

A review of antecedents of employee turnover in the hospitality industry on individual, team and organizational levels

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Abstract

Purpose – The article is to review recent literature studies of employee turnover to identify antecedents of employee turnover in the hospitality sector to reduce the literature gaps and present a wider scope of turnover factor and understanding of employee motivational factors in their job decision.

Design/methodology/approach – The recent literature studies published over the last two decades were reviewed and structured into the three levels of employee turnover factors, including individual, team and organizational level.

Findings – The antecedents on organizational levels were frequently studied and suggested as strong predictors to employee turnover in the hospitality sectors. The team and organizational factors also influence employee turnover, yet the factors on the team level may not have a significant direct impact but rather an indirect impact through the organizational or individual level. The factors of the individual level may not explain the fundamental reasons behind the turnover. Yet, it might be a more reliable predictor of employee turnover as factors on the other levels are often mediated by individual factors.

Originality/value – The article contributes to the knowledge base by articulating a wide range of updated employee turnover factors in the hospitality that brings an updated insight into employee motivational factors in the hospitality sector.

Keywords Employee turnover, Hospitality, Employee motivation, Human resource management, Human resource development

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately one-third of employees are estimated to quit their jobs in 2020 in the United States voluntarily. As the turnover rate in hospitality is commonly higher than in other sectors, ranging from 60 to 120% annually (Agovino, 2019), the cost of losing employees is significant, and the causes of turnover have been studied over the last decades.

Maertz and Campion (1998) defined employee turnover as voluntary job terminations by employees where “voluntariness” is defined as “instances wherein management agrees that the employee had the physical opportunity to continue employment with the company at the time of termination” (p. 50). This term is commonly agreed in a wide range of studies, although the definition might not apply to some employee turnover studies because involuntary turnover might be included in the data (Maertz and Campion, 1998).

The effect of employee turnover on organizations has been discussed widely in the existing literature (e.g. Shaw, 2011), and employee turnover has been proved to affect



organizational performance negatively. However, the findings were somewhat mixed, according to [Shaw \(2011\)](#). Various measures were used to examine how organizational performance was influenced by employee turnover, including sales growth (e.g. [Batt, 2002](#)), return on equity (e.g. [Hambrick et al., 1993](#)), quality of customer service (e.g. [Hausknecht et al., 2009](#); [Michele Kacmar et al., 2006](#)) and profitability (e.g. [Koslowsky and Locke, 1989](#); [Michele Kacmar et al., 2006](#); [Mcelroy et al., 2001](#)). Although some studies have rejected the significant effect of employee turnover on organizational performance (e.g. [Koys, 2001](#); [Koslowsky and Locke, 1989](#)), most of the previous studies have agreed on the negative relationship between employee turnover and organizational performance (e.g. [Morrow and Mcelroy, 2007](#); [Shen and Cannella, 2002](#)).

In addition to the linear negative relationship, [De Winne et al. \(2018\)](#) concluded that employee turnover and organizational performance tend to have a nonlinear relationship (inverse *U*-shape) that moderates the effect of the employee turnover level. This is because employee turnover can increase productivity due to highly motivated new employees and better creativity and innovation. This was also confirmed by the studies of [Shaw \(2011\)](#) and [Glebbeeck and Bax \(2004\)](#). Nonetheless, the effect of a high level of turnover was generally agreed to be a negative sign of organizational effectiveness in the previous literature.

A recent study conducted in North Macedonia estimated that the cost of turnover is 7% of the total service export and up to \$21,700 per senior staff ([Sanja and Eftimov, 2016](#)). Particularly, in the hospitality sector, the cost could be significantly high due to lower productivity and lost sales and could cost up to \$5,000 per person, according to the National Restaurant Association, ([Gustafson, 2002](#)) or nearly \$10,000 for a complex job ([Tracey and Hinkin, 2006](#)). Furthermore, [Branham \(2005\)](#) added the cost of disengaged employees before they left their jobs. Therefore, the cost of turnover to a single hospitality business could be \$37,000 annually ([Kaak et al., 1998](#)) and \$5 trillion nationwide ([Frank et al., 2004](#)), as a typical turnover rate. Accordingly, identifying the reasons for employee turnover in the hospitality industry is a critical and strategic issue for long-term business success.

The ground-breaking employee turnover model was introduced by scholars [Mobley \(1977\)](#) and [Price and Mueller \(1981\)](#). [Mobley \(1977\)](#) initially developed a simple model to explain how employee turnover decisions progressed through multiple stages of decisions, ranging from evaluating the current job to quitting the job. The job search process mentioned in [Mobley's](#) initial model was further explained in detail by [Steel \(2002\)](#). [Mobley](#) later developed a significant conceptual model that included organizational, individual and economic-labor market factors that passed through other intermediate factors influencing employee turnover ([Mobley et al., 1979](#)). [Mobley](#) focused on the process of employee turnover decisions, while [Price and Mueller \(1981\)](#) and [Price \(2001\)](#) research expanded the turnover determinants to broader areas, such as kinship responsibility and professionalism.

