

Why Employees Quit: A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Turnover Motivations, Leadership Styles, and Workplace Retention - Nimrod Levin

Employee turnover is a critical challenge for both organizations and employees, with significant economic, operational, and psychological implications (Karsan, 2007; Park & Shaw, 2013). For organizations, high turnover disrupts productivity, increases recruitment costs, and weakens team cohesion (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom et al., 2017). From an employee's perspective, understanding turnover reasons is equally important, as it enables informed career transitions and helps individuals find work environments that align with their values and aspirations (Hommelhoff et al., 2025; Maertz, & Kmitta, 2012). While extensive research has examined predictors and outcomes of turnover, less is known about how cultural differences shape dominant turnover motivations. Additionally, leadership style is a known factor influencing employee retention (Hommelhoff et al., 2025; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), yet cultural variations in leadership preferences and their link to turnover intentions remain underexplored. The present project aims to investigate cultural differences in dominant turnover motivations, focusing on the interplay between turnover reasons, cultural values, and leadership preferences.

The study will employ a cross-sectional survey design across at least five countries, each with a sample of at least 200 workers with at least 6 months of work experience at their current position, ensuring that they have been exposed to workplace environments long enough to develop turnover intentions or preferences regarding leadership styles. Moreover, the study will focus on the technology sector, an industry known for high turnover rates and rapid innovation cycles, making it a relevant setting for examining cultural influences on retention and job mobility. An online questionnaire will assess the study variables, including participants' turnover intentions and motivations, endorsement of cultural norms, leadership styles, and indicators of well-being at work.

Findings from this study will offer new insights into the cultural dynamics of employee turnover and leadership preferences. First, by identifying whether dominant turnover reasons vary across cultures, the study will clarify whether retention strategies should be universal or culturally tailored. Second, by investigating how individuals' endorsement of cultural norms shapes turnover motivations, the study will highlight how internalized cultural values impact career decisions. Third, by exploring leadership style preferences across cultural contexts, the study will contribute to the understanding of how leadership mismatches drive turnover intentions and whether specific leadership styles are more effective in certain cultural settings. These findings have practical implications for multinational organizations aiming to improve retention by aligning leadership styles with employee expectations. By tailoring leadership development, HR policies, and career support systems to culturally relevant turnover motivations, organizations can foster greater job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and stronger employee engagement in diverse workforces.

References

- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management*, *26*(3), 463–488.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600305>
- Hom, P. W., Lee, T. W., Shaw, J. D., & Hausknecht, J. P. (2017). One hundred years of employee turnover theory and research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(3), 530–545. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000103>
- Hommelhoff, S., Keller, F., & Stemmler, M. (2025). Turnover reasons are more complex than “people quit bosses”: An approach-avoidance perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 104099. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2025.104099>
- Karsan, R. (2007). Calculating the cost of turnover. *Employment Relations Today*, *34*(1), 33–36. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ert.20139>
- Maertz, C. P., & Kmitta, K. R. (2012). Integrating turnover reasons and shocks with turnover decision processes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *81*(1), 26–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.04.002>
- Park, T.-Y., & Shaw, J. D. (2013). Turnover rates and organizational performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *98*(2), 268–309.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030723>
- Schyns, B., & Schilling, J. (2013). How bad are the effects of bad leaders? A meta-analysis of destructive leadership and its outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *24*(1), 138–158.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.09.001>