

# Negative behaviors among employees: the impact on the intention to leave work

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study examines the effect of three negative behaviors namely alienation behavior, cynicism behavior and silence behavior on employees' intention to leave work in the telecommunication sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using a simple random sampling technique, data was collected using a questionnaire from 204 employees working in two leading telecommunication service providing agencies (Omantel and Ooredoo) in Oman. The collected data was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) through AMOS software.

**Findings** – The findings of the study indicate a significant effect of both cynicism behavior and work alienation behavior on employees' intention to leave work while silence behavior did not appear to affect employees' intention to leave work.

**Practical implications** – The research suggests that the policymakers are required to take corrective measures and implement policies and work practices that ensure employees' sincere engagement to work.

**Originality/value** – The findings contribute to the knowledge regarding the effect of employees' negative behavior on the intention to leave work. The work is novel in the context of studying the effect in the Sultanate of Oman.

**Keywords** Negative behaviors, Alienation behavior, Cynicism behavior, Silence behavior, Intention to leave work, Telecommunications sector, Sultanate of Oman

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The human resource departments in organizations constantly make efforts to retain good employees. It is important for employers to understand why an employee leaves and what steps should be taken to retain him. The turnover cost of a company depends on three elements: the cost of recruiting the replacement, the time required for new staffing resulting in less productivity and loss of potential business, and the time and resources required for a new employee to understand the work procedures through training and orientations (O'Connell and Kung, 2007). Hence, as per human capital theory, there exists a negative association between the level of productivity and voluntary employee turnover Dess and Shaw (2001). A continuous and excessive employee turnover provokes far-reaching concerns and in some cases might affect the organizational efforts to achieve the company's objectives. This happens because of the brain drain when a good productive employee leaves. The old traditional models of employee turnover put emphasis only on the work-related factors but in reality, an employee's intention to leave his/her work also depends on organizational, environmental or personal factors (Qadeer *et al.*, 2011).



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The current study is designed to empirically investigate and explain the effect of negative behavioral factors (i.e. alienation behavior, cynicism behavior, silence behavior) on employees' intention to leave work in the telecommunication sector in Salalah, a city in Sultanate of Oman.

## Background

The businesses are struggling hard to be competitive as the business world is changing very fast and firms are competing to achieve sustainable growth. The global dynamics and fast-paced technology have transformed the way organizations operate and conduct businesses. This has also generated the need for organizations to not just manage but also retain their workforces in a competitive environment. Employee voluntary turnover has always been considered a severe problem for organizations and extensive research had been conducted in the past to understand the phenomenon (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). When an employee leaves the organization, it affects it negatively in two ways, i.e. the high cost that is involved in hiring a new employee and the knowledge that is lost. The organization has to utilize its resources again in terms of money and time to train the new hire. Thus, it makes it very challenging for organizations to allow a good employee to leave as retaining them is vital for organizational growth (Holtom *et al.*, 2005). An employee may have an intention to leave due to various factors that can be psychological, social, or financial in nature (Dhanpat, 2018). As per Sager *et al.* (1998), the turnover intention is generally defined as attitudinal (thinking of quitting), decisional (intention to leave), and behavioral (searching for a new job) process proceeding to deliberate turnover. The common understanding is that an employee will leave work when he is affected by any of the negative factors.

### *Intention to leave work*

Theoretical, as well as empirical evidence, suggests that employee's intention to leave work is a vital variable to recognize the actual employee turnover (Ajzen, 1991). The past researches have shown that intention to leave or to retain work in an organization is the last rational stage in the decision-making process of voluntary employee turnover. Moreover, the employee's intention to leave work is purely behavioral in nature (Qadeer *et al.*, 2011). Some researchers believe that a moderate level of employee turnover is favorable to the organization as new employees bring innovation by introducing new approaches or ideas. This might reduce workplace conflicts; however, a very high level of employee turnover forms an unstable workforce and increases costs and organizational ineffectiveness (Grobler and Wärmich, 2005). High employee turnover is considered a sign of poor management for businesses which ultimately results in losses (Gözüokara *et al.*, 2017).

Most of the available literature discusses the turnover process as a function of various variables related to the work environment like salary, employee's autonomy and professional development, job satisfaction or organizational commitment (Daly and Dee, 2006; Rosser and Townsend, 2006). According to most of the previous studies, job satisfaction is highlighted as the most critical and principal element of intention to leave (Feng and Angeline, 2010; Manlove and Guzell, 1997). Job satisfaction has a direct and negative impact on intention to leave (Lambert *et al.*, 2001). However, this may not be true in all situations. Studies also showed that before deciding to leave work an employee makes some kind of comparison between the cost and benefit of leaving work. Various elements are considered like time and effort invested in the job, the rewards or awards received, quality and benefits of choosing the alternatives, and the cost associated with working with a particular organization (Rusbult *et al.*, 1988). Organizational commitment has a direct negative and significant influence on the intention to leave. Organizational commitment also reported being mediating the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave (Soleman *et al.*, 2020).

