

Paradox at Work: Unraveling Stress and Turnover in Healthcare: Evidence in Indonesian Hospitals

*Work Stress and
Turnover Intention in
Indonesian Hospitals*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership, job demands, and job resources on work stress and turnover intention of hospital staff, with work stress as a mediating variable. The study was conducted on medical and non-medical staff at three hospitals in Indonesia using a quantitative approach. A sample of 200 respondents was selected through purposive sampling with the criteria of a minimum of six months of service and direct involvement in hospital operations. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that leadership, job demands, and job resources significantly influenced work stress. Leadership and job demands also positively influenced turnover intention. In addition, work stress was shown to mediate the influence of leadership, job demands, and job resources on turnover intention. This study concluded that effective leadership management, job demand management, and job resource optimization play a significant role in reducing work stress and turnover intention of hospital staff. These findings provide practical implications for hospital management in improving workforce well-being and retention.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern healthcare faces significant challenges in retaining competent medical personnel amidst increasing work demands, changes in healthcare systems, and the dynamics of hospital organizations. Turnover intention is a crucial issue because it directly impacts service quality, operational efficiency, and patient safety. Turnover intention reflects an employee's psychological attitude toward their job and is often viewed as an early indicator of actual turnover (Ahmad, 2018; Bhat et al., 2023). Yaqin and Indradewa (2025) explain that turnover intention arises in response to an imbalance between job demands and rewards, such as compensation, workload, and work-life balance.

Soedira et al. (2021) associate turnover intention with employees' evaluations of career development opportunities and work environment, while Rahayu et al. (2025) highlight low organizational commitment as a key driver. Sun and Wang (2017) and Purnomo et al. (2025) further show that leadership style, organizational culture, engagement, and job satisfaction shape turnover intention, and Fahrosa et al. (2025) add that technological support and transformational leadership indirectly reduce it through enhanced job satisfaction. In healthcare, doctors and nurses often face a tension between organizational loyalty and personal well-being, career growth, and professional autonomy, reflecting an inherent organizational paradox (Zheng et al., 2021).

From a paradox theory perspective, organizational relationships involve managing persistent tensions, such as control versus autonomy and stability versus change. Transformational leadership helps balance these opposites by reducing work stress and supporting employee development, thereby aligning organizational demands with individual aspirations (Atalla et al., 2025). In crisis contexts like the COVID-19 pandemic,

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these paradoxes intensify, as healthcare workers experience strong professional commitment alongside heightened psychological strain, which simultaneously strengthens attachment and increases turnover intention (Deng et al., 2022). Furthermore, specific factors such as job demands, job resources, and leadership style have been shown to significantly influence work stress and turnover intention in healthcare workers. High job demands increase work stress and turnover intention, while adequate job resources can reduce both. Transformational leadership has also been shown to impact work stress and turnover intention (Suryawan et al., 2021; Maniscalco et al., 2024; Yong & Zhang, 2025).

Turnover intention among healthcare workers reflects complex tensions between organizational demands, leadership, resources, and personal needs rather than purely individual factors (Moloney et al., 2018). In this context, employees face a dilemma between organizational stability and the pursuit of professional autonomy and well-being, illustrating the inherent retention paradox described by Zheng et al. (2021). Transformational leadership, as an inspiring and empowering leadership style, plays a crucial role in reducing work stress and turnover intention by creating a supportive and motivating work environment (Atalla et al., 2025). Research also shows that job demands have a positive effect on work stress and turnover intention, while job resources have a negative effect on both (Yang et al., 2017; Sokhanvar et al., 2018; Maniscalco et al., 2024).

Work stress also plays a crucial mediating role in linking transformational leadership, job demands, job resources, and turnover intention, indicating that leadership styles and working conditions affect turnover intention not only directly but also indirectly through their impact on employees' stress levels. In crisis contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these factors may create paradoxical conditions by simultaneously strengthening emotional commitment while intensifying psychological strain, which in turn increases turnover intention (Deng et al., 2022). Hence, a paradox theory perspective is particularly suitable for capturing the complex and conflicting interactions among variables influencing turnover intention in healthcare settings.

