

# DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEES' TURNOVER INTENTION

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## Abstract

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The growing competition for talent and increasing employee turnover intention pose challenges for organizations. This paper examines the effect of employees' organizational trust, job satisfaction, and perception of organizational performance on intention to leave. The research method used was an online survey, with partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal there is an insignificant direct influence of employee organizational trust on turnover intention. Moreover, the impact of job satisfaction and organizational performance on turnover intention was found to be both positive and significant. This paper, therefore, introduces fresh empirical evidence and perspective to augment the body of research on the turnover intentions of employees working at public sector institutions, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context.

**Keywords:** Organization Trust, Turnover Intention, Job Satisfaction, Organization Performance

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is an increasing human resource issue, particularly in the post-COVID-19 workplace (Jayathilake et al., 2021; Sablynski, 2022). As the post-COVID-19 job requirements emerge, organizations are finding it harder to retain talented employees who both need and have the capacity to obtain higher rewards elsewhere (Child, 2021). Thus, the determinants associated with turnover intention must be re-evaluated in this fresh context and with

new data (Jayathilake et al., 2021). Turnover here is defined as the result of employees resigning from a position at an organization (Arshad & Puteh, 2015), while turnover intention (TI) describes an employee's willingness to resign from their position at an organization (Mashal et al., 2015).

The determinants of TI can include falling quality, consistency, and stability within an organization, and at present interest in clarifying the determinants of turnover is high (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). Such factors are exhaustive and

may be either intrinsic or extrinsic to the job (Tubay, 2020). Similarly, factors that support retention, and strategies to combat TI, are acknowledged to be either emotional or material in nature (Koo et al., 2020). Such factors provide a useful strategic orientation for an organization seeking to identify concerns and then develop strategies for the retention of employees.

A specific area of discussion related to the determinants of TI and retention strategies concerns the employee's level of engagement with the organization (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011). Such engagement is primarily assumed to counter TI because an employee who feels engaged with an organization is less likely to consider leaving it. This study, therefore, focuses on the components of employee engagement in the public sector, specifically in the post-COVID-19 context. These can comprise employees' trust in the organization itself, their job satisfaction, and their perception of the organization's current performance. Here we consider that it is more important to evaluate engagement factors as determinants of TI because the orientation of trust and its association with job satisfaction and perception of performance create a sufficiently firm psychological reluctance to leave a public sector organization (Chen & Wu, 2017). This is because public sector institutions have performance indicators that include more abstract objectives than simply immediate profitability.

Previous studies in the fields of human resources and organizational behavior have sought to investigate the direct connections that arise between job satisfaction, employee performance, and the intention to leave an organization. They provide evidence of a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance, as well as a negative relationship between job satisfaction and employee TI. However, knowledge regarding the role of organizational trust in mediating such relationships is lacking. The organizational trust provides several positive benefits not only to the individuals themselves but also to those whom they meet. Many researchers argue that organizational trust should lead to improved job performance. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the primary question:

*RQ: Why do people leave their jobs?*

It will do this by examining the role of organizational trust in the relationship between job satisfaction, employee performance, and turnover intention, in the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait.

The relevance of this study is that it will bring fresh evidence from public sector institutions in the Kuwaiti context to enhance the strengths of the TI-related literature, both theoretical and empirical, thereby increasing its generalizability. This study is timely for two reasons. First, the majority of the recent research on the determinants of TI have primarily focused on private sector firms, which are driven by profitability as an indicator of performance; however, the intention to leave a government sector job may be differently oriented, because employees' trust, satisfaction, and performance orientations differ and are more abstract. Second, this study is based on data from the post-COVID-19 context, which provides fresh evidence to support the task of assessing whether there have been any changes in

the relationships hypothesized in the literature. The ability to predict TI is important for effective human resource planning and management since it enables organizations to forecast their resource requirements and plan replacements if necessary. In practical terms, the present paper also provides sufficient evidence-based propositions to design retention policies for employees in the public sector. Existing guidelines for managing employees who intend to leave an organization (Koo et al., 2020; Tubay, 2020) are based on post-COVID-19 evidence. The next section adopts a theoretical perspective to discuss the three factors addressed in this study; namely, employee organizational trust (EOT), job satisfaction (JS), and organization performance (OP), as the determinants of TI.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. A literature review is presented in Section 2. The methodology used for the study is provided in Section 3. Section 4 reveals the analysis and results. Section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 presents the conclusion, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future studies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