*Alienation behavior*

Work alienation is often considered as a reference point in a wide variety of disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, psychology, and psychiatry. Work alienation has also been addressed in other contexts in which a worker feels himself/herself as a stranger or, in other words, is alienated from him/herself (Fromm, 1955). One of the most influential studies on this topic was in 1971 when Seeman (1971) identified five different elements of alienation, i.e. (1) powerlessness – loss of control; (2) meaninglessness – the inability to understand the relationship between one's contributions to a broader perspective; (3) normality; (4) loneliness and (5) self-estrangement – when work is considered merely a mean to meet extrinsic needs.

Then in 1980, Hackman and Oldham (1980) associated terms like estrangement, boredom, disaffection, emotional and psychological abandonment with the concept of work alienation. Kobasa *et al.* (1982) defined work alienation as a representation of a generalized, unenthusiastic attitude toward the work that indicates a low level of engagement with the work role. Furthermore, scholars also conceptually associated work alienation with low levels of positive psychological stimulation pertaining to work-related activities and environment (Hull *et al.*, 1987) and also as a detachment from the work atmosphere (Hirschfeld and Feild, 2000). Work alienation has several consequences, it interrupts interpersonal relationships, reduces the participation, causes suspicion in the workplace, weakens social relations and makes the employee unmotivated towards his work (Tabrizi, 1991).

Some literature is available related to the identification of variables that cause work alienation, however, a comprehensive model exhaustively explaining it is still missing. Some of the variables causing significant identified in past studies are (1) Centralization and formalization: some studies have found work alienation to be directly connected to formalization (Allen and LaFollette, 1977). (2) Fewer autonomy tasks: the routine tasks that are repetitive in nature result in less autonomy which in turn results in work alienation (Blauner, 1964). (3) Individual-level differences: the past studies characterized individual-level differences as follows: Higher education levels and higher incomes (Parker, 1983), worker's age (Mottaz, 1981) and the individual variables like unreasonable expectations and lack of job satisfaction (Korman *et al.*, 1981).

*Cynicism behavior*

Cynicism in an organization can be explained as an intrinsic personality attribute that reflects negative sentiments and emotions like frustration and has adverse effects on an organization (Subgur *et al.*, 2019). Organizational cynicism is not a new concept and has been long debated by industry practitioners and academic researchers. Past studies explain it as a sentiment of displeasure or annoyance towards the working organization where the employee starts believing that their employer is dishonest, unfair, and not transparent (Özler and Atalay, 2011). Organizational cynicism (having negative opinions against the organizational processes) to react towards this discrepancy, bringing harsh criticism, and disdaining the organization with sarcastic behaviors are listed as the other features of organizational cynicism (Dean *et al.*, 1998). Cynicism in organizations seemed like a new pattern of employer-employee associations (Feldman, 2000). Organizational cynicism according to (Li and Fan Zhou, 2011) refers to suspicion or uncertainty towards the management.

Researchers found that a substantial proportion of employees were highly pessimistic about their organizations (Bommer *et al.*, 2005; Reichers *et al.*, 1997). To put it very straight forward and in simple language; organizational cynicisms develop when an employee feels a lack of confidence with respect to his organization and feels that the organization is not trustworthy (Pugh *et al.*, 2003). Most definitions of organizational cynicism are related to sentiments such as disillusionment and anger that influence the employee's attitude, belief and behavior (Abraham, 2000; Andersson and Bateman, 1997).

The past studies (Dean *et al.*, 1998; Durrah *et al.*, 2019; Helvaci and Cavdar, 2017; Ince and Turan, 2011; Rehan, 2017) distinguished the organizational cynicism into three main categories: (1) Cognitive cynicism: refers to lack of sincerity, honesty, and justice in the organization. (2) Affective cynicism: refers to sentimental and emotional feelings towards the organization. (3) Behavioral cynicism: refers to critical expressions and negative attitudes that are often experienced in the organization.

#### *Silence behavior*

Many organizations are focusing on teamwork and organizational democracy to engage the employees more and make them feel like an important part of an organization (Elçi *et al.*, 2014). Such efforts have been proven to be effective mostly leading to higher knowledge sharing and greater expression of innovative ideas supplementing the organizational performance (Çaylak and Altuntas, 2017). Therefore, creating such an organizational climate is important for organizations. However, it is also observed that the majority of workers prefer to be silent. Milliken *et al.* (2003) investigated two sets of factors that cause employee silencing. The first set of reasons consists of an employee's fear of being viewed negatively, fear of damaging the professional relationship among peers or between supervisor and employee, fear of getting some kind of retaliation/punishment, and fear of having some kind of negative impact on others. The second set of reasons is related to either an individual, supervisor, or organization as a whole. An employee may show silence due to individual reasons like lack of experience. Other reasons include the organization's hierarchical structure or unsupportive culture. Moreover, it can also be due to the poor relationship between employee and supervisor. Organizational silence was considered as a lack of sound, which means acceptance. Further, organizational silence is the fact that employees do not consciously share their concerns and ideas about organizational problems with management and keep them for themselves (Cetin, 2020). Employee's silence can create unfavorable situations for organizations. The decision making can be impacted negatively in organizations where feedback culture is not present. Such silence affects the organizational learning process and development. Similarly, such silent behavior at an individual level might be perceived as invaluable, incoherent, and antagonist (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

