

An Investigation into the Factors Affecting Turnover Intention in a Global Pharmaceutical Company

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Abstract: *This study examines the effects of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits on turnover intention among employees in the pharmaceutical sector. A quantitative approach was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to 288 employees of a pharmaceutical company in Negeri Sembilan. Data were analyzed through multiple regression, correlation, reliability analysis, and descriptive statistics. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 142.260$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating a strong effect ($R = 0.775$) and explaining 60.0% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.600$). Among the predictors, compensation and benefits had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.411$, $p = 0.029$), followed by job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.064$) and work-life balance ($\beta = 0.204$, $p = 0.003$). These findings reinforce the importance of competitive compensation, employee well-being, and job satisfaction in reducing the likelihood of employee exit. The study offers theoretical and practical insights for HR professionals, suggesting that integrated human resource strategies focused on these key areas can effectively mitigate turnover and foster employee retention. Limitations and directions for future research are also discussed.*

Keywords: Compensation and Benefits, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, Pharmaceutical Sector, Work-Life Balance

1. Introduction

The pharmaceutical sector, a \$1.6 trillion global industry (Statista, 2023), plays a pivotal role in advancing healthcare through drug development and therapeutic innovation. Despite its economic and societal importance, the industry continues to grapple with persistent employee retention challenges. High turnover rates—comparable to related sectors such as chemicals, which record an average annual rate of 9.1% (Inspirus, 2023)—undermine workforce stability, disrupt operations, and weaken organizational performance (Hussain & Khaliq, 2021). A key indicator of this issue is turnover intention, defined by Mobley (1977) as the conscious and deliberate intent of an employee to leave their current role.

The pharmaceutical sector is inherently dynamic and knowledge-intensive, demanding a workforce with specialized skills to navigate complex R&D processes, regulatory compliance,

and continuous innovation (Singh & Agarwal, 2021). However, increasing pressures such as demanding workloads, misaligned career trajectories, and unclear job expectations have contributed to employee dissatisfaction and voluntary exits (Ahmad & Zafar, 2020). Organizational cultures that lack supportive leadership, transparent communication, and inclusivity further deteriorate employee engagement and loyalty. Concerns about job security—often stemming from restructuring, automation, or economic fluctuations—further fuel turnover intentions (Rahman et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have identified several determinants that influence employee retention. Work-life balance, for example, is shaped by flexible work arrangements, manageable workloads, supportive supervisors, and the ability to disconnect from work during personal time (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). When employees feel overburdened or lack time for personal responsibilities, their likelihood of remaining in the organization diminishes. Job satisfaction is another critical factor, influenced by job role clarity, opportunities for advancement, meaningful work, recognition, and positive interpersonal relationships at work (Spector, 1997). A lack of these elements often results in disengagement and elevated turnover intention. Similarly, compensation and benefits including fair salaries, performance incentives, health coverage, retirement plans, and other financial or non-monetary rewards - play a central role in shaping employees' perceived value and loyalty toward the organization (Milkovich & Newman, 2020).

Nguyen et al. (2020) emphasized that leadership style, organizational commitment, and a supportive work environment also significantly influence turnover intention. High stress levels, poor work-life balance, and limited growth opportunities frequently drive employees to seek alternative employment (Chen et al., 2019). While both intrinsic motivators (e.g., autonomy, achievement, and recognition) and extrinsic drivers (e.g., compensation, job security, and policies) impact retention, tailoring these elements to specific organizational contexts remains a key challenge (Sharma & Gupta, 2019; Tian & Gamble, 2020).

Given the critical roles that pharmaceutical employees play in ensuring drug safety, product innovation, and quality control, high turnover can have serious consequences—including productivity losses, knowledge drain, and rising recruitment costs (Brown & Peterson, 2022). This underscores the urgent need for pharmaceutical companies to implement integrated human resource strategies that foster a positive workplace culture, offer clear career development pathways, and ensure equitable and attractive compensation structures.

