

Beyond the Paycheck: Societal and Cultural Influences on Turnover Intention in Contemporary Workplaces - A Conceptual Review

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Abstract: *Turnover intention has traditionally been examined through organizational and individual lenses, emphasizing job satisfaction, commitment, compensation, and leadership dynamics. However, this study shifts the focus to broader societal determinants that subtly yet powerfully shape employees' decisions to exit. Drawing on Theoretical frameworks embedded with sociological and cultural factors, it explores how social norms, community expectations, and cultural pressures influence perceptions of loyalty, career mobility, and workplace disengagement. In collectivist contexts, family obligations, societal status, and normative conformity often override organizational incentives, creating a complex interplay between personal agency and community influence. This study delves into the socio-cultural aspects integrated with turnover intention, offering fresh insights for HR practitioners and organizational psychologists. By moving beyond the paycheck, this study invites a rethinking of retention strategies that account for socio-culturally embedded interventions, especially in collectivist economies like India.*

Keywords: Contemporary workplace, Turnover Intention and Societal and cultural determinants.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Macro-level constructs, such as social identity, family expectations, economic pressures, and cultural norms, play a pivotal role in shaping decision heuristics, especially in collectivist cultures such as India. Given the volatility in the present workplace scenario, turnover intention is no longer solely an organizational phenomenon; rather, it is deeply embedded in societal norms, community expectations, and cultural pressures. Despite a competitive pay structure, the surge in intentional exits, specifically in India's high-growth sector, remains a pressing challenge. In the current corporate landscape of India, Turnover intention is a hybrid phenomenon driven by global career aspirations and embedded in societal and cultural obligations. Often cited as one of the most discussed themes in organisation and behaviour studies, turnover intention is ambiguous as it refers to employees' attitudes towards the organisation Maier et al., (2013). According to the etymology of the concept, turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious or subconscious desire to leave their current job or organisation. In scholarly diaspora, turnover intention may be defined as the individual's intention to quit the organisation voluntarily. Specifically, in the literature pertaining to behavioural studies in the workplace, intentions are important to study as they predict an individual's perception and judgement (Mobley et al., 1979). Thus, intentions are the most immediate determinant of actual behaviour. Hussain and Asif (2012) view turnover intention as a deliberate and conscious decision, claiming it to be a dominant mental behavioural decision made by employees on continuing to work for or leaving the present organisation. Price (1997) refers to turnover as the degree of individual movement across the membership of a social system. Elaborating on the concept, Joo (2010) bifurcated turnover intentions as voluntary or involuntary in nature, involving an employee's decision to leave the organisation of their own accord. This can involve a variety of factors, such as a salary increase, a more prestigious position, travel expenses, and help with accommodation. The concept of voluntary turnover can be explicated only when it is accepted as a combination of social, economic, and psychological processes (Udechukwu et al., 2009). Tett and Meyer's (1993) meta-analysis also sheds light on organizational traits, emphasising organizational commitment and job satisfaction as key denominators influencing turnover,

suggesting a strong correlation between satisfaction and intentions and withdrawal cognitions. Early Scholarly works postulated by Harrison and Bell (1995) and Martocchio et al. (1992) cite individual behavioural factors, including attitude towards attendance, perceived norms to attend, and moral obligations, as denominators of withdrawal behaviour, most likely impacting turnover intentions. Shore and Wayne (1993) also attribute individuals commitment to the organisation as a stronger plausible predictor of quit intentions at the workplace. Further emphasizing the interplay of leadership factor Covella, et al., (2017), Harris, et al., (2014), Kim, et al., (2010) stated that good LMX can reduce the strength of employees' voluntary intentions to leave, as they tend to perceive their current job as valuable, even if they are offered better salaries, and position by potential opportunities.

Based on the prior literature review, mainstream turnover intention models have historically leaned heavily on individual and organizational predictors, often sidelining the broader societal context. Most empirical studies on turnover intention emphasize.

Individual factors included job satisfaction, burnout, career aspirations, and personality traits.

Organizational factors include leadership style, organizational commitment, work environment, compensation, and growth opportunities. These predictors are well documented in meta-analyses and integrative reviews (Belete, 2018; Alkaabi et al., 2024).

