

# The Influence of Work Motivation on the Turnover Intention of Higher Vocational Graduates through the Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in Shandong China

Meng Xing<sup>1</sup>, Osaro Aigbogun<sup>2</sup> and Sudesh Prabhakaran<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Researcher, Binary University of Management & Entrepreneurship, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business, Curtin University, Malaysia, <sup>3</sup>Professor, Binary University of Management & Entrepreneurship, Malaysia

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## Abstract

The turnover rate of higher vocational graduates is much higher than that of other college graduates. With a new generation of employees likely to be more actively invested in the company, employee turnover has become a challenging issue and a key focus of human resource management. It also creates a lot of problems for management and organization. Turnover intention is a component of the employee before the actual departure. Turnover intention is easy to predict and directly controlled by the individual. This study selected 400 higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province as the research objects to explore the effects of work motivation and job satisfaction on turnover intention. Through structured questionnaire survey. Partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) and Smart-PLS software were used to analyze the measured data and structural model. The results show that work motivation has not a significant impact on turnover intention, job satisfaction has a significant impact on turnover intention, and work motivation has an impact on turnover intention through the mediating role of job satisfaction. This study is an extension of the study of turnover intention in China.

**Keywords:** Work Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, Smart-PLS

## Introduction

The number of graduates of higher vocational colleges in Shandong Province ranks first in the country in the past five years (China Statistical Yearbook, 2013-2017). Shandong Province has a large number of higher vocational graduates, but the turnover rate of vocational graduates is also relatively high. About 35% of higher vocational graduates changed one or two employers after working for half a year, and the turnover rate of vocational graduates in Shandong Province has remained at 33% from 2016 to 2018

(Employment Quality Report of College Graduates in Shandong, 2016-2018). The employment rate of higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province in the past three years has reached 96% (Shandong Provincial Department of Education, 2017-2019). The initial employment of higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province is relatively good, which is higher than the employment rate of undergraduates and graduate students. However, after vocational graduates successfully obtained employment, there was a high turnover rate. The turnover rate of vocational graduates reached nearly 40% after one year of employment, which was significantly higher than the employment rate of graduates with other degrees. Among the staff who resigned from colleges and universities in Shandong Province in 2017 and 2018, higher vocational graduates accounted for 63% (Employment Quality Report of College Graduates in Shandong, 2016—2018). The turnover rate in 2019 reached 41.05%, nearly 20% higher than that of undergraduate graduates (Shandong Provincial Department of Education, 2017-2019). It can be seen that the high turnover rate of higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province is a more realistic and prominent problem.

## **Literature Review**

### **Turnover Intention**

Turnover intention is taken as a precursor of employee turnover (Aladwan et al., 2013). Another benefit of using TI over actual turnover rate is that intention is easier to predict than turnover and is controlled by the individuals themselves (Shore & Martin, 1989). Models of employee turnover tend to fall into one of the two categories: process models or content models (Maertz & Campion, 2004).

Turnover process models focus on the sequence of steps employees go through during the process of quitting, such as developing feelings of dissatisfaction, thinking about quitting, searching for alternative employment, and then quitting their current jobs. On the other hand, content models focus on factors that cause employees to quit, incorporating constructs such as attributes of the job, organization, and individual as well as alternative opportunities (Hom et al., 2012). Finally, some models include both the process and content.

Wang (2017); Li (2015); Wang et al (2015); Hossain et al (2023); Lv (2015) believed that the turnover intention of higher vocational graduates was the key factor that predicted their turnover behavior. According to the forecast, the following are the primary reasons people quit their jobs: a desire for a higher salary, a high labor intensity, a desire for more room for personal development, a low social status, an unoptimistic working environment, and other personal factors, as well as employment units and talent training units' other factors. Sun et al (2018); Li et al., (2018); Ran (2015) established that it is believed that vocational graduates' employment expectations are too high, that their personal positioning is inconsistent with social needs, that they lack the spirit of hard labor, and that they lack the experience of living life (Hossain et al., 2018). At the same time, graduate role pressure has a significant negative impact on job satisfaction; graduate job satisfaction has a significant negative impact on turnover intention; and graduate job satisfaction acts as a partial intermediary between role pressure and turnover intention.