In later studies, new insight was introduced by [Lee and Mitchell \(1994\)](#), who stated that multiple paths could explain employee turnover decisions, according to the unfolding model. This model was later confirmed by [Lee et al. \(1996\)](#) in a qualitative study. The study findings revealed that most of the reasons people quit their jobs could be explained by one of the four paths.

In a more recent study, [Mitchell et al. \(2001\)](#) introduced a new job embeddedness theory, which explained why people stayed in their jobs. [Mitchell et al. \(2001, p. 7\)](#) argued that people with high levels of “fit,” “link” and “sacrifice” stay in their jobs longer, which affects employee turnover. This concept was confirmed by other researchers, such as [Robinson et al. \(2014\)](#), and was expanded into a new construct of job embeddedness with family embeddedness ([Ramesh and Gelfand, 2010](#)).

Contextual factors that influence employee turnover decisions and the hospitality sector highly rely on human resources (HR) as a key strategic resource ([D'Annunzio-Green et al., 2008](#)) because the employees often play critical roles in the frontlines that possibly cause

adverse side effects, such as turnover behavior and lower customer satisfaction (Alola *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, it is essential to understand the antecedents of employee turnover in the hospitality sector from recent studies to determine the turnover factors, synthesize the findings and suggest new studies. The article aims to present an overview of recent studies on employee turnover factors in the hospitality sector based on three categories: individual, team and organizational levels. In addition, an initial model is developed based on the review to synthesize the key findings to identify research gaps and opportunities for future research.

2. Methodology

Recently published articles were selected based on the following criteria to fill the literature gap and present a broader scope of employee turnover factors from employee turnover studies in the hospitality sector. First, the current review focused on the recency of knowledge. Thus, only peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last two decades were searched using online databases, such as Emerald, Taylor & Francis and SAGE Journal. Although an article by Iverson and Deery (1997) was on the recency criterion border, it was included because it has been influential in the knowledge base (Q2 in the Scimago Journal Ranking).

The current review only selected empirical research based on quantitative, qualitative analyses or a mixed approach. In terms of the quality standard, the Scimago Journal and Country Ranking was applied to select only high-quality journal articles (Q2 or higher rate only), and other types of publications were excluded, such as Ph.D. theses (e.g. Brown, 2011) and conference papers (e.g. Zhou and He, 2014). For instance, work by Upchurch *et al.* (2010) was initially discovered in the search but was excluded because the rating was Q3. The keywords used for searching the literature were *employee turnover antecedent* (or *factors and reasons*), *hospitality sector*, *hotel* and *restaurant*.

As the current review focuses on the reasons for employee turnover, only the literature that highly focused on the antecedents of employee turnover was selected. After the screening based on the above criteria, 35 articles were selected for the following review (60 articles were excluded based on the above criteria). The literature review was categorized by the three levels of turnover factors: individual, team and organizational level. After the review, an integrated model is developed to synthesize the key findings and propose new research directions.

3. Literature review

3.1 Factors on the individual level

3.1.1 Job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Overall, job satisfaction was concluded to be a strong predictor of turnover intention (Park and Min, 2020; Stamolampros *et al.*, 2019). For instance, job satisfaction influenced turnover intentions directly and indirectly but had a more significant effect via organizational commitment (Choi, 2006). In a later study, Yang (2010) confirmed the direct and indirect path to turnover intention, but affective commitment showed a stronger correlation with job satisfaction and turnover intention. Various studies, such as those by Jang and George (2012), also confirmed the correlation between job satisfaction and turnover. However, Jang and George (2012) determined the connection between job satisfaction and turnover to be direct, whereas Lee and Way (2010) and Choi (2006) determined that it was indirect via organizational commitment.

In addition to the effect of job satisfaction on turnover, the factors predicting job satisfaction were widely mentioned, ranging from relationship quality, job accuracy, effects of the need–reward match on relationship quality and comparison to others (Choi, 2006) to training (Chiang *et al.*, 2005) and polychronicity (Jang and George, 2012). Yang (2010) added

role conflict and autonomy as contributors to job satisfaction that indirectly affect organizational commitment, yet role ambiguity was rejected.

In contrast, several studies rejected the influence of job satisfaction on employee turnover. For instance, according to [Lee et al. \(2011\)](#), overall job satisfaction did not influence turnover intentions, although satisfaction with schedule flexibility was negatively correlated. Hospitality work requires employees to adapt to flexible working schedules, and those with greater emotional intelligence (EQ) were more likely to adapt to flexible schedules, which affect their turnover decisions but not their overall satisfaction from other factors. Nonetheless, the strength of the correlation with schedule flexibility was somewhat weak (-0.26 of the standardized coefficient).

In addition, [Kim and Jogaratnam \(2010\)](#) and [Lam et al. \(2002\)](#) also confirmed that job satisfaction did not predict employee turnover but only organizational commitment ([Lam et al., 2002](#)). [Kim and Jogaratnam \(2010\)](#) mentioned a possible sampling error that caused the contradictory finding of the effect of job satisfaction on turnover. Organizational commitment was often mentioned concerning job satisfaction, but, in some other studies, it was also considered to be a strong predictor of turnover derived from the quality of the job and the work environment ([Blomme et al., 2010a](#)).