This study seeks to examine the effects of transformational leadership, job demands, and job resources on work stress and turnover intention among healthcare workers. It specifically investigates the extent to which transformational leadership can alleviate work stress and reduce turnover intention, as well as how job demands and job resources affect these outcomes both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of work stress. Grounded in paradox theory, the study also explores the tensions between organizational expectations and the personal needs of healthcare workers in highly demanding and stressful environments, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Transformational Leadership, Job Demands, Job Resources, and Work Stress

Work stress emerges when job demands exceed an individual's capacity or available resources, leading to negative emotional and physiological responses. Work stress is a key antecedent of burnout and turnover intention among workers (Tziner et al., 2015). Rindu et al. (2020) demonstrated that work stress significantly mediates the relationship between leadership and turnover intention, while Manoppo (2020) found that work stress mediates the influence of transformational leadership on negative employee behavior. Similarly, Pandey (2020) and Chen et al. (2022) reported that work stress triggers dysfunctional behavior and reduces performance. In healthcare settings, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, intense workloads and emotional pressures have made work stress a critical issue affecting both service quality and workforce stability.

Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, motivation, and interpersonal support, is widely recognized for its capacity to enhance employee resilience and reduce psychological strain. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, job demands refer to physical and psychological aspects of work that require sustained effort and, when excessive, contribute to burnout and turnover intention. Kloutsiniotis and Pateli (2022) found that this leadership style reduced anxiety and loneliness during

the COVID-19 crisis, thereby lowering psychological distress. Job resources, including organizational support, autonomy, adequate facilities, and rewards, further function to buffer the adverse effects of high job demands.

Vanesa (2021) emphasized that transformational leadership suppresses stress-induced negative behavior by fostering a supportive work climate, while Manoppo (2020) highlighted its indirect role in lowering turnover intention through stress reduction and the promotion of positive organizational citizenship behavior. Conversely, high job demands remain major sources of stress. Yang et al. (2017) showed that such demands increase psychological distress and reduce emotional well-being. Moreover, when job resources are insufficient or poorly aligned with job demands, frustration and dissatisfaction may intensify, further elevating stress levels (Maniscalco et al., 2024). These studies underline the importance of balancing leadership, demands, and resources in managing work stress among healthcare workers.

H1: Transformational leadership has a negative effect on work stress.

H2: Job demands have a positive effect on work stress.

H3: Job resources have a negative effect on work stress.

Transformational Leadership, Job Demands, Job Resources, and Turnover Intention

Turnover intention represents employees' inclination to leave the organization and serves as a key indicator of workforce stability (Belete, 2018; Aliu & Kutllovci, 2025). Empirical evidence shows that burnout and high job demands, depersonalization, and job dissatisfaction, as well as low job security (Sokhanvar et al., 2018; Maniscalco et al., 2024). These factors significantly increase this intention among healthcare workers. Crisis conditions and pressures related to professional autonomy further intensify turnover intention (Zheng et al., 2021; Deng et al., 2022). The literature indicates that turnover intention emerges from the interplay of individual, psychological, and organizational factors.

Transformational leadership has consistently been associated with lower turnover intention (Sobaih et al., 2022; Diko & Saxena, 2023). By providing inspiration, individualized consideration, and motivational support, this leadership style fosters emotional attachment and organizational commitment. Manoppo (2020) demonstrated that transformational leadership reduces turnover intention by alleviating work stress and encouraging organizational citizenship behavior. In line with this, Kloutsiniotis and Pateli (2022) found that during crisis situations, transformational leadership decreases employee anxiety and psychological strain, indirectly lowering the desire to leave. Vanesa (2021) further emphasized that a supportive and empowering leadership climate helps suppress negative reactions to stress and strengthens employees' intention to remain in the organization.

