

**Investigating Well-Being-Oriented Human Resource Management: A Mixed-Methods
Exploration of Employee Well-Being and Turnover Intentions**

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates whether well-being-oriented HRM (WBHRM) practices reduce turnover intentions through the mediating roles of psychological well-being (employee satisfaction), social well-being (perceived organizational support), and physical well-being (emotional exhaustion). It addresses gaps in HRM-well-being-performance research (i.e. organization-centred HRM and narrow well-being concept), particularly within the rapidly transforming and highly competitive Saudi information and communications technology (ICT) sector, where national development plans have intensified competition for skilled talent.

Methods: Drawing on the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, the quantitative phase employed partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) on 238 employee survey responses from three Saudi ICT companies, supplemented by an importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) to assess each construct's impact on turnover intentions. The following qualitative phase included 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews with survey participants, providing richer insights into the contextual factors influencing employee well-being and turnover intentions.

Findings: Quantitative results indicate that WBHRM practices significantly enhance satisfaction, perceived organizational support and lower exhaustion, yet do not directly predict employees' turnover intentions. Instead, satisfaction and exhaustion fully mediate WBHRM's link to retention, whereas perceived organizational support is not a significant mediator. Qualitative evidence reveals that unclear promotions, lag market compensation, and intensive work demand frequently undermine WBHRM's potential benefits, prompting employees to seek external prospects despite valuing flexible working arrangements policies and a supportive work environment.

Contributions: This research expands the HRM-well-being literature by investigating employee-centered HRM practices (i.e., WBHRM) and integrating three distinct dimensions of employee well-being: satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and emotional exhaustion, through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Although WBHRM reduces exhaustion and raises satisfaction, these findings demonstrate that employees still leave if core structural issues, such as unclear or unfair promotion criteria, lag-market compensations, and job strains and pressures, remain unaddressed. The study offers new insights into rapidly changing labor markets undergoing national transformation and increasing talent competition.

Keywords: WBHRM, HR Practices, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R), Employee Well-Being, Turnover Intentions, Mixed-Methods Research, PLS-SEM, IPMA

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1. Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) practices primarily directed at performance enhancement have dominated research for decades. However, Guest (2017) challenged this perspective by advocating prioritizing employee well-being as an effective alternative strategy for enhancing performance. Furthermore, many researchers have explored employee well-being in general, typically measured only by employee satisfaction, without considering that employee well-being is a broad concept that comprises psychological, physical, and social dimensions (Grant et al., 2007; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). Recent research has suggested incorporating more dimensions of well-being (Wang et al., 2022). Various organization-centric HRM practices bundles, such as high-performance work practices and high-commitment HRM practices, have been widely examined in HRM literature. However, this study intends to address the role of employee-centric HRM practices designed to enhance employee well-being (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021; Guest, 2017) in turnover intention and the mediating roles of three components of employee well-being. A survey was conducted to investigate these relationships, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the underlying reasons and experiences associated with these relationships.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of well-being-oriented HRM (WBHRM) practices in turnover intentions?

2. What is the relationship between WBHRM practices and psychological well-being (employee satisfaction), social well-being (perceived organizational support), and physical well-being (emotional exhaustion)?
3. To what extent do psychological well-being (employee satisfaction), social well-being (perceived organizational support), and physical well-being (emotional exhaustion) mediate the relationship between WBHRM practices and turnover intention?
4. What are the underlying experiences and reasons that support these relationships?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Well-Being

Since the Industrial Revolution, industry workers and labor union representatives have significantly improved the working environment. Labor unions have sought to improve working conditions, demand fair wages, reduce working hours, and provide health benefits (Hagedorn et al., 2016). In 1950, the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) established a joint committee that promotes occupational health. Each organization has its own perspective on workplace well-being. For instance, the WHO defined a *healthy workplace* as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (Burton & World Health Organization, 2010, p.15). ILO defined *workplace well-being* as "all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization." (International Labour Organization, n.d.). Employee well-being is often measured by a single dimension, commonly job satisfaction, which provides a narrow perspective of overall well-being. Measuring well-being through job satisfaction alone cannot capture the broad concept of employee well-being (Inceoglu et al., 2018). This study intends to address this gap in

the HRM literature by operationalizing employee well-being as a broad concept that consists of psychological, social, and physical dimensions (Grant et al., 2007; Guest, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019).

