

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

## Moderating Role of Perceived Job Alternatives in the Relationships between Individual Learning, Compensation, Overtime Work and Turnover Intention

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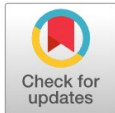
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**Abstract**— Employee turnover is a significant concern for Information Technology (IT) organizations. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the moderating role of perceived job alternatives in the relationship between individual learning, compensation and benefits, and overtime work, on the turnover intention of employees. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect the data through a self-administered structured questionnaire from 524 employees working in various micro, small, medium, and large size IT organizations. Data was analyzed using frequency, alpha reliability, common method biases, and process macro Hayes model 1. The results indicate that employees' turnover intention reduces due to individual learning, compensation and benefits, and overtime work. Moreover, perceived job alternatives only moderate the relationships between individual learning and compensation and benefits. This study advances the literature on employee turnover intention both theoretically and empirically, with a focus on perceived job alternatives as a moderator. Future directions and limitations were also discussed.

**Index Terms**— Turnover intention, compensation and benefits, individual learning, overtime work, IT

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### Introduction

The Economic Survey of Pakistan (2020-2021) indicated that the IT industry has experienced exponential annual growth of 18.85%. Micro-enterprises, independent consultants, and freelancers have contributed approximately \$500 million to IT exports. Moreover, the industry is valued at over \$1 billion. Although Pakistan's dynamic and fast-growing IT industry has achieved significant milestones, it still faces challenges. Balagam and Fariduddin (2008) highlighted that challenges faced globally by IT firms include, but are not limited to, talent shortages, skills development, talent acquisition, and retention. Due to this, the IT industry has a high turnover rate, and it is expected that 69% of technology professionals are open to job opportunities, with 36% actively looking for a new job (CompTIA, 2021). Employee turnover poses a significant challenge for organizations, resulting in substantial costs and performance gaps (Stamolampros et al., 2019).

Based on the aforementioned information, it can be inferred that employee turnover is a pressing issue in the IT industry. Existing literature emphasizes that employees' turnover intention can be reduced when they feel they are continuously learning new skills and

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knowledge, leading to a decrease in their motivation to leave their jobs. (Oh & Kim, 2019). Reasonable compensation has a positive association with employee retention (Rombaut & Guerry, 2020), and it negatively influences turnover intentions (Oh & Kim, 2019). Inadequate compensation can result in high turnover intentions (Silaban and Syah, 2018). According to Tsai et al. (2016) and Junaidi et al. (2020), working overtime is also an antecedent of employee turnover. Furthermore, employee intention to leave is influenced by available perceived job alternatives (PJA) (Albalawi et al., 2019; Feather and Rauter, 2004; Nawaz and Pangil, 2016). This relationship can manifest in various ways, either through a direct pathway where employees actively seek other job options leading to turnover (Anuradha et al., 2017), or indirectly where the mere awareness of alternative opportunities shapes employees' attitudes/behaviors that lead to turnover intention (Huang et al., 2017). Perceived job alternatives is defined as an individual's perception of the availability of other employment options (Wheeler et al., 2007). When individuals perceive that job alternatives exist, they may not expend significant effort to remain in their current organization. Additionally, research in the field points to perceived job alternatives as a moderator of the association between job or person-organization fit and intention to leave (Akbyk, 2016). Huang et al., (2017) suggested that future studies should further study the role of perceived job alternatives in the turnover intention of employees. There is still a lack of knowledge regarding how many aspects of the workplace, including as compensation and benefits, overtime work, and learning, interact to affect these outcomes, despite the growing importance of decreasing turnover and encouraging commitment (Sheikh, 2023). Addressing the research gaps mentioned, this study will contribute to a better understanding of HRM practices, employee engagement, and retention strategies. It will provide valuable insights in reducing turnover intentions, and enhancing employee commitment, leading to more productive and successful organizations. Therefore, the objective of the current study is to understand how individual learning, compensation and benefits, and overtime work affect the turnover intentions of IT professionals. Furthermore, how perceived job alternatives moderate those effects.