Job characteristics also play a decisive role in shaping turnover intention. High job demands, such as excessive workload, time pressure, and emotional strain, have been shown to significantly increase employees' intention to leave, particularly in healthcare settings (Qureshi et al., 2013; Junaidi et al., 2020). When demands exceed personal capacity, employees are more likely to seek alternative employment that offers a better balance. Conversely, adequate job resources, including organizational support, sufficient facilities, autonomy, and fair rewards, enhance job satisfaction (To & Huang, 2022; Sadaf et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2023). Sokhanvar et al. (2018) reported that insufficient resources heighten turnover intention because employees perceive a lack of organizational support. These findings indicate that while high job demands push employees toward exit, the availability of strong job resources can function as a protective factor that lowers turnover intention.

H4: Transformational leadership has a negative effect on turnover intention.

H5: Job demands have a positive effect on turnover intention.

H6: Job resources have a negative effect on turnover intention.

Work Stress as a Mediating Variable

Transformational leadership contributes to lowering turnover intention not only directly but also indirectly by alleviating work stress. By fostering a supportive and open work environment and providing individualized motivation, transformational leaders help reduce employees' stress levels (Mawardi, 2022). Lower stress subsequently enhances job satisfaction and diminishes the desire to leave the organization. Empirical evidence supports this relationship, as Kloutsiniotis and Pateli (2022) demonstrated that transformational leadership reduces stress and psychological strain, while Manoppo (2020) confirmed that work stress significantly mediates the link between transformational leadership and turnover intention. High job demands directly increase turnover intention, while simultaneously triggering work stress, which then strengthens intentions to leave. Research shows that high work pressure increases emotional burden, which in turn increases turnover intentions (Yang et al., 2017). Thus, work stress mediates the relationship between job demands and turnover intention.

Adequate job resources are essential for fostering a healthy and productive workplace (Muppidi & Manoharan, 2025). Insufficient resources, such as limited supervisory support, low autonomy, or restricted opportunities for development, can reduce job satisfaction and heighten employee stress. When these conditions persist, psychological strain may intensify and encourage employees to contemplate leaving the organization (Baquero et al., 2025). Sokhanvar et al. (2018) reported that inadequate job resources significantly increased psychological distress among healthcare workers, which subsequently led to higher turnover intention. This indicates that work stress mediates the relationship between job resources and turnover intention, in which limited resources elevate stress levels and, in turn, strengthen employees' intentions to leave.

H7: Work stress mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention.

H8: Work stress mediates the relationship between job demands and turnover intention.

H9: Work stress mediates the relationship between job resources and turnover intention.

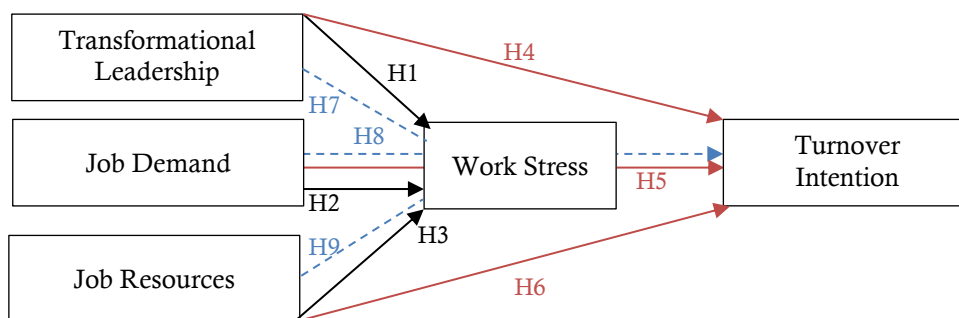


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 posits that transformational leadership and job resources reduce work stress and turnover intention, whereas job demands increase both. Transformational leadership and job resources are hypothesized to lower turnover intention directly and indirectly through reduced work stress, while job demands are expected to heighten turnover intention both directly and via increased work stress. Thus, work stress functions as a central mediating mechanism linking leadership and job characteristics to employees' intention to leave.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to examine the causal relationship between transformational leadership, job demands, job resources, work stress, and turnover intention in one integrated conceptual model. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for measuring complex latent constructs with mediating variables, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is able to evaluate direct and

indirect relationships simultaneously (Hair et al., 2019). This research was conducted at three locations, namely Adhyaksa General Hospital, Dr. Sitanala General Hospital, and Setia Mitra Hospital. These three hospitals were chosen because they represent different workload variations, management systems, and healthcare worker characteristics, allowing researchers to more comprehensively uncover the dynamics of work stress, burnout levels, and potential turnover. Through this cross-institutional comparison, the research is expected to more accurately depict the work paradox in the healthcare sector and provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the well-being and sustainability of healthcare workers.

