assuming that 50% of employees have intention to leave their job (i.e. the researcher wanted to be 95% confident that between 55% and 45% of employees have intention to quit) then, the calculated sample size was approximately 400 employees. Then, sample was selected to include working females and this study is based on the valid responses of 191 female employees. The age distribution is approximately normal, with an average age close to 30 years and the respondents' experience in their current jobs is approximately normal with an average of 3 years of experience. Their average of previous experience is approximately 5 years and is moderately positively skewed. One of the questions to ask in this investigation will be "how valid is the questionnaire used in collecting data?" or "how valid the interpretation will be for this study?" To answer this question, the researcher in this investigation established the **construct validity** of the questionnaire via Factor Analysis. Furthermore, the reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha. Each response uses a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). Factor analysis was carried out as a data reduction technique to test the construct validity of the questionnaire. Two statistical tests were conducted to determine the suitability of factor analysis. First, the Kaisers-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy generated a score of 0.889, well above the recommended level of 0.50. Second, the Bartless test of sphericity result was significant (Chi Square = 4939.621, P= 0.00), indicating that there are adequate inter-correlations between the items which allow the use of factor analysis. Principal axis factoring was used as an extraction method and oblique rotation was used as a rotation method. Six factors were extracted using a criterion of an Eigen value greater than 1. The six-factor solution accounted for 79.557% of the total variance. The oblique factor solution is shown in Table – 1 -

Table 1

Structure Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q7 Our manger spends the time to form quality relationships with employees.	.887	-.375	.192	.318	.221	.239
Q1 Our manger listens to employees	.885	-.356	.233	.267	.190	.232
Q2 Our manger involves employees in suggesting new ideas.	.864	-.291	.144	.306	.208	.197
Q10 Our manger makes the personal development of employees a priority.	.859	-.363	.246	.353	.193	.214
Q8 Our manger creates a sense of community among employees.	.853	-.377	.136	.358	.240	.253

Q3 Our manger promotes teamwork rather than individual decision making.	.836	-.436	.109	.377	.255	.394
Q5 Our manger does not consider himself above employees.	.831	-.247	.282	.229	.246	.288
Q4 Our manger enhances employee's problem-solving skills.	.830	-.374	.072	.340	.302	.352
Q6 Our manger allows employees to do what they do well.	.829	-.305	.196	.282	.250	.197
Q9 Our manger decisions are influenced by employees' input.	.811	-.348	.245	.291	.111	.137
Q25 Our employees demonstrated lack of loyalty.	.301	-.905	.019	.227	.217	.456
Q26 Our employees would like to quit because of having authorative manager.	.341	-.900	.014	.277	.130	.455
Q27 I am planning to quit because of lack of flexi time	.346	-.900	.067	.303	.223	.378
Q28 I am planning to quit because of the succession problem.	.406	-.885	.086	.245	.130	.353
Q24 Our employees have been adequately trained to work under stress	.288	-.859	.055	.141	.210	.513
Q29 I am planning to quit because of the role conflict.	.412	-.854	.067	.310	.213	.279
Q32 I am planning to hunt for a new job	.445	-.747	.180	.263	.113	.527
Q42 I felt hopeless about finishing certain work tasks, due to my family responsibility.	.244	-.055	.947	.072	.157	.124

Q47 I felt hopeless about finishing certain tasks, due to my daily family responsibility.	.267	.012	.934	.108	.192	.080
Q41 My family responsibility distracted me from taking pleasure in my work.	.158	-.115	.908	.082	.131	.108
Q46 Because of my family responsibility, the stresses of my job as an employee were much harder to handle.	.182	-.092	.882	.217	.234	.015
Q48 At work, Although I have headache or backache, I still force myrself to go to work	.331	-.267	.130	.956	.238	.169
Q50 At work, despite my non-health (family responsibility), I still force myself to go to work .	.329	-.285	.129	.948	.268	.123
Q43 At work, Although I have symptoms like depression, common cold, toothache, I still force myself to go to work	.368	-.248	.096	.892	.423	.131
Q51 All activities are regulated in order to prevent the abuse of power	.240	-.248	.205	.264	.927	.243
Q52 Job descriptions are clear in order to prevent the abuse of power	.319	-.190	.204	.385	.913	.061
Q23 I am satisfied with my current job.	.373	-.470	.177	.162	.127	.888
Q22 I am satisfied with my colleagues.	.271	-.489	.043	.226	.218	.888

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

The first factor (Perceived Leadership, Cronbach's alpha = 0.957) accounts for 38.534% of the total variance and is defined by ten items with factor loadings greater than 0.80. The second factor (Perceived Intention to Quit, Cronbach's alpha = 0.943) accounts for 13.816% of the total variance and is defined by seven items with

factor loadings greater than 0.74. The third factor (Perceived Work Life Conflict, Cronbach's alpha = 0.939) accounts for 10.704% of the total variance and is defined by four items with factor loadings greater than 0.88. The fourth factor (Perceived Presenteeism, Cronbach's alpha = 0.927) accounts for 8.051% of the total variance and is defined by three items with factor loadings greater than 0.89. The fifth factor (Perceived Regulation and Job description, Cronbach's alpha = 0.842) accounts for 4.603% of the total variance and is defined by two items with factor loadings greater than 0.91. The sixth factor (Perceived Job Satisfaction, Cronbach's alpha = 0.791) accounts for 3.868% of the total variance and is defined by two items with factor loadings 0.88.