This study focuses on a pharmaceutical company operating in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia—a strategic location that provides access to a diverse workforce. It investigates how work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation affect turnover intentions among employees in this setting. By understanding these determinants, the study seeks to offer practical insights for enhancing employee retention and promoting long-term organizational sustainability. To guide the investigation, this study is structured around the following objectives:

- To examine the effect of work-life balance on turnover intentions among pharmaceutical employees.
- To examine the effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions among pharmaceutical employees.
- To examine the effect of compensation and benefits on turnover intentions among pharmaceutical employees.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Turnover Intention

Across many industries, employee turnover has become a recurring problem, especially in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors, where having qualified human capital is essential to providing high-quality services. The idea of turnover intention, which is defined as an employee's conscious wish to quit their current company, has attracted a lot of scholarly interest because of its consequences for operational expenses, customer service, and organizational effectiveness (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Employee turnover in the pharmaceutical sector is a major problem since it results in lost experience and knowledge, increased recruiting and training expenses, and service interruptions (Saedin et al., 2023).

According to Mobley (1977), turnover intention is the conscious and intentional desire of an employee to quit their current company within a given time. It is a crucial topic of research in human resource management since it is generally acknowledged to be the most accurate and timely indicator of actual turnover behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Price (2001) asserts that a number of internal and external factors, such as perceived career alternatives, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, affect turnover intentions. In the pharmaceutical sector, high turnover intentions can negatively affect service delivery and operational stability, as staff continuity and knowledge are essential to customer care and regulatory compliance (Saedin et al., 2023). Organizations looking to create proactive retention strategies must comprehend the idea of turnover intention, particularly in high-demand industries like healthcare and pharmaceutical retail.

2.2 The Concept of Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, Compensation and Benefits

Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage their professional responsibilities alongside personal and familial commitments. It involves the efficient allocation of time, energy, and attention between work and personal domains to reduce stress and enhance overall well-being (Guest, 2002). A well-maintained work-life balance contributes significantly to employee satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty. Conversely, work-life imbalance has been linked to increased stress, burnout, absenteeism, and higher turnover intentions (Haar et al., 2014). This is especially pertinent in the pharmaceutical industry, where employees often face long hours, regulatory pressure, and customer-facing responsibilities (MIDA, 2022). Organizations that support work-life integration are more likely to retain a stable and motivated workforce.

Job satisfaction is defined as the extent of an employee's positive emotional response to their job, based on evaluations of their job experiences, assigned roles, and working conditions (Locke, 1976). It reflects the alignment between employee expectations and actual workplace outcomes, such as supervisor support, meaningful work, recognition, and a safe environment. Higher levels of job satisfaction have been consistently associated with greater organizational commitment, reduced turnover intention, and improved performance (Tett & Meyer, 1993). In the retail pharmaceutical setting, where employees regularly manage high workloads and demanding customer interactions, maintaining job satisfaction is essential for service quality and long-term retention (Shabnaz & Sultana, 2016).

Compensation and benefits encompass both monetary and non-monetary rewards provided to employees in exchange for their contributions. These may include base salary, bonuses, performance incentives, health insurance, paid leave, retirement plans, and other fringe benefits (Milkovich, Newman, & Gerhart, 2013). According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020),

transparent and competitive compensation structures are key drivers of job satisfaction and employee retention. In the competitive Malaysian pharmaceutical retail market, providing attractive compensation packages is essential for talent retention and sustaining organizational competitiveness (Saedin et al., 2023).

Based on the literature review and research objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H₁**: Work-life balance has a significant effect on turnover intention among employees in the pharmaceutical sector.
- **H₂**: Job satisfaction has a significant effect on turnover intention among employees in the pharmaceutical sector.
- **H₃**: Compensation and benefits have a significant effect on turnover intention among employees in the pharmaceutical sector.

These hypotheses guide the study in evaluating how key organizational factors influence employee decisions to remain with or leave their current employer, particularly within the context of the Malaysian pharmaceutical industry

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Several foundational theories offer valuable perspectives on the determinants of employee turnover intention by explaining how workplace conditions, organizational practices, and employee perceptions interact to influence the decision to stay or leave an organization.

The Motivation-Hygiene Theory, also known as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, serves as a key theoretical foundation for this study. Introduced by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), the theory distinguishes between two categories of factors that impact employee attitudes: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are intrinsic to the job itself—such as achievement, recognition, career advancement, and personal growth—and are associated with increased job satisfaction when present. In contrast, hygiene factors—such as salary, working conditions, organizational policies, supervision, and interpersonal relationships—do not necessarily enhance job satisfaction when present, but their absence can lead to dissatisfaction and increased turnover.