EOT is one of the factors addressed in this study. For employees, a trust relationship is multi-oriented and may apply to their coworkers, immediate supervisor, or the whole of senior management, including, for example, the chief executive officer (CEO) (Cho & Park, 2011). The degree of differentiation between these trust orientations depends on the degree of contact between the employee and the object of trust, whether the latter is a direct supervisor or a CEO, and for how long the employee has been familiar with the organizational routine. The employee's trust in top management is, however, found to affect their TI much more strongly than their trust in a direct supervisor (Costigan et al., 2011).

JS, as another factor influencing TI in an abstract sense, is generally defined as comprising a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances, which result in a feeling of contentment with one's role (Hoppock, 1935). Furthermore, however, JS relates to an external outcome that arises when an individual assesses a completed job or an experience encountered (Locke & Latham, 1990). JS can further be defined as an employee's positive attitude to their work and to the satisfaction of their own needs and the impact of the same (Vanckavicienė et al., 2017). A substantial body of research reports a significant correlation between JS and TI (Cañizares & García, 2012; Chiang et al., 2005; Lok & Crawford, 2001; Nurjanah et al., 2020; Suki, 2012), suggesting an inversely proportional relationship between an employee's JS and their TI, where the more satisfied an employee is with their job, the less willing they are to quit (Adel & Alqatan, 2019; Ali & Anwar, 2021).

OP is another critical parameter examined in the present study, and one that is especially important when assessing TI. OP is multi-dimensional and includes the organization's constituent abilities as a collective unit to produce outputs using various efficiency and effectiveness criteria (Jenatabadi, 2015). Employees' negative perception of their organization's performance may trigger thoughts of

pursuing a position in another company (Wagadia, 2022). Alongside theories, empirical studies in the UAE have also shown that employees' perceptions of OP influence their intention to leave (Zeffane & Bani Melhem, 2017).

This study examines the relationship between EOT, JS, and OP and the impact on TI. These relationships are hypothesized as follows:

*H1: Employee organizational trust (EOT) has an impact on employees' intentions to leave their jobs.*

*H2: Job satisfaction (JS) has an impact on employees' intentions to leave their jobs.*

*H3: Employees' perceptions of organizational performance (OP) have an impact on their intention to leave their jobs.*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative analytical method and employs both systematic and topical approaches. The sample consisted of employees at a governmental institution. A survey questionnaire was distributed to employees in Kuwait to establish the probability that they would leave their jobs. The period for data collection ran from January to June 2022.

#### 3.1. Questionnaire design

This study used the survey approach to examine the hypotheses. All four variables were measured by means of Likert scales. The employees' organizational trust (*EOT*) was measured according six items, their job satisfaction (*JS*) through seven items, their organization performance (*OP*) through seven items, and turnover intention (*TI*) through five items. All the items were rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"). The questionnaire was adopted from Elessawy et al. (2019, p. 44) and distributed to 200 employees of the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait, a governmental institution. Of this total, 114 responded to the survey questions fully and

accurately. The sample size was justified as this was a survey of a governmental institution with a relatively small population (which also makes the study unique). Other related studies have also used a sample size of between 100 and 150 respondents (Nisar Ul Haq & Haque, 2018; Psomas et al., 2013).

