

WORK STRESS, CAREER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AS DETERMINANTS OF TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

Employee turnover is the rate at which employees leave the organisation due to voluntary or involuntary reasons. It is a critical challenge faced by IT companies. From the literature review it is found that the most common type of turnover is voluntary turnover means employees leave by own choice. Many studies indicated Work stress, career growth opportunities and Work - life balance as strong predictors contributing to turnover. Thus, this study examines the effects of Work Stress, Career Growth Opportunities, and Work-Life Balance on Turnover Intention among IT professionals in the context of Kerala. Findings revealed that Work stress has strong positive effect on turnover intention, whereas career growth opportunities and work-life balance have negative correlations with turnover intention. Work Stress was the strongest predictor of turnover intention and it was followed by Career Growth Opportunities. Work-Life Balance was excluded from the model due to lack of statistical significance. The study will help IT companies to address stress, promote career development, design and strengthen employee support systems so as to reduce attrition and enhance workplace well-being.

Keywords:- Work Stress, Career Growth, Work-Life Balance, Turnover Intention, IT Professionals.

*I*nformation technology sector is one of the fastest-growing and most competitive industries in India. Kerala is the state where major IT hubs consisting of many IT companies operate. IT contributes to the economic development of the country. Despite its growth prospects, the industry faces a

persistent challenge which is high employee turnover.

Rapid technological changes, demanding project cycles, long working hours, and constant skill up gradation have intensified work stress among IT professionals (Agarwal & Kalita, 2021). At the same time, limited opportunities for career advancement and inadequate

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work-life balance have been frequently cited as major determinants of employees' intention to quit (Kundu&Lata, 2017; Karatepe, 2013).

Turnover intention can be defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization, serves as the strongest predictor of actual turnover (Mobley, 1977). In recent years, stress arising from heavy workloads, lack of career pathways, and imbalance between personal and professional roles has emerged as a critical concern affecting turnover intention in the IT sector.

Thus, this study aims to investigate how Work Stress, Career Growth opportunities, and Work-Life Balance influences Turnover Intention among IT professionals. The findings will also provide valuable insights for HR managers and policy makers to formulate strategies that will reduce attrition and improve employee well-being.

Statement of the Problem

IT sector experience some of the highest turnover rates across various industries. IT companies are increasingly struggling to retain skilled professionals. People leave organisations voluntarily because they face intense performance pressure from superiors which results in limited time for personal life, and uncertain career opportunities. Previous studies have identified Work stress, career development, and work-life balance as predictors of turnover intention. But the joint impact of these variables in the context of IT professionals in Kerala has not been yet explored.

The unique nature of work in sector-specific IT parks which is characterized by long working hours, project-based deadlines, and global client demands, understanding the combined influence of these factors is very essential. Also the lack of Kerala specific evidence creates difficulty for organizations to design effective retention strategies. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how work stress, perceived career growth opportunities, and work-life balance affect turnover intention among IT professionals.

Scope and Significance of the Study

This study has focused on key independent variables such as work stress, work-life balance, and career growth opportunities on turnover intention. A sample of 82 IT employees working in various IT organisations in Kerala were selected for the study on the basis of convenience sampling method and data was collected through structured questionnaire.

This study will help IT companies to know about the major reasons of turnover and this will help HR managers to design retention, workload management, and employee wellness strategies so as to retain their best talents and to reduce the cost associated with turnover. Companies can better design career development programs and work-life balance initiatives also.

The study also contributes academically by examining the combined effect of predictors used in the study on turnover intention by taking evidence from IT professionals in Kerala.

This study is socially relevant as it takes in to consideration issues affecting the mental well-being of IT employees and it encourages healthier work cultures and policies which will promote employee welfare.

Objectives

- To examine whether turnover intention, work–life balance, work stress, and career growth opportunities differ significantly across gender among IT professionals.
- To study the relationship between workstress and turnover intention.
- To study the relationship between work-life balance and turnover Intention.
- To study the relationship between career growth opportunities and turnover intention.
- To evaluate the collective effect of career growth opportunities work stress and **work–life balance on turnover intention**.
- To identify the most significant predictors of turnover intention among IT employees.