3.1.2 Intrinsic motivation. According to [Kim and Jogaratnam \(2010\)](#), intrinsic motivation is a predictor of turnover intention, together with supervisory leadership. The strength of the correlation with turnover intentions was relatively weak compared to the relationship to supervisory leadership. However, the causes of variations in intrinsic motivation were not clearly mentioned or tested.

Several other studies expounded on possible predictors of intrinsic motivation to understand its effects further. For instance, [Dipietro and Condly \(2007\)](#) applied Clark's commitment and necessary effort model to measure motivation and how it affects turnover intentions. The research confirmed that support was the most influential factor for explaining turnover intentions, followed by self-efficacy and utility. In other words, employees who felt more supported were less likely to leave their jobs and had more confidence in their work capabilities, thus decreasing turnover ([Dipietro and Condly, 2007](#)). In addition, how employees perceived the usefulness of the tasks they performed contributed in achieving their goals, which mattered in terms of their motivation and turnover intentions ([Dipietro and Condly, 2007](#)).

Moreover, [Choi \(2006\)](#) proved that unmet expectations changed employee turnover decisions because unmet expectations concerning rewards indirectly increased employee turnover. Furthermore, [Lam et al. \(2002\)](#) added that individual values (subjective norms) are an important factor, particularly for Chinese employees. However, the study did not specify the types of subjective norms that influence employee turnover.

3.1.3 Personal competency. Job performance contributed to employee turnover, but no specific measure of job performance was suggested ([Pizam and Thornburg, 2000](#)). A possible explanation for the correlation between polychronicity and turnover intentions was the nature of hospitality work. Hospitality workers were generally required to multitask at work; thus, those with higher levels of polychronicity could perform better, resulting in greater job satisfaction levels and lower turnover ([Jang and George, 2012](#)). However, this did not necessarily mean that only polychronic staff members could perform better in hospitality jobs because most jobs involve various skill sets from simple work to multitasking jobs ([Jang and George, 2012](#)). The study highlighted the importance of the HR role in selecting and assigning the right people for the right job ([Jang and George, 2012](#)).

To further understand the role of personal competency, some researchers have focused on EQ, which proved to be a driving factor that mitigated turnover intentions (e.g. [Wolfe and Kim, 2013](#); [Lee et al., 2011](#)). The term EQ is defined as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" ([Salovey and Mayer, 1990](#), p. 198). According to [Wolfe and](#)

Kim (2013), employees with higher EQ levels tend to remain longer in hospitality careers, but EQ did not predict company tenure. In addition, Lee *et al.* (2011) revealed how EQ could influence employee turnover indirectly via job flexibility. In other words, employees with higher levels of EQ were more capable of dealing with the demanding schedule in the hospitality industry, as EQ increased job satisfaction, thus reducing turnover intentions (Lee *et al.*, 2011). Both studies indicated the possible effects of EQ on employee turnover but determined that EQ had a long-term/indirect effect on turnover decisions instead of an immediate/direct connection.

Concerning the factor of competency on the career level, Rasheed *et al.* (2020) concluded that individuals who possess better career adaptability and the ability to cope with job-related issues have lower turnover intentions because they tend to have a higher level of orientation toward happiness that forms positive job performance.

3.1.4 Work-life balance. Although work-life balance is possibly a nongender issue that affects employee turnover, as Blomme *et al.* (2010b) confirmed, most previous studies agreed that female staff members are highly affected by work-life balance issues. For example, shorter traveling time to work and more family time were important concerns for female staff members (Qiu *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, work-family balance is a concern when female staff members change to new jobs. The author explained that the nature of hospitality work is demanding and inflexible, which makes it difficult for staff to achieve an appropriate balance between work and life.

Although a general agreement concerning work-life balance exists in the previous literature, work-life balance was not confirmed as a turnover factor in India (Mohsin *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, kinship responsibility was not supported as an antecedent of turnover intentions (Iverson and Deery, 1997).

3.1.5 Employee background. Individual employment characteristics affect the intention to continue in a job, depending on employment level, working hours, number of years at the organization and work shifts (Lee and Way, 2010). For instance, the managerial staff was more concerned about the work environment and job quality in turnover decisions, whereas staff members in the food and beverage department were more influenced by job quality (Lee and Way, 2010). Pizam and Thornburg (2000) proved the influence of different departments on turnover decisions in addition to employment status (part-time or full-time) and other factors. However, individual employment profiles did not affect compensation and personal status related to turnover intentions (Lee and Way, 2010).

Moreover, the older generation had lower job satisfaction levels, which led to higher turnover intention levels, particularly for those at nonmanagerial levels (Maier, 2011). In particular, when baby boomers work under managers from younger generations, their dissatisfaction was increased due to misaligned leadership expectations (Maier, 2011). Nonetheless, the effect of age on turnover intentions was relatively weak (Pizam and Thornburg, 2000) or was not supported statistically (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010).

Concerning female workers, Blomme *et al.* (2010b) highlighted work-life balance as a factor affecting turnover decisions because women usually have more responsibility for family and housework. Blomme *et al.* (2010a) added that promotion opportunities affected women more significantly regarding turnover decisions because women frequently had fewer promotional opportunities than men, affecting work-life balance issues. Accordingly, women tend to emphasize promotion in job decisions (Blomme *et al.*, 2010a).

