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# WHAT MAKES PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WANT TO LEAVE THEIR JOB?

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## PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- **Motivation for the Study**
- **Research Question**
- **Methodology**
- **Results**
- **Practical Tips**

## MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

High levels of turnover can...

- Undermine the quality of services
- Increase exhaustion among government employees
- Increase the cost of government services due to the cost of recruiting, selecting, and training new employees
- Lead to reductions in funding

## RESEARCH QUESTION & OUTCOME

QUESTION & OUTCOME VARIABLE VARIABLE

### Research Question:

What makes public employees want to leave their job?

### Outcome Variable:

Turnover Intention

- Are currently thinking of quitting
- Have thought of quitting during a designated time period in the past
- Have or intend to search for alternative employment
- Does not include internal transfers and retirements

# Turnover Intention

## Predictors of Turnover Intention

Predictors	Measures	
<b>Demographic characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Tenure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisory position</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
<b>Work environment characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from colleagues</li> <li>• Support from supervisors</li> <li>• Transformational leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedural justice</li> <li>• Resource availability</li> <li>• Participation in decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Job characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhaustion</li> <li>• Role ambiguity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role conflict</li> </ul>
<b>HRM practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training/development</li> <li>• Advancement/promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity management</li> <li>• Pay and rewards</li> <li>• Performance appraisal/feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Employee work attitudes and motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job satisfaction</li> <li>• Organizational commitment</li> <li>• Affective commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job involvement</li> <li>• Intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Extrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Public service motivation (PSM)</li> </ul>
<b>External factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job alternatives</li> </ul>	

# METHODOLOGY

# METHODOLOGY

## Meta-analysis:

Aggregating findings from many different studies to create one big, more accurate, and more comprehensive study.

Single studies may suffer from small sample sizes, measurement error, and selection bias.

- Combined findings from 59 studies

- Peer-reviewed

- Written in English

- Published between 1990 to 2021 in Public Administration Journals

# RESULTS



## DEMOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS

Predictor	Adjusted Effect Size
Age	-0.11
Tenure	-0.09
Education	0.05
Supervisory Position	-0.04
Gender (Female=1)	0.02

**Negligible Effects on Public Employees' Turnover Intention!**

# WORK ENVIRONMENT

Predictors	Adjusted Effect Size
Participation in Decision-Making	-0.40
Procedural Justice	-0.36
Support from Supervisor	-0.32
Transformational Leadership	-0.28
Resource Availability	-0.24
Support from Colleagues	-0.24

**Strong Effect on Public Employees' Intention to Remain**

# JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Predictor	Adjusted Effect Size
Exhaustion	0.59
Role Ambiguity	0.47
Role Conflict	0.16

Very Strong Effect on Public Employees' Turnover Intention

# HRM PRACTICES

Predictors	Adjusted Effect Size
Diversity Management	-0.26
Performance Appraisal / Feedback	-0.25
Advancement / Promotion	-0.25
Training / Development	-0.23
Pay and Rewards	-0.17

Small Effect

Moderate Effect on Public Employees' Intention to Remain

# WORK ATTITUDES / MOTIVATION

Predictor	Adjusted Effect Size
Job Involvement	-0.60
Job Satisfaction	-0.50
Affective Commitment	-0.46
Intrinsic Motivation	-0.34
Extrinsic Motivation	-0.32
Organizational Commitment	-0.30
Public Service Motivation	-0.33

**Very Strong Effect on Bureaucrats' Intention to Remain!**

# EXTERNAL FACTORS

Predictors	Adjusted Effect Size
Job Alternatives	0.14

Small Effect on Public Employees' Turnover Intention

# EFFECT SIZES LISTED FROM LARGEST TO SMALLEST

Predictor	Adjusted Effect Size
1) Job Involvement	-0.60
2) Exhaustion	0.59
3) Job Satisfaction	-0.50
4) Role Ambiguity	0.47
5) Affective Commitment	-0.46
6) Participation in Decision Making	-0.40
7) Procedural Justice	-0.36
8) Intrinsic Motivation	-0.34
9) Extrinsic Motivation	-0.32
10) Support from Supervisor	-0.32
11) Organizational Commitment	-0.30
12) Transformational Leadership	-0.28
13) Diversity Management	-0.26

Predictor	Adjusted Effect Size
14) Performance Appraisal / Feedback	-0.25
15) Advancement / Promotion	-0.25
16) Resource Availability	-0.24
17) Support from Colleague	-0.24
18) Training/Development	-0.23
19) Pay and Rewards	-0.17
20) Role Conflict	0.16
21) Job Alternatives	0.14
22) Public Service Motivation	0.13
23) Age	-0.11
24) Tenure	-0.09
25) Education	0.05
26) Supervisory Position	-0.04
27) Gender	0.02

**FINDINGS/  
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND  
POLICY**



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are several factors more important than pay and rewards (advancement and promotion) in reducing staff turnover among government workers.
- The best predictors of public employee turnover intention are job involvement, affective organizational commitment, exhaustion, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction.
- Demographic variables have a weak relationship with turnover intention.
- Process matters, procedural justice and participation in decision-making have a strong negative correlation with turnover intention.

# PRACTICAL TIPS

1. Fill open positions to reduce job exhaustion
2. Honest and thorough, recruitment and selection practices to ensure person-job fit
3. Clarify job roles through performance reviews, job analysis, and less formal mechanisms
4. Ensure criteria for pay, rewards, recognition, and promotion are clear, balanced, and applied consistently and fairly
5. Allow employees some autonomy in their work duties
6. Assess whether employees are supportive of peers and subordinates in performance reviews

**Thank you!**

**We look forward to your  
questions & comments!**