Research Methodology

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 82 IT professionals working in various IT companies in Kerala using structured questionnaire sent through Google forms. Convenience sampling method was used for collecting data. The collected data were analysed using various statistical tools such as

Correlation, Multiple regression, Step wise Regression and Independent sample T test. The analysed data were presented in the form of tables. Secondary data were collected from published articles.

Literature Review

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave an organization (Mobley, 1977) and is considered a strong predictor of actual turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993). In the IT sector, factors such as job hopping, skill shortages and high workload increase employees' intention to quit (Agarwal & Kalita, 2021). Prior studies highlight burnout, job dissatisfaction, poor work–life balance, and limited growth opportunities as key drivers of turnover intention (Hom et al., 2017; Kim & Stoner, 2008).

Work Stress and Turnover Intention

Work stress is the psychological and physiological strain arising when job demands exceed an individual's capacity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). IT employees often face stress due to deadlines, long working hours, and rapid technological changes (Srivastava, 2018). Research shows a positive relationship between work stress and turnover intention, where higher stress increases employees' likelihood of leaving (Ahsan et al., 2009; Jiang & Probst, 2016).

Career Growth and Turnover Intention

Career growth refers to employees' perceived opportunities for advancement and skill development (Weng & McElroy,

2012). Studies indicate a negative relationship between career growth and turnover intention, as better career opportunities enhance commitment and reduce employees' desire to quit (Kraimer et al., 2011; Kundu&Lata, 2017).

Work–Life Balance and Turnover Intention

Work–life balance (WLB) is the ability to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively (Greenhaus& Allen, 2011). Poor WLB, common in the IT sector due to long hours and work pressure, leads to higher turnover intention (Chandra, 2012). Research shows that improved WLB and flexible work arrangements significantly reduce employees' intention to leave (Karatepe, 2013; Noor, 2011).

Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive statistics

Table 1.1 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the Work–Life Balance, Work Stress, Career Growth Opportunities, and Turnover Intention variables.

The results show that Career Growth Opportunities recorded the highest overall mean score ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.92$), suggesting that respondents generally perceived their organisation as providing favourable prospects for professional development. This was followed by Work–Life Balance ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.65$), indicating a moderate level of perceived balance between work responsibilities and personal life.

The mean score for Turnover Intention was ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.98$),

which reflects a moderate tendency among respondents to consider leaving their current organisation. In contrast, Work Stress recorded the lowest overall mean score ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.79$), suggesting that respondents experienced relatively lower levels of stress compared to other measured constructs.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all four constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales used in the study. Turnover Intention ($\alpha = 0.916$), Work Stress ($\alpha = 0.906$), Work–Life Balance ($\alpha = 0.770$), and Career Growth Opportunities ($\alpha = 0.932$)—indicate that the scales are dependable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Independent Sample T Test

H0 - There is no significant difference in Work–Life Balance, Work Stress, Career Growth Opportunities, or Turnover Intention among IT professionals based on gender.

Table 1.2 indicates that female employees reported slightly higher turnover intention ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.94$) than their male counterparts ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.02$) also Female employees perceived marginally higher career growth opportunities ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.94$) compared to male employees ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.90$). Work stress levels were nearly identical for males ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.86$) and females ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.69$). Male employees reported slightly higher work–life balance ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.65$) than female employees ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.65$). Independent samples t-test was

Table 1.1
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

Measuring Instrument	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Turnover Intention	3.0488	0.98244	0.916
Work Stress	2.8878	0.78762	0.906
Work life Balance	3.3366	0.65159	0.770
Career growth opportunities	3.5902	0.91673	0.932

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.2
Gender-wise Comparison of Study Variables