2.2. Well-being oriented HRM Practices

Unlike other HRM practices bundles, such as high-involvement practices and higher-performance working practices, well-being-oriented HRM policies prioritize employee well-being rather than organizations' interests (Guest, 2017). Building on Guest's (2017) framework, this study investigated HRM practices intended to improve employee well-being and performance. This bundle includes various HRM practices, such as investing in employee training and development, creating an engaging work environment, maintaining a healthy physical and social atmosphere, promoting employee participation, and providing organizational support.

Building on Guest's framework, Cooper et al. (2019) and Salas-Vallina et al. (2021) were among the first to investigate well-being-oriented HRM (WBHRM) practices. They incorporated training and development, job security, employee voice, information sharing, use of teams, and relationships with supervisors. WBHRM practices are positively correlated with employees' performance, and well-being components (happiness at work, trust, and exhaustion) mediate this relationship (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021).

In this study, we argue that WBHRM practices can also effectively retain employees by improving their well-being. Employee retention is one of the key performance indicators of HRM function. Reducing high turnover rates will reduce replacement costs. For example, this includes the resources required to hire a new employee and the training and knowledge lost due to high turnover. We also integrated three components of well-being (employee satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and emotional exhaustion) into the framework.

2.3. Turnover intentions

Turnover intention was used as an indicator of individual outcomes. Research on employee well-being and performance has primarily focused on task performance rather than on positive (e.g., creative) or counterproductive behaviors (e.g., absenteeism) (Pérez-Nebra et al., 2021). Human resource outcomes, such as turnover and absenteeism, are directly influenced by HRM practices (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021). Prior research indicates that high-performance working practices may lead to higher levels of stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and employee quitting (Pavlova, 2022). Employees' intention to leave may indicate disengagement or psychological withdrawal from their workplaces and jobs (Haque et al., 2019).