In contrast to the other demographic factors, the educational level was not confirmed as a reason for turnover (Mohsin *et al.*, 2013). No further explanations were provided in the study.

3.2 Factors on the team level

3.2.1 Relationship and its effect. Relationship quality has been mentioned studied often in previous studies. Some studies have proved a link between the quality of the relationship

between coworkers, supervisors and turnover intentions (Choi, 2006), although the effect was somewhat indirect. Qiu *et al.* (2014) explained the reasons for the relationship quality-turnover link. For instance, workgroup bonding was stressed by the interviewees because strong bonds with colleagues could increase job performance in highly collaborative work environments (Qiu *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, satisfactory relationships with coworkers can directly increase satisfaction with the job, as it can build a more enjoyable work environment (Qiu *et al.*, 2014; Tews *et al.*, 2019) and improve the level of job embeddedness (Afsar *et al.*, 2018).

However, several other studies have contradicted the influence of relationship quality. For example, Becker and Tews (2016) concluded that fun activities improve the relationship quality and bonding between employees, yet they did not eventually lower employee turnover intentions. According to Mohsin *et al.* (2013), the relationship with supervisors was not also statistically supported as a turnover factor. The author implied that the local culture (India) generally supports good relationships with managers and peers. Thus, the relationship quality was not the primary concern in turnover decisions. Similarly, Lam *et al.* (2002) rejected the influence of relationship quality on employee turnover, although the author highlighted the importance of relationships in Chinese culture and management practice.

Furthermore, Tews *et al.* (2013) focused on employee relationships, namely instrumental support and emotional support. The study concluded that more significant instrumental support increased turnover intentions, while more significant emotional support decreased turnover intentions. The findings were further explained as follows: people who received greater instrumental support might be seen as “incompetent and inferior” (Tews *et al.*, 2013, p. 645), or poorly performing staff members may simply receive more instrumental support.

In addition to the peer-level relationship, the effect of supervisory support on employee turnover received mixed findings, according to Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) and Iverson and Deery (1997). However, Qiu *et al.* (2014) stated that empowerment by supervisors motivated employees to remain in an organization.

3.3 Factors on the organizational level

3.3.1 Compensation and other benefits. In previous studies, salary was mentioned most frequently as a factor causing employee turnover. For instance, Chan and Kuok (2011) tried to explain why people resign for salary reasons based on the local labor market conditions. The demand for labors in Macao’s hospitality sector has been recently increased rapidly; thus, the market suffered from a labor shortage. This shortage was considered the main reason for the salary hikes that motivated people to leave their jobs more frequently because there were better offers from other firms (Chan and Kuok, 2011). Although the findings by Chan and Kuok (2011) were limited to the Macao region, the strong influence of salary was also consistent in other studies (Yang *et al.*, 2012; Pizam and Thornburg, 2000). Yang *et al.* (2012) explained that people expect higher compensation, particularly when their companies perform well, whereas Blomme *et al.* (2010a) explained salary as a method to increase commitment to the firm and to decrease turnover intentions.

However, some studies contradicted the strong influence of salary on employee turnover, as Lee and Way (2010) confirmed. In addition, Mohsin *et al.* (2013) found that salary was inversely related to turnover intentions. The study implied that young participants in the hospitality sector focus more on building a career than the salary level (Mohsin *et al.*, 2013). Qiu *et al.* (2014) and Iverson and Deery (1997) also supported this finding, stating that salary was a minor reason for turnover, although they found a low level of correlation with employee turnover.

There were mixed findings related to the salary issue. An earlier study by Moncarz *et al.* (2009) made a point that salary affects employee turnover decisions but not retention

decisions. This finding implies that, in the longer term, the reason for a career decision could be less affected by monetary compensation. The mixed findings of salaries were explained by [Gustafson \(2002\)](#), who said that people often considered salary to be the main turnover factor. However, the actual turnover reasons were nonsalary issues, such as management support and social events ([Gustafson, 2002](#)). Thus, it was difficult to generalize these findings to employee turnover issues when considering a different demographic. However, the study revealed that pay could be a reason for leaving or taking a job.

In addition to the general compensation level, [Blomme et al. \(2010a\)](#) explained how an incentive system affects employee turnover. Both studies concluded that effective incentive systems decrease voluntary termination. In particular, [Blomme et al. \(2010a\)](#) proved that an ineffective incentive system affects turnover intentions by decreasing organizational commitment. However, the research scale was limited, and the incentive scheme was not as important as salary or other factors ([Blomme et al., 2010a](#)).

Apart from the basic salary, other benefits were also related to turnover but were less important than salary and other factors, as mentioned by [Pizam and Thornburg \(2000\)](#). However, as the benefits were not tested or studied separately but were included with the salary, it is difficult to determine how strongly the other benefits affect employee turnover. Although the other benefits were generally agreed to be turnover factors, they were not accepted in other regions, such as India and Taiwan ([Mohsin et al., 2013](#); [Lee and Way, 2010](#)).