Dependent Variable Regression: Perceived Intention to Quit

In regressing the latent dependent variable "Perceived Intention to Quit" on the other latent explanatory variables (Each is measured as factor scores for the respondents on the dimension of the factor solution), it was found that three out of the five explanatory variables are significant in explaining the variation and predicting "Perceived Intention to Quit". Table – 2 -   shows that the regression equation is highly significant (F= 15.244, p=.000) and the R2 is 0.293. The significant independent variable are brought explicitly into the path analytic model to determine the direct and indirect effect of the significant explanatory variables in predicting and explaining the variation in the dependent variable "Perceived Intention to Quit" as shown in Figure –1-

Table -2-

Coefficients[a]

| Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-7.640E-17	.062		.000	1.000
	Perceived Leadership	-.237	.070	-.237	-3.407	.001
	Perceived Work Life Conflict	.040	.064	.040	.623	.534
	Perceived Presenteeism	-.138	.068	-.138	-2.023	.045
	Perceived Regulation and Job description	-.040	.066	-.040	-.598	.551
	Perceived job satisfaction	-.360	.065	-.360	-5.566	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Intention to Quit

Path Analysis

Figure -1- contains the results of a path analysis of the structural causal model that is formed for this study. **The true direct effect is shown between the parentheses** while the other numbers are a zero-order relation (measuring the total effect = direct effect + indirect effect). The findings of the path analysis confirm two of the stated research hypotheses that the impact of perceived leadership on intention to quit is strengthened via the mediating variables Perceived Presenteism and Perceived Job Satisfaction.

Figure 1

Perceived Leadership
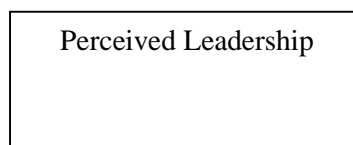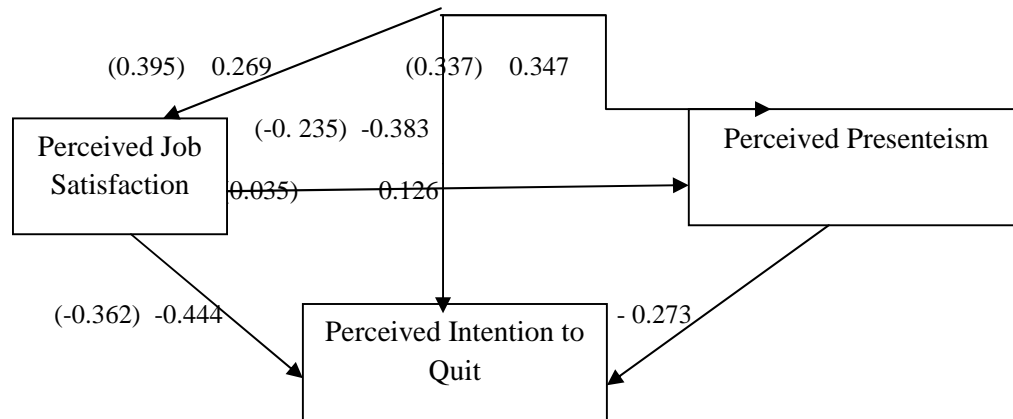
Conclusion

The total effect between perceived leadership and perceived intention to quit is better and stronger than the direct effect. This implies that the impact of Perceived Leadership on Perceived Intention to Quit improved via Perceived Presenteeism and Perceived job satisfaction. What's more, the multiple regression analysis revealed that both Perceived Work Life Balance and Perceived Regulation and Job description are statistically speaking not significant and consequently they were not included in path analysis. This is not surprising, because many people in Arab culture live Work Life Balance as a daily activity they are grown accustomed to do as compared to presenteeism as a practice of being present without fully functioning at work that they may differ on. Presenteeism denotes the situations in which employees keep on working despite the fact that they are unable to work owing to their own health problems or work life conflict. Findings of the study show no significant impact of work experience or age on intent to leave. Almost half of the respondents reported that they don't perceive their leaders as role models that listen to employees or create a sense of community among them. Almost two thirds believe that employees in our country are trained to work under stress, demonstrated lack of loyalty and like to quit their job. Employees still force themselves to go and be present at work if they have health or non – health problems. Results show a weak negative correlation; perceived Intention to Quit decreases as level of perceived collaborative leadership, job satisfaction and presenteeism increase. What's more, it is highly recommended that decision makers at the surveyed Lebanese SMEs make presenteeism and job satisfaction a priority, because they are considered critical and highly important. What's more, leadership is the first step in reducing employees turnover.

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