2.4. Conceptual Framework

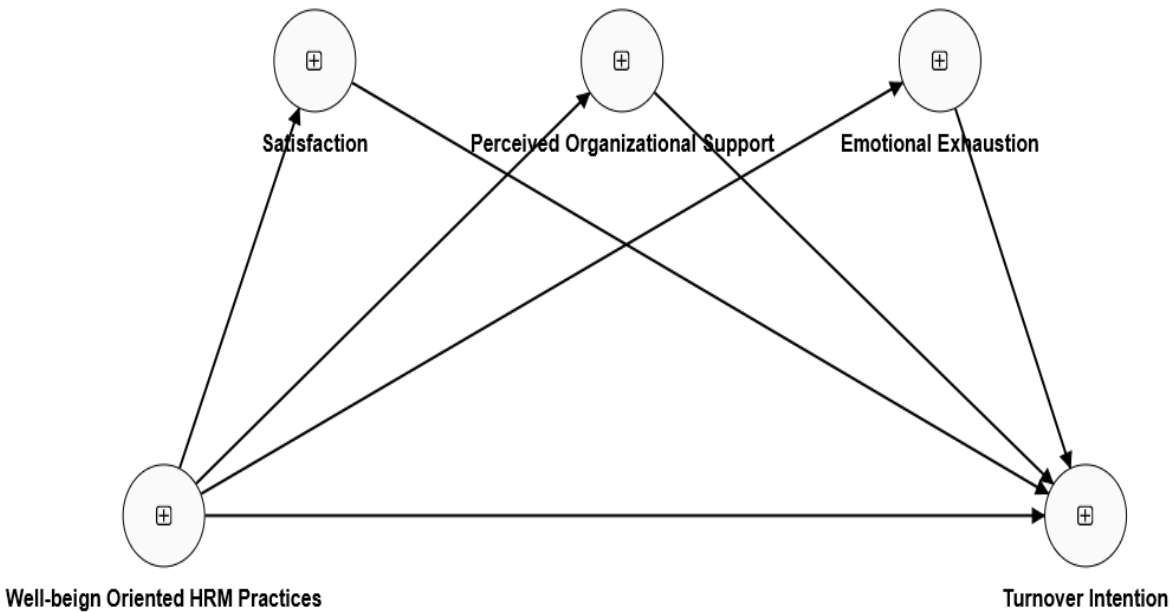


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Context Background

This study investigates the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in Saudi Arabia. In 2016, Saudi Arabia introduced its Vision 2030 initiative to address economic issues such as overreliance on oil and gas sector. Saudi Vision 2030 is one of the most ambitious initiatives in the world, including economic, social, and cultural domains. The Kingdom has undergone significant transformation since the initiation of this national vision. The talent shortage in the local talent pool and challenges in maintaining talent are apparent features of this ICT sector. In recent years, the national transformation has resulted in high demand for highly skilled employees, increasing competition among public and private organizations in the talent market, leading to a "talent war," making retaining employees more challenging. These challenges require significant efforts from HRM leaders, including repositioning HRM strategies, practices, and policies to align with their organizations' core strategies while maintaining their human capital.

3.2. Study Design

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed in this study, in which quantitative research was conducted first, followed by qualitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The reason for adopting a mixed-methods design was to gain a deeper understanding by integrating quantitative findings with in-depth semi-structured interviews. Mixed-methods designs can alleviate the single-approach bias and gain richer insights into the phenomena of this study, as both qualitative and quantitative techniques complement each other (Greene et al., 1989, p.258). The explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2017) was expanded into three sequential phases to address the limitations and challenges in using existing literature

measures and the lack of contextually relevant measures. Figure 1 illustrates the implementation of the extended sequential explanatory design.

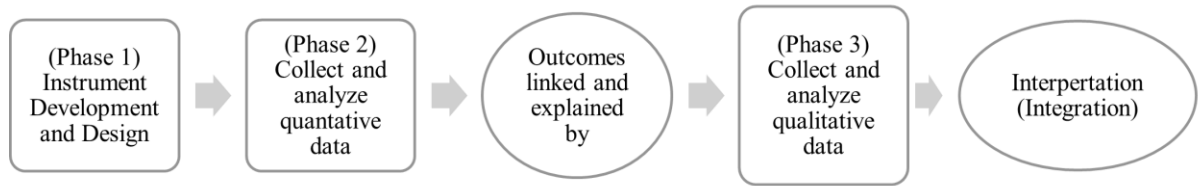


Figure 2 Three-phase design of the research process Adapted from Creswell & Clark (2017)

3.3. Instrument Development and Design Phase

The instrument was developed following Dillman's (2011) four stages (content validity, cognitive interviews, pilot testing, and re-evaluation) and translated into Arabic using back-translation (Brislin, 1970). Cognitive interviews with Saudi employees and a pilot study confirmed contextual relevance and reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$), prompting minor refinements. A bilingual academic and a gatekeeper then reviewed the final version.

3.3.1. Measurement of the Study

All measures except turnover intentions used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). WBHRM was measured with 27 items (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021) covering job security, information sharing, training, employee voice, teamwork, and supervisor-employee relationships; two items loading below 0.40 were excluded, $\alpha=0.871$. Employee satisfaction used three items, $\alpha=0.859$ (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Emotional exhaustion used three items, $\alpha=0.896$ (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Perceived organizational support used three items, $\alpha=0.916$ (Eisenberger et al., 2002, 1986). Turnover intentions was measured with a single item describing four possible intentions (Fletcher et al., 2018). Age, gender, tenure, and education were included as control variables (Emiroğlu et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2016; Van der Heijden et al., 2019).

3.4. Quantitative Research Phase

3.4.1. Procedures and sampling

A randomized sampling approach was initially considered to minimize researcher bias (Saunders & Townsend, 2018). However, due to low response rates and access difficulties in this region (e.g., Zahra, 2011; Aldossari & Robertson, 2016), convenience sampling was used. The first researcher leveraged memberships in local HR communities and a professional network to reach three ICT companies in Saudi Arabia between August and November 2023. An online survey was distributed through gatekeepers, yielding response rates of 26%, 55%, and 47.5% (overall 39.5%). Of 620 invitations, 245 responses were received; seven were excluded for lack of consent, leaving 238 valid responses.