The study population included medical and non-medical hospital staff in Indonesia, with the sample selected using purposive sampling based on criteria of a minimum work period of six months and involvement in operations or patient care. The study was conducted in three hospitals with a minimum number of respondents of 200 people according to the sample size guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). Data collection was carried out through offline and online questionnaires using a 7-point Likert scale to increase response sensitivity. The research instrument was adapted from previous valid studies, namely transformational leadership, work stress, and turnover intention by Rindu et al. (2020), job demands and job resources by Chênevert et al. (2021), which were then modified for the context of Indonesian healthcare workers. Measurements for each variable covered key dimensions such as idealized influence, work overload, organizational support, physical stress, and intention to quit to capture the phenomenon comprehensively. All data were analyzed using SEM to test the relationship model and the mediating role of work stress in the dynamics of the influence of leadership and work factors on turnover intention.

The analysis commenced with the measurement model assessment to ensure that all indicators demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability, followed by a discriminant validity test to confirm that each construct was conceptually distinct. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, significance levels, and R-square values to assess relationships among variables. Multicollinearity (VIF) and Q^2 predictive relevance were then examined to ensure the stability and predictive capability of the model. Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to determine the contribution of individual paths, and CVPAT was conducted to compare the predictive performance of the PLS-SEM model with alternative approaches. Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) was used to identify priority areas for improvement based on the total effects and performance of indicators on key outcomes such as turnover intention.

RESULTS

Based on the outer model results in the figure, all constructs demonstrated excellent measurement quality and met the validity and reliability criteria in SEM-PLS. Almost all indicators had outer loadings above 0.70, indicating that each item was able to strongly reflect the latent construct. The Transformational Leadership (TL) construct demonstrated high consistency, with loadings between 0.852 and 0.922, thus all indicators were valid for explaining transformational leadership. The Job Demands (JD) variable also demonstrated strong reliability, marked by loadings of 0.798–0.879, confirming that workload, stress, and job conflict were well reflected in its indicators. For Job Resources (JR), all indicators showed loadings of 0.804–0.860, indicating that organizational support, work meaning, and patient recognition were well measured as work resources. The Work Stress (WS) construct demonstrated very high quality with loadings of 0.935–0.947, indicating that physical, emotional, and behavioral stress were strongly represented by its indicators. Meanwhile, Turnover Intention (TI) demonstrated excellent measurement consistency with a loading of 0.947–0.955, indicating that the tendency to change jobs is clearly reflected in all items. Thus, the results of this outer model indicate that all variables have strong convergent validity and construct reliability, making them suitable for further structural analysis.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Evaluation

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	CA	AVE	CR
Job Demands	JD1	0.118	0.95	0.957	0.958
	JD2	0.124			
	JD3	0.113			
	JD4	0.115			
	JD5	0.120			
	JD6	0.112			
	JD7	0.118			
	JD8	0.103			
	JD9	0.131			
	JD10	0.124			
Job Resources	JS1	0.173	0.93	0.684	0.963
	JS2	0.180			
	JS3	0.176			
	JS4	0.103			
	JS5	0.092			
	JS6	0.096			
	JS7	0.113			
	JS8	0.135			
	JS9	0.131			
Turnover Intention	TI1	0.375	0.91	0.903	0.950
	TI2	0.340			
	TI3	0.337			
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.240	0.92	0.788	0.927
	TL2	0.251			
	TL3	0.299			
	TL4	0.333			
Work Stress	WS1	0.358	0.91	0.888	0.937
	WS2	0.346			
	WS3	0.357			

Based on Table 1, the outer loading values indicate that all indicators exceed the threshold of 0.7, demonstrating that each item adequately represents its respective construct. This is further supported by the cross-loading results, which show that each indicator loads more strongly on its own construct than on others, and by the Fornell–Larcker criterion, confirming that discriminant validity has been achieved. Regarding reliability, all constructs exhibit Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability values (ρ_a and ρ_c) above 0.9, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than 0.5, indicating strong internal consistency. These results suggest that the measurement model is highly reliable and that the indicators consistently and accurately capture the underlying constructs. Consequently, the construct of job demands, job resources, transformational leadership, work stress, and turnover intention is measured with sufficient precision, allowing for confident interpretation and further analysis of the relationships among the variables.