This study's findings would be valuable for HR practitioners and organizations to develop strategies to reduce turnover intentions, and also in terms of designing and implementing more effective compensation and benefits programs, reducing excessive overtime hours, and encouraging continuous learning opportunities for the employees in the respective organization. This research might help in the creation of thorough human resource management strategies aimed at promoting employee well-being and commitment in the workplace.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **Individual learning and turnover intention**

According to Laursen and Foss (2003), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), and Sung and Choi (2014), learning is a process that results in creativity. It is an essential component for enhancing employees' competencies, and there are various themes associated with it like work-based learning (Nikolova, et al., (2014), learning by doing, task-related learning, informal learning, and non-informal learning (Kyndt et al., 2009). Wang (2005) asserts that a learning organization includes three elements in addition to orientation: individual learning, team learning, and organizational learning. Individual learning refers to employees' continual attempts to acquire information and skills. Team learning refers to the process of members learning from one another. On the other hand, understanding the system, being empowered, and exercising strategic leadership are all components of organizational learning (Watkins & O'Neil, 2013).

The literature suggests that employees with a learning orientation tend to demonstrate more adaptive responses, leading to positive outcomes (Seibert et al., 1999; Ghafoor et al., 2017). Lee (2000) suggests that IT professionals are motivated to learn and believe in their ability to grow in their job knowledge. This achievement orientation leads them to actively seek learning opportunities (Wynkoop & Walz, 1998) hence, they, are better equipped to manage work demands, leading to reduced work exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). In other words, when workers are engaged and inspired, they are less likely to consider quitting (Kuvaas, 2006; Wegge et al., 2006). Therefore, IT employees' motivation to learn should be negatively related to their turnover intention (Oh & Kim, 2019),

Incremental theory posits that individuals who hold incremental views are more inclined to engage in learning behaviors and seek out challenging projects to enhance their knowledge and abilities. They also tend to have lower levels of turnover intention because they view their job as an opportunity for growth and development rather than a fixed state. Incremental mindset tends to achieve more in the long run because they are more resilient, open to learning, and willing to try to improve their abilities. When employees feel they are experiencing growth in their jobs, they become satisfied and are less likely to seek alternative employment. Employees may be less inclined to leave their current employment due to the opportunities for individual learning. This relationship between individual learning and turnover intention can also be viewed through organizational support theory (Eisenberger, et al., 1986). This theory posits that when IT employees perceive that their organization supports their values and well-being, including providing a conducive learning environment. In return, they exhibit higher job satisfaction and a lower degree of intention to quit (Islam et al., 2015). Summing up, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H1:** Individual Learning is negatively affecting turnover intention.

**H2:** The relationship between individual learning and turnover intention is moderated by perceived job alternatives.

### Compensation & benefit and turnover intention

A working relationship between employees and an organization characterized by the supply of financial and non-financial compensation is known as compensation, which refers to cash benefits received in conjunction with employment (Jeha et al., 2022). It is a reward or respect for the work done and is evaluated depending on the work performed (Pan et al., 2022). Tang et al. (2020) classified them as direct benefits in the form of money and indirect benefits in the form of non-financial benefits. According to Delery et al. (2000), compensation is the sum of financial and non-financial benefits employees receive from a company in exchange for their efforts. Compensation includes monetary advantages, such as pay, insurance, bonuses, and pension, as well as non-monetary benefits, such as additional vacation time, complementary travel, free medical care, or free childcare (Alhmod & Rjoub, 2019).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory asserts that employee behaviors, including commitment, motivation, and effort, are influenced by the mental processes of interpreting and perceiving organizational compensation. Mutiso et al. (2022) highlighted employees compare their efforts and contributions to the organization with the rewards they receive, including salary, bonuses, and other benefits. If employees perceive that their compensation is not commensurate with their efforts, they may feel unfairly treated, become demotivated, and exhibit reduced commitment to their organization. When employees perceive their compensation, such as pay, as fair when it matches their contribution and performance within the organization, they are more satisfied with their work and want to stay with the organization (George, 2015; Rambur et al., 2005)

Employee turnover has been attributed to compensation and benefits, with pay being identified as a powerful motivator (Hausknecht et al., 2009). A reasonable salary encourages employees to remain in the organization (Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2008). Tangthong et al. (2014) and Sijai (2022) indicated that high pay is crucial in retaining productive employees. Higher earnings are an alluring reason as they play a crucial role in employees' decisions to stay or leave their organization, especially in developing countries (Bibi et al., 2017).

