

Employee Turnover In Organizations: A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Of Determinants Across Industries And Countries

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ABSTRACT

Employee turnover affects organizational stability and increases human resource costs such as recruitment and training. This article presents a systematic literature review (SLR) to map the most frequently reported determinants of employee turnover/turnover intention across organizational contexts. A thematic synthesis yields eight clusters: (1) compensation and rewards, (2) job dissatisfaction, (3) career development, (4) training and competence development, (5) work environment, (6) job pressure and work stress, (7) organizational culture, and (8) recognition. These findings can inform retention strategy prioritization and future research agendas

Keywords: employee turnover; intention to leave; retention; compensation; work stress; organizational culture.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a strategic organizational asset because employees drive the core processes of producing goods and delivering services. In practice, employee turnover is a critical challenge because it can disrupt organizational stability and increase HR-related costs. Therefore, mapping turnover determinants through an SLR is important to systematically summarize empirical evidence and support organizations in prioritizing retention interventions.



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METHOD

2.1 Study Design and Reporting Guidelines

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to identify, appraise, and synthesize empirical evidence on the determinants of employee turnover/turnover intention. The manuscript follows PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting principles. A review protocol was established prior to searching to reduce selection bias, including the search strategy, eligibility criteria, screening procedures, data extraction, and synthesis methods.

2.2 Review Questions

This SLR is guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What factors are most frequently reported as determinants of employee turnover or turnover intention?

RQ2: How do these factors operate (mechanisms/explanations) across industries and countries?

RQ3: What managerial implications can be derived for retention strategies?

2.3 Literature Search Strategy

The search was conducted across academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and/or Garuda/SINTA (depending on researcher access). The search was limited to publications from 2015–2025 and English-language articles. Boolean operators and keyword combinations were used to broaden coverage while maintaining relevance. In addition to database searching, backward reference searching (from key articles) and forward citation searching (when necessary) were used to identify additional relevant studies.

2.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria: (1) journal/proceedings articles addressing determinants of employee turnover or turnover intention; (2) empirical findings or review outcomes that clearly identify causal/antecedent factors; (3) full-text availability; (4) publication within the defined time range; and (5) clearly specified organizational/company context.

Exclusion criteria: (1) duplicates; (2) irrelevant focus (e.g., customer turnover or non-HR topics); (3) unavailable full text; (4) no information on determinants/antecedents; or (5) low methodological quality based on quality appraisal.

2.5 Study Selection Procedure (PRISMA)

Study selection followed PRISMA stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. First, all search records were compiled and duplicates removed. Second, titles and abstracts were screened using the inclusion–exclusion criteria. Third, the full text of screened articles was assessed for eligibility. Finally, eligible articles were included in the synthesis. The number of records at each stage and reasons for exclusion should be documented in a PRISMA flow diagram (to be completed based on the researcher's search results).

2.6 Study Quality Appraisal

To improve synthesis accuracy, each eligible article was appraised using an appropriate checklist aligned with the study design (e.g., JBI Critical Appraisal Tools or CASP). Criteria include clarity of objectives, methodological fit, sample characteristics, measurement validity, and adequacy of reporting. Low-quality studies may be excluded or given lower interpretive weight.

2.7 Data Extraction

Data were extracted using a standardized form capturing: author/year, country/context, sector/industry, design/method, sample size and characteristics, determinant variables (e.g., compensation, job satisfaction, work stress, organizational culture), direction/type of relationship (positive/negative), and key findings. Extraction was performed systematically and verified before analysis.

2.8 Data Synthesis Technique

A thematic synthesis approach was applied through: (1) coding determinant factors from each study; (2) grouping similar codes; (3) generating cross-study themes; and (4) interpreting findings based on theme frequency and industry/country context. The synthesis was summarized into dominant determinant clusters and related implications for retention strategy.

2.9 Review Reliability (Optional)

If more than one reviewer is involved, inter-rater agreement can be calculated during title/abstract and full-text screening (e.g., Cohen's kappa). Discrepancies should be resolved by discussion to reach consensus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Characteristics of Included Studies

Based on the selection and extraction process, this SLR included 20 studies in the synthesis (see Table 1). Publication years range from 2012–2025, with a higher concentration in 2018–2025. Studies cover various countries and sectors, including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Ethiopia, Slovenia, and cross-sector service contexts. Sample sizes vary (approximately 65–568 respondents), with most studies involving hundreds of participants. Overall, findings indicate that turnover/turnover intention is influenced by a combination of economic factors (e.g., compensation), psychological factors (e.g., job satisfaction), structural factors (e.g., career opportunities and development), and organizational factors (e.g., culture and work environment).