Construct validity and reliability were tested using Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All constructs had Cronbach’s Alpha above 0.9 (job demands = 0.95, job resources = 0.93, turnover intention = 0.91, transformational leadership = 0.92, work stress = 0.91), indicating very high internal reliability. Composite Reliability for all constructs was also above 0.9, demonstrating strong construct consistency. AVE values for all constructs were greater than 0.5 (job demands = 0.958, job resources = 0.963, turnover intention = 0.950, transformational leadership = 0.927, work stress = 0.937), showing that the indicators effectively explain the majority of construct variance. These results confirm that all constructs in the study exhibit high validity and reliability and accurately measure the intended concepts.

Based on Table 2, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results show that all values between constructs are below the threshold of 0.90, with the highest value of 0.76 between job demands and work stress. This indicates that there are no serious discriminatory issues

between constructs, so each construct can be considered conceptually and statistically distinct. In other words, the research variables have the ability to measure different phenomena without significant overlap.

Table 2. HTMT Test

Construct	Job Demands	Job Resources	Transformational Leadership	Turnover Intention
Job Resources	0.383			
Transformational Leadership	0.466	0.492		
Turnover Intention	0.688	0.379	0.422	
Work Stress	0.76	0.519	0.54	0.703

Based on Table 3, the results of the Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test indicate that there are no multicollinearity issues among the variables in the structural model. All VIF values are well below the critical threshold of 5.0, and even tend to be low, so that each independent construct does not distort the others in predicting work stress or turnover intention. Job demands have a VIF of 2.122 and 1.312, indicating a very reasonable correlation and do not cause redundancy between predictors. Job Resources also shows low VIF values, namely 1.480 and 1.359, indicating that work resources are not excessively collinear with other variables. Transformational leadership has a VIF of 1.492 and 1.436, which also indicates predictive stability in the model. Meanwhile, work stress has a VIF of 2.499, still within safe limits, so it does not interfere with the estimated relationship with Turnover Intention. These values confirm that multicollinearity is not an issue in the model, and the estimated relationships between variables can be interpreted accurately.

Table 3. VIF Test

Construct	Turnover Intention	Work Stress
Job Demands	2.122	1.312
Job Resources	1.480	1.359
Transformational Leadership	1.492	1.436
Work Stress	2.499	

Based on Table 4, the Q² results for all constructs were greater than zero, confirming that the model has good predictive ability. This means that the model not only explains the relationships between variables in the sample but is also able to predict the values of endogenous variables with sufficient accuracy. Furthermore, the SRMR of 0.074 indicates adequate model fit because it is below the cut-off limit of 0.08. Other parameters, such as d_ULS, d_G, and NFI, are also within the range that supports model suitability. Thus, this study provides strong evidence that the conceptual model used is not only theoretically valid but also empirically appropriate. This provides a solid foundation for interpreting relationships between variables, including direct and mediating effects, so that the findings can be used as a reference for management decision-making related to job satisfaction, stress, and employee turnover.

The F-square analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variables. The results in Table 4 indicate that job demands exert a very strong influence on work stress ($f^2 = 0.618$), suggesting that job demands are the primary source of employee stress. The impact of job demands on turnover intention is in the moderate range ($f^2 = 0.13$), while the effect of work stress on turnover intention is also moderate ($f^2 = 0.107$), supporting the role of stress as a key mediating factor between job demands and employees' intention to leave. Conversely, job resources and transformational leadership show only small effect sizes on turnover intention (each $f^2 = 0.002$) and on work stress ($f^2 = 0.089$ and 0.039 , respectively), indicating that although these factors contribute to the work environment, their influence on stress and turnover intention is relatively weaker compared to that of job demands.