Measuring Instrument Sub Scales	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P
Turnover Intention	Male	45	2.9611	1.02102	0.376
	Female	37	3.1554	.93607	
Career Growth Opportunities	Male	45	3.5200	.90494	0.448
	Female	37	3.6757	.93613	
Work Stress	Male	45	2.9067	.86298	0.813
	Female	37	2.8649	.69611	
Work Life Balance	Male	45	3.3733	.65171	0.576
	Female	37	3.2919	.65760	

Source: Primary Data

conducted to examine whether turnover intention career growth opportunities, work–life balance, Work stress, and differ based on gender among IT professionals. The results reveal no statistically significant differences across any of the variables.

Turnover Intention (P =0.376), Career Growth Opportunities (P=0.448), WorkStress (P=0.813) and Work–life balance (P=0.576) did not differ significantly between males and females

as P Values are greater than 0.05. The findings indicate that there is no significant gender-based difference in turnover intention career growth opportunities, Work stress, or work–life balance, among IT professionals. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Correlational Staistics

H01 = There is no significant relationship between Work Stress and Turnover intention.

H02 = There is no significant relationship between Work–Life Balance and turnover intention.

H03 = There is no significant relationship between Career Growth Opportunities and Turnover Intention.

As shown in Table 1.3, Work stress, work–life balance, and career growth demonstrated significant correlations with turnover intention. The correlations ranged from $r = -0.37$ to $r = 0.55$, indicating medium to large practical effect sizes ($p < 0.01$).

Work stress showed the strongest positive correlation with turnover intention ($r = 0.55$; $p < 0.000$), suggesting that higher levels of Work stress are associated with an increased intention to leave the organisation. A negative medium correlation was found between work–life balance and turnover intention ($r = -0.37$; $p = 0.001$), indicating that employees with better work–life balance tend to have lower turnover intention. Career growth also demonstrated a negative medium correlation with turnover intention ($r = -0.37$; $p = 0.001$), implying that perceptions of better opportunities for growth are linked to reduced intention to quit.

Overall, the findings reveal that higher Work stress increases turnover intention, while better work–life balance and career growth reduce turnover intention among employees. Hence Null hypothesis is rejected.

Multiple Regression Analysis

H04 = Work–life balance, Work stress, and career growth opportunities do not jointly predict turnover intention among IT employees

Table 1.4 shows that the regression model explained a substantial proportion of variance in turnover intention. The results indicate that work–life balance, Work stress, and career growth opportunities jointly accounted for 35.1 per cent of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.351$; medium to large practical effect size, Cohen, 1992). The overall regression model was statistically significant with $P = .001$, indicating that the set of predictors meaningfully contributes to the prediction of turnover intention.

Step wise Regression

H05: Work stress does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H06: Career growth opportunities do not contribute additional predictive power to turnover intention beyond Work stress.

H07: Work–life balance does not significantly predict turnover intention beyond the other variables.

Table 1.5 presents the hierarchical regression results for predictors of turnover intention. As first step Work Stress was entered as sole predictor and it explained 30.5 per cent ($R^2 = .305$) of variation in dependent variable Turnover Intention. It indicates that there is medium practical effect size (Cohen, 1992) and the model is statistically significant with $P = 0.001$ and thus job stress alone is a strong and significant predictor of turnover intention.

In the second stage career growth opportunities were added to the model and the inclusion of the same increased the explained variance to 34.3 per cent ($R^2 = 0.343$), this represents an additional

Table 1.3
Correlation between Turnover Intention and Study Variables

Measuring Instrument Sub Scales	Work Stress	Work–Life Balance	Career Growth
Turnover Intention	0.55	-0.37	-.0.37

Source: Primary Data

N = 82.

TI, Turnover Intention; JS, Work Stress; WLB, Work–Life Balance; CG, Career Growth.

P< 0.01 (two-tailed);

r ≥ 0.50 (large practical effect size);

r ≥ 0.30 < 0.49 (medium practical effect size).