In this study, structured questionnaire was used to investigate the higher vocational graduates who had graduated for one year in Shandong Province. Partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) and Smart-PLS software were used to analyze the measurement data and structural model, to explore the influence of job motivation and job satisfaction on turnover intention.

**Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as a worker's sense of accomplishment (Al Qalhati et al., 2020) and success at work (Kaliski, 2007). It is commonly thought to be directly related to both personal satisfaction and productivity. Job satisfaction is the outcome of having a job that one enjoys, doing it well, and being compensated for it (Javed et al., 2020). Another aspect of job satisfaction is a sense of excitement and fulfilment with one's work. Job satisfaction is an important factor that leads to recognition, wages, promotions, and the achievement of other goals that lead to a sense of fulfillment (Hossain et al., 2018).

Job satisfaction, according to Chasanah (2008), comprises appraisal, emotion, and reaction or perceived disposition. Job satisfaction is a happy or positive emotional state resulting from job evaluation. Employee effort is closely related to job satisfaction (Novariani and Ramli, 2020; Imran et al., 2020). Employees that are discontent with their jobs, mainly because they are performing their missions as well as they can and are not attempting to be the greatest at their mission output. Then there are three markers of job happiness: social contentment, intrinsic job satisfaction, and extrinsic job satisfaction (Ramli, 2019; Schnake & Dumler, 2003).

A number of variables, including the nature of the work, pay, prospects for advancement, management, work groups, and working environment, have an impact on job satisfaction (Brikend, 2011).

In this study, the job satisfaction of higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province is defined as the comprehensive evaluation of the satisfaction degree of higher vocational graduates in all aspects of the job in the existing jobs. It involves various aspects of work, including work tasks, work compensation, work environment, promotion opportunities, work safety and work interpersonal relationships, etc (Weiss et al., 1967).

Employee turnover is a long-standing problem in organizations in the globalization period, and it is prevalent in enterprises of all types and sizes, at all organizational levels (Hossain et al., 2018). Employee turnover is a critical issue, particularly in human resource management (Benjamin et al., 2010). This is quite costly for a company, with costs associated with termination, advertising, recruiting, selection, and employment (Abbasi & Hollman, 2008). When an employee departs the organization, the remaining employees' capacity to complete their jobs may suffer. Job satisfaction has been acknowledged as a significant component in all occupational groups' work lives. Employees that are satisfied are more likely to be dedicated to their organization and have fewer intents to leave (Benjamin et al., 2010).

Yang and Chen (2020) discovered an adverse connection between job satisfaction and resignation intentions in an online questionnaire survey of 663 Chinese paediatric nurses who were considering leaving their positions. This association was confirmed using structural equation modelling.

Randhawa (2007) used 300 scientists as research subjects to investigate the association between job satisfaction and intention to leave. He discovered a substantial negative association between job satisfaction and turnover intention using multiple regression analysis.

Through a multi-stage linear regression investigation, Kuo et al (2013) discovered that job satisfaction has a strong mediating influence between job stress and turnover intention. Furthermore, they discovered that higher levels of job satisfaction significantly lowered the levels of job stress and turnover intention experienced by long-term care nurses.

Jehanzeb et al (2015) selected Saudi Arabian fast food chain employees as the research object, and analyzed 250 questionnaires, discovered a negative relationship between job

satisfaction and employee turnover intention. Meanwhile, job satisfaction mediates between effective training programs, colleagues' support for training and turnover intention.

Han et al (2011) used an exploratory analysis to find that leader-member exchange was negatively correlated with turnover intention, leadership-member exchange was positively correlated with job satisfaction, and job satisfaction was negatively correlated with turnover intention in a study of 181 nurses from a Catholic medical cooperative health care organization in a state in the Midwest of the United States. The association between leader-member interchange and turnover intention is mediated by job satisfaction.

Saleh et al (2023) investigated role of emotional exhaustion on turnover intention among early-career employees and found that early-career employees' emotional exhaustion significantly increases their turnover intention.