Table 4. Q Square, F Square, and R Square

Test	Path / Variable	Value
Q ²	Job Demands	0.642
	Job Resources	0.597
	Transformational Leadership	0.620
	Turnover Intention	0.750
	Work Stress	0.722
f ²	Job Demands → Turnover Intention	0.130
	Job Demands → Work Stress	0.618
	Job Resources → Turnover Intention	0.002
	Job Resources → Work Stress	0.089
	Transformational Leadership → Turnover Intention	0.002
	Transformational Leadership → Work Stress	0.039
R ²	Work Stress → Turnover Intention	0.107
	Turnover Intention	0.51
	Work Stress	0.60

The R-square results indicate that the research model has satisfactory explanatory power. Turnover Intention has an R-square of 0.51, meaning 51% of its variance is explained by job demands, job resources, transformational leadership, and work stress, with the remaining 49% due to other factors. Work Stress has an R-square of 0.60, showing that 60% of its variance is accounted for by job demands, job resources, and transformational leadership. Adjusted R-square values (0.501 for turnover intention and 0.594 for work stress) are close to the original R-square, indicating that the model is stable and free from overfitting.

Table 5. Cross-Validated Predictive Ability (CVPAT) Value

Variable	PLS-SEM vs Indicator Average (IA)		PLS-SEM vs Linear Model (LM)	
	Average loss difference	p-value	Average loss difference	p-value
Turnover Intention	-0.674	0.002	-0.094	0.390
Work Stress	-1.208	0.000	-0.155	0.010
Overall	-0.941	0.000	-0.124	0.057

Based on Table 5, CVPAT results indicate that the PLS-SEM model has better predictive ability than the Indicator Average (IA) approach, as indicated by the average loss difference values, which are all negative and significant ($p < 0.05$) for the turnover intention and work stress variables, as well as for the overall value. This finding indicates that PLS-SEM is superior in producing more accurate predictions. Meanwhile, compared to the Linear Model (LM), PLS-SEM only shows significant superiority for the Work Stress variable ($p = 0.010$), while for Turnover Intention and the overall value, the differences are not significant. In general, these results confirm that PLS-SEM is a more appropriate approach to use in this study, especially in predicting work stress variables.

Table 6 shows the hypothesis testing results indicate that transformational leadership significantly reduces work stress, while job demands significantly increase it, and job resources significantly help to alleviate it. However, transformational leadership and job resources do not have a significant direct effect on turnover intention, although their relationships are negative, suggesting a tendency to lower employees' intention to leave without strong statistical support. In contrast, job demands show a positive and significant direct effect on turnover intention, confirming that excessive workload and pressure encourage employees to consider leaving the organization. Mediation analysis further reveals that work stress plays a crucial role in explaining the effect of job demands on turnover intention, as higher demands increase stress, which in turn significantly raises the intention to quit. Conversely, the indirect effects of transformational leadership and job resources on turnover intention through work stress are negative but not significant, indicating that their primary contribution lies in reducing stress rather than directly influencing turnover decisions. These findings highlight job demands as the most

dominant factor driving both work stress and turnover intention, with work stress acting as an important mediating mechanism in this relationship.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Code	Hypothesis	Result (β)	p-value	Decision
H1	Transformational Leadership → Work Stress (negative)	-0.151	0.033	Supported
H2	Job Demands → Work Stress (positive)	0.570	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Resources → Work Stress (negative)	-0.219	0.029	Supported
H4	Transformational Leadership → Turnover Intention (negative)	-0.034	0.678	Not Supported
H5	Job Demands → Turnover Intention (positive)	0.367	0.010	Supported
H6	Job Resources → Turnover Intention (negative)	-0.038	0.673	Not Supported
H7	Transformational Leadership → Work Stress → Turnover Intention (negative)	-0.054	0.161	Not Supported
H8	Job Demands → Work Stress → Turnover Intention (positive)	0.206	0.008	Supported
H9	Job Resources → Work Stress → Turnover Intention (negative)	-0.079	0.113	Not Supported

IPMA results confirm that work stress is the most important factor and also the lowest performing factor, making it a key area for organizations to improve to reduce turnover intention. Job demands are a secondary priority, while job resources and transformational leadership are in the high-performance zone and need to be maintained. Furthermore, the result depicted in Figure 2.

