Identifying the Components of Job Leaving Intention Among Faculty Members of Azad Universities in Fars Province

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Article Info

A B S T R A C T

Objective: In the contemporary era, having a capable workforce is considered a competitive advantage for universities, and the job leaving intention among faculty members is one of the fundamental challenges for universities. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the job leaving intention among faculty members of Azad Universities in Fars Province.

Methodology: This research was an exploratory sequential mixed-methods study of the instrument development type. In the qualitative section, using purposive sampling and the theoretical saturation technique, 16 experts were selected for the study on job leaving intention among faculty members of Azad Universities in Fars Province. Initially, the main influencing indicators were extracted from the theoretical foundations and validated by experts using the fuzzy Delphi methodology. Since consensus among experts is the decision criterion in the Delphi method, the questionnaire was distributed and collected over three stages to achieve overall expert consensus on the classification. Then, using the matrix questionnaire and interpretive structural modeling technique distributed among specialists, the leveling of these factors was carried out.

Findings: According to the obtained results, it is shown that ten factors pertain to the first level: a sense of injustice, personality traits, lack of adaptability, neglect, environmental factors, individual factors, job involvement, lack of social belonging, presence of conflict, and value differences. Additionally, two factors belong to the second level: organizational factors and human factors. The only factor related to the third level is the lack of employee work independence. The factor of non-implementation of a coordinated and fair system remains in the model and pertains to the fourth level of the model.

Conclusion: It is recommended that attention to key dimensions such as organizational empathy, participative management, understanding employees in the workplace, attention to their individual issues and problems, addressing their

demands, understanding discriminations, striving to reduce them, and focusing on positive psychology can contribute to organizational growth and excellence. This can lead to reducing or eliminating the adverse effects of job leaving intention, such as increasing intra-organizational conflicts, tensions, lack of organizational participation, secrecy, job abandonment, and damage to organizational performance.

Keywords: *Job Leaving Intention, Faculty Members, Azad Universities, Fars Province.*

1   Introduction

In today's world, the correct management of organizational resources is crucial for the success of organizations. Among the various resources available to organizations, human resources hold special significance and require specific attention. Human resources are a critical factor that differentiates organizational performance. Given that in today's organizational environment, the leaving of valuable employees is a significant issue affecting competitive advantage, it is essential to focus on the strategic importance of human resources, the current competitive situation, and the implementation of strategies that can retain skilled, elite, and capable human resources within the organization and prevent their leaving (Rahimnia et al., 2017).

Today, having efficient and motivated human resources is one of the most important assets of any organization. Paying attention to their values and needs is the most effective step in achieving organizational goals (Alipour et al., 2018; Pitts et al., 2011). Therefore, the importance of maintaining and retaining human resources as valuable organizational assets is a particular concern for researchers and managers (Pertiwi & Piartrini, 2020). With increasing competition and the expansion of human capital development methods, organizations aim to retain and empower their employees to achieve high performance. However, organizations fear losing their human resources and incurring losses, as one of their main challenges is employee leaving, especially among skilled and valuable employees. They are the organization's most important resource, and their leaving imposes significant costs on the organization (Pitts et al., 2011).

Today's organizations no longer have the time opportunities of the past; therefore, they must constantly update their capabilities with speed and skill and move a step ahead of competitors by relying on efficient human resources, a key factor in progress and development (Mondalizadeh & Javaheri, 2019). Work and occupation play a significant role in individuals' lives and have considerable impacts on their well-being and happiness.

