

A Mediating Effect of Intention on the Relationship between Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioural Control and the Turnover Intention Actual Usage among the SME Service Sectors Employees in Beijing, China

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the mediating role of intention in the relationship between attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on turnover intention and actual turnover behavior among employees in the SME service sector in Beijing, China. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), we hypothesize that employee attitudes towards their job, the influence of subjective norms, and their perceived control over leaving their job collectively influence their turnover intentions, which in turn affect their actual turnover behavior. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of SME service sector employees in Beijing. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses and the mediating effect of intention. The findings reveal that intention significantly mediates the relationship between the three TPB components (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) and turnover behavior. Specifically, employees with negative job attitudes, high subjective norms favoring turnover, and high perceived control over leaving are more likely to form strong turnover intentions, which subsequently lead to actual turnover. These results offer valuable insights for SME management in Beijing on the importance of addressing employee attitudes, norms, and perceived control to mitigate turnover rates. The study contributes to the broader literature on employee turnover by highlighting the critical mediating role of intention and providing a nuanced understanding of the TPB in the context of SME service sectors in China.

Keywords: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, turnover intention, SME

I. INTRODUCTION

The mediating effect of intention on the relationship between attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, and turnover intention and actual usage among SME service sector employees in Beijing, China, is pivotal in understanding employee turnover. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), intention is a critical

predictor of behavior, and it is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of employee turnover, attitude refers to employees' overall evaluation of their job, subjective norm involves the perceived social pressure to stay or leave, and perceived behavioral control denotes the perceived ease or difficulty of leaving the job. When employees have a negative attitude towards their job, perceive strong social norms favoring turnover, and feel confident in their ability to find alternative employment, their intention to leave the job strengthens. This intention, in turn, significantly impacts their actual turnover behavior. Empirical studies have demonstrated that intention serves as a mediator in this relationship, indicating that interventions aimed at modifying attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control could effectively reduce turnover intention and actual turnover rates (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Han et al., 2018). Thus, for SMEs in Beijing's service sector, understanding and addressing these psychological factors through targeted organizational strategies can help mitigate high turnover rates and enhance employee retention.

Despite extensive research on employee turnover, significant gaps remain in understanding turnover intention and actual usage among SME service sector employees in Beijing, China. One critical gap is the limited exploration of cultural factors unique to China that may influence turnover behavior. Previous studies have predominantly focused on Western contexts, potentially overlooking how Chinese cultural values, such as collectivism and *guanxi* (personal relationships), impact turnover intentions and behaviors (Hofstede, 1980; Chen et al., 2011). Another research gap is the insufficient attention to the role of organizational support and how it interacts with employees' perceived behavioral control in predicting turnover. While some studies suggest that perceived organizational support can buffer the negative effects of job dissatisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), specific mechanisms through which this support influences turnover intentions in SMEs remain underexplored. Furthermore, there is a need for longitudinal studies that track turnover intentions and actual turnover over time, providing a more dynamic understanding of how intentions evolve into actions (Hom et al., 2017). Addressing these gaps could lead to more effective strategies for managing turnover in Beijing's SME service sector, ultimately enhancing organizational stability and performance.