#### *Negative behaviors and intention to leave work*

Through extensive literature review, it was evident that very little research has been conducted on examining the relationship between negative behavior (i.e. Alienation Behavior, Cynicism Behavior, Silence Behavior) and the intention to leave work. Employee turnover intention is influenced by organizational cynicism because an employee wants to leave the organization (Shahzad and Mahmood, 2012). The higher the cynicism, the higher the intention to leave work, and the lower cynicism, the lower the turnover intention (Khan, 2014). So from the past literature, we can see that organizational cynicism and intention to leave are negatively associated. Yildiza and Shaylkay (2014) found that the cynicism in organizations leads to negative emotions, beliefs, and other related behaviors including distrust, disillusionment, frustration and negative feelings towards an institution, thus encouraging the intention to leave work.

The previous studies also deduced that work alienation ultimately results in a higher intention to leave. There exists a link between employees with low job attachment and high levels of alienation to be more prone to leave the organization or to withdraw efforts from it (Kanungo, 1979). In one of the recent studies, the researchers found that work alienation results in less work effort and higher intention to leave (Tummers *et al.*, 2015). Another study conducted in South Africa found that work engagement, over-exhaustion and work alienation are the predictors of employee turnover intention (Grobler and Wörnich, 2005). The

study of Gözükarar *et al.* (2017) found that work alienation fully mediates the relationship between turnover intention and loneliness.

As per one of the studies done in Turkey, the findings indicated a significant positive relationship between organizational silence and employees' turnover intention (Elçi *et al.*, 2014). In one of the latest study researchers also found that organizational silence in conjunction with organizational cynicism increases the employees' intent to leave work (Çaylak and Altuntas, 2017).

Higher emotional exhaustion is also reported to be associated with decreased job satisfaction and increased intention to leave (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Durrah (2020) conducted his study in the healthcare sector in the Sultanate of Oman and revealed that the injustice perception and employee's cynicism significantly affect work alienation, the impact of injustice perception in creating employee's cynicism was also observed in this sector. Merkhe (2015) indicates that the negative emotions of employees, i.e. depression, anger, anxiety, etc., are the result of injustice that encourages such attitudes embodied within the withdrawal behavior causing work alienation, low commitment, cynicism, absenteeism, fake excuses for sick leaves and intention to leave work (Mingzheng *et al.*, 2014) (see Figure 1).

Based on the review, the following hypotheses constructed:

- H1. Alienation behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work.
- H2. Cynicism behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work.
- H3. Silence behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work.

*The telecommunications sector in Oman*

Telecommunication sector in the Middle East is very challenging and competitive, with the advent of high Internet speed, cheaper mobile cellular services, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services have transformed businesses (Parkes, 2011). The Sultanate of Oman is one of the founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). With the projected population of 5 million, it is one of the least densely populated nations (Ghouse *et al.*, 2020). In 1972, Oman became part of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The mobile phone connections and subscriptions were introduced in 1996 and by the year 2000, prepaid mobile subscriptions were made offered (Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA, 2004). As per 2009 data, the telecommunication industry in Oman was worth \$1.5 billion (Rajasekar and Al Raee, 2013). Currently, the Omani telecommunication service industry is growing at a very fast rate. But, this fast-paced development of the telecommunications sector also poses a lot of challenges (Shakeel and Butter, 2009).

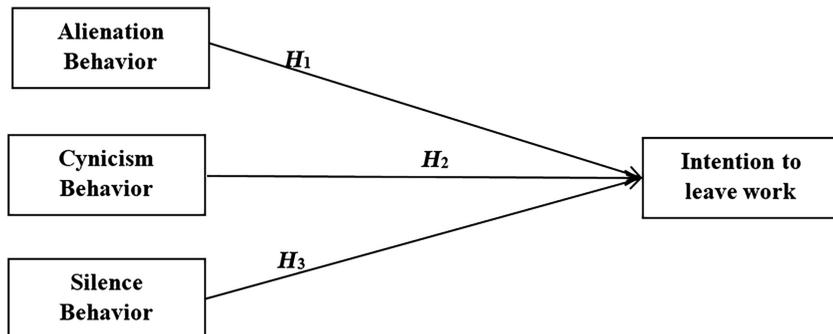


Figure 1.  
Proposed model

Omantel was formed in 1999 and was headquartered in Muscat having 34 branches in Oman. It is the license holder to provide fixed-line, mobile, and Internet services in Oman. Omantel's net profit was around 120 million OMR in 2016. Ooredoo was formed in 2004 having headquarters in Muscat. It also provides mobile and fixed-line networks and services to customers. The company reported a net profit of around 50 million OMR in 2016. (Belwal and Amireh, 2018).