Despite their robustness, societal embeddedness, and influence, cultural norms remain underexplored. This gap is especially pronounced in collectivist cultures, such as India, where social identity and familial expectations shape career decisions. Therefore, this review explicitly examines societal and cultural contracts.

OBJECTIVE

- To enhance understanding of social and cultural embeddedness as a determinant of turnover intention.
- To elucidate factors rooted in social and cultural embeddedness as determinants of turnover intention.
- This study proposes a new paradigm for future research.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review. Data sources included academic publications, articles, books, journal vetting tools, and open-access platforms to identify suitable publication venues for interdisciplinary research, encompassing the International and National context pertaining to organizational behaviour with regard to factors influencing Turnover Intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing on Social exchange, cultural dimensions, Social Identity theory, and job embeddedness as the theoretical framework, this literature synthesis explores and presents a new paradigm of enquiry leaning towards the societal context influencing employee turnover intention.

Hofstede's Cultural dimensions Theory and Turnover Intention

Among the early scholarly work, notable predictors

elucidating socio-cultural parameters as key denominators influencing turnover intention among the working class is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980). Postulating how collectivism influences workplace behaviour, including retention decisions, is important. His study cites employee's intent to stay in roles longer is influenced by cultural factors including-

- Social pressure to maintain stability
- Fear of disrupting relational networks
- Concern for family prestige tied to job status

His seminal book, *Culture's consequences*, links collectivist culture and turnover intention, stating that it is not merely a personal choice but a socially embedded decision influenced by familial and societal expectations Hofstede, (2001). This is similar to collectivist societies like India, where employees often prioritise group harmony, family expectations, and societal reputation over individual preferences. Budhwar's (2001) work also cites a linkage between collectivism and TI in the Indian workplace. Denoting collectivism as a catalyst driving the intent to leave a job. He further classifies the Indian workplace and the cultural embeddedness factor, proposing that employees often do not leave the organisation; they leave a supervisor who fails to provide the expected paternalistic protection. Culture dominates the quality of relationships and workplace dynamics, and a boss can mitigate the desire to leave, even if the pay is lower than market standards.

Social Exchange Theory and Turnover Intention

The core of the SET theory postulated by Homans (1958) states that human relationships are built on reciprocal exchange. In an organizational context, when employees feel valued, they reciprocate with commitment. Drawing inferences as a theoretical base Joshi et al. (2009) affirmed how social exchange acts as a relational tie, specifically in Indian workplace settings. Highlighting the relevance of collectivist cultures, she emphasises that relationalism at the workplace (loyalty to a group) serves as a stronger glue than individualistic incentives. In India, TI is often a group-influenced decision rather than a solo decision. Das and Ekka's (2024) meta synthesis too corroborates with findings attributing collectivism and high-power distance in India make relational exchanges (respect, inclusion, recognition) more critical than purely transactional rewards. From the lens of SET Theory, any relationship breach in an organisation can trigger TI.

Social Identity Theory and Turnover Intention

In India, self-image or identity is deeply communal, and in workplace settings, an identity crisis can often trigger the intention to leave. Turnover intention is moderated by the perceived impact of one's social identity and community reputation. Kapur and Mehta (2021) elucidated the role of gender, implying that societal role expectations significantly shape turnover intention, particularly in gendered labour markets. Their observations affirm the current workplace dynamics; for instance, women may feel pressured to leave their jobs after marriage or childbirth, while men may still feel obligated to remain employed regardless of their level of job satisfaction. In the Broader context, Wójcik (2020) stressed the larger implications of societal stressors, such as the political climate, economic instability, and social