3.3.2 Job quality. A wide range of job-related factors was mentioned in previous research. [Lee and Way \(2010\)](#) determined that different job categories, shifts and levels affect turnover intentions for hotel employees. For example, F&B staff, those at the managerial level and those working the morning shift had greater intentions to remain working at the hotel. ([Blomme et al., 2010a](#)) also agreed that job content affected employee turnover, but these studies did not clearly explain why these factors contributed to better job quality.

Concerning job quality, [Yang et al. \(2012, p. 842\)](#) explained that four different job qualities affected employee turnover: “lack of challenge,” “too much information processing,” “monotony of daily work” and “change in the philosophy of business operation.” [Yang et al. \(2012\)](#) also pointed out that a job involving simple and less challenging tasks increases turnover intentions but that employees do not like to spend time dealing with demanding paperwork. In addition, the turnover intentions increased when other job opportunities provided more challenging tasks due to the rapidly changing local hospitality sector ([Yang et al., 2012](#)).

In an earlier study by [Yang \(2010\)](#), the researcher suggested two possible job quality factors that caused higher employee turnover: autonomy and role ambiguity. However, only autonomy significantly affected employee turnover ([Yang, 2010](#)). [Yang \(2010\)](#) indicated that the hospitality industry changes quickly in a short time, and employee expectations might also change dramatically.

[Jang and George \(2012, p. 592\)](#) also supported the preference for multitasking jobs, finding that hospitality workers with polychronicity (i.e. people who prefer multitasking at work) felt more satisfied with their jobs, leading to decreased employee turnover. [Iverson and Deery \(1997\)](#) also mentioned the effect of simple tasks as an indirect factor in employee turnover. Concerning the complexity of a job, implementing a “job design” seemed to be a common HR practice to reduce boredom and increase flexibility within the organization because people who left the hospitality sector demanded intellectually challenging jobs ([Moncarz et al., 2009, p. 451](#)). Conversely, covering different job roles might also increase turnover intentions, according to [Iverson and Deery \(1997\)](#).

In addition to the influence of job complexity/design issues, [Dipietro and Condy \(2007\)](#) identified job quality issues with motivational factors. Their research listed three main job qualities affecting motivation and turnover: interest, importance and utility. In other words,

employees feel more motivated when their jobs are more interesting and important to the overall operation, which eventually decreases employee turnover.

In the research by [Mohsin et al. \(2013\)](#), unclear policies and guidelines were further identified as demotivating factors, such as ungrateful work. However, no clear explanation of the nonstimulating job qualities those increased employee turnover was provided.

Another frequently mentioned job quality factor was flexible working hours ([Milman, 2003](#); [Blomme et al., 2010b](#); [Lee et al., 2011](#)). [Lee et al. \(2011\)](#) concluded that overall job satisfaction did not significantly affect turnover intentions but that satisfaction with schedule flexibility did. However, the study posited that greater satisfaction was not the result of better scheduling but higher EQ ([Lee et al., 2011](#)). [Blomme et al. \(2010b\)](#) explained how a low level of work flexibility affects work–life balance, with particular reference to female workers who experience more significant conflict in their families when lower flexibility levels are offered at work, which eventually causes increased turnover intentions.

Although job quality was almost universally agreed as a reason for turnover, [Kim and Jogaratnam \(2010\)](#) rejected the link between job content and turnover intentions. Their study concluded that job content only affected job satisfaction and did not affect turnover intentions ([Kim and Jogaratnam, 2010](#)). However, the sampled population was relatively young, implying a low generalization level to other age groups.

3.3.3 Promotion. Promotion was consistently proven to be a concern affecting employee turnover in previous studies, such as the study by [Chan and Kuok \(2011\)](#). [Qiu et al. \(2014\)](#) explained that promotion is a way to affect a higher level of intrinsic motivation for employees. Accordingly, when the opportunity to attain a higher position was absent, employees were more willing to leave their jobs ([Qiu et al., 2014](#)), and this finding was consistent with the study by [Yang et al. \(2012\)](#).

In another study, [Blomme et al. \(2010a\)](#) stated that organizational commitment was an intermediary factor between promotional opportunities and turnover intentions. In addition, intraorganizational mobility and job security were possibly influenced by career opportunities that affect organizational commitment and subsequent turnover intentions ([Blomme et al., 2010a](#)).

Unlike other studies, [Moncarz et al. \(2009\)](#) agreed partially with the influence of promotion on turnover intentions. The study only confirmed that promotional opportunities affect the retention decisions of both managerial and nonmanagerial staff but did not affect employee turnover ([Moncarz et al., 2009](#)), which implies that short-term career decisions are less affected by opportunities for promotion. Because promotion is a key turnover factor, how the decision is reached is important in turnover decisions ([Milman, 2003](#)).

3.3.4 Working environment and its elements. The term *working environment* was mentioned in several studies ([Yang et al., 2012](#); [Lee and Way, 2010](#)), which indicated a correlation between the working environment and employee turnover. However, the term *working environment* was not consistently defined or addressed in previous research.