### Methodology

The target population of the study was the employees from various hierarchical levels in two companies (Omantel and Ooredoo) in Salalah, a city in the Sultanate of Oman, as shown in Table 1. These two companies were selected as they represent the largest telecommunication sector in the region that captures 90% of the market in Oman (Prakash and Mathew, 2014).

The target respondents for the study were 420 employees in these two organizations. Using a random sampling technique, the fit sample size was 225. Data was collected through a survey comprising of 225 questionnaires distributed to the sample population. 204 questionnaires were returned and the survey yielded a high response rate of 90.66%. The sample constituted of 73.5% males and 26.5% females, more than three-quarters of the sample were married, approximately half of the sample belonged to the age group of 40–50 years, most of the respondents had a bachelor degree, and more than half of the sample had experience between 5 and 10 years.

Negative behavior was measured by a developer scale of twelve elements based on former studies where three elements for studying the alienation behavior were adapted from the study of Punia and Berwal (2017), four elements for cynicism behavior were adapted from the study of Durrah *et al.* (2019), and five components for silence behavior were adapted from the study of Adamska and Jurek (2017). The scale of intention to leave work was designed based on previous literature (Kumar and Govindarajo, 2014) and consisted of five factors. The data was analyzed by an AMOS program using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). A five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”) has been adopted in building the survey questions.

### Analysis and findings

Cronbach's alpha in Table 2 shows that the scale utilized in the current study is reliable because all values of alpha coefficients were greater than 0.60 (Chaudhary *et al.*, 2019; Hair

S/N	Company	No. of employees	Respondents	
			No.	%
1	Omantel	310	145	71.07
2	Ooredoo	110	59	28.93
	Total	420	204	100.00

**Table 1.** Companies' distribution

Variables	Items no.	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Alienation Behavior (AB)	3	0.822	3.64	0.838	-1.18	0.859
Cynicism Behavior (CB)	4	0.840	2.68	0.860	0.517	-0.793
Silence Behavior (SB)	5	0.849	2.44	0.801	-0.036	-1.08
Negative Behaviors (NB)	12	0.724	2.92	0.506	-0.028	-0.204
Intention to Leave Work (ILW)	5	0.841	2.38	0.831	0.828	-0.548

**Table 2.** Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics

*et al.*, 2006). The alienation behavior had  $\alpha = 0.822$ , cynicism behavior had  $\alpha = 0.840$ , silence behavior had  $\alpha = 0.849$  and intention to leave work had  $\alpha = 0.841$ .

The results indicated that the means of negative behaviors were at a low level except for alienation behavior ( $M = 3.64$  with  $SD = 0.838$ ), while the mean of cynicism behavior was 2.68, with  $SD = 0.846$  and mean of silence behavior was 2.44 with  $SD = 0.801$ . Besides, the mean of total negative behaviors was at a low level ( $M = 2.92$ , with  $SD = 0.506$ ). Moreover, the mean of intention to leave work was also at a low level ( $M = 2.38$ , with  $SD = 0.831$ ). Furthermore, the normal distribution has been conducted using skewness and kurtosis statistics tests. The results mentioned in the above table were within the acceptable range of +3 and -3 (Ghasemi and Zahediasl, 2012).

To check if the condition of multicollinearity between independent variables has been achieved, statistical tests were applied on tolerance and variance inflation factors. The results in Table 3 indicate the validity of this condition because all the values of tolerance were more than 0.05 (Durrach *et al.*, 2020b), and all values of the inflation variance factor were less than 10 (Gharib *et al.*, 2018).

*Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)*

The exploratory factor analysis was performed to identify the study variables. Varimax rotation was used to adjust data coordinates from principal component analysis as shown in Table 5 (Durrach *et al.*, 2020a). It was ensured that the validation level for a load of items should be more than 0.40 (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2006; Straub *et al.*, 2004).

EFA examined the existence of four variables where the items were entered in the model to analyze three dimensions related to negative behaviors (alienation behavior

**Table 3.**  
Multi-collinearity test  
of independent  
variables

Variables	Tolerance ( $T > 0.05$ )	Variance inflation factor (VIF $< 10$ )
Alienation Behavior (AB)	0.987	1.013
Cynicism Behavior (CB)	0.986	1.014
Silence Behavior (SB)	0.999	1.011