Social exchange theory posits that individuals are inclined to reciprocate when they receive organizational benefits, especially when the perceived benefits outweigh the associated costs significantly (Lambert, 2000). This reciprocal behavior plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' turnover intentions, as organizations' handling of these exchanges significantly influences how employees perceive their workplace relationships (Qadri et al., 2022). However, perceived work alternatives have the potential to attenuate the association between income and benefits, and intention to leave. Employees may be less likely to quit their current position solely due to dissatisfaction with pay and benefits if they believe there are numerous alternative employment opportunities available to them. Summing up, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H3:** Compensation and Benefits are negatively affecting turnover intention.

**H4:** The relationship between compensation and benefits and turnover intention is moderated by perceived job alternatives.

### Overtime work and turnover intention

Overtime is characterized as work that lasts for more than three consecutive weeks and exceeds 40 hours per week (Hasanah & Suharnomo, 2016). Hanna et al. (2005) defined overtime as time spent longer than 8 hours per day and, or 40 hours per week. There could be many reasons for overtime work, like higher workload, deadline pressures, or unexpected circumstances that require extra effort. Insufficient management practices can additionally contribute to the necessity for overtime work and pose challenges in providing adequate support for effective work implementation (Hasanah & Suharnomo, 2016; Tan et al., 2020).

Overtime and work overload can be associated with each other in a way that severe workloads can cause overtime, which can have unfavorable effects like anxiety, irritability, disruption, depression, exhaustion, lack of confidence, and increased absences (Maslach & Jackson, 2013). Lee et al. (2016) stated that regular overtime work impacts an employee's capacity to spend time with their family members and engage in leisure activities, which increases the likelihood that they may consider leaving. Furthermore, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory can be used to support the relationship between overtime work and turnover intention; overtime work can result in the depletion of resources (personal, social, and organizational), increasing job stress and lowering job satisfaction, which might raise employees' intent to leave their jobs (Hobfoll, 1989). When employees' resources are depleting, they actively seek and search for alternative employment options/opportunities, as frequent overtime work requirements significantly impact employees' job satisfaction and motivation, leading them to consider leaving their current jobs (Dipboye, 2018). Summing up, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H5:** Overtime work positively affects turnover Intention.

**H6:** The relationship between working overtime and turnover intention is moderated by perceived job alternatives.

### Method

This study focused on IT employees working in Lahore, Pakistan, with work experience ranging from one month to twenty years. Respondents were software developers, human resource managers, project managers, and business development managers, totaling 520

participants. Data collection utilized both online and hard copy self-administered structured questionnaires, distributed through email and in-person visits to IT companies.

**Measures**

Individual learning was measured using Button et al. (1996) and Annosi et al. (2020) scale. Perceived Job Alternatives, turnover Intention, and overtime work measures were adapted from the study by Albalawi et al. (2019). The compensation and benefits scale was adapted from Patiar and Wang (2020). All the measures items were measured on a "Likert Scale" ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree.

**Sample profile**

The table I below provides insights into the surveyed IT professionals, detailing their age, education, industry experience, and the scale of their employers. According to the table, the majority (88.5%) of the respondents fall within the 18-28 years age bracket, indicating a predominantly youthful workforce. Regarding education, the respondents exhibit a diverse range, with the majority (80.9%) holding a bachelor's degree.

Regarding professional experience, the data reveals that the majority (82.1%) of respondents have 0-3 years of work experience in the IT industry, suggesting a significant presence of entry-level professionals. When it comes to organizational size, a significant portion (42.4%) of respondents work in small firms with 10-50 employees. Additionally, respondents from micro, medium-sized, and large-sized firms constitute 22.9%, 23.3%, and 11.5%, respectively indicating a varied representation across different organizational scales.