3.4.2. Quantitative Analysis and Findings (PLS-SEM)

Research Questions	Findings
1. What is the relationship between WBHRM practices and employee intentions to stay?	WBHRM practices are insignificantly related to employee intentions to stay with their current employers ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 1.081$, $p = 0.28$).
2. What is the relationship between WBHRM practices and psychological well-being (employee satisfaction), social well-being (perceived organizational support), and physical well-being (emotional exhaustion)?	– WBHRM practices show a significant positive association with employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.774$, $t = 24.218$, $p < 0.001$). – WBHRM practices have a significant and positive relationship with perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.779$, $t = 25.695$, $p < 0.001$). – WBHRM practices are significantly and negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.235$, $t = 2.877$, $p = 0.004$).
3. To what extent do psychological well-being (employee satisfaction), social well-being (perceived organizational support), and physical well-being (emotional exhaustion) mediate the relationship between WBHRM practices and intention to stay?	– Employee satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between WBHRM practices and employee intention to stay ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 2.764$, $P = 0.006$). – Emotional exhaustion significantly mediated the relationship between WBHRM practices and employee intention to stay, full mediation. ($\beta = 0.076$, $t = 2.595$, $P = 0.009$). – Perceived organizational support had no mediation role in the relationship between WBHRM practices and employee intention to stay ($\beta = -0.025$, $t = 0.325$, $P = 0.745$).

3.5. Qualitative Research Phase

Building on the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees and HR professionals from three Saudi ICT companies to explore employees' intentions to stay or leave. A nested sampling strategy yielded 12 interviews from the survey respondents, each lasting from 40 to 140 minutes. Questions focused on participants' experiences, including how long you have worked at X. Would you say it is a good workplace? Why or why not? and What factors might make you consider moving to another job?

All interviews were transcribed, translated, and uploaded to NVivo 14.0 for initial coding. An iterative process guided by the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013; Magnani & Gioia, 2023) was employed, involving repeated transcript reviews, code assignment, category refinement, and continual revisiting of the data until clear themes emerged. The findings are presented using a Gioia approach structure that details first-order codes (participants' perspective), second-order themes (interpretation), and aggregate dimensions (theoretical concepts), providing a transparent account of the contextual and individual factors influencing employee retention and turnover. Table 2 illustrates the data structure development.

4. Quantitative and Qualitative Findings Integration

Joint displays integrate mixed methods findings and enhance inferential transparency by visually aligning quantitative and qualitative data (McCrudden et al., 2021). They reveal meaningful patterns and divergences, ensuring intentional, transparent integration that extends insights beyond separate analyses. Table 3 demonstrates the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings through a joint display.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Retention and Turnover Decisions