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies

Note: Author and title are combined under "Study" for compact presentation.

No.	Study	Context/Sample	Key Findings
1	Satyaningrum & Djastuti (2020) – Relationship between emotional labor, work stress, employee creativity, and turnover intention: Study on Indonesian bank frontliners	Bank BTN Semarang Branch employees	Work stress negatively affects creativity and positively affects turnover intention; work stress mediates the influence of emotional labor on both creativity and turnover intention.
2	Abagelan & Tullu (2020) – Employee turnover in non-profit organizations in Jimma Prefecture, Ethiopia	110 NGO workers (86 employees across five nonprofit sectors)	Internal push factors (ineffective management, lack of career development, low salary/benefits) and job-related factors contribute strongly to turnover.
3	Hosen (2022) – Factors affecting employee turnover in multinational companies in Malaysia	250 MNC employees (officer-manager level)	Job dissatisfaction and work-life imbalance show significant positive relationships with employee turnover.
4	Mumin & Iddrisu (2021) – Employee turnover and job satisfaction: A synthesis of factors influencing employee turnover in higher learning institutions in Ghana	287 lecturers	Salary, working conditions/environment, career advancement, and coworker relationships correlate with job satisfaction and lecturer turnover.
5	Lee & Liu (2021) – The moderating effects of employee benefits and job burnout among employee loyalty, corporate culture and employee turnover	330 hotel employees	Higher work pressure increases turnover and lowers performance tendency; benefits can moderate burnout-related effects.
6	Indrati (2025) – Job satisfaction and commitment under employee commodification and turnover intention among Generation Z journalists	300 media journalists (web, TV, newspapers)	Higher job satisfaction reduces turnover intention; lower satisfaction increases turnover intention.
7	Rehman (2012) – Employee turnover and	568 public-sector employees	Job dissatisfaction predicts decisions to

No.	Study	Context/Sample	Key Findings
	retention strategies: An empirical study of public sector organizations of Pakistan		leave; job satisfaction is a key indicator of turnover.
8	Gupta, Singhal, & Chauhan (2021) – Impact of organisational politics on employee turnover and employee performance	300 private bank employees	Organizational politics significantly affects turnover; underlying elements include nepotism, organizational support, and management control.
9	Meiliawati, Sutanto, & Siswanti (2022) – The effect of career development and compensation on employee turnover with employee engagement as an intervening variable (Indonesia)	300 employees, PT Telkom Akses Yogyakarta	Career development and compensation significantly affect turnover directly and indirectly through employee engagement.
10	Tarafdar, Kajol, & Karmoker (2023) – Linking compliance practices to turnover intention in Bangladesh's jute industry: The moderating effect of employee commitment	400 workers	Compliance practices reduce turnover intention; commitment moderates the relationship.
11	Simangunsong, Sudjima, & Siahaan (2024) – Individual characteristics, employee engagement, and turnover intention among hotel employees in Medan	211 3-star hotel employees	Individual characteristics significantly influence turnover intention (also significant jointly with engagement).
12	Kwakye (2018) – Organisational culture and employee turnover: Evidence from Ghana	203 university employees	Bureaucratic, clan, entrepreneurial, and power cultures influence turnover.
13	Tanchi (2025) – Factors influencing employee turnover in private commercial banks in Bangladesh	117 employees (14 banks)	Unattractive pay, lack of training/development, partiality, and lack of career development increase turnover.
14	Dumale & Asawo (2020) – Employee	202 employees (21 banks)	Employee empowerment significantly influences

No.	Study	Context/Sample	Key Findings
	empowerment and employee turnover in deposit money banks in Port Harcourt		turnover.
15	Tamrin & Hanoky (2023) – The mediating effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on employee turnover	105 permanent employees (PT Kalimantan Sawit Kusuma)	Higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment reduce turnover.
16	Alam (2015) – Employee turnover in MFIs: Reasons & remedies	65 MFI employees (Bangladesh)	Key reasons include relatively low pay/benefits, heavy workload, transfers, limited promotion, and family reasons.
17	Pipan (2022) – Gender differences in turnover predictors in organisations facing a crisis	469 employees (Slovenia)	Women are more likely to leave due to dissatisfaction with promotion opportunities, professional development, recognition, autonomy, fair pay, and coworker relations.
18	Al-Suhaymi (2025) – The effect of incentives on employee turnover in the service sector	200 employees (hospitality, retail, healthcare)	Financial and non-financial incentives reduce turnover; recognition and supportive leadership foster longer-term commitment.
19	Perkasa & Abadi (2018) – The influence of compensation and leadership on employee turnover	76 IT employees (resigned)	Compensation shows a significant influence; the study reports turnover can still increase despite higher compensation (context-specific finding).
20	Chakravarthi, Kumar, & Kumari (2019) – Employee turnover in Deccan Industries, Coimbatore	121 employees	Turnover is largely associated with uncomfortable working conditions and inadequate welfare/security measures.