With increasing competition and the expansion of human resource development methods, organizations strive to retain and empower their talented employees to demonstrate high performance. Today, the leaving of key employees in leading organizations has become one of the most significant concerns in human resource management. This is because organizations invest heavily in training, developing, and preparing their employees until they reach optimal efficiency and performance. Losing valuable employees means losing the skills and experiences gained over the years (Neissi et al., 2011). Therefore, organizations that can identify the factors influencing employee leaving can implement effective policies and methods to retain human resources before employees leave (Hormozi Moghaddam et al., 2024; Mohammadi Yazdi et al., 2024). According to numerous scientific theories from management experts regarding job satisfaction and organizational policies, the failure to satisfy any of the needs stated in these theories at any stage may lead to poor job performance and leaving (Rajabi Farjad & Toranian, 2024). Additionally, leaving has many consequences for the organization, including increasing the costs of other human resource activities. For example, when an employee resigns, the organization must find a new employee and train them (Kim, 2020). In some organizations, due to poor economic conditions and accompanying unemployment, not providing a realistic picture of the job may not affect leaving rates. Even if an employee stays in the organization due to a lack of job opportunities, they may leave at the first opportunity, indicating a lack of organizational commitment, reducing their efficiency and productivity (Bäker & Goodall, 2020). Leaving can be categorized into involuntary and voluntary. Major involuntary separations include permanent or temporary dismissal, suspension, firing, retirement, and unemployment insurance. Major voluntary separations include resignation, voluntary buyout, unpaid leave, and retirement upon personal request (Luo & Chui, 2018). Scholars believe that voluntary leaving involves employees leaving the organization to seek other job opportunities, influenced by personal characteristics, economic conditions, and other job alternatives. Voluntary separation is an alert

for managers, as a high resignation rate may indicate job dissatisfaction, necessitating immediate organizational analysis to identify and address the causes of resignations (Alipour et al., 2018). Factors influencing leaving include job dissatisfaction, limited environmental opportunities, job involvement, lack of independence, job stress, organizational commitment, lack of distributive justice, promotional opportunities, and social support. Employee leaving disrupts organizational operations, and replacing employees is costly and technically and economically undesirable. According to studies by Pertiwi (2020), in organizational units with below-average job satisfaction, employee leaving rates are higher. Leaving can be voluntary, related to job dissatisfaction, or due to personal reasons beyond managerial control. It can also stem from challenging economic conditions, necessitating serious attention and corrective actions where needed. Leaving is defined as the percentage of employees leaving the organization annually. Employee leaving has garnered significant organizational attention due to the associated costs of recruitment and training and the resulting decrease in organizational productivity (Pertiwi & Piartrini, 2020).

University faculty members play a crucial role in the development of science within universities and society. Given the undisputed role of specialized human resources (faculty) in educating the younger generation and the costs associated with human resource management (recruitment, training, hiring), retaining these skilled and capable individuals is of utmost importance. Unfortunately, research on retention has been limited, making it essential to focus on their occupational dimensions to facilitate the development and expansion of faculty performance. The lack of research in faculty occupational areas, particularly concerning leaving and job burnout variables, has led to serious challenges in planning to improve leaving dimensions among Azad University faculty members. Therefore, this study aims to examine job leaving intention among Azad University faculty members in Fars Province and addresses the question: What are the factors and components of job leaving intention among Azad University faculty members in Fars Province?

2   Methods and Materials

Given that the present study aims to deeply investigate job leaving intention among Azad University faculty members in Fars Province, its design is mixed-methods, and its approach is exploratory sequential (qualitative-quantitative) due to the absence of a pre-existing framework and the researcher's goal to discover this framework. Since the study seeks to develop an instrument for measuring job leaving intention among Azad University faculty members based on qualitative data, it is exploratory sequential-instrument development. The potential participants include 16 faculty members from Azad Universities in Fars Province. The qualitative sampling method was purposive, targeting key informants with rich and comprehensive information. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached, with an additional interview conducted to ensure saturation.

First, the main indicators influencing job leaving intention were extracted from the theoretical foundations and validated by experts using the fuzzy Delphi methodology. The purpose of this questionnaire was to select a set of indicators to design and implement job leaving. Since consensus among experts is the decision criterion in the Delphi method, the questionnaire was distributed and collected in three stages to achieve overall expert consensus on classification. Experts should express these values through variables. Using variables with fixed values complicates expert opinions. Therefore, using qualitative variables provides more flexibility for experts. Qualitative variables like "low," "medium," and "high" partially solve the above issues. People's views on qualitative variables like low or high are not uniform. Since experts have different characteristics, they also have different perspectives, and responding based on different mentalities makes variable analysis invalid. However, defining the range of qualitative variables allows experts to respond uniformly. Therefore, qualitative variables are defined as trapezoidal fuzzy numbers: low (0,0,2,4), medium (3,4,6,7), high (6,8,10,10). Trapezoidal fuzzy numbers, though more complex in calculation than triangular fuzzy numbers, can carry more ambiguity in the range b to c defined for trapezoidal fuzzy numbers, whereas this range in triangular numbers becomes a single point b.