This framework aligns closely with the independent variables in this study: work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits. Work-life balance and compensation, for example, are typically viewed as hygiene factors that, when insufficient, lead to discontent and higher turnover intention. Meanwhile, job satisfaction may reflect the presence of both motivators and hygiene elements, influencing whether employees feel fulfilled or disengaged. By applying Herzberg's theory, the study seeks to understand how both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the work environment influence an employee's decision to remain with or leave the organization.

Complementing this, Social Exchange Theory (SET), proposed by Blau (1964), provides a relational lens through which employee-employer dynamics can be examined. SET posits those relationships are formed and sustained through reciprocal exchanges of resources, both tangible and intangible. In an organizational context, employees contribute time, effort, skills, and loyalty, and expect in return fair compensation, recognition, growth opportunities, and supportive working conditions. When employees perceive that their contributions are met with equitable and meaningful returns, a positive social exchange occurs, enhancing commitment and reducing the likelihood of turnover. Conversely, perceived imbalances—such as being overworked without sufficient recognition or undercompensated despite high performance—can erode trust and prompt employees to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Together, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Social Exchange Theory provide a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing how workplace conditions shape turnover intention. These frameworks help explain why employees are more likely to remain in organizations that offer not only attractive compensation and benefits but also a balanced and supportive environment that acknowledges and reciprocates their contributions.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the factors influencing employees' intentions to leave a pharmaceutical company in Negeri Sembilan. It details the research design, pilot testing, population and sampling methods, data collection procedures, research instrument, and data analysis techniques. This systematic approach ensures the reliability, validity, and replicability of the study findings.

3.1 Pilot Test

A pilot study was conducted to assess the clarity, validity, and reliability of the survey instrument before its full deployment. Thirty full-time employees were randomly selected from various branches of the pharmaceutical company in Negeri Sembilan to ensure diversity of responses. A sample size of 30 is considered sufficient for identifying potential issues with item construction and overall questionnaire design (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Based on participant feedback, minor adjustments were made to the wording and layout of several items to improve clarity and ease of completion. To assess internal consistency, a reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha was performed. Each construct recorded a value above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The pilot test enhanced the quality of the instrument and confirmed its suitability for the main study.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised full-time employees of a pharmaceutical company operating across Malaysia. This includes pharmacists, pharmacy assistants, sales personnel, and administrative staff engaged in daily operational and customer service roles. Given the impracticality of surveying the entire population, simple random sampling was applied to ensure that each employee had an equal probability of selection, thereby reducing sampling bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Based on an estimated workforce of 1,000 to 5,000 employees—as reported on the company's official LinkedIn profile (LinkedIn, 2025)—the sample size was calculated to represent this range adequately. An online questionnaire was disseminated via corporate email and internal communication platforms to ensure broad accessibility. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and participation was entirely voluntary.

3.3 Instrumentation and Measurement

The primary data collection tool was a **structured, self-administered questionnaire** designed to gather quantitative data. The instrument was divided into two main sections:

- **Section A** collected demographic information, including gender, age, educational background, and length of service.
- **Section B** assessed the study variables: the independent variables such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits—and the dependent variable—turnover intention.

All items in Section B were adapted from previously validated instruments to ensure content validity. A five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) was used for all scale-based items (Likert, 1932), facilitating easy interpretation and analysis.

The questionnaire underwent expert review by academic researchers to ensure face and construct validity. It was refined based on the pilot study findings to ensure clarity, appropriateness for the organizational context, and internal consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The standardized format helped maintain consistency in responses and enhanced the instrument's overall reliability.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

Data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30. A series of statistical techniques were employed to meet the research objectives and test the hypotheses:

- **Descriptive statistics** (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were used to summarize demographic characteristics and provide an overview of the data distribution.
- **Reliability analysis** (Cronbach's Alpha) assessed the internal consistency of the constructs.
- **Correlation analysis** identified the strength and direction of relationships between variables.
- **Multiple regression analysis** was conducted to determine the effect of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits on turnover intention.

This combination of methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of the key predictors influencing employee turnover intention in the pharmaceutical setting.