Illustrative Quotations	First-Order Concepts	Second-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
“The program includes an Individual Development Plan each year, practical assignments, certifications, and shadowing with leaders within the company or at consulting firms.” (P11)	Training Opportunities, Individual Development Plans	Learning and Skills Development	Career Development
“I’m a Senior Analyst, aiming to become a Lead Analyst and then an Assistant Manager. This path is clear to me. ” (P4)	Clear Career Path, Promotion Opportunities	Progression and Opportunities	
“I saw someone get promoted without meeting the stated criteria or seniority. The process seemed unclear to me. ” (P5)	Limited Learning Opportunities, Lack or Slow Career Progression, Unfairness	Career Stagnation	
“Also, in terms of salary scales , it’s currently a leader in the market ” (P12)	High Salaries, Performance-Based Rewards, Interest-Free Loans	Financial Compensation	Competitive Compensation and Benefits
“General thanks are easy, but specific appreciation makes you feel valued and shows that your contributions are genuinely recognized. ” (P1)	Employee Recognition, Parental Medical Insurance, Discounts	Non-financial Benefits	
“Both offers provided the same salary, but one had a higher bonus and better insurance, including parents. ” (P5)	Higher Salaries, Better Overall Benefits Packages	Labour Market Pressures	
“I’ve worked in the private sector and IT, which is generally demanding. But in telecommunications, it’s not the same. It gives me a second life outside work , time for family, friends, and myself.” (P7)	Flexible Working Hours, Leaves Beyond Regulations, Work-Life Balance	Workplace Flexibility and Leave Arrangements	Flexible Work Arrangements
“we get 60 days of remote work per year. It’s up to the manager’s approval. My manager is quite accommodating, as long as I inform him a few days in advance.” (P7)	Autonomy, accommodating religious and cultural needs	Remote Work Policies	
“My manager was the first to stand by me... He took responsibility for the error along with me , which showed me his true support ... That’s one of the main reasons I feel comfortable at Company (3).” (P8)	Psychological Safety, Support with Work Challenges, Trust Employees	Supportive Management	Supportive Work Environment
“There’s no gap between me and the VP . I can easily approach the VP with any issues I have, and the open-door policy has had a very positive impact.” (P8)	Open Door Policy, Regular Meetings with Leaders, Surveys	Employee Voice	
“We have a good relationship built on trust and cooperation . We help each other out, share tasks based on our strengths, and support each other when needed.” (P4)	Positive Peers and Supervisors Relations	Work Relations	
“I receive about 150 emails daily , ranging from 80 to 150, and 20-30 calls, so this period is very high and frankly annoying over a long time and tiring , but I benefit from it because the learning is fast. ” (P2)	Learning-Oriented Workload, Workload Intensity, Insufficient Staffing	Excessive Workload	Workplace Pressures and Strains
“I was working continuously, even on weekends . This intense period made me slow down in the last two or three years, but I still worked on weekends without taking a break. ” (P12)	Time Pressure, Exhausted, Work-life Interference	Work-Life Imbalance	

Table 3: Joint Display: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings Integration

Research Question	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Convergence, Divergence, and Inference
RQ1: WBHRM Practices and Intentions to Stay	WBHRM practices (training and development, job security, employee voice, information sharing, use of team, relationship with immediate supervisor) showed no statistically significant direct effect on employees' intention to stay.	Many participants acknowledged WBHRM practices but consistently prioritized career development (avoiding stagnation, ensuring fair promotion criteria) and competitive compensation and benefits (aligned with market benchmarks). The qualitative analysis suggests that retention declined when workplace pressures and strains (e.g., excessive workload) persisted or if promotion and compensation policies were seen as unfair or unclear. Some interviewees valued supportive management yet felt career stagnation, or more attractive external offers prompted them to consider leaving.	Convergence Both data strands acknowledge WBHRM, though the quantitative results do not show a direct (only indirect) link to retention. Divergence The qualitative analysis shows that while employees value WBHRM, their decisions are primarily influenced by career development opportunities, competitive compensation, and manageable workloads. Inference WBHRM alone does not determine retention. Career development and competitive compensation and benefits are major drivers, whereas flexible work arrangements may assist but do not compensate for inadequate career development or compensation packages.
RQ2: WBHRM Practices and Well-Being (Satisfaction, Organizational Support, Emotional Exhaustion)	WBHRM practices were positively associated with employee satisfaction and perceived organizational support and negatively associated with emotional exhaustion.	The qualitative analysis suggests that a supportive work environment (supportive management, employee voice, work relations) can reduce strain and enhance satisfaction, and flexible work arrangements (workplace flexibility, leave arrangements, remote work policies) help balance personal needs. However, workplace pressures and strains (excessive workload, work-life imbalance) might undermine these gains. Participants also noted that if promotion paths were unclear or compensation seemed misaligned with market standards,	Convergence Both data strands indicate WBHRM can improve satisfaction and reduce exhaustion when implemented fairly and consistently. Divergence The qualitative findings reveal that these benefits are fragile if systemic issues (heavy workloads, unclear progression) remain unaddressed, limiting WBHRM's positive impact on well-being. Inference While WBHRM promotes well-being, reasonable workloads, transparent promotions, and market-aligned compensation are essential to maintaining these effects.