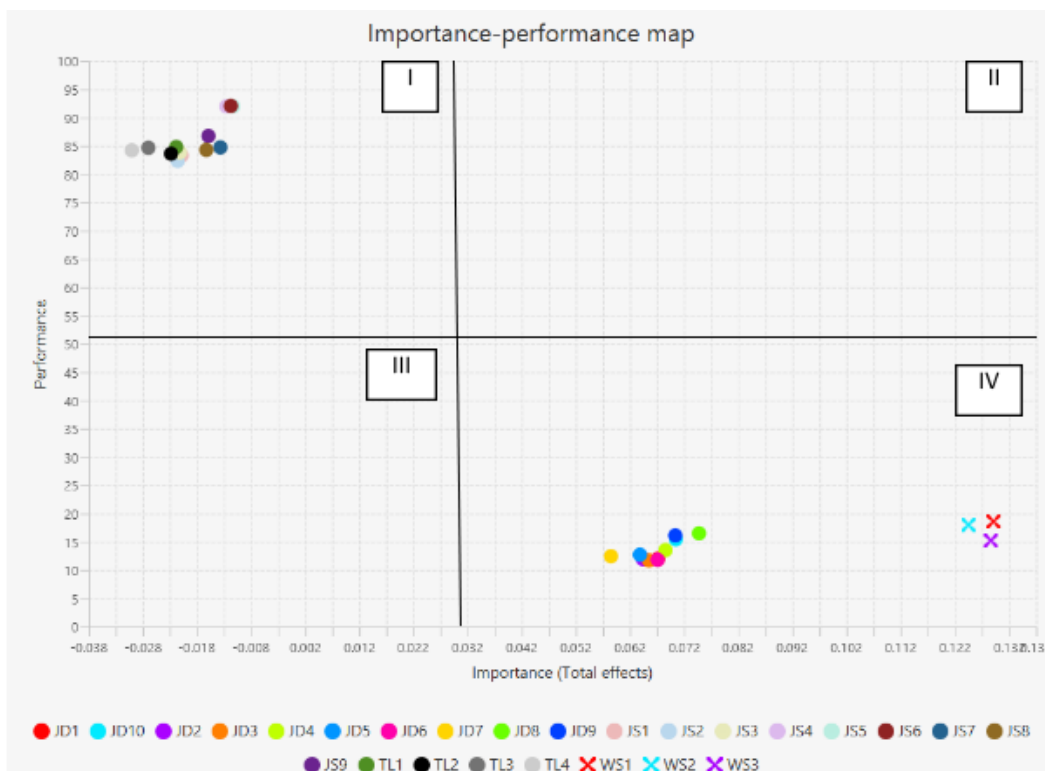


Figure 2. IPMA Indicator

Figure 2 shows that IPMA results show that the work stress indicators (WS1, WS2, WS3) have the highest total effect value on turnover intention (0.125–0.130) with relatively low performance (15.24–18.61). This finding indicates that work stress is a top priority for improvement because it contributes most significantly to turnover intention, while its performance remains low, requiring more intensive managerial intervention. The

job demands indicators (JD1–JD10) have a moderate total effect value (0.059–0.075) with low performance (around 11–16). This indicates that job demands still influence turnover intention, but their contribution is not as strong as that of work stress. However, low performance indicates that job demands still need to be managed to prevent increased employee turnover intention.

