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## Turnover of individuals with similar career sequences as predictor of employer change

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**Abstract** Occupational career patterns are conceptualized as sequences that consist of individuals' occupational states and employer changes. These sequences are often similar, as many careers are path dependent and follow general patterns. Our hypothesis is that employee turnover can be predicted by employer changes of individuals with similar career trajectories. We derived 1,651 career sequences that incorporate 20 years of individuals' occupational positions from a large national panel. The similarity of career sequences was assessed with the optimal matching method. We then used the resulting similarity measures as weights for a novel predictor of individuals' employer changes. In support of our hypothesis, employer changes in similar career sequences predicted turnover. The method introduced in this study could help in reinforcing the use of prospective, longitudinal designs in career literature.

### 1. Introduction

Research on employee turnover has a long tradition in the organizational sciences. Numerous studies analyzed how individual, organizational, and contextual factors influence individuals' turnover intentions and actual turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Accordingly, meta-analytic evidence offers a comprehensive picture of relevant antecedents, for example job satisfaction, pay, job content, or alternative job opportunities (Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Zimmerman, 2008). Following the rationale of behavioral consistency, the number of previous employer changes has been shown to be a valid predictor of voluntary turnover, too (Judge & Watanabe, 1995). However, reducing the working life to the total number of previous employer changes might be an oversimplification, as an individual's occupational career contains much richer information.

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## 2. Theory

*2.1. Career patterns as manifestation of job-related personal dispositions*

## ***2.2. Path dependence***

### *2.2.1. Path dependence in organizations*

### *2.2.2. Path dependence in careers*

### **3. Method**

#### ***3.1. Sample***

### ***3.2. Measures***



### ***3.3. Data analytic strategy***

#### ***3.3.1. Optimal matching analysis***





### *3.3.2. Join count analysis*

### *3.3.3. Logistic regression with similarity weights*

## **4. Results**

### ***4.1. Join count analysis results***

### ***4.2. Logistic regression analysis results***









#### *4.3. Simulation of sequences without career patterns*

### **5. Discussion**

### ***5.1. Prediction of employee turnover***

## *5.2. Limitations and future research*

### ***5.3. Conclusion***

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