4. Research Findings

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the structured questionnaire. The primary objective is to examine the effect of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits on turnover intention among employees in a pharmaceutical company. The analysis draws upon responses from a total of 288 full-time employees, utilizing statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to explore the relationships among the study variables and assess the strength of their effects.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 288 valid and complete responses were obtained from full-time employees across multiple branches of a pharmaceutical company operating in Negeri Sembilan. The demographic data provide a comprehensive view of the workforce composition, facilitating a more nuanced interpretation of turnover intentions across various employee groups.

Gender distribution among respondents was relatively balanced, with 151 male employees (52.4%) and 137 female employees (47.6%), indicating nearly equal representation from both sexes. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (27.3%) were aged 31 to 40, followed by 22.1% aged 25 to 30, and 21.8% aged 41 to 50. Meanwhile, 15.2% were 25 years old and below, and 13.1% were aged above 50. These findings suggest that the workforce is primarily composed of mid-career professionals, with a healthy mix of both younger and more experienced employees.

Regarding educational attainment, the majority of participants held at least a bachelor's degree (29.8%), followed by diploma holders (22.9%) and those with STPM or equivalent qualifications (20.8%). Respondents with master's degrees constituted 13.9%, while those with

an SPM qualification accounted for 12.5%. This distribution reflects a relatively well-educated workforce, typical of the modern pharmaceutical retail environment, where technical knowledge and customer service competencies are essential. With respect to job position or work level, junior executives formed the largest group (23.3%), followed by managers (20.8%), senior executives (19.4%), and senior managers (18.4%). A smaller proportion of the respondents were entry-level employees (8.7%), while 9.4% fell into the “Others” category, which likely includes specialized or non-standard roles.

This diverse demographic distribution ensures that the findings of the study are reflective of a broad employee base, enhancing the generalizability of the results within the pharmaceutical sector context.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement items for each construct in the study. Cronbach’s Alpha was used as the reliability coefficient, where values exceeding 0.70 are deemed acceptable for social science research (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As shown in Table 1, work-life balance recorded a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.897, indicating strong reliability, while job satisfaction and compensation and benefits yielded scores of 0.891 and 0.885, respectively—both reflecting high internal consistencies. The turnover intention construct demonstrated the highest reliability with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.913, signifying excellent coherence among its items. These results confirm that all constructs exhibit robust internal consistency, validating the suitability of the instrument for advanced statistical procedures such as regression, correlation, and hypothesis testing. This strong reliability enhances the credibility of the study’s findings and reinforces the soundness of its methodological framework.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Remarks
Work-life Balance	5	0.897	Independent Variable
Job Satisfaction	5	0.891	Independent Variable
Compensation and Benefits	5	0.885	Independent Variable
Turnover Intention	5	0.913	Dependent Variable

4.3 Regression Analysis

The findings of the multiple regression analysis, which evaluates the independent variables’ predictive ability on turnover intention, are shown in Table 2. Strong correlation ($R = 0.775$) and statistical significance ($F = 142.260$, $p < 0.001$) are shown, which also accounts for 60.0% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.600$). Compensation and benefits were the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.411$, $t = 3.807$, $p = 0.029$), followed by work-life balance ($\beta = 0.204$, $t = 1.860$, $p = 0.003$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.236$, $t = 2.197$, $p = 0.064$).

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Variable	β	t	p	R	R ²	F
				0.775	0.600	142.260
Work-Life Balance	0.204	1.860	0.003			
Job Satisfaction	0.236	2.197	0.064			
Compensation and Benefits	0.411	3.807	0.029			
Turnover Intention	0.439	2.956	<0.001			

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; DV: Turnover Intention

4.4 Results of Hypotheses Testing

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis used to test the proposed hypotheses. The analysis examined the effects of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits on turnover intention. These results are consistent with previously published research that indicates increased pay, job satisfaction, and work-life balance lower the risk of employee turnover (Mobley, 1977; Price, 2001). The significance of these HR procedures in keeping employees is confirmed by the statistically significant predictors.

Table 3: Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta)	<i>p</i> -value	Results
H ₁	WLB → TI	0.204	0.003	Supported
H ₂	JS → TI	0.236	0.064	Rejected
H ₃	CB → TI	0.411	0.029	Supported

As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 1 is supported, indicating a statistically significant positive effect of work-life balance on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.204$, $p = 0.003$). This suggests that employees who perceive greater challenges in balancing work and personal life are more likely to consider leaving the organization.