Table I  
Sample profile

Age	Frequency	Percent	Education	Frequency	Percent
18-28 Years	464	88.5	Diploma/Certificate	24	4.6
28-42 Years	56	10.7	Bachelor's Degree	424	80.9
43-58 Years	4	0.8	Masters	76	14.5
Total	524	100	Total	524	100
Experience in IT	Frequency	Percent	Firm Size	Frequency	Percent
0-3 Years	430	82.1	Micro	120	22.9
4-6 Years	76	14.5	Small	222	42.4
10-12 Years	6	1.1	Medium	122	23.3
13+ Years	12	2.3	Large	60	11.5
Total	524	100	Total	524	100

**Analysis**

The table II below indicates the reliability of the variables. It shows that all the variables' reliability values are above the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1970). A Harman single-factor test was also conducted which found a single factor accounted for 20.741 variance, which is within the threshold. Although the Harman single-factor test does not allow us to exclude common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003) it suggests this is not a severe issue in our study.

Table II  
Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
1 Individual Learning	0.901
2 Compensation and Benefits	0.909
3 Turnover Intention	0.857
4 Overtime Working	0.861
5 Perceived Job Alternatives	0.735

Hayes (2012) process macro Model 1 was used to analyze the proposed hypotheses. The table III below presents the regression analysis results examining the relationship between turnover intention and several variables: Individual Learning, Compensation and Benefit, Overtime Work, and their interactions with Perceived Job Alternatives at different percentiles.

Table III  
Regression analysis

Variables	Turnover Intention			
	R-sq	F (p)	Beta	Sig
Individual Learning	0.108	20.940(.000)	-0.797	0
Individual Learning X Perceived Job Alternatives			0.286	0
Individual Learning X Perceived Job Alternatives at 16th percentiles			-0.225	0.022
Individual Learning X Perceived Job Alternatives at 50th percentiles			0.061	0.452
Individual Learning X Perceived Job Alternatives at 84th percentiles			0.347	0.005
Compensation and Benefit	0.498	172.10(.000)	-0.194	0
Compensation and Benefit X Perceived Job Alternatives			-0.143	0
Compensation and Benefit X Perceived Job Alternatives at 16th percentiles			-0.478	0
Compensation and Benefit X Perceived Job Alternatives at 50th percentiles			-0.621	0
Compensation and Benefit X Perceived Job Alternatives at 84th percentiles			-0.763	0
Overtime Work	0.168	35.057(.000)	-0.411	0.025
Overtime Work X Perceived Job Alternatives			-0.0267	0.631

Individual Learning has a significant negative relationship with turnover intention (Beta = -0.797,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that as individual learning increases, turnover intention decreases. This suggests that employees who perceive themselves as continuously learning and growing in their roles are less likely to intend to leave their jobs. The interaction between individual learning and perceived job alternatives shows exciting results (as shown in figure 1). At the 16th percentile of perceived job alternatives, the negative effect of Individual Learning on turnover intention weakens (Beta = -0.225,  $p = 0.022$ ). This indicates that when job alternatives are scarce, the impact of continuous learning on reducing turnover intention is less pronounced. At the 50th percentile of perceived job alternatives, the negative effect of individual learning on turnover intention becomes insignificant (Beta = .061,  $p = 0.452$ ). Whereas the 84th percentile of perceived job alternatives (Beta = 0.347,  $p = .000$ ) suggests a nuanced relationship. At the 84th percentile of perceived job alternatives (indicating a relatively high perception of available job options), the positive impact of individual learning on reducing turnover intention strengthens. In other words, when employees are aware of numerous job alternatives, the effect of continuous learning on reducing their intention to leave their current job becomes more pronounced.