### **Work Motivation**

Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed Self-Determination theory, and discussed the definition of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means the motivation generated by individuals based on their own interests, autonomy and satisfaction when engaging in activities or pursuing goals. Intrinsic motivation is a spontaneous driving force, and individuals participate in activities out of the pursuit of enjoyment, fun and self-realization of the activities themselves. Extrinsic motivation means the drive and motivation by external factors when an individual engages in activities or pursues goals (Al Qalhati et al., 2020). These external factors include rewards, punishments, social approval, power, or money, etc., and they guide the individual's behavior rather than originating from the individual's internal interests or values. Ryan and Deci (2000) also pointed out that the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are not mutually exclusive, but exist in a continuous motivation spectrum. Individuals can be driven by intrinsic motivation as well as extrinsic motivation in pursuit of goals. The point is that intrinsic motivation has a more positive impact on an individual's long-term motivation and quality of behavior (Akosile & Ekemen, 2022). Self-determination theory emphasizes an individual's need for autonomy, belonging, and competence as keys to stimulating and supporting intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory suggests that meeting these basic psychological needs helps to promote the development and maintenance of intrinsic motivation.

Miao et al (2020) took employees in China as the research object, applied regression analysis technology, and discovered that both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentive have a detrimental effect on the intention to leave a job. Zeki et al (2007) conducted a questionnaire analysis of 936 nurses, and concluded that work motivation and job satisfaction are important influencing factors for predicting turnover intention.

Regression analysis was used in a study by Khan et al (2016) on 62 participants to discover that work motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—had a substantial impact on turnover intention.

In order to draw the conclusion that work motivation and job satisfaction have predictive effects on employee turnover intention, Michelle et al (2018) used structural equation modelling to analyze data from 341 employees in the foreign exchange banking sector in South Africa.

The data show that job satisfaction has a negative and significant link with the intention to leave a company. While a result, as positive connections have been shown in the majority of the data, employees' happiness is more likely to be derived from intrinsic and extrinsic motivating elements (Carolina et al., 2020). However, the majority of these research have

been conducted in developed Western countries, and more verification and analysis in other locations are required (Carolina et al., 2020).

Work motivation has a direct impact on job satisfaction (Suyono et al., 2021). Work motivation and teachers' job satisfaction are positively correlated (Maharjan, 2012). According to Kian et al (2014), the majority of empirical investigations show a correlation between job satisfaction and work motivation. Using a sample of 160 employees from the People's Bank of Indonesia, Nurdiansyah et al (2020) confirmed that job satisfaction is positively and significantly impacted by work motivation. Through job satisfaction, work motivation has a favorable and considerable impact on employee performance. Employees are motivated at work when they are aligned with the aims of the organization. Work motivation, as influenced by job performance and job satisfaction, is a crucial element determining employee turnover intention (Prihandinisari et al. 2020). Sing and Sharma (2017) used linear regression analysis and t-test analysis to determine that work motivation has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of teachers in professional institutions. They randomly selected 240 teachers from a sample of professional institutions in Western India.

### Conceptual Framework

Work motivation measured by extrinsic motivation (WMEM), intrinsic motivation (WMIM), use the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (Gagné et al., 2015). Job satisfaction (JS) measured by external job satisfaction (EXJS) and internal job satisfaction (INJS), use the MSQ (Manual for the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire).

Turnover intention uses the turnover intentions scale (Dwivedi, 2015).

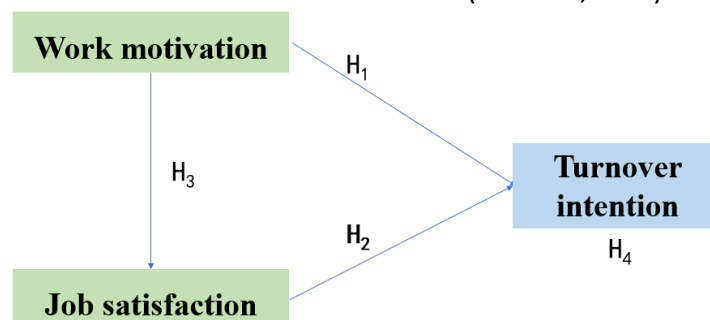


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

### Hypotheses

H1: Work motivation has a significant impact on turnover intention.

H2: Job satisfaction has a significant impact on turnover intention.

H3: Work motivation has a significant impact on job satisfaction.

H4: Work motivation has a significant impact on turnover intention through job satisfaction as an intermediary.

### Methodology

This study uses partial least squares to construct a structural equation model of the factors affecting turnover of vocational graduates, and explores the influence of work motivation, job satisfaction on turnover intention.