unrest, as indirect denominators influencing turnover intention by altering job security perceptions and outlook. Societal-level uncertainty contributes to psychological contract breaches, influencing turnover intention. Chatman and Reilly (2016) emphasised the cultural and social aspects. Organizational norms are described as a social control system that shapes attitudes and behaviours through shared expectations. Social norms are informal rules that guide acceptable workplace behaviour. In collectivist cultures, norms surrounding loyalty, endurance, and deference to authority often discourage voluntary exits, even in dissatisfying roles. Drawing inferences from Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, they further highlight how high power distance and uncertainty avoidance reinforce conformity and discourage risk-taking, including job changes. Sinha (1990) and Tajfel’s (1981) Social Identity Theory highlight community expectations and social identity as potential influences on career aspirations. Employees often perceive their job roles as extensions of their social identities. Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory (1981) highlights that individuals derive self-worth from group affiliations, including workplace status. Drawing parallels from this assumption, In Indian context, familial and societal

expectations, such as maintaining a respectable job or fulfilling gendered roles, can override personal dissatisfaction and community validation influences career decisions, making turnover a socially sensitive act. Papadionysiou and Myloni (2023) also highlight the interdependence of societal and organizational cultures. Citing national cultural traits, such as loyalty and fatalism, shapes how individuals interpret workplace adversity. This suggests that turnover intention cannot be fully understood without considering macro-level cultural conditioning. Aycan and Kanungo’s (1999) cultural fit model sheds light on underexplored and nuanced constructs such as societal values, Cultural Pressures and Career Mobility. Elucidating the influence of societal values on organizational behaviour, including resignation decisions. They further propose empirical evidence emphasising that human resource management practices are not universally applicable and must be aligned with the socio-cultural environment of a society. In other words, effective HRM depends on the fit between

- Societal culture (values, norms, beliefs)
- Internal work culture (organizational assumptions and practices)
- HRM systems (recruitment, training, appraisals, etc.)

Key findings of the model in cross-cultural set up comparing Indian and Canadian managers suggest

- Indian managers scored higher on paternalism, power distance, and community loyalty.
- Indian employees reported less enriched jobs and lower autonomy, reflecting cultural assumptions regarding supervision and hierarchy.
- Mediated regression analyses confirmed that socio-cultural values influence HRM through internal work culture.
- The model emphasises that managerial assumptions about employee nature (e.g. proactive vs. reactive, malleable vs. fixed) are shaped by cultural values and directly influence HRM design.

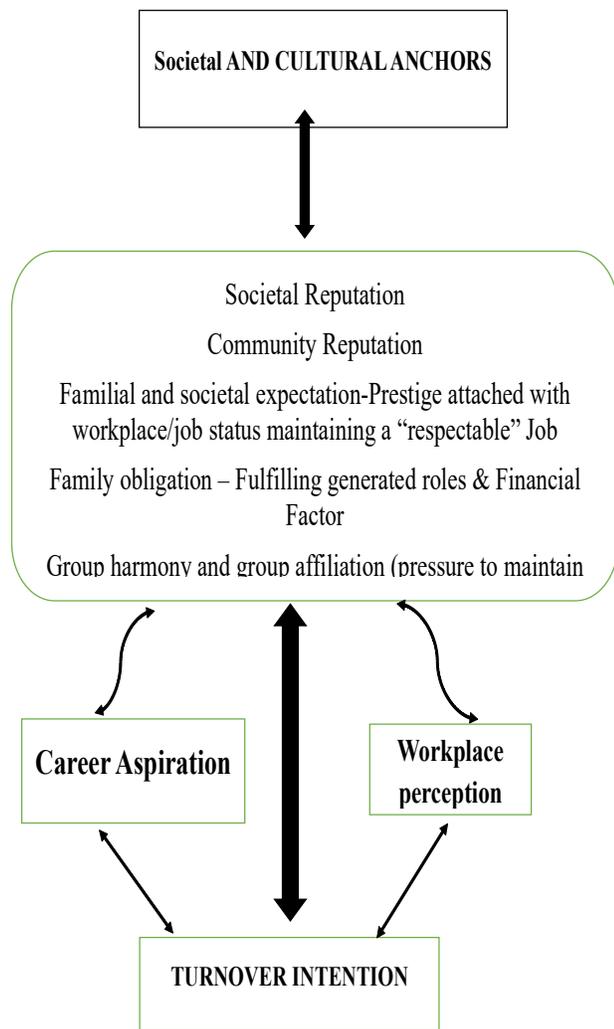
It is a notable fact that HR Personnels act as the policy crusader’s shaping retention and attrition policies that directly influences an employee’s decision and intention to stay or quit. Therefore, societal and cultural embedded aspects and their constructs must be studied in a broader light.