#### 3.2. Statistical method

After collecting the required data, incomplete survey responses were excluded from the dataset. The next step was to compute Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to identify construct reliability and to compute average variance extracted (AVE) to determine convergent validity. Further, to evaluate the discriminant validity of the construct, cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981a), and the Heterotrait-Monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT) were employed (Hair et al., 2017). In the final step, partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. All the statistical analyses were conducted with JAMOV and SmartPLS software.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics (age group, gender, marital status, education level) of the survey respondents. The survey data showed that 36.4% of respondents were between the ages of 23 years old and 29 years old; 27.9% were between the ages of 30 years old and 38 years old; 17.1% were aged between 39 years old and 47 years old; 15.7% were aged between 48 years old and 56 years old; and the remaining 2.9% were over 56 years of age. In total, 55% of the respondents were female, while 45% were male. In terms of education level, most (74.8%) of the respondents had a bachelor's degree; 23% were post-graduate degree holders.

**Table 1.** Participants' demographic characteristics

Characteristics	N	N%
<b>Age group</b>		
Over 56 years old	4	2.9%
From 23 to 29 years old	51	36.4%
From 30 to 38 years old	39	27.9%
From 39 to 47 years old	24	17.1%
From 48 to 56 years old	22	15.7%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	77	55.0%
Male	63	45.0%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Divorced	7	5.0%
Married	89	63.6%
Single	44	31.4%
<b>Education level</b>		
Bachelor	104	74.8%
Diploma	3	2.2%
Graduate	32	23.0%

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for each construct. Using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"), the researchers assessed the extent of agreement or

disagreement with the statements provided. If the mean value of all the constructs exceeds 3, this indicates a positive response about respondents' *EOT*, *JS*, and *OP* in relation to *TI*.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
EOT	3.53	3.50	0.481	2.17	4.50	-0.435	0.204	0.169	
JS	3.42	3.67	0.900	1.00	5.00	-0.624	0.204	0.378	0.406
OP	3.24	3.25	0.849	1.00	5.00	-0.387	0.204	0.115	0.406
TI	3.09	3.00	0.438	1.60	4.40	0.189	0.204	1.108	0.406

Correlations across constructs are shown in Table 3. The constructs *EOT*, *JS*, and *OP* were significantly correlated with the output variable *TI*. The highest correlation was found between *JS* and *OP* ( $rp = 0.54$ ), while the lowest correlation was found between *TI* and *EOT* ( $rp = 0.12$ ).

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis

	<i>EOT</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>OP</i>	<i>TI</i>
<i>EOT</i>	-			
<i>JS</i>	0.348***	-		
<i>OP</i>	0.483**	0.537***	-	
<i>TI</i>	0.116	0.291***	0.226**	-

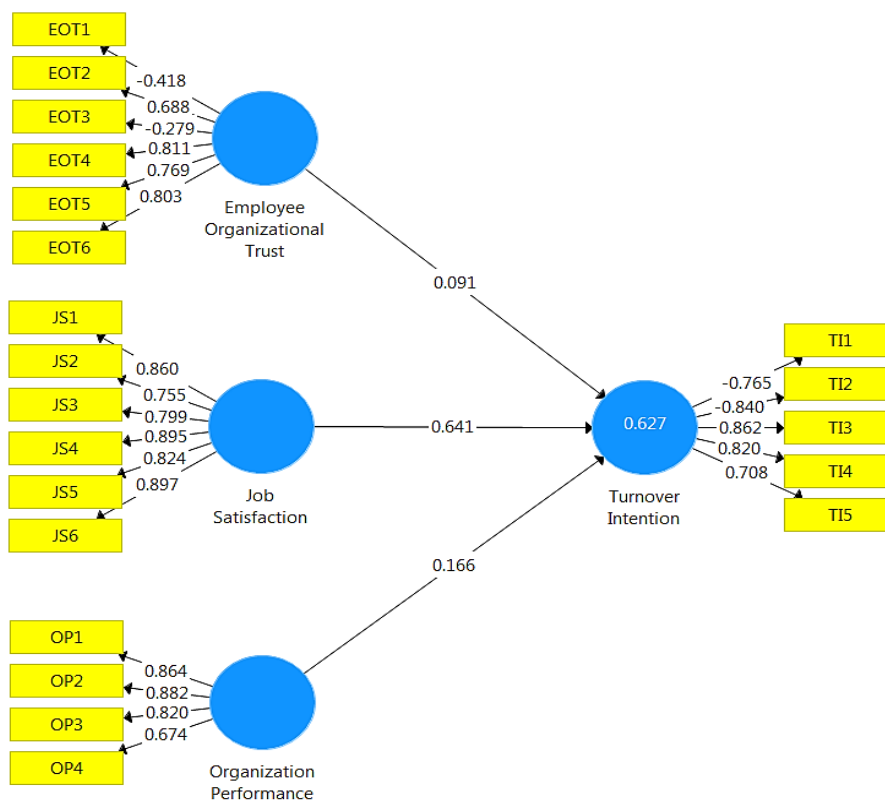
Note. \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**4.1. Measurement model assessment**