**Table 4.**  
Exploratory factor  
analysis (EFA) of the  
Study model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Alienation Behavior (AB)	AB <sub>1</sub>	0.693	13.860	2.356
	AB <sub>2</sub>	0.930		
	AB <sub>3</sub>	0.904		
Cynicism Behavior (CB)	CB <sub>1</sub>	0.896	16.486	2.803
	CB <sub>2</sub>	0.756		
	CB <sub>3</sub>	0.920		
	CB <sub>4</sub>	0.659		
Silence Behavior (SB)	SB <sub>1</sub>	0.718	18.755	3.188
	SB <sub>2</sub>	0.866		
	SB <sub>3</sub>	0.806		
	SB <sub>4</sub>	0.799		
	SB <sub>5</sub>	0.784		
Intention to Leave Work (ILW)	ILW <sub>1</sub>	0.704	18.426	3.132
	ILW <sub>2</sub>	0.839		
	ILW <sub>3</sub>	0.734		
	ILW <sub>4</sub>	0.779		
	ILW <sub>5</sub>	0.788		

**Table 5.**  
Confirmatory factor analysis results (CFA)

Constructs	Items	Standardized factor loadings (SFL > 0.50)	Squared multiple correlation (SMC > 0.30)	Composite reliability (CR > 0.70)	Average variance explained (AVE > 0.50)
Alienation Behavior (AB)	AB <sub>1</sub>	0.545	0.397	0.901	0.720
	AB <sub>2</sub>	0.966	0.933		
	AB <sub>3</sub>	0.850	0.722		
Cynicism Behavior (CB)	CB <sub>1</sub>	0.889	0.790	0.852	0.663
	CB <sub>2</sub>	0.551	0.403		
	CB <sub>3</sub>	0.993	0.987		
	CB <sub>4</sub>	0.558	0.411		
Silence Behavior (SB)	SB <sub>1</sub>	0.621	0.486	0.829	0.510
	SB <sub>2</sub>	0.861	0.742		
	SB <sub>3</sub>	0.763	0.582		
	SB <sub>4</sub>	0.748	0.559		
	SB <sub>5</sub>	0.682	0.465		
Intention to Leave Work (ILW)	ILW <sub>1</sub>	0.704	0.496	0.773	0.509
	ILW <sub>2</sub>	0.820	0.672		
	ILW <sub>3</sub>	0.680	0.463		
	ILW <sub>4</sub>	0.674	0.454		
	ILW <sub>5</sub>	0.717	0.514		

(3 items), cynicism behavior (4 items) and the silence behavior (5 items), and one dimension related to intention to leave work (5 items) as shown in Table 4. All conditions of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were achieved where the Cumulative Variance was  $67.527 > 60$ , Bartlett's test = 1781.747 with significance level equals  $0.000 < 0.05$ ; the  $KMO = 0.742 > 0.60$ , and Eigenvalues for each factor was more than 1 (Ghouse *et al.*, 2019).

#### Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to identify the study model validity. The results listed in Figure 2 indicate that the good fit indices reached the threshold (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

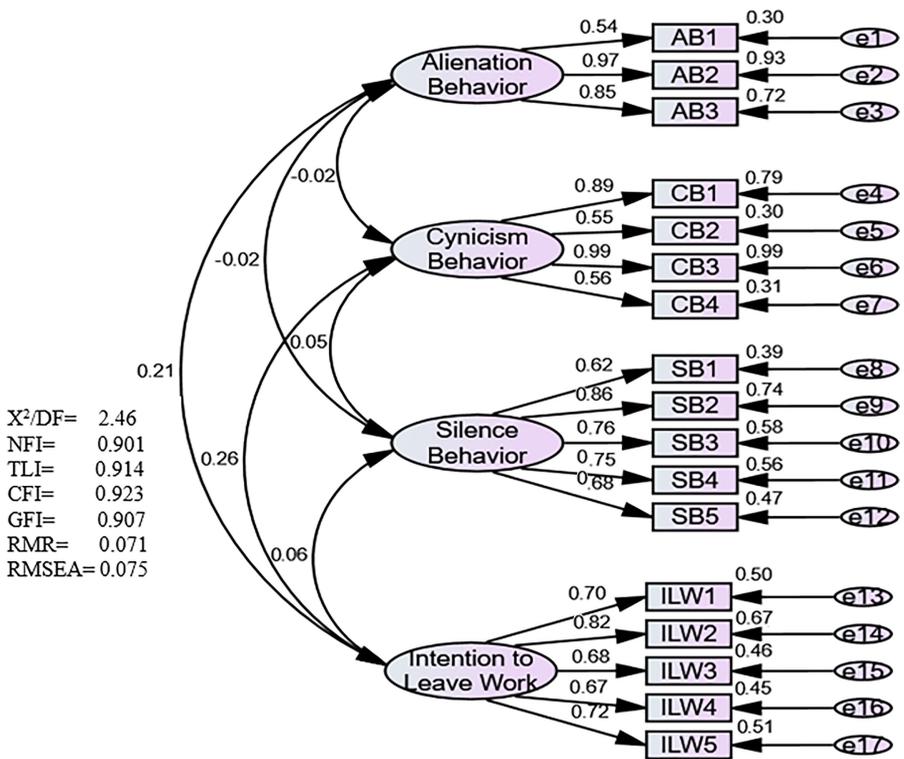
Table 5 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which shows how the convergent validity has been determined (Chan *et al.*, 2015). The composite reliability of all constructs yielded more than 0.70; (i.e. AB = 0.901, CB = 0.852, SB = 0.829, and ILW = 0.773), and this result was confirmed by the test of Average Variance Explained (AVE), where all constructs were above the acceptable level of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988); i.e. AB = 0.720, CB = 0.663, SB = 0.510, and ILW = 0.509.