Job Embeddedness theory and Turnover Intention

The ideological basis of Job Embeddedness theory Mitchell et al. (2001) intricately weaves a strong linkage between an employee’s intent to stay or leave, emphasising an array of forces that keep employees rooted to their jobs and communities. In the Indian workplace context, leaving a job may not only dent financial status but also hamper social status and community respect. Strong embeddedness reduces turnover intention by anchoring employees through their social, cultural, and personal ties. Shah et al., (2020).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on a rigorous literature review, a comprehensive framework was developed to guide the research. The framework encompasses key Societal and Cultural influences and their relationship with the dependent variable of turnover intention, as depicted in *Figure 1*.



PRACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

In a collectivist culture like India, where boundaries between self, family, and work are essential, leveraging the theoretical frameworks of social identity and exchange theory to attune policies that address the social and emotional wealth of an employee is necessary to lower turnover intention. Potent policies may encompass

1) Family Inclusion or Family Embedded model as new paradigm

In the Indian context, the family often acts as a hidden stakeholder in the employment contract, influencing one's social status. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Budhwar, 2001). Therefore, a family embedded model and policy attuned to fostering family inclusion in the workplace could prove crucial in narrowing the social and emotional disconnect between an employee and an employer. Indian-specific interventions, such as extending health insurance policies explicitly for elderly parents, which are often seen as a high-priority concern in Indian households compared to the West due to societal and cultural embeddedness) or offering educational scholarships for children, can prove to be a potent mechanism for promoting the longevity of an employee. In such situations, families may perceive the organisation as a benefactor that can act as a social anchor, discouraging the employee from leaving for a marginal pay increase elsewhere.

2) The "Guru Shishya approach"

Reflecting and drawing inferences from parentalism (Sinha 1990) and the high-power distance approach (Hofstede 1980) cultural dimension theory, a value-driven and culturally rooted mentorship protocol emphasising the traditional model of Leader-Member Exchange in the Indian context, the "Guru Shishya approach" is proposed. Adopting the role of a guru can foster a moral obligation to stay. Employees may intend to stay for the Leader even if they are dissatisfied with the Firm. A good LMX can reduce the strength of employees' voluntary intentions to leave, as they tend to perceive their current job as valuable, even if they are offered better salaries, positions, and accommodations by potential opportunities. (Harris et al., (2014); Kim et al., (2010).

3) Branding attuned with Purpose

By attuning and aligning CSR practices as an internal tool rather than just a tax saving or a PR gimmick in the private sector. For instance, formulating initiatives in line with "Make in India" or "or the Digital India campaign can promote societal infused meaningfulness at work, aligning with a sense of social identity. The feeling of serving a larger purpose will uplift the worth of psychological income in employees, breaking the social stigma of work prestige largely confined to government jobs. Meaningfulness at work, aligned with societal impact, directly influences workplace tenure.

These charters can be laid as the foundational basis for curating India-specific interventions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study yielded significant insights into the intricate dynamics driving Turnover Intention. While most turnover models and literature

emphasise individual and organizational predictors (e.g. job satisfaction, commitment, and leadership), neglecting societal embeddedness. The constructs pertaining to organizational predictors are well-studied; however, societal cultural influences remain underexplored, especially in collectivist cultures like India.

Turnover remains the most costly problem in the workplace across the globe. This has been attributed to a ragging issue for a long time. Many attempts have been made to propose interventions and prepositions to combat the issue; however, there is no long-term solution to curb its prevalence. Therefore, it is crucial to postulate a conceptual framework that proposes a fresh perspective for HR Strategists and Organizational psychologists. By explicitly shedding light on societal and culturally embedded factors influencing and shaping turnover intentions in the workplace. Ramifications and interventions considering and emphasising sociocultural aspects aligned with management policies can potentially address even larger implications, such as attrition and retention factors that directly correlate with the repurcussionary side of employee turnover.

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