To evaluate the measurement models, the construct reliability (including Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability) and validity (including

convergent and discriminant validity) were assessed, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). Figure 1 illustrates the basic node diagram with loadings and Figure 2 shows the final model after excluding the items with a loading less than 0.6.

**Figure 1.** Node diagram



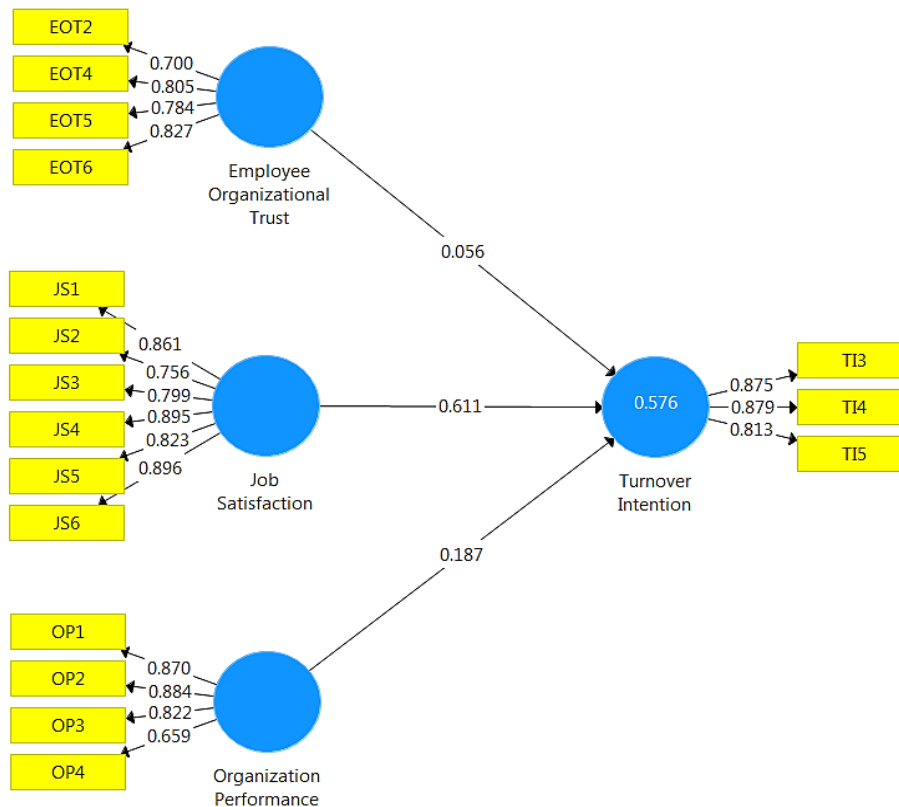
The factor loading for individual items is shown in Table 4. According to Hair et al. (2010), factor loading values above 0.60 are considered adequate, and those above 0.70 are considered good. Therefore, those items with a loading of less than 0.50 were removed before further analysis. Additionally, the value of Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were evaluated for the constructs. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for the study construct ranged between 0.79 and 0.92, and the composite reliability ranged between 0.86 and 0.94; these