Employee turnover in the SME service sector in Beijing, China, presents a significant challenge that undermines organizational stability and performance. High turnover rates lead to increased recruitment and training costs, loss of organizational knowledge, and disruptions in service delivery (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Despite these substantial impacts, the factors driving turnover intentions and actual turnover behavior among SME employees in Beijing remain inadequately understood. The unique cultural, economic, and organizational contexts of Beijing's SME sector may influence turnover differently than in other settings, necessitating localized research (Wang et al., 2014). Moreover, existing studies often fail to account for the interplay between individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control within the Chinese cultural framework, potentially overlooking critical determinants of turnover intentions (Hofstede, 1980; Chen et al., 2011). Addressing this problem requires a comprehensive examination of these factors to develop targeted strategies that can mitigate turnover and enhance employee retention in Beijing's SMEs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen, is a widely utilized psychological theory that aims to predict and understand human behavior in specific contexts. TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behavior is the most immediate determinant of that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This intention is, in turn, influenced by three core components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question. Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior, reflecting the influence of significant others such as family, friends, or colleagues. Perceived behavioral control denotes the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, which is assumed to reflect past experiences and anticipated obstacles (Ajzen, 2002). By integrating these factors, TPB provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how and why individuals make decisions to engage in specific actions, making it particularly useful in fields such as health psychology, organizational behavior, and marketing (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Empirical studies have consistently supported the predictive validity of TPB, demonstrating its applicability across diverse behaviors and settings (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological framework developed by Icek Ajzen that aims to predict and explain human behavior across various contexts. According to TPB, human action is guided by three kinds of considerations: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral beliefs are concerned with the likely outcomes of the behavior and the evaluations of these outcomes, forming the attitude toward the behavior. Normative beliefs relate to the perceived expectations of significant others and the motivation to comply with these expectations, shaping the subjective norm. Control beliefs pertain to the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior and the perceived power of these factors, influencing perceived behavioral control. The combined influence of attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control leads to the formation of a behavioral intention. Intention is the immediate antecedent of behavior, representing the motivational factors that influence behavior; it indicates how hard people are willing to try and how much effort they plan to exert in order to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 2002). By integrating these components, TPB provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and predicting a wide range of behaviors, making it applicable in fields such as health, marketing, and organizational behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Conner & Armitage, 1998).

B. Attitude on the Employee Turnover

Attitude plays a crucial role in influencing employee turnover, as it encapsulates employees' overall evaluations and feelings towards their jobs, which can significantly affect their intentions to stay or leave an organization. Positive job attitudes, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment, are associated with lower turnover intentions, as employees who are satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organizations

are less likely to consider leaving (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Conversely, negative job attitudes, such as job dissatisfaction and lack of commitment, are strong predictors of turnover intentions and actual turnover behavior. These attitudes are influenced by various factors, including job characteristics, work environment, and organizational support (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011). For example, employees who perceive their work as meaningful and receive adequate support from their organization are likely to develop positive job attitudes, reducing their turnover intentions (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Understanding the impact of job attitudes on turnover is essential for organizations seeking to enhance employee retention, as targeted interventions aimed at improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment can effectively mitigate turnover rates.

C. Subjective Norm on the Employee Intention

Subjective norm, a critical component of the Theory of Planned Behavior, significantly influences employee turnover intentions by reflecting the perceived social pressures to stay or leave an organization. This concept involves the influence of important referent groups, such as colleagues, family, and friends, on an employee's decision-making process regarding turnover (Ajzen, 1991). When employees perceive that significant others believe they should remain with or leave their organization, these social expectations can heavily impact their own intentions. Research has shown that subjective norms can either amplify or mitigate turnover intentions depending on the prevailing attitudes within these referent groups (Rivis & Sheeran, 2003). For instance, if an employee's close peers within the organization express a positive view about staying, this can strengthen the employee's intention to remain. Conversely, if family or colleagues outside the organization encourage leaving due to perceived better opportunities elsewhere, this can increase turnover intentions (van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). Therefore, understanding the role of subjective norm is essential for organizations aiming to manage turnover, as it highlights the importance of fostering a supportive and cohesive work environment that positively influences employees' social networks and their intentions to stay.

D. Perceived Behaviour Control of the Employee Intention

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is a fundamental aspect of the Theory of Planned Behavior that significantly influences employee turnover intentions. PBC refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior, reflecting both past experiences and anticipated obstacles (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of employee turnover, PBC encompasses employees' perceptions of their ability to leave their current job and find new employment. High perceived behavioral control is often associated with greater confidence in one's ability to secure alternative employment, thereby increasing turnover intentions (Terry & O'Leary, 1995). Conversely, employees who perceive significant barriers to leaving, such as a lack of available job opportunities or necessary skills, are less likely to form strong intentions to quit (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Understanding PBC can help organizations identify and address factors that employees perceive as barriers or facilitators to leaving, such as job market conditions, skill development opportunities, and internal career advancement prospects. By enhancing

employees' perceived control over their career paths within the organization, employers can reduce turnover intentions and foster greater organizational commitment.

III. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Actual usage of employee behaviour on the turnover intention.

The actual usage of employee behavior significantly impacts turnover intentions, reflecting the practical actions employees take in response to their intention to leave an organization. Actual usage, or the behavioral execution of turnover, is the culmination of the decision-making process influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Research indicates that turnover intention is a strong predictor of actual turnover behavior, with employees who frequently engage in job search activities, submit applications, or attend interviews demonstrating a higher likelihood of leaving their current positions (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Additionally, behaviors such as reduced work effort, decreased engagement, and withdrawal activities (e.g., increased absenteeism) can also signal impending turnover (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). These actions are often observable manifestations of underlying turnover intentions, providing organizations with early indicators of potential turnover. By monitoring and addressing these behaviors, employers can implement timely interventions to retain valuable employees and mitigate turnover rates. Understanding the link between turnover intentions and actual usage of behavior is crucial for developing effective retention strategies and fostering a stable workforce.

B. Employee Intention to the Turnover Among the SME Service Sector in Beijing, China

Employee turnover intention in the SME service sector in Beijing, China, is a critical issue that affects organizational performance and stability. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave their current job. In Beijing's dynamic and competitive SME service sector, several factors contribute to high turnover intentions, including job dissatisfaction, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate compensation (Wang et al., 2014). Cultural factors unique to China, such as the influence of *guanxi* (personal networks) and collectivist values, also play a significant role in shaping employees' turnover intentions (Chen & Francesco, 2000). Employees who perceive strong social support and positive relationships within their workplace are less likely to consider leaving. Conversely, those who feel isolated or undervalued are more prone to turnover intentions. Moreover, the rapid economic development in Beijing has led to a highly competitive job market, making it easier for dissatisfied employees to find alternative employment (Zhang, 2016). Addressing turnover intention in this context requires a comprehensive approach that considers both individual and organizational factors, as well as the broader socio-economic environment. By enhancing job satisfaction, providing clear career paths, and fostering a supportive work culture, SMEs in Beijing can better retain their employees and reduce turnover rates.

IV. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen, offers a robust framework for understanding employee turnover by examining the psychological factors that influence an individual's intention to leave their job. According to TPB, three key components shape turnover intentions: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude involves the employee's overall evaluation of quitting their job, where negative job experiences and dissatisfaction increase the likelihood of forming an intention to leave (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures from significant others, such as family, friends, and colleagues, which can either encourage or discourage turnover. For instance, if peers and family members believe that leaving the job is beneficial, the employee is more likely to develop a turnover intention (van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). Perceived behavioral control encompasses the employee's perception of the ease or difficulty of leaving their current job and finding new employment. High perceived control, often due to a favorable job market or strong personal skills, can lead to higher turnover intentions (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). By addressing these components, organizations can better understand the underlying motivations behind employee turnover and develop strategies to enhance retention, such as improving job satisfaction, fostering a supportive work environment, and providing career development opportunities.

The mediating effect of intention on the relationship between attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, and actual turnover behavior is critical in understanding employee turnover among SME service sector employees in Beijing, China. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), intention serves as a crucial mediator that links individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of employee turnover, attitudes toward the job (positive or negative feelings about one's employment), subjective norms (perceived social pressures to stay or leave), and perceived behavioral control (confidence in one's ability to leave and find new employment) collectively shape an employee's intention to leave the organization (Ajzen, 2002). Empirical studies have shown that intention significantly mediates the effect of these three components on actual turnover behavior. For instance, when employees hold negative attitudes towards their job, perceive strong social support for leaving, and feel confident in their ability to secure new employment, their intention to leave intensifies, which directly increases the likelihood of actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Han et al., 2018). This mediating role of intention highlights the importance for SMEs in Beijing to understand and influence these psychological factors to effectively manage and reduce employee turnover rates. By fostering positive job attitudes, supportive social norms, and enhancing employees' perceived control over their careers, organizations can mitigate turnover intentions and consequently reduce actual turnover.

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