DISCUSSION

The study results showed that transformational leadership had a significant negative effect on work stress, indicating that better leadership lowers employee stress levels. This aligns with Vanesa (2021) and Kloutsiniotis et al. (2022), who noted that transformational leaders provide emotional support, clear communication, and guidance that reduce work pressure. Job demands significantly increased work stress, consistent with the JD-R model and Chênevert et al. (2021), as excessive workload, time pressure, and emotional demands trigger stress and burnout. Yang et al. (2017) also found that job pressure predicts turnover and stress among nurses. Job resources had a significant negative effect on stress, meaning that more support, facilities, and training resulted in lower stress, supporting findings by Atalla et al. (2025) and Sokhanvar et al. (2018). Transformational leadership's effect on turnover intention was insignificant, contrasting Manoppo (2020), Martins et al. (2023), and Pattali et al. (2024), suggesting that leadership alone may not prevent turnover under high stress, as noted by Kloutsiniotis et al. (2022).

Job demands were shown to have a significant positive effect on turnover intention, meaning that the higher the job demands, the stronger the employee's desire to leave. This result is consistent with Chênevert et al. (2021) and Deng et al. (2022), who explain that high job pressure drives employees to seek alternative, more stable, and healthier work environments. Job resources were found to have no significant effect on turnover intention. This result differs from the research of Sokhanvar et al. (2018), which found that job resources were able to reduce turnover intention. This insignificance indicates that resource availability is not a strong enough reason for employees to stay when work stress remains high. Hair et al. (2019) stated that insignificant variables can occur when the indirect effect is stronger than the direct effect.

The mediating effect of work stress on the relationship between leadership and turnover intention was found to be insignificant. This finding differs from Rindu et al. (2020) and Manoppo (2020), who found work stress to be a significant mediator. This insignificance indicates that although leadership reduces stress, the reduction is not large enough to indirectly reduce turnover intention. The mediation of work stress between job demands and turnover intention proved significant and positive, indicating that work stress is a crucial link in explaining the impact of job demands on turnover intention. These results support Chênevert et al. (2021) and Deng et al. (2022), who stated that high work pressure increases stress, thus driving turnover. The mediation of work stress on the relationship between job resources and turnover intention was found to be insignificant, in contrast to the study by Atalla et al. (2025), which found that job resources were able to reduce stress, thus suppressing turnover intention. These results indicate that although job resources can reduce stress, the reduction is not significant enough to influence turnover intention.

The IPMA results indicate that work stress has the highest importance for Turnover Intention (0.125–0.130) but low performance (15.24–18.61), making it the main priority for improvement, particularly in managing emotional workload, time pressure, and work capacity. Job demands show moderate importance (0.059–0.075) with low performance (11–16), confirming their role as a secondary trigger of turnover that requires attention, especially regarding workload and cognitive pressure. In contrast, job resources and transformational leadership exhibit small negative effects on turnover intention with high performance (above 82), indicating that both function well as protective factors but are not urgent targets for intervention. The findings emphasize that reducing work stress should be the primary focus, followed by managing job demands, while job resources and leadership should be maintained at their current effective levels.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that job demands, job resources, and transformational leadership play a significant role in shaping employee work stress and turnover intentions. Job demands have consistently been shown to increase stress levels and drive employee intentions to leave the organization. Conversely, job resources and transformational leadership can mitigate work stress, although their direct influence on turnover intentions is not always strong. These findings suggest that work stress is a central mechanism linking working conditions to turnover intentions, making stress management a key strategy for employee retention. At the same time, the results indicate that not all organizational support or leadership styles are capable of directly curbing turnover intentions, especially when work pressure remains high. This indicates that organizational efforts need to focus on balancing job demands with employee capacity and strengthening consistently supportive leadership practices.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture changes in employee behavior and stress over time, thereby limiting the strength of causal inferences. In addition, the use of self-administered questionnaires may introduce response or social desirability bias. The research was also confined to a single organizational context, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other sectors. Moreover, important factors such as organizational commitment, social support, and work culture were not incorporated into the model, even though they may offer further insights into the dynamics of employee turnover.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to employ a longitudinal design to more accurately capture the dynamics of stress and turnover intentions. Mixed methods can also be considered to explore employee experiences in greater depth. Future research can expand the organizational context to make the results more generalizable and include other variables such as burnout, job satisfaction, or organizational support as mediators or moderators. Future researchers are also encouraged to explore specific interventions based on stress management and leadership to gain a stronger understanding of practical strategies that are effective in reducing employee turnover intentions.

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