Then, using the matrix questionnaire and interpretive structural modeling technique distributed among specialists, the leveling of these factors was carried out.

3   Findings and Results

The study aimed to identify the components of job leaving intention among faculty members of Azad Universities in Fars Province. To explore these components, a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach was used.

In the qualitative section, 16 experts were selected using purposive sampling and the theoretical saturation technique. Initially, the main influencing indicators were extracted from the theoretical foundations and validated by experts using the fuzzy Delphi methodology. Consensus among experts was achieved through three rounds of questionnaires, and the factors were then structured using interpretive structural modeling.

Results of the First and Second Questionnaire Responses: These tables provided initial ratings of the importance of various indicators but were summarized in the text to highlight the key findings. Experts rated the importance of each indicator as low, medium, or high. Key indicators such as lack of job independence, sense of injustice, personality traits, human factors, lack of adaptation, environmental factors, job involvement, lack of social belonging, presence of conflict, implementation of a coordinated and fair system, organizational factors, and value differences consistently appeared as high importance across the rounds.

Indicators such as lack of job independence, sense of injustice, and presence of conflict received the highest importance ratings consistently.

Indicators like human capital and technology were considered less critical and were often rated with medium or low importance.

The defuzzified mean values provided a more precise understanding of the importance of each indicator. High mean values indicated a higher consensus among experts on the criticality of these indicators.

Table 1

Defuzzified Mean of Expert Opinions from the First Questionnaire

Index	Indicator	Defuzzified Mean
1	Lack of job independence	9.6
2	Sense of injustice	9.9
3	Human capital	6.2
4	Personality traits	9.1
5	Human factors	7.3
6	Lack of adaptation	7.3
7	Environmental factors	9.1
8	Job involvement	7.3
9	Lack of social belonging	8.1
10	Presence of conflict	9.9
11	Implementation of coordinated and fair system	9.1
12	Organizational factors	9.1
13	Value differences	9.9

Differences in Expert Opinions Between Rounds: These tables showed the minimal changes in defuzzified means, indicating strong consensus among experts, and were summarized to provide context for the final identified indicators.

Table 2

Defuzzified Mean of Expert Opinions from the Second Questionnaire

Index	Indicator	Defuzzified Mean
1	Lack of job independence	9.9
2	Sense of injustice	9.9
3	Human capital	6.3
4	Personality traits	9.1
5	Human factors	9.1
6	Lack of adaptation	7.3
7	Environmental factors	9.1
8	Job involvement	7.3
9	Lack of social belonging	9.1
10	Presence of conflict	9.9
11	Implementation of coordinated and fair system	9.1
12	Organizational factors	9.1

| 13 | Value differences | 9.9 |

The findings indicated that sense of injustice, presence of conflict, and value differences were among the most critical factors affecting job leaving intention.

In the third round, further refinement of the indicators was conducted. This round confirmed the critical indicators with minimal changes in the defuzzified mean values, indicating strong consensus among experts.

Table 3

Defuzzified Mean of Expert Opinions from the Third Questionnaire

Index	Indicator	Defuzzified Mean
1	Lack of job independence	9.9
2	Human factors	9.1
3	Lack of adaptation	6.3
4	Reduced position	6.3
5	Lack of support system	6.3
6	Lack of social belonging	9.1
7	Attention to internal motivation	6.2
8	Attention to external motivation	6.2

From the initial set of 26 indicators, the analysis revealed that 14 indicators were critical to understanding the leaving intention among faculty members. These indicators were categorized into different levels based on their importance and influence.

Table 4

Final Identified Indicators Influencing Leaving Intention

Index	Indicator
1	Lack of job independence
2	Sense of injustice
3	Personality traits
4	Human factors
5	Lack of adaptation
6	Neglect
7	Environmental factors
8	Individual factors
9	Job involvement
10	Lack of social belonging
11	Presence of conflict
12	Implementation of coordinated and fair system
13	Organizational factors
14	Value differences

Using interpretive structural modeling, the factors were categorized into different levels based on their influence.

Table 5

First Level Factors (Most Influential)

Index	Indicator	Output Set	Input Set	Common Set	Level
1	Sense of injustice	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1
2	Personality traits	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1
3	Lack of adaptation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	1

Ten factors were identified as being at the first level (most influential) and were excluded from further calculations. These included sense of injustice, personality traits, lack of adaptation, neglect, environmental factors, individual factors, job involvement, lack of social belonging, presence of conflict, and value differences.