Table 1.4
Summary of Regression Analysis for Turnover Intention

R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate	Sig.
.592	.351	.326	.80676	.001

Source: Primary Data

Predictors: Work Life Balance, Career Growth Opportunities, Work Stress

Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention

Table 1.5
Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Predicting Turnover Intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the estimate	Sig
1	.552	.305	.296	.82429	.001
2	.586	.343	.327	.80608	.034

Source: Primary Data

Dependent Variable: Turnover intention Predictor in Model 1 Work Stress

Predictors in Model 2 Career Growth Opportunities

Excluded Predictor: Work Life Balance

3.9 per cent of variance explained and it is also statistically significant with P= 0.034. Therefore, career growth contributes unique and significant predictive power to turnover intention beyond work stress. Work–life balance (WLB) was tested in

the regression procedure but was automatically excluded because it did not meet the statistical criteria for entry into the model as its contribution was not statistically significant.

Hence it is concluded that Work stress is a strong and significant predictor of turnover intention thus H05 is rejected ,Career growth opportunities significantly predicts turnover intention apart from work stress hence H06 is also rejected . Work–life balance does not significantly predict turnover intention after accounting for Work stress and career growth hence failed to reject H07.

Findings

- Turnover Intention ($P=0.376$), Career Growth Opportunities ($P=0.448$), Work Stress ($P=0.813$) and Work–life balance ($P=0.576$) did not differ significantly between males and females as P Values are greater than 0.05. The findings indicate that there is no significant gender-based difference in turnover intention career growth opportunities, Work stress, or work–life balance, among IT professionals.
- Work Stress($r = .55$, $p < .001$) indicated the strongest positive correlation with turnover intention, Work–Life Balance ($r = -.37$, $p = .001$) showed medium negative correlation with turnover intention and Career Growth Opportunities ($r = -.37$, $p = .001$) showed medium negative correlation with turnover intention.
- Multiple regression resultsshowed that work stress, work–life balance, and career growth collectively explained 35.1 per cent of variation in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.351$, $p = 0.001$).
- Work Stress was identified as the strongest predictor with P value 0.001and Career Growth Opportunities with P value .034 was added to it with significant predictive value.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there are no significant differences in Work–Life Balance, Work Stress, Career Growth Opportunities, or Turnover Intention based on gender. Hence gender does not visibly bring any change in the experiences of IT professionals regarding stress, career opportunities, or turnover tendencies. It is also found that turnover intention among IT professionals in Kerala is significantly influenced by work stress and perceived career growth opportunities. Work stress is the most powerful determinant of turnover intention and this underscores the demanding and high-pressure environment of the IT industry. Work–life balance indicated a negative correlation with turnover intention and it doesn't contribute significantly in the regression model. Hence the results indicates that employees may tolerate imbalance up to a point if career growth prospects are promising and also an urgent need for IT organizations to implement stress management initiatives, promote healthy workloads, and create structured career development pathways. By strengthening employee wellness programs, fostering growth-oriented cultures, and reducing stress-related work conditions can help reduce attrition and enhance long-term retention. The findings will help organizations for policy

formulation related to employee welfare and HR development. It will also contribute to broader literature on employee retention in the IT sector.

Suggestions

- Since work stress emerged as the strongest predictor for employees leaving the organisation, they may be provided with mental health support, counselling sessions, realistic deadlines and proper task allocation. Employee wellness programs, staff tour and relaxation workshops, can further reduce work-related stress.
- By establishing flexible working hours and hybrid work options can help employees balance their work life which can help to minimize employees' intention to leave.
- Since a negative correlation exists between career growth opportunities and turnover intention, organisations should establish clear career progression paths and transparent promotion criteria. Regular training and skill development programs, along with periodic career discussions between managers and employees will help to enhance employee retention.
- Conducting structured exit interviews can help identify the key reasons behind employees' turnover and this will help organizations to improve retention strategies.
- By giving scope for more open communication and implementing feedback system will help to address issues proactively and strengthen employee engagement.

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