For instance, [Moncarz et al. \(2009\)](#) considered the working environment to be more of a cultural issue (such as having a fun working environment) related to empowerment, while [Lee and Way \(2010\)](#) linked it to communication, location of work, achievement and specific departments. In addition, the organizational structure and incentive system were used to evaluate the working environment ([Yang et al., 2012](#)). Thus, although strong evidence exists that the working environment influences employee turnover in the hospitality industry, the interpretations were mixed, and the findings were difficult to generalize. Although the previous studies generally agreed that a poor working environment increases employee turnover, [Moncarz et al. \(2009\)](#) rejected links between the working environment and employee turnover for managerial and nonmanagerial staff.

According to [Milman \(2003\)](#), effective organizational communication increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Furthermore, satisfied and long-term

committed employees were more likely to recommend their organizations to others. For instance, when top management makes critical decisions without lower-level staff participation, this decreased the staff members' motivation and eventually encouraged them to leave their jobs (Yang *et al.*, 2012). Despite the common agreement regarding the communication effect on turnover, Moncarz *et al.* (2009) only proved that communication influenced the retention and tenure decisions at the nonmanagerial level but not that it affected employee turnover of managerial and nonmanagerial staff.

Concerning how culture influences employee turnover, culture is an important factor in employee retention (Moncarz *et al.*, 2009). The most notable research related to culture and turnover in the hospitality industry was by Iverson and Deery (1997). The study confirmed a "turnover culture" exists in the hospitality industry, which is defined as a "workgroup belief in the legitimacy of labor turnover" (Iverson and Deery, 1997, p. 73). In other words, employees are more likely to leave their jobs when resigning is a norm within the organization and is considered acceptable behavior.

Nevertheless, Yang *et al.* (2012) listed different aspects of culture related to employee turnovers, such as factions, infighting and unfriendly competition. The research concluded that a negative culture results from work pressure, internal competition and office politics.

As the previous findings were mixed, it was difficult to determine a universal culture causing employee turnover in the above studies. Nonetheless, socialization was frequently mentioned as an essential factor in turnover intentions because it increases job satisfaction, organizational commitment, absenteeism and turnover intentions (Yang, 2010). Gustafson (2002) also proved the importance of social activities, stating that socialization is a method of motivating employees through recognition, although the correlation was rejected by Mohsin *et al.* (2013). Tews *et al.* (2020) noted the importance of a fun working environment through social activities that form a better training climate that eventually lowers employee turnover.

3.3.5 Staffing and training. Choi and Dickson (2009) confirmed that training positively influenced an organization by decreasing employee turnover and increasing job satisfaction regardless of the type of jobs and roles. However, Chiang *et al.* (2005) only proved an indirect connection between training and turnover based on job satisfaction. Mentoring exhibited mixed findings regarding whether it affected turnover or merely organizational commitment (Lam *et al.*, 2002).

Another line of thought on other HR management (HRM) factors was also discussed in previous research related to turnover reasons. For example, Moncarz *et al.* (2009) suggested that effective staffing practices ensure that the right skills and knowledge are placed in the right positions as effective selection tools to filter out irrelevant candidates.

3.3.6 Managerial support. As work-life balance is considered a turnover determinant, the importance of managerial support may ease this tension. Employees feel motivated when they are supported by management, which leads to lower employee turnover (Dipietro and Condly, 2007; Park and Min, 2020). Management support affects women more profoundly because women are under more pressure caused by work-life balance, and without proper organization, women are more inclined to leave their jobs voluntarily for the sake of their families (Blomme *et al.*, 2010b). Yang *et al.* (2012) added that a poor central management style could increase employee turnover because it demotivates employees via ineffective management practices. Accordingly, if central leadership focused on employee development and growth, employees would stay in the job longer through higher organizational commitment (Jang and Kandampully, 2018).

3.3.7 Organizational background. In addition to the individual demographical differences, some studies have attempted to explain how organizational background influences employee turnover decisions. In total, two external factors formed by organizations were identified: organizational reputation (Chan and Kuok, 2011) and the owner's financial capability (Yang *et al.*, 2012). Organizational reputation was mentioned by Chan and Kuok (2011) but was

deemed to have a lower effect on turnover than other factors. Furthermore, employees were more likely to leave their jobs when the owners could not pay salaries on time (Chan and Kuok, 2011). Both studies generally identified the factors, but no further research or explanations were provided to allow a more in-depth analysis.

According to Lee *et al.* (2014), having a code of ethics could influence employee turnover intentions. When organizations were more engaged in corporate philanthropy, job engagement and organizational engagement were increased, thus indirectly decreasing turnover intentions.

Nadiri and Tanova (2010) focused on three different types of justice influencing turnover: distributive, procedural and interactional justice. All three types of justice affect turnover intentions and employee satisfaction, but interactional justice (the way managers communicate with employees) has more influence on turnover intentions (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010).

4. Key findings

The recent literature in the hospitality sector identified a wide range of antecedents to employee turnover, and the current review summarized them into three levels (Tables 1 and 2: Individual variables and organizational variables). In the team factors, the quality of the relationships among team members was the most crucial concern when making turnover decisions (Vasquez, 2014; Robinson *et al.*, 2014). Emotional and instrumental support from team members was concluded to be a reason for turnover (Tews *et al.*, 2013) in addition to the department to which the team belonged (Lee and Way, 2010) Appendix 2).