The questionnaire was be distributed in July 2020, using the questionnaire star online questionnaire survey platform to issue questionnaires through the Internet. The final sample included 400 vocational graduates who graduated one year (graduating in 2019). SPSS 26.0

software was used for descriptive statistical analysis on the background information and data variables of the respondents.

In the study, the 400 respondents were all high vocational graduates who graduated in 2019, that is, they all graduated and worked for one year. As shown in Table 1, 316 respondents are female high vocational graduates, accounting for 79%, and the remaining 84 are male high vocational graduates, accounting for 21%.

Table 1

*Gender of High Vocational Graduates*

| Demographic factor | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender             | Male     | 84        | 21.0           |
|                    | Female   | 316       | 79.0           |
|                    | Total    | 400       | 100.0          |

The surveyed 400 high vocational graduates are currently employed, as shown in Table 2 and 3, 251 respondents are employed in the enterprise; accounting for 62.7%; 46 respondents are employed in the business unit, accounting for 11.5%; 18 respondents are employed in the government department, accounting for 4.5%; 85 respondents are employed in the other types of employment units, accounting for 21.3%.

Table 2

*Employment Status of High Vocational Graduates*

| Demographic factor       | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Employment Status</b> | Employed | 400       | 100.0          |
|                          | Total    | 400       | 100.0          |

Table 3

*Nature of Work Unit of High Vocational Graduates*

| Demographic factor         | Category              | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Nature of Work Unit</b> | Business Unit         | 46        | 11.5           |
|                            | Government Department | 18        | 4.5            |
|                            | Enterprise            | 251       | 62.7           |
|                            | Other                 | 85        | 21.3           |
|                            | Total                 | 400       | 100.0          |

**Result and Findings**

The data analysis of this research mainly uses Smart PLS 3.0 software to analyze the measurement model and structural model to evaluate the interpretation of the measurement model and the fit of the structural model. The specific analysis is as follows.

**Measurement Model Analysis**

Table 4 shows the Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE values of each indicator in the model measurement. Cronbach's Alpha>0.7, Composite Reliability>0.7, AVE>0.5 in the various indicators of the measurement model facets, indicating that the measurement facets have good internal reliability and validity.



Table 7

*Cross Loadings*

|             | <b>JS</b> | <b>TI</b> | <b>WM</b> |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>EXJS</b> | 0.955     | -0.325    | 0.583     |
| <b>INJS</b> | 0.953     | -0.258    | 0.564     |
| <b>TI1</b>  | -0.107    | 0.671     | 0.049     |
| <b>TI2</b>  | -0.183    | 0.690     | 0.011     |
| <b>TI4</b>  | -0.296    | 0.848     | -0.175    |
| <b>TI5</b>  | -0.280    | 0.816     | -0.206    |
| <b>WMEM</b> | 0.389     | -0.024    | 0.857     |
| <b>WMIM</b> | 0.649     | -0.203    | 0.911     |

At the same time, according to the recommendations of Fornell and Lacker, the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  value is shown in Table 8. From the table, it can be seen that  $\sqrt{AVE} >$  Pearson correlation of each aspect, indicating that each index has obvious discrimination validity.

Table 8

 $\sqrt{AVE}$  value calculated according to Fornell and Lacker recommendations

|           | <b>JS</b> | <b>TI</b> | <b>WM</b> |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>JS</b> | 0.954     |           |           |
| <b>TI</b> | -0.306    | 0.760     |           |
| <b>WM</b> | 0.602     | -0.139    | 0.884     |

**Structural Model Analysis**

Path Coefficients are shown in Table 9. Analyzing the p-value of Path Coefficients, we can see that job satisfaction has a significant impact on turnover intention, hypothesis H2 holds. Work motivation has a significant impact on job satisfaction, hypothesis H3 holds. Work motivation has no significant effect on turnover intention, hypothesis H1 not established.

Table 9

*Path Coefficients*

|                    | <b>Beta coefficient</b> | <b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b> | <b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b> | <b>P Values</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>JS -&gt; TI</b> | -0.352                  | 0.066                             | 5.281                           | 0.000           |
| <b>WM -&gt; JS</b> | 0.601                   | 0.037                             | 16.326                          | 0.000           |
| <b>WM -&gt; TI</b> | 0.065                   | 0.096                             | 0.725                           | 0.469           |

The intermediary effect in the structural model is shown in the Specific Indirect Effects in Table 10. Combined with the P value, work motivation has a significant impact on turnover intention through job satisfaction as an intermediary. Hypothesis H4 holds.