values are above the threshold value of 0.6 (Robinson et al., 1991) and 0.7 (Kline, 2023; DeVellis, 2016), respectively. Accordingly, the construct reliability was confirmed — i.e., all the constructs were determined to be completely reliable. Additionally, to test convergent validity, Hair et al. (2017) recommend the use of AVE. In the present study, the value of AVE ranged between 0.61 and 0.73, which is higher than the threshold value of 0.50. These results demonstrate the convergent validity for all constructs (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Frequentist individual item reliability statistics for study constructs

Constructs	Mean	SD	Item-test correlation	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
EOT1	3.29	1.044	-0.242	-0.418	0.790	0.820	0.862	0.610
EOT2	3.20	0.918	0.400	0.688				
EOT3	4.13	0.788	-0.020	-0.279				
EOT4	3.40	0.922	0.455	0.811				
EOT5	3.77	0.819	0.486	0.769				
EOT6	3.35	1.115	0.417	0.803				
JS1	3.71	0.968	0.799	0.860	0.916	0.920	0.935	0.705
JS 2	3.16	1.096	0.673	0.755				
JS 3	3.32	1.208	0.688	0.799				
JS 4	3.33	1.089	0.844	0.895				
JS 5	3.66	0.978	0.733	0.824				
JS 6	3.41	1.106	0.849	0.897				
OP1	3.19	1.135	0.702	0.864	0.829	0.865	0.886	0.662
OP 2	2.71	1.147	0.747	0.882				
OP 3	3.31	1.053	0.699	0.820				
OP 4	3.78	0.805	0.519	0.674				
TI1	2.74	1.116	-0.217	-0.765	0.817	0.817	0.891	0.733
TI2	2.76	1.097	-0.324	-0.840				
TI3	3.61	0.957	0.008	0.862				
TI4	3.11	1.170	0.064	0.820				
TI5	3.22	0.945	0.231	0.708				

**Figure 2.** Node diagram for the PLS-PM model with loadings



Besides validating the constructs, discriminant validity was examined to determine whether or not the measure of one construct correlates with that of another construct (Ringle et al., 2015). Discriminant validity can be achieved by employing the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981b) and the cross-loading (Hair et al., 2017) approach. Henseler et al. (2015), however, proposed a new criterion, the HTMT, which detects discriminant validity more sensitively. The results of cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the HTMT are shown in Tables 6 and 7, respectively.

The findings show that the indicator's outer loading on the associated construct was higher than

its cross-loadings on all other constructs (Table 5), thus demonstrating its discriminant validity. Additionally, it was found that the square root of AVE (diagonal element in italics) was greater than its correlation with other constructs (Table 6); thus, constructs have good discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Moreover, according to the HTMT criterion, the HTMT value between the two constructs must be lower than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Since the construct in the present study fulfilled this criterion (Table 7), discriminant validity was demonstrated.

**Table 5.** Loadings and cross-loadings of the outer model

Constructs	EOT	JS	OP	TI
EOT2	<b>0.700</b>	0.264	0.293	0.233
EOT4	<b>0.805</b>	0.294	0.425	0.284
EOT5	<b>0.784</b>	0.339	0.470	0.305
EOT6	<b>0.827</b>	0.319	0.595	0.405
JS1	0.269	<b>0.861</b>	0.429	0.614
JS2	0.239	<b>0.756</b>	0.330	0.503
JS3	0.364	<b>0.799</b>	0.498	0.695
JS4	0.408	<b>0.895</b>	0.517	0.646
JS5	0.381	<b>0.823</b>	0.501	0.626
JS6	0.281	<b>0.896</b>	0.448	0.587
OP1	0.499	0.531	<b>0.870</b>	0.541
OP2	0.489	0.493	<b>0.884</b>	0.497
OP3	0.531	0.408	<b>0.822</b>	0.413
OP4	0.421	0.303	<b>0.659</b>	0.307
TI3	0.384	0.652	0.457	<b>0.875</b>
TI4	0.255	0.633	0.417	<b>0.879</b>
TI5	0.398	0.602	0.547	<b>0.813</b>