The recent turnover research from the hospitality sector developed models to understand the paths and relationships, which are summarized in Table 3. For example, Wang (2010) proposed a model that included a direct path from a factor of team level to turnover intention. In contrast, Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) confirmed an indirect path from factors on an organizational level, such as job characteristics, work environment and salary level.

The effect of team-related factors on employee turnover was also reported by Robinson *et al.* (2014) and Tews *et al.* (2013). It was illustrated in a model developed by Vasquez (2014), which indicated that supervisory leadership influenced the intention to remain with an employer. Turnover determinants on an individual level, such as job satisfaction (Choi, 2006) and intrinsic motivation (Kim and Jogaratnam, 2010), were also reported frequently as direct antecedents to turnover.

In terms of the indirect paths, Choi (2006) confirmed the team (relationship quality)/individual-level (job satisfaction) path, and Feeley *et al.* (2008) and Lam *et al.* (2002) suggested the team/organizational-level path, stating that the positive relationship quality could reduce job stress and improve the overall quality of the working environment, which affects turnover. Martin (2010) also explained the path between the team and organizational levels, positing that strong peer support improves training effectiveness. The organizational-/individual-level path was also supported by many researchers, such as Wang (2010).

As the previous literature focused on the paths and connections between various variables and determinants (e.g. Bluedorn, 1982; Price and Mueller, 1981; Choi, 2006; Wang, 2010), the current model was developed to understand the relationships and paths on the three levels, individual team and organizational, based on the variables and determinants studied in the previous literature. Based on the above models and findings in the previous literature concerning turnover determinants, the current study developed a conceptual model, which is presented in Figure 1. The conceptual model consists of four constructs, including individual, team and organizational levels and turnover intention, which revealed three direct paths and four indirect paths leading to turnover, as depicted in Figure 1.

Table 1.
Individual variables

Sub-category	Turnover factor	Supporting literature
Demographics	Age	Pizam and Thornburg (2000)
	Marital status	Pizam and Thornburg (2000)
	Gender	Pizam and Thornburg (2000)
Employee profile	Education level	Blomme <i>et al.</i> (2010b)
	Length of service	Mohsin <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Performance-related factors	Level of employment	Pizam and Thornburg (2000)
	Job category	Nadiri and Tanova (2010)
	Job performance	Lee and Way (2010)
	Effort	Lee and Way (2010)
	Persistence	Pizam and Thornburg (2000)
Psychological factors	Polychronicity	Dipietro and Condly (2007)
	Job satisfaction	Dipietro and Condly (2007)
	Intrinsic motivation	Jang and George (2012)
	Subjective norm	Choi (2006)
Work-life balance	Comparison with others	Kim and Jogaratnam (2010)
	Emotional intelligence	Lam <i>et al.</i> (2002)
	Self-efficacy	Choi (2006)
	Unmet expectations	Chan and Kuok (2011)
	Organizational commitment	Iverson and Deery (1997)
	Social life balance	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2011)
	Kinship responsibility	Dipietro and Condly (2007)
Career development plan	Choi (2006)	
Easier travel to work	Saporna and Claveria (2013)	

Table 2.
Organizational
variables

Sub-category	Turnover factor	Supporting literature
Working atmosphere	Working environment	Yang <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Management support	Dipietro and Condly (2007)
	Communication	Milman (2003)
Job	Culture / socialization	Moncarz <i>et al.</i> (2009)
	Job quality	Lee and Way (2010)
Compensation and rewards	Job security	Mohsin <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	Salary	Chan and Kuok (2011)
Other HRM factors	Promotion	Qiu <i>et al.</i> (2014)
	Training	Choi and Dickson (2009)
Organizational values	Recruitment procedure	Moncarz <i>et al.</i> (2009)
	Ethics	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Organizational background	Customer centeredness	Moncarz <i>et al.</i> (2009)
	Labor shortage	Gustafson (2002)
	Owner's financial status	Yang <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Reputation of the organization	Chan and Kuok (2011)

The proposed model suggests that various antecedents of employee turnover are associated with the three levels and form different paths to employee turnover decisions as follows:

- (1) Different personal backgrounds, such as age (Maier, 2011), gender (Blomme *et al.*, 2010a), education (Mohsin *et al.*, 2013) and performance (Pizam and Thornburg, 2000);

Author	Direct reason	Direct and indirect reasons	Indirect reason
Choi (2006)	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Accuracy in terms of job information Need-rewards match Relationship quality Comparisons to others Salary level
Yang (2010)		Absenteeism Affective commitment Continuance commitment Job satisfaction (Job satisfaction has no effect on turnover)	Role conflict Burnout Socialization Autonomy
Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) Lee <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Intrinsic motivation Supervisory leadership Satisfaction with job flexibility		Emotional intelligence Overall job satisfaction Routinization Role conflict Promotional opportunity Career development Negative affectivity Job satisfaction Organizational commitment
Iverson and Deery (1997)	Job search	Union loyalty	Job opportunity Turnover culture