3.2 Thematic Synthesis of Turnover Determinants

The thematic synthesis produced eight determinant clusters most frequently reported across studies: (1) compensation and rewards, (2) job dissatisfaction, (3) career development, (4) training and competence development, (5) work environment, (6) job pressure and work stress, (7) organizational culture, and (8) recognition.

3.2.1 Compensation and rewards

Compensation and rewards are widely reported as dominant determinants. Perceived unfairness or non-competitive compensation often increases turnover intention.

3.2.2 Job dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction encourages negative evaluations of the job and organization, increasing intentions to leave.

3.2.3 Career development

Clear career opportunities (promotion/career paths) support retention, while career stagnation increases turnover intention.

3.2.4 Training and competence development

Training and competence development support adaptation and growth; limited development can push employees to move.

3.2.5 Work environment

Physical and psychosocial work environments (facilities, coworker relations, supervisor support) influence decisions to stay or leave.

3.2.6 Job pressure and work stress

Sustained pressure increases stress and fatigue, thereby strengthening turnover intentions.

3.2.7 Organizational culture

Supportive cultures strengthen commitment, while unhealthy cultures increase turnover intention.

3.2.8 Recognition

Recognition of contributions increases perceived value and employee attachment; a lack of appreciation increases intentions to leave.

This discussion revisits the synthesis using a “foundational theory + recent studies” strategy. Conceptually, turnover intention can be understood as an outcome of employees’ evaluations of exchange relationships (social exchange) and fairness (equity), which then shape satisfaction, commitment, exhaustion, and ultimately intentions to exit (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964). Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, high job demands without adequate resources/support increase stress and burnout, strengthening the push to leave (Demerouti et al., 2001).

4.1 Foundational theories linking the empirical evidence

Equity Theory emphasizes that perceived unfairness in rewards (salary, benefits, incentives) relative to contribution increases intentions to leave (Adams, 1965). Social Exchange Theory suggests that organizational support, leader–member relations, and healthy cultural climates encourage reciprocity (commitment/loyalty), reducing turnover intention (Blau, 1964). The JD-R model positions stress and burnout as key mechanisms: when job demands are high and job resources are low, stress increases and triggers turnover intention (Demerouti et al., 2001).

4.2 Synthesis of 2018-2025 findings by theme

- Compensation, incentives, and benefits: Incentive design is relevant for retention; benefits can buffer burnout-related effects and reduce turnover tendencies.
- Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mechanisms: Satisfaction and commitment consistently reduce turnover intention across contexts.
- Work stress, burnout, and emotional demands: Emotional labor and sustained pressure increase stress and turnover intention; workload management and support are key levers.
- Career development and engagement: Career development reduces turnover both directly and indirectly through employee engagement.
- Empowerment and individual characteristics: Empowerment and individual differences interact with engagement and context to influence turnover intention.

4.3 Context variation and conceptual implications

Reviewed studies span banking, hospitality, manufacturing, nonprofits, higher education, palm oil, services, and media. This variation suggests that turnover intention determinants often converge on shared psychological mechanisms (fairness, exchange, stress, satisfaction/commitment) but differ in context-specific triggers.

4.4 Research gaps and future agenda

Key gaps include: (a) dominance of cross-sectional designs limiting causal inference; (b) heterogeneity in turnover intention constructs/indicators across studies, complicating comparison; and (c) limited cross-industry and cross-generation mediation/moderation testing. Future work should use longitudinal designs, incorporate psychological mediators (stress/burnout, satisfaction, commitment, engagement), and test contextual moderators such as benefits, culture/politics, compensation/incentives, and individual characteristics.

CONCLUSION

This SLR identifies eight determinant clusters most frequently reported: compensation/rewards, job dissatisfaction, career development, competence development, work environment, job pressure/work stress, organizational culture, and recognition. Organizations should map which factors are most dominant in their context to prioritize effective retention strategies.

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