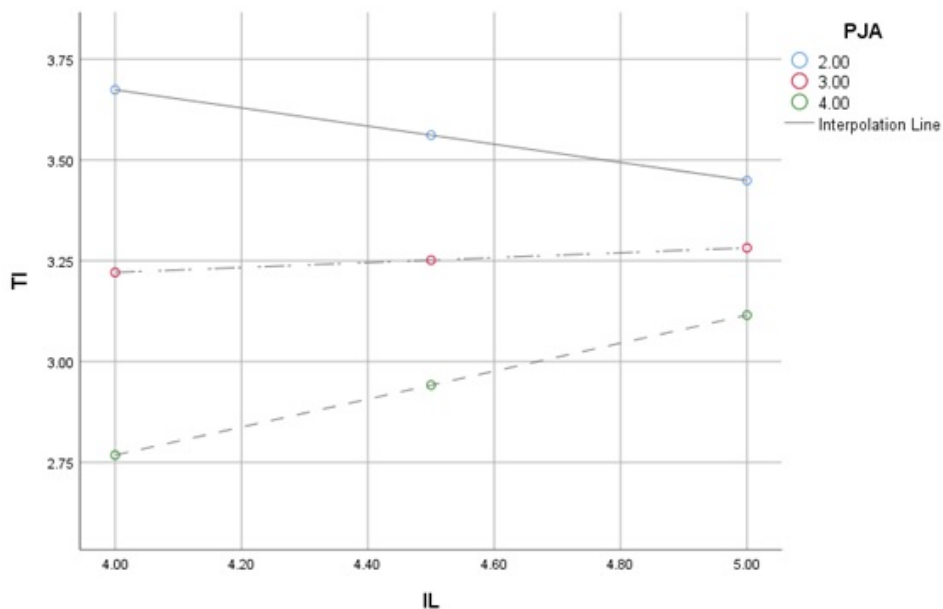


Fig. 1. Individual Learning

The variable "Compensation and Benefits" has a substantial negative relationship with turnover intention (Beta = -0.194,  $p < 0.001$ ), implying that employees who feel adequately compensated and receive good benefits are less likely to consider leaving their jobs. For compensation and benefits, the interaction with Perceived Job Alternatives at different percentiles shows a consistent pattern (as shown in figure 2). As perceived job alternatives decrease (from the 16th to the 84th percentiles), the negative effect of compensation and

benefits on turnover intention becomes stronger. This suggests that when employees perceive fewer job alternatives, the importance of compensation and benefits in retaining them increases significantly.

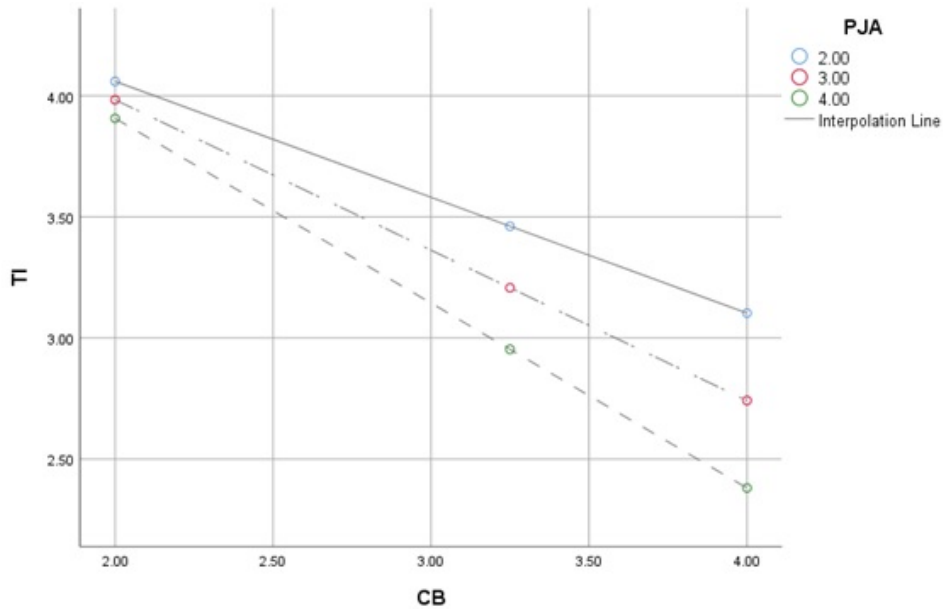


Fig. 2. Compensation and Benefits

Overtime Work is also negatively related to turnover intention (Beta = -0.411,  $p = 0.025$ ). This suggests that employees who work overtime are more likely to consider leaving, although the relationship is weaker compared to individual learning and compensation and benefits. The interaction between overtime work and perceived job alternatives is not statistically significant (as shown in figure 3), indicating that the relationship between overtime work and turnover intention does not significantly change based on the perceived availability of job alternatives.