Furthermore, all the values of standardized factor loadings (SFL) listed in Table 5 exceeded the acceptable level of 0.50, and the values of square multiple correlations (SMC) were more than 0.30 (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

#### Discriminant analysis

To confirm if the adequate discriminant validity has been determined, the value of the square roots of AVE in each column should be greater than the correlation values mentioned in that column (Alraja and Kashoob, 2019). The results of this comparison listed in Table 6 indicate that the adequate discriminant validity has been determined.

Moreover, the findings in Table 6 indicate the existence of a significant positive correlation between two dimensions of negative behaviors (alienation behavior and



**Figure 2.**  
Confirmatory factor  
analysis (CFA)

Variables	AB	CB	SB	ILW
Alienation Behavior (AB)	(0.848)			
Cynicism Behavior (CB)	0.113	(0.814)		
Silence Behavior (SB)	-0.008	0.032	(0.714)	
Intention to Leave Work (ILW)	0.219**	0.252**	0.061	(0.713)

**Table 6.**  
Discriminant analysis

cynicism behavior) and intention to leave work at a significance level of 0.01. However, no relationship between silence behavior and intention to leave work was found.

*Testing the structural model*

The proposed model in this study was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) as shown in Figure 3. Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommended applying SEM to test the research model. It is a methodology for testing several relationships between the variables (Byrne, 2001). The SEM was performed using AMOS software to identify the effect of negative behaviors (alienation behavior, cynicism behavior, and silence behavior) as independent variables on the intention to leave work as a dependent variable.

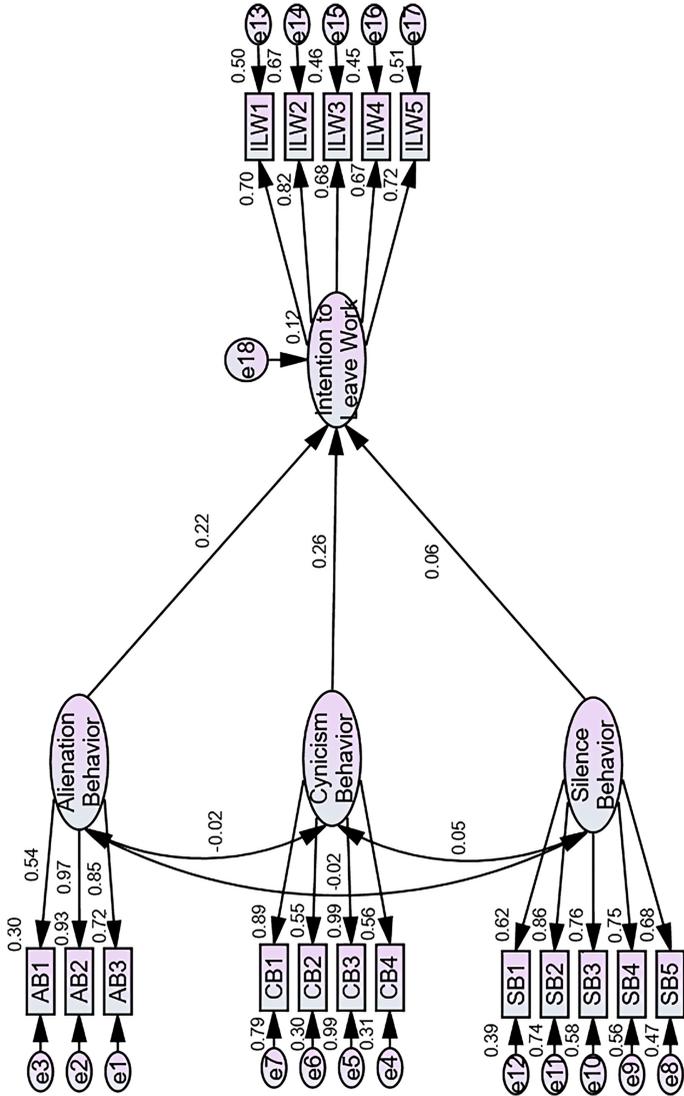


Figure 3. Tested model

WJEMSD  
17,1

116

**Table 7.**  
Fit indices of the model

Fit indices	Measured	Recommended
CMIN/DF	2.46	<5
RMR	0.071	<0.08
RMSEA	0.075	<0.08
GFI	0.907	>0.90
CFI	0.923	>0.90
TLI	0.914	>0.90
NFI	0.901	>0.90
IFI	0.904	>0.90
PGFI	0.648	>0.50
PNFI	0.705	>0.50

The structural model illustrates that all the fit indices represented in [Table 7](#) were within the recommended values ([Hair et al., 2006](#); [Kline, 1999](#); [Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003](#)).

