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## INVESTIGATING THE MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF WORK MEANINGFULNESS, JOB SATISFACTION, AND JOB STRESS ON TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG MALAYSIAN COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS

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### Abstract:

Turnover is a challenging issue for many organizations. Turnover caused organization suffer a loose of competent employees as well as costs associated with employee turnover and hiring new employees. High turnover among community pharmacists presents a significant concern due to its potential negative impact on the quality of pharmaceutical care and patient safety. Addressing this issue requires a thorough investigation of turnover intention, as it has been found to be positively associated with actual turnover. Turnover intention, although not synonymous with immediate departure, serves as a critical indicator of an employee's inclination to leave their current position. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the job satisfaction and job stress, that affect turnover intention among community pharmacists in northern region of Malaysia. The meaningfulness of work was added as mediator. A quantitative study was conducted with 228 community pharmacists who participated in this study voluntarily. The data collection based on self-administered questionnaire. The findings emphasize the critical role of job satisfaction and job stress in influencing turnover intention. The insights offered by this research are valuable for top management in community pharmacies, providing them with the necessary knowledge to formulate effective strategies for managing employee turnover intention. Implementing these strategies can foster a more stable and engaged workforce, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organization as a whole



## Introduction

In Malaysia, turnover intention among employees, particularly in retail sector, including community pharmacies, is a significant issue (Pillai, 2023). This turnover not only disrupts operations but also poses challenges to patient care and safety due to frequent staff changes and potential medication errors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacists took on expanded roles, gaining recognition for their essential services. However, post-pandemic, they faced new challenges like staff shortages and increased stress, leading to higher turnover intentions. Despite the importance of understanding turnover intention in pharmacy settings, research in this area remains limited (Li et al., 2023). Previous studies have identified various factors influencing turnover intention, including job satisfaction and job stress (Chua et al., 2014; Al-Muallem and Al-Surimi, 2019). In Malaysia community pharmacists, in face a challenging situation with turnover intentions due to factors like workloads, long hours and growing responsibilities. These issues often result in dissatisfaction, stress and burnout among these professionals (Arbae, 2019). In addition, the lack of career advancement opportunities in this field may deter them from remaining in their roles for the term (Subramaniam, 2022). In Malaysia as a whole these combined factors contribute to a decline in job satisfaction and an increase in stress and burnout, among healthcare workers, including pharmacists. The prevalence rates were reported as 53.8% (personal) 39.1% (work related) and 17.4% (client related) (Roslan et al., 2021). This study delves deeper into these aspects to support and contented pharmacist workforce. Drawing from existing research, meaningfulness of work will be considered as a mediating variable. This variable can help understand how negative working conditions, such as job stress and work overload, impact turnover intention. By investigating these factors, the study aims to provide insights for effectively managing turnover and promoting a positive work environment in community pharmacies.

## Literature Review

**Table 1: Findings of The Reviewed Sources**

Authors and Years	Purpose	Research Design	Framework	Findings and Summary Points
Iqbal, 2014	To investigate the impact of job satisfaction and job stress on turnover intention	Self-administered questionnaires	No	Job satisfaction had negative relation with turnover intention, whereas job stress has positive relation with turnover intention.
Hwang & Kim, 2021	To investigate the mediating role of meaningfulness of work	Survey system	Theoretical model	Meaningfulness of work mediate work overload towards turnover intention.

Sugiono, 2021	To examine the effect of job satisfaction and job stress on turnover intention	Self-administered questionnaires	SEMFULL Model	Job satisfaction had negative relation with turnover intention, whereas job stress has positive relation with turnover intention.
Al-Muallem & Al-Surimi, 2019	To investigate job satisfaction on turnover intention	Self-administered questionnaires	No	Even though job satisfaction high, turnover intention also high.

There are four points will be discussed in literature review:

### ***Turnover Intention***

Turnover intention is characterized as the conscious contemplation of employees to depart from their current organization, reflecting their readiness to depart due to various factors (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020). It encompasses the cognitive processes involved in considering alternative employment options due to dissatisfaction at work (Seo & Lee, 2021). The intent to leave arises from a lack of motivation, performance, or advancement opportunities in the workplace (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020). Dissatisfied employees are less likely to demonstrate commitment and loyalty, and are more inclined towards planning their turnover (Ghani et al., 2022). Addressing stress levels and job satisfaction is crucial in reducing turnover rates among pharmacists (Teong et al., 2019). High turnover eventually affects pharmaceutical care and patient safety due to a shortage of skilled employees, leading to potential medication errors and negative impacts on healthcare practices (Thin et al., 2022). Thus, organizations must be aware of the consequences of turnover intention, such as medication errors, and identify influencing factors before implementing retention strategies (Hee et al., 2019).