**Table 6.** Results of discriminant validity by the Fornell-Larcker criterion

	EOT	JS	OP	TI
EOT	<b>0.781</b>			
JS	0.391	<b>0.840</b>		
OP	0.594	0.547	<b>0.814</b>	
TI	0.405	0.735	0.554	<b>0.856</b>

**Table 7.** Results of HTMT

	EOT	JS	OP	TI
EOT	-			
JS	0.451	-		
OP	0.708	0.606	-	
TI	0.486	0.843	0.656	-

## 4.2. Structure equation modelling

Once the measurement model had been confirmed, it was time to construct the structural model. A bootstrapping procedure can be used to estimate path coefficients (Hair et al., 2017). Table 8 illustrates the results of path analysis, which include path coefficients, t-values, and p-values for each hypothesis. Organizational trust has been identified as a crucial factor in positively influencing an employee's decision to leave or remain at their current job. However, the findings of this study revealed that an employee's organizational trust exerts an insignificant direct influence on *TI* ( $\beta = 0.056$ ,  $t = 0.945$ ,  $p = 0.345$ ). Hence, *H1* was rejected.

In other words, whether or not employees are satisfied with their jobs, they feel that it is optional whether to leave or stay. Even if they are not happy with their present conditions, Kuwaitis may continue to work in the same organization for other reasons, such as pursuing a higher education degree or building their network. The job security (guaranteed income) provided by public organizations in Kuwait may be another important factor.

Moreover, the impact of *JS* ( $\beta = 0.611$ ,  $t = 9.747$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and *OP* ( $\beta = 0.187$ ,  $t = 2.469$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ) on *TI* was found to be positive and significant. Thus, *H2* and *H3* were accepted. The node diagram for the PLS-PM model with loadings is shown in Figure 2.

**Table 8.** Bootstrap results for the inner model regression paths

Hypothesis	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T-statistics ( O/STDEV )	P-values	Remark
<i>H1</i>	<i>EOT</i> → <i>TI</i>	0.056	0.055	0.059	0.945	0.345	Not supported
<i>H2</i>	<i>JS</i> → <i>TI</i>	0.611	0.613	0.063	9.747	0.000	Supported
<i>H3</i>	<i>OP</i> → <i>TI</i>	0.187	0.188	0.076	2.469	0.014	Supported

In the next section, the implications of the above results related to the three focal hypotheses are discussed in the context of the literature.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The three hypotheses tested in this research have profound implications for interpreting the impact of *EOT*, *JS*, and *OP* on employees' *TI*.

First, the study does not have sufficient evidence to conclude that *EOT* impacts the *TI* of public sector employees. This finding contrasts with the findings

of other researchers, who have mainly found it to impact employees' *TI* (Costigan et al., 2011; Latif & Saraih, 2016). This finding is interesting, since in the public sector, particularly in Kuwait, public sector organizations are most often state-supported, and employees are rarely affected by their trust in institutions alone, for that trust may depend on the government itself. Thus, employees who are considering whether to leave public sector employment are less likely to base that decision on their trust in top management and CEOs. This finding is in line with the recent argument in

the literature that interprets trust as more abstract. The degree of trust can be treated as a factor influencing TI, but this trust is not the same as the trust that an employee places in their immediate supervisor; rather, it is trust in people who are more abstractly responsible (Costigan et al., 2011). It is, therefore, worthwhile for human resource managers who are developing strategic plans for public sector employees, to use this perspective of trust in government rather than in an employee's immediate leadership (Schreder, 2020).

Second, the study has found that job satisfaction impacts TI. This finding endorses and further strengthens the argument about the role of JS (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Stamolampros et al., 2019). This is a popular argument that has also been successfully used in regard to government sector employees. It is, however, harder to understand the nature of JS in the public sector, because the reasons for JS and its impact on job turnover may vary. Since JS is mainly a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that result in a person feeling content with their job position (Hoppock, 1935), it is important to differentiate the psychology of public sector employees from those of the private sector, because their reasons for feeling satisfied may differ and this satisfaction may hold different meanings for employees in the two sectors.

Third, the study also confirms that the employees' perception of OP does have an impact on their TI. OP provides psychological fulfilment from a job well done. The performance, however, may be perceived by the employees differently; e.g., as financial performance, the performance of the top management, or one particular department (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Mobley, 1977; Stamolampros et al., 2019). It is, therefore, important in the design of human resource planning to consider a variety of performance parameters and link them with the job descriptions of relevant employees. This will help the institutions to associate employees more closely with organizational performance. These findings have implications for predicting both employees' TI and their commitment (Bulut & Culha, 2010). This is particularly important in a context where performance parameters and the expectations of public sector organizations tend to differ.

Finally, this paper has a number of limitations. First, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data on which this study is based, the results of the investigation may only be applicable to a specific time frame. Consequently, researchers and academics should carry out longitudinal studies to monitor the shifts in behavior that occur over time. According to the findings of earlier research, future research should focus on carrying out cross-cultural studies in order to investigate the nature of the relationships that exist between the various factors. The effectiveness of organizations can be improved by increasing the amount of money spent on research and development within those organizations. Within the context of the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait, this study used SEM to investigate the elements that influence employees' performance as well as their intentions regarding leaving their job. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that employees' organizational trust,

job satisfaction, and organizational performance have on employees' intention to leave their current job at the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Employees' TI is an important theoretical as well as practical concern, with the literature in this area seeking to clarify its determinants in various temporal and regional contexts. This study explored some of the factors that influence TI at the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait, specifically: employees' organizational trust (EOT), job satisfaction (JS), and organization performance (OP). The findings revealed an insignificant direct influence from EOT on TI. In addition, the impact of JS and OP on TI was found to be both positive and significant. The factors examined in this study are reflective of how employees of governmental institutions develop an intention to quit. Interestingly, the study found little evidence of EOT leading to any change in performance. This indicates that in government institutions employees consider their trust in the government overall, rather than any individual organization within it. These findings call for a new interpretation of the government models for retaining employees.

The above findings suggest the Kuwaiti government should re-evaluate the role of organizational trust in the development of TI among employees in the government sector. First, this psychological construct is associated with the employees' expectations and belief in the capacity of their employer to meet their needs. In this research, the public sector employees seemed not to associate their trust in the organization with their intention to leave. Rather, the trust of such employees depends on the general running of the government. Therefore, it is proposed that clear governmental commitments be communicated to employees in order to maintain their trust and, thus, minimize any intention to leave. Second, employees' satisfaction should be ensured at government institutions, where sufficient local achievements should be brought to the employees' attention to enable them to feel satisfied with their perception of OP. Lastly, it is suggested that the government keeps up to date regarding OP and regularly communicates information about this to restrain the development of leaving intention among employees.

The main limitation of this study is its narrow focus on the public sector in Kuwait, meaning the results may not apply to the private sector. Indeed, government employees are believed to face different sets of challenges relative to employees in the private sector. The present research could be extended by comparing the determinants of trust across these two groups. These recommendations could be adopted in future research to improve empirical confidence. Furthermore, the model could be extended to include employees' loyalty and engagement as additional factors that impact the intention to leave an organization. This would allow the relationship between employee loyalty and other workforce factors, such as employee satisfaction, to be explored in future studies.

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