The Hypotheses made in the current study were tested using SEM. The results obtained from the structural model analysis are summarized in [Table 8](#).

These results showed that alienation behavior, have a significant effect on the intention to leave work in the telecommunications sector in Oman. (SRW = 0.206;  $t$ -value = 2.75;  $p$ -value = 0.006). Thus, the first hypothesis ([H1](#)) is supported. The analysis also showed that the cynicism behavior significantly effects on intention to leave work in the telecommunications sector in Oman. (SRW = 0.387;  $t$ -value = 3.17;  $p$ -value = 0.002). Thus, the second hypothesis ([H2](#)) is also supported. Finally, the analysis revealed that the silence behavior has no significant effect on the intention to leave work in the telecommunications sector in Oman (SRW = 0.067;  $t$ -value = 0.716;  $p$ -value = 0.474). Thus, the third hypothesis ([H3](#)) is not supported.

## Discussion

This study is novel in investigating the link between negative behaviors and intention to leave work in the telecommunications sector in Oman. The study model aims to explore the direct influence of three main negative contextual behaviors of employees, i.e. alienation behavior, cynicism behavior, and silence behavior on the intention to leave work that is tested as one single variable. This model was developed based on previous studies. This study is pivotal and essential for all employees especially those in senior management level who seek to understand the intention to leave work and ways to reduce it.

The results of this study showed that the levels of negative behaviors of employees in the Omani telecommunications sector were generally low except the alienation behavior that was

**Table 8.**  
Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Direct effect	SRW	S.E.	$t$ -value	$p$ -value	Result
<a href="#">H1</a> : Alienation behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work	AB → ILW	0.206	0.075	2.75	0.006	Supported
<a href="#">H2</a> : Cynicism behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work	CB → ILW	0.387	0.122	3.17	0.002	Supported
<a href="#">H3</a> : Silence behavior has a significant effect on the intention to leave work	SB → ILW	0.067	0.093	0.716	0.474	Not Supported

found to be at a moderate level. This result is attributed to the fact that the majority of employees do not feel the importance of their job and feel the unfamiliar attitude of their colleagues along with the lack of an appropriate work environment in the organization. The obtained result is consistent with the results from past studies that showed a moderate familiarity of alienation behavior in the various sectors (Dağlı and Averbek, 2017; Valikhania and Zamani, 2019).

The findings also indicated that the level of cynicism behavior in the telecommunication sector was low that is an indication of the availability of a healthy environment of work in these firms. Furthermore, the employees do not feel anger, annoyance, nervousness, or strain in their organizations. Similar findings were obtained showing a low level of organizational cynicism in research conducted on employees in the petrochemical sector in Oman by (Durrak *et al.*, 2019). Akman's (2013) study to identify the cynicism levels in healthcare workers found that respondents' affective cynicism levels were low whereas the study of Ozbey *et al.* (2012) found that employees experience organizational cynicism at an intermediate level.

Regarding the silencing behavior, the results indicate low levels that can be due to the multiple reasons for, e.g. the employees respect feelings of their co-workers and their superiors, do not want to embarrass others, have confidence in senior management, have been given the freedom to speak and express opinions on company issues, getting along easily with co-workers, have a tendency of pro-social behavior and modest personality. This obtained result is consistent with the study of Alparslan *et al.* (2015) which showed a low level of employees' silence behavior. However, the result differs from many studies (Afsar, 2013; Yalcın and Baykal, 2012) which found that the silence level was high because the unhealthy relationship and job-related fear are important factors that cause silence among workers. The most effective cause of employees' silence was found to be the insecurity felt toward superiors. The findings also demonstrated that the rate of intention to leave work was low in the Omani telecommunications sector. This result is attributed to the job stability and psychological comfort felt by workers in their companies. The current result is consistent with the study of Alzayed and Murshid (2017) which showed low levels in Kuwait while another study (Wen *et al.*, 2018) found that around half of the employees sampled intended to resign. Many studies reported that the employees who are not rewarded or recognized for their hard work and efforts may experience a higher rate of turnover in their organizations (Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Petroni, 2000).

The analysis showed that the alienation behavior and cynicism behavior have significant effects on the intention to leave work in the telecommunications sector in Oman while the silence behavior was found to have no significant effect on the intention to leave work. These results are consistent with the study of Nazir *et al.* (2016) which signified the impact of cynicism as a mediator over the intentions of employees to leave work in the healthcare sector in Pakistan. The findings of the current study revealed that when the employees of the telecommunication sector in Oman engage themselves with work alienation, it impacted their behavior through reduced work effort and ultimately stimulated their intention to leave. Gözükarar *et al.* (2017) explored that the work alienation fully mediates the relationship between turnover intention and loneliness in aviation company staff. Alienation in the work occurs when an employee feels uninterested in his work (Kanten and Ülker, 2014) and such feeling is known to cause unfavorable outcomes both at the individual and organizational levels (Ceylan and Sulu, 2011; Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013).

In line with the past studies related to organizational behaviors, this study also proved that cynicism behavior significantly affects negatively on employee's intention to leave work. Çaylak and Altuntas (2017) mentioned that organizational cynicism increases intent to leave work. They also found that half of the sample had never considered leaving work and that one-third of the sample had a high level of intention to leave work for organizational and

administrative reasons. [Sungur et al. \(2019\)](#) found that the participants' perceptions of cynicism behavior amplified their intention to leave work increased.

Silence behavior surprisingly was not a significant factor in our results. Though it affects negatively but not significant enough as compared to the other two factors. This might be because these two telecommunications companies welcome employees' ideas so that they can express their opinions freely. Though more investigations are needed to rightfully say this, it seems to be an organization's internal factor. Organizations that actively seek feedback from their employees and maintain transparent policies make it easy for employees to approach them. This result varies with past studies ([Çaylak and Altuntas, 2017](#)) that signify that the reason for organizational silence in conjunction with organizational cynicism increases the intent to leave work for employees in their organizations. [Yalcin and Baykal \(2012\)](#) determined that employees who considered leaving work remained silent because of organizational and administrative reasons, isolation, work-related fears, fear of unhealthy relationships, and lack of experience.

### *Implications*

This insightful study has multifold implications. On the one hand, the study is helpful for organizations to understand and take corrective measures to make sure that the employees do not experience work alienation. An employee who experienced work alienation will have a high intention to leave. This will further lead to unexpected workforce loss and thus lead to organizational inefficiency. Proactively, if organizations are aware of it then they have time to alter their procedures and practices and take corrective measures to ensure that the employee is engaged healthily with his/her work. Some practices like, changing work teams and supervisors might help. Sometimes even changing the work also reduces work boredom and employees might feel excited about the new work.

The behavior of supervisors can also be channelized to ensure the employees do not feel alienated from work. Employees' perceptions of their leaders and the organizational context influence their intention to leave ([Martinussen et al., 2020](#)). Supervisors or Managers who mismanage their teams might alienate staff and have a disengaged workforce. Managers should try to create an empowering and open work environment that fosters perioperative employees' job satisfaction and reduces their intention to leave ([Lee et al., 2020](#)). So the study could also be helpful for those managers who would like to build a strongly motivated team. One of the things that alienate employees the most is the rude attitude of their managers who constantly pinpoint their faults. Good managers must take steps to enhance their team member's strength. The results of the study also suggest that the development of organizational cynicism is tied to employees' intention to leave. An employee who feels cynicism towards the organization might have negative self-perception. This could be one reason why such employees are inclined to view the actions of their organization cynically.

This study is insightful in knowing such behavior. The study would also be useful from a policy-making point of view. Organizations must acknowledge the importance of making the workplace a motivating factor for their employees. Particular attention should be given to the telecommunications sector to remove factors that cause negative behaviors in the work by reducing job pressures ([Whiteside and Barclay, 2013](#)), and increasing coworker trust ([Kim et al., 2019](#)). Moreover, intention to leave work can be reduced by creating a healthy work environment for the staff by encouraging managers to behave fairly ([Koçoğlu, 2014](#)), respecting employees, developing relationships with them, and participating employees in making important decisions related to their work ([Lee and Ha, 2020](#)). Employee friendly and employee engaging policy can make the difference and change the employees' perspective about the employer. Lastly, the study is a theoretical contribution to the vast research done in Oman. The study takes into account the complexity that exists in organizations and portrays a more integrative approach towards the study of employee-organization relationships.

### *Limitations and future research directions*

The present research is novel in Oman and has successfully revealed the effect of most negative behaviors on the intention to leave the work. However, despite its importance, the study had certain limitations. The study respondents were only from two telecommunication organizations in Oman, thus external validity might be a concern. The other possible limitation is the fact that the results are not longitudinal in nature; thus, no causal relationships can be established. Moreover, this study is based on self-report measures on employee behavior and its outcomes hence there may be a potential for method bias.

The research was limited to three negative behaviors (alienation behavior, cynicism behavior, and silence behavior), hence future research may include other negative behaviors like job burnout, job frustration, and job bullying. Finally, this research is limited to the telecommunication sector so future researchers may wish to study the effect in other sectors too like Media, industry, education, banking, hospitality, and health. Though the study may assist the organizations for making changes in their policies and operations, the study is indicative for future researchers to consider organizational culture as a key construct in the chain of relationships among the same variables or variables similar to those of the present research. Future researchers could also extend the current study by incorporating other variables like employees' psychological empowerment, employee advocacy, employee-manager relationship, joint corporate goal setting, high-performance work teams, etc. Higher sample size and the number of organizations would add more credibility to this study.

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