Table 6

Second Level Factors

Index	Indicator	Output Set	Input Set	Common Set	Level
1	Organizational factors	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13	2
2	Human factors	4, 12, 13	1, 4, 12, 13	4, 12, 13	2

In summary, the study identified 14 key indicators influencing job leaving intention among faculty members of Azad Universities in Fars Province. The factors were categorized into different levels of influence, with sense of injustice, personality traits, lack of adaptation, neglect, environmental factors, individual factors, job involvement, lack of social belonging, presence of conflict, and value differences being the most influential. Organizational factors and human factors were identified at the second level, with lack of job independence identified at the third level.

Indicators with Low Consensus: Indicators that did not reach high importance or strong consensus were reported as less critical and were not included in the final model.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyze the job leaving intention among faculty members of Azad Universities in Fars Province. The results indicate that there are ten factors associated with the first level: sense of injustice, personality traits, lack of adaptability, neglect, environmental factors, individual factors, job involvement, lack of social belonging, presence of conflict, and value differences. Additionally, there are two factors at the second level: organizational factors and human factors. The only factor at the third level is the lack of job independence. The implementation of a coordinated and fair system remains in the model and pertains to the fourth level.

In related research by Arshadi et al. (2011), Khajehpour et al. (2015), Kashef et al. (2016), Haj Karimi et al. (2011), Zigo et al. (2012), Ikolt (2017), and Chung (2018), the role of human resources and organizational issues in organizational leaving was emphasized. Productivity has long been a key issue for organizations due to its impact on economic and social development and its importance as an increasing source of income and a linking goal between human resources and management, leading to employee participation in the workplace. If all organizational stakeholders accept productivity goals, these goals become vital tools for aligning individual and organizational objectives.

Key points in this section, categorized under personality traits and organizational justice as impactful dimensions on organizational leaving, include weaknesses in interpersonal communications, isolation, inability to see oneself as part of the organization, cultural and behavioral differences, dependence on previous managers and colleagues, and a sense of personal injustice in the organization. These also include procedural injustice and affiliation with different political groups.

A study by Gerhart (1990) on voluntary leaving and alternative job opportunities confirmed Mobley's model regarding the voluntary leaving process. Voluntary leaving is influenced by the unemployment rate and the perceived ease of moving from the organization, which then interacts with job satisfaction, indirectly influencing voluntary leaving through the desire to leave or stay in the organization. Price (1991) stated that responsibility towards relatives, defined as a duty to those closely related, reduces the likelihood of leaving. The presence of close relatives creates a sense of duty, expressed by staying with the current supervisor, leading to lower leaving. Family responsibilities focus on factors such as the number of dependents or being the sole breadwinner. Literature strongly supports the negative relationship between family responsibility and voluntary leaving, as employees with significant family responsibilities rely heavily on the organization to meet financial needs, making them more likely to stay (Rahimnia et al., 2017).

Studies also reported that employee participation and diligent efforts can enhance productivity. Based on employees' maturity and readiness, managers can involve them in planning, decision-making, and program execution to reduce organizational conflicts and leaving effects, promoting participation and organizational empathy. Suggestion systems from both employees and references are

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crucial components of participative human resource management. Workplace leaving is linked to higher anxiety, depression, job-seeking behavior, leaving intention, and lower satisfaction and mental health. Managers' interaction quality with subordinates, when viewing them as "in-group" members versus "out-group" members, differs. Low-quality interaction, lack of trust, and support occur when managers see subordinates as "out-group" members, leading to feelings of leaving (Mondalizadeh & Javaheri, 2019). Workplace leaving generally refers to being ignored or overlooked by colleagues, a form of silent violence affecting psychological well-being, job performance, and behavior. Psychologically, leaving impacts job tension, job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and overall mental health. Behaviorally, leaving leads to deviant or counterproductive work behaviors, negatively affecting job performance (Alipour et al., 2018; Luo & Chui, 2018).

Strengthening internal communications, creating new work groups, fostering dialogue between conflicting parties, moving towards open environments, and reducing tensions through inclusivity can lead to positive performance outcomes like organizational effectiveness.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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