Source(s): Author

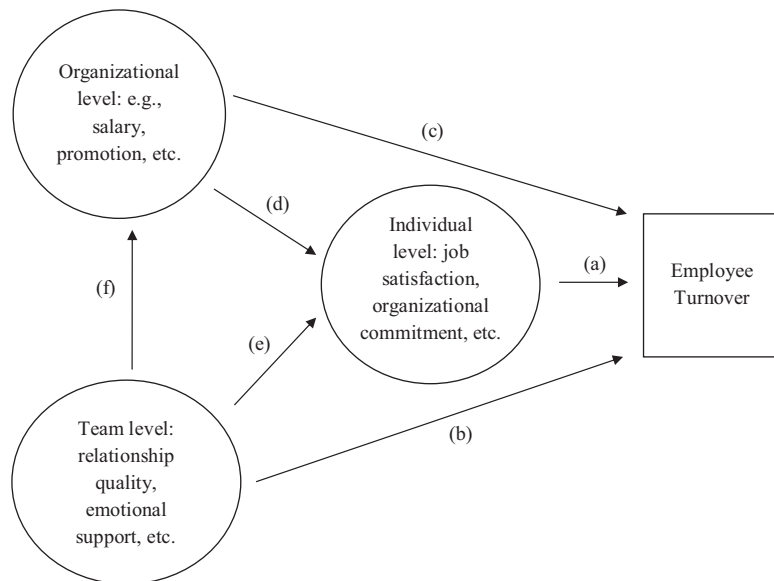
Table 3.
Direct and indirect causes of employee turnover

psychological reasons (Wolfe and Kim, 2013) and work-balance issues (Blomme *et al.*, 2010b) influence employee turnover intention on the individual level.

- (2) Team cohesiveness influences employee turnover intentions through relationship quality (Qiu *et al.*, 2014), emotional support, instrumental support (Tews *et al.*, 2013) and different departments/teams (Gustafson, 2002) at the team level.
- (3) Organizational factors, such as work environment (Yang *et al.*, 2012), compensation (Chan and Kuok, 2011), communication (Milman, 2003), culture (Moncarz *et al.*, 2009) and company ethics (Lee *et al.*, 2014), affect employee turnover intentions at the organization level.

The three levels show (see relations (1), (2) and (3)) direct patterns in employee turnover intentions. In addition, there might be patterns in correlations among these levels, as shown in the model by the potential relations (4), (5) and (6). Either the direct relations or correlations might point to ways of understanding and improving HRM effectiveness. The theory of interactions among three levels might influence employee turnover intentions:

- (1) Organization-related factors influence individuals and affect HRM effectiveness (Choi, 2006). For instance, a satisfactory salary and compensation lower employee turnover through a higher level of job satisfaction as a mediation effect.
- (2) Team-related factors influence individuals and affect employee turnover intentions (Choi, 2006). For example, satisfactory coworker support improves overall satisfaction with the job quality and the commitment to the organization as a mediation effect on employee turnover.



Source(s): Author

Figure 1.
Conceptual model

- (3) Team-related factors influence organizational-related factors and affect employee turnover intentions (Qiu *et al.*, 2014; Lam *et al.*, 2002; Feeley *et al.*, 2008), as effective training often relies on social bonding and person-to-person skills and knowledge transfer.

5. Conclusions

As the proposed model implies, various paths to employee turnover exist on the three levels. The empirical evidence should be collected and analyzed to test the proposed model. Moreover, as recent research has primarily focused on organizational-level antecedents while lacking evidence of team-related turnover factors, more research should be conducted to understand the effect of coworkers and supervisory relationships on employee turnover.

Throughout the review, the conceptual model illustrates how various turnover factors on the three levels are associated with and create possible paths to employee turnover decisions. As the model suggests, the antecedents on organizational and team levels are mediated by individual factors, implying that individual-level factors might be good indicators of future employee turnover but not the fundamental causes. The turnover paths should be tested on the three levels to determine the complex nature and root causes of employee turnover in the hospitality sector.

Moreover, the literature on employee turnover issues in the hospitality sector was highly skewed toward the Western world regarding quantity and quality. Insufficient research has been conducted in emerging economies in Southeast Asian markets, such as Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand. Therefore, employee turnover research should focus more on the emerging market to understand contextual differences, as pointed out by Hom *et al.* (2017). For instance, relationship quality is confirmed as a turnover predictor, whereas it was rejected in China (Lam *et al.*, 2002) and India (Mohsin *et al.*, 2013) because the local cultures moderate the influence of the relationship quality on employee turnover. Furthermore, factors

predicting employee turnover are evolving with the nature of human beings. As COVID-19 changes the fundamentals of social conditions and assumptions, the effect of the current pandemic should be studied concerning the previous findings of the employee turnover studies.

Understanding employee turnover is critical for hospitality employers as HR is a critical contribution to business success and sustainability. The current review presents the most recent quality research and synthesizes the key findings into a proposed model on the three levels that suggest the complex nature and relationships among the variables and levels. Although the study of employee turnover has been conducted as long as the history of business and management research, the research should be continuously updated to comprehend the evolving nature of society and organizations.

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