		satisfaction declined and exhaustion rose, regardless of supportive management.	
RQ3: Mediating Roles of Satisfaction, perceived organizational support and exhaustion	Employee satisfaction and emotional exhaustion fully mediate the relationship between WBHRM practices and intention to stay, while perceived organizational support was not statistically significant as a mediator.	The qualitative analysis indicates that job satisfaction is linked to career development, compensation packages, flexible work options, and supportive managers. In contrast, unresolved workplace pressures and strains (excessive workload, weak work-life balance) can increase exhaustion and prompt turnover. Although participants valued accessible leaders, open-door policies, and recognition, they considered these secondary to structural fairness in pay and promotions. Persistently high demands or unclear advancement led some to seek external opportunities despite their appreciation for supportive supervisors.	Convergence Both datasets confirm that satisfaction (supported by fair career paths and lower strain) and exhaustion (worsened by excessive job demands) contribute to turnover intentions. Divergence The qualitative findings indicate that although participants appreciated a supportive work environment, this support alone is inadequate in the presence of deeper issues, like ambiguous promotions or lag market compensation packages, which were not explicitly tested in the quantitative phase. Inference A supportive work environment is beneficial, but addressing clear promotion paths, competitive salaries, and manageable workloads is essential for WBHRM's effectiveness.
RQ4: Retention and Turnover Decision Factors	Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) highlighted emotional exhaustion as having high importance but low performance. WBHRM practices showed high importance and high performance, whereas perceived organizational support had lower relevance for turnover intentions.	The qualitative analysis indicates that employees prioritize career development, competitive compensation and benefits, flexible work arrangements, a supportive work environment, and manageable workplace pressures and strains. When promotion criteria, compensation, and job demands did not meet participants' expectations, turnover intentions rose. Some interviewees cited unclear promotions or compensation not matching market benchmarks as direct reasons for leaving, while others considered external offers with higher salaries or better work-life balance.	Convergence IPMA underscores emotional exhaustion as critical, aligning with qualitative insights that unaddressed workloads and insufficient (lag market) compensations lead employees to consider leaving. Divergence Despite WBHRM being rated highly, the qualitative data highlights that structural fairness in career growth and compensation often overshadows supportive management or flexible working arrangements policies. Inference WBHRM practices do enhance employee well-being. However, emotional exhaustion should be addressed to effectively retain employees by ensuring realistic workloads and offering market-competitive compensation and clear advancement opportunities.

5. Discussion: Contributions, limitations, and conclusion (ongoing)

As illustrated in Table 3, the quantitative results indicate that WBHRM practices correspond with higher employee satisfaction and perceived organizational support while reducing emotional exhaustion. These practices indirectly predict turnover intentions, supporting the notion that employee well-being could be an alternative path to help lower employee turnover and absenteeism and enhance an organization's capacity to attract and retain employees (Guest, 2017, 2025; Mansour, 2024). Aligned with Gubernator et al. (2024) and Salas-Vallina et al. (2021), our findings suggest that WBHRM increases job satisfaction and mitigates strains and exhaustion. Further, Li et al. (2023) reported that job resource HR practices significantly correlate with the psychological, physical, and social dimensions of well-being, reinforcing the view that these practices can support multiple dimensions of employee well-being.

Our findings indicate that satisfaction and exhaustion act as potent mediators, consistent with Kashif et al. (2017), who found that exhaustion leads to dissatisfaction and intentions to leave, and Lamane-Harim et al. (2023), who observed that higher satisfaction reduces turnover intentions. Contrary to Dawley et al. (2010), Park et al. (2016), and Cao et al. (2014), our findings indicate that perceived organizational support did not significantly relate to turnover intentions, pointing to the possibility that contextual influences or other structural elements could moderate the effect of organizational support on turnover intentions. The qualitative analysis revealed that employees appreciated a supportive work environment and flexible working arrangements. However, this support proved inadequate to retain employees due to structural issues, including unclear or unfair promotion criteria, excessive workloads, and lagged market compensation packages.

This study is part of the lead researcher's doctoral thesis and is still in progress. Although analysis and integration of the multiple phases have not yet been completed, this study provides valuable insights into this ongoing investigation.

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