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Author

DORENKAMP, Isabelle (WEISS, Eva-Ellen)

Title

What makes them leave? : a path model of postdocs' intentions to leave academia / Isabelle Dorenkamp ; Eva-Ellen Weiß

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Abstract

A growing number of postdoctoral academics cite stressful working conditions for considering abandoning their studies and leaving the academic profession entirely before they obtain a tenured position. This paper identifies the mechanisms by which work stress influences postdocs' intentions to leave academia. Based on Schaubroeck et al.'s (1989) stress-turnover-intention model, we propose a professional turnover-intention model that includes both the effort-reward imbalance model as a comprehensive measure of work stress and affective professional commitment. The research model is tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) and data from 421 postdocs. The results show significant support for the hypothesized effects. In particular, a three-path-mediated effect is found from work stress to the intention to leave academia via strain and job satisfaction. Additional analyses reveal significant gender differences: The relationship between overcommitment and strain is stronger for female postdocs than it is for male postdocs, and the direct link between work stress and the intention to leave academia applies only to female postdocs. Further, job satisfaction fully mediates

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the relationship between affective professional commitment and the intention to leave academia. Thus, we provide a model on an academics' professional turnover intention that goes beyond previous research by incorporating two important mediators, strain and job satisfaction. We also confirm the relevance of affective professional commitment to professional turnover intentions in the realm of academia. Specific policy recommendations for retaining more postdocs in academia are given. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Dorenkamp, Isabelle, E-Mail: isabelle.dorenkamp@hhu.de