Table 10

*Specific Indirect Effects*

|                             | <b>Beta Coefficient</b> | <b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b> | <b>P Values</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>WK -&gt; JS -&gt; TI</b> | -0.211                  | 4.937                           | 0.000           |



**Conclusion**

This article selects 400 higher vocational graduates in Shandong Province as the research object. Based on PLS, a structural model of the factors affecting the turnover of vocational graduates is constructed. Through the statistical analysis of PLS, it is found that the measurement model has good reliability and validity. The structural model has a good fit. Through the verification of the model, it is concluded that: work motivation has no significant influence on turnover intention, hypothesis H1 is not supported; job satisfaction has a significant influence on turnover intention, hypothesis H2 holds; work motivation has a significant effect on job satisfaction, hypothesis H3 holds; work motivation has a significant impact on turnover intention through job satisfaction as an intermediary, and hypothesis H4 holds.

Based on the results of the structured questionnaire survey and the analysis of the data obtained, hypothesis H1 was not supported. There is not a substantial relationship between work motivation and the intention of higher vocational graduates to switch jobs. Work motivation can be broken down into two categories: work motivation-external motivation and work motivation-internal motivation. Both of these categories reflect the work motivation of higher vocational graduates. According to the findings of the review of the relevant literature, many researchers have arrived at varying conclusions on the connection between work motivation and intention to leave the company. Miao et al (2020) used employees in China as the research object, performed regression analysis on the data, and came to the conclusion that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation had a negative influence on an individual's intention to leave their current place of employment. According to the hypothesis presented by Astiti and Surya (2020), a lack of work motivation is associated with an increased likelihood of employee turnover. In a survey of 203 public officials in South Korean local governments using ordinary least-squares regression analysis, Kim (2018) made the discovery that intrinsic motivation had a Substantial negative impact on fatigue and turnover intention. A small amount of protection from burnout was offered by an extrinsic source of incentive. This is a further exploration and development of the research field on the relationship between work motivation and turnover intention. In this study, we found that work motivation has no significant impact on the turnover intention of higher vocational graduates. This was found through theoretical review and empirical testing.

According to Kian et al (2014), the majority of empirical investigations support the notion that there is a positive association between work motivation and job satisfaction. Work motivation was shown to have a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction by Nurdiansyah et al (2020), who used a sample of 160 workers from Bank Rakyat Indonesia to conduct their research. Through their level of pleasure in their jobs, employees' performance can be significantly improved when they are motivated at work. Sharma (2017) conducted linear regression analysis and t-test analysis on a sample of 240 instructors from chosen professional institutes in western India. The researchers came to the conclusion that work motivation has a substantial effect on the level of job satisfaction experienced by teachers in western India. In a study conducted by Ahmed et al (2016) on 185 lecturers, they employed structural equation modelling to confirm that a positive and substantial relationship exists between work motivation and job satisfaction. The small number of instructors who participated in the sample and the fact that the research was carried out at a private university both work against the study's capacity to generalize its findings. This study is a further expansion of the research that has been done on the influence that work motivation has on job satisfaction within the context of China. In their study on the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave an organization, KUo et al (2013); Khawaja et al (2015) both came to the conclusion that

job satisfaction also served as a mediating variable. As a result of our research, which included both a theoretical analysis and empirical testing, we came to the conclusion that job satisfaction acts as a mediator between work motivation and turnover intention. This study is an extension of the research that has been done on job satisfaction as a mediating variable, which has been shown to mediate the association between work motivation and turnover intention in the Chinese environment.

In terms of future research, we can further apply the pls structural equation model to quantitatively explore and study other factors that affect the turnover intention of higher vocational graduates, as well as to analyze the employment stability, work performance, and Further research on job satisfaction and other issues. This will allow us to examine the turnover intention of higher vocational graduates and determine other factors that affect it. To be able to better meet the urgent needs of enterprises in Shandong Province for talents in the transformation of new and old kinetic energy, and to provide corresponding countermeasures and suggestions on issues including stable employment and high-performance output of highly skilled talents represented by higher vocational graduates.

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