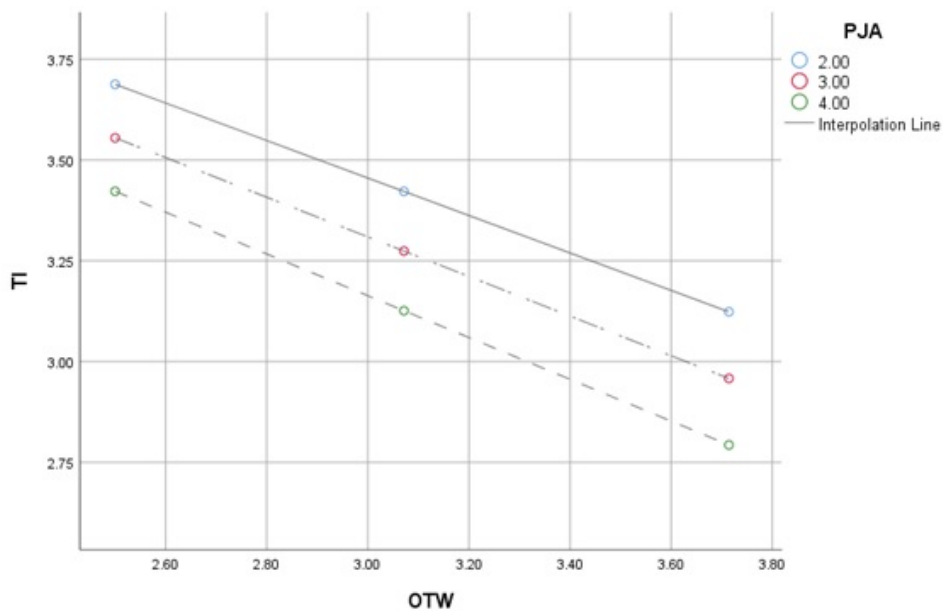


Fig. 3. Overtime Work

### **Future Directions**

The research thesis offers valuable insights into factors influencing individuals' intentions to stay in the IT industry. However, avenues for future research could enhance our understanding further. For instance, exploring additional factors such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, leadership styles, and career development opportunities, alongside variables like compensation and benefits, overtime work, and individual learning, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of turnover intention and organizational commitment in the IT sector.

Moreover, adopting a longitudinal research approach would allow for tracking changes in individuals' attitudes and behaviors over time, providing robust evidence of the relationships among the variables. Additionally, conducting comparative studies across various industries and nations, rather than focusing solely on IT workers in Pakistan, would provide a broader perspective. Different industries and cultural contexts may influence organizational commitment and turnover intention uniquely. Exploring these variations would deepen our understanding of this phenomenon.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study focused on IT employees in Pakistan and may not fully capture the diversity of the global IT industry. To enhance the generalizability of the results, future research should aim to replicate and expand the study in various geographic regions. Secondly, the self-report measures used to gather data for this study are highly susceptible to common method biases such as social attraction bias and common method variance. Future studies might employ multiple data sources or objective metrics, such as supervisor ratings or organizational records, to mitigate potential biases associated with self-report measures. Thirdly, while efforts were made to include a diverse sample of IT employees, the study primarily consisted of software developers, human resource managers, project managers, and business development managers. The findings may not fully capture the perspectives and experiences of other IT roles or organizational levels. Future research could strive for a more comprehensive representation of different IT roles and organizational levels to provide a more thorough explanation of the phenomenon.

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