Hypothesis 2 is rejected, as job satisfaction did not exhibit a statistically significant effect on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.064$). Although the beta coefficient indicates a positive trend, the *p*-value exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, suggesting that job satisfaction alone does not significantly predict employees' intentions to leave in this context.

Hypothesis 3 is supported, demonstrating a significant and positive effect of compensation and benefits on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.411$, $p = 0.029$). Among the three predictors, compensation and benefits exerted the strongest effect, confirming that this variable is the most influential determinant of turnover intention in this study.

These findings highlight the critical importance of designing competitive compensation packages and supporting employees' work-life integration to reduce turnover intention in the pharmaceutical sector.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

This study examined the effects of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and compensation and benefits on turnover intention among employees in a Malaysian pharmaceutical company. Using regression analysis, the findings provide empirical support for two of the three proposed hypotheses, offering both theoretical and practical implications for human resource management and organizational behavior.

The results of Hypothesis 1 revealed a statistically significant and positive effect of work-life balance on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.204$, $p = 0.003$). This suggests that when employees experience better balance between their professional responsibilities and personal lives, they are less likely to consider leaving the organization. This outcome aligns with previous findings by Karatepe and Uludag (2008) and Haar et al. (2014), reinforcing the importance of supportive work-life policies in reducing job stress and enhancing employee retention. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding substantiates the core premise of SET, which posits that when organizations invest in employees' well-being, employees reciprocate with positive attitudes

and behaviors, including stronger organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In contrast, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as job satisfaction did not exhibit a statistically significant effect on turnover intention in the regression analysis ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.064$). While the direction of the relationship was positive and consistent with prior literature (Lambert et al., 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993), the result did not reach the conventional threshold for statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). This finding may indicate that while job satisfaction is important, it may be mediated or moderated by other variables such as perceived organizational support or career advancement opportunities in this specific context. Despite the non-significant result, it is worth noting that the extensive literature still considers job satisfaction a foundational predictor of turnover intention (Jogi et al., 2024), and this remains an area for further exploration.

The strongest support emerged for Hypothesis 3, which found a significant and substantial effect of compensation and benefits on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.411$, $p = 0.029$). This finding highlights that competitive and fair compensation is a key driver in employee retention, consistent with the works of Trevor et al. (1997). Theoretically, this result reinforces Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which classifies compensation and benefits as critical hygiene factors. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), the absence of such factors leads to job dissatisfaction and increased turnover, whereas their presence prevents dissatisfaction and supports stability. In this study, compensation and benefits emerged as the most influential predictor, underscoring their centrality in retention strategies, especially in high-skill, knowledge-intensive industries such as pharmaceuticals.

By applying Social Exchange Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, this study contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of turnover intention and employee behavior. It emphasizes that organizational practices that demonstrate investment in employee well-being—through work-life balance initiatives and fair compensation—build relational trust and reciprocity, which in turn reduce the likelihood of employee departure. These findings are particularly valuable in the context of emerging economies like Malaysia, where workforce diversity and evolving labor expectations require culturally sensitive and evidence-based HR practices. As Hofstede (2001) emphasized, effective management must consider socio-cultural dimensions, and this study affirms that established Western theories remain applicable across cultural boundaries when adapted thoughtfully.

In terms of practical implications, organizations must prioritize human resource policies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic employee needs. This includes implementing flexible work arrangements, ensuring transparent communication, and maintaining competitive pay structures. While job satisfaction remains an important construct, this study suggests that work-life balance and compensation deserve greater immediate attention from HR practitioners seeking to reduce turnover.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. Its cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and the focus on a single industry and geographic region may limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches, explore additional mediating variables (e.g., organizational commitment or leadership style), and compare results across industries or cultures to enhance the robustness of turnover-related models.

In conclusion, this study enriches the academic discourse on employee retention by reaffirming the relevance of classical organizational theories and offering empirical evidence on key predictors of turnover intention. It provides a solid foundation for the development of strategic HR interventions aimed at fostering workforce stability, enhancing employee satisfaction, and supporting long-term organizational success.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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