### ***Job Satisfaction***

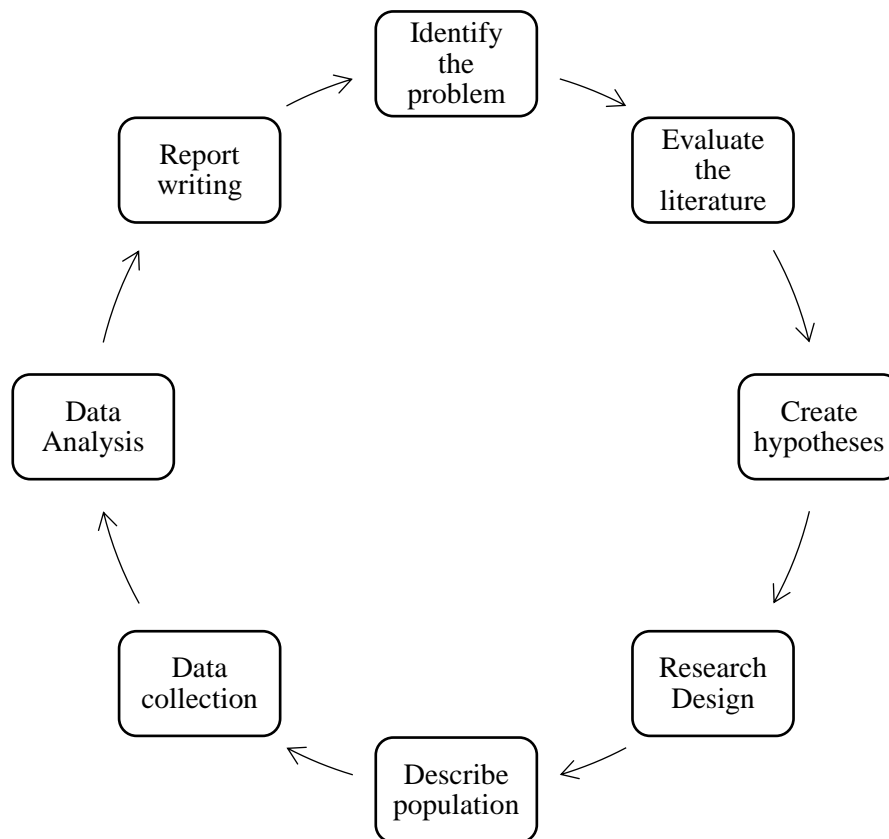
According to Montuori (2022), job satisfaction can be defined as a positive emotional attitude towards one's work. Aodton et al. (2021) describe it as a pleasant emotional state resulting from employees' evaluation of their work. Job satisfaction is a complex concept that encompasses various dimensions of an individual's cognitive evaluation, emotional experiences, and mental state regarding their job (Kalinowska & Marcinowicz, 2020). It represents employees' feelings and thoughts about their work (Udayar et al., 2020), with perceptions of the work environment playing a crucial role in overall satisfaction. Manan et al. (2015) found that 48% of 161 pharmacists across three states (Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, and Perak) expressed low job satisfaction. However, Chua et al. (2014) stated that pharmacists generally have average job satisfaction. This highlights the need to explore the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction among pharmacists in Malaysia. The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention has been extensively studied across various industries, including in Malaysia. Studies by Chua et al. (2014), Al-Muallem and Al-Surimi (2019), Iqbal et al. (2014), and Efendi (2021) consistently show that dissatisfied employees are more likely to intend to leave. These findings underscore the significant adverse impact of job satisfaction on turnover intention, emphasizing the importance of addressing job satisfaction to reduce turnover within organization.



## Methodology

For this survey, respondents were chosen among Malaysian community pharmacists, with a focus on the country's north. The number of community pharmacies in northern region is 923 pharmacies, which consists of 1052 pharmacists included 361 pharmacists in Perak, 390 pharmacists in Penang, 275 pharmacists in Kedah and 26 pharmacists in Perlis (Pharmacy Services Programme, 2023). The sample size was 285 community pharmacists, out of a population of 1052, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional approach with a descriptive survey design. The questionnaires are adopted by study of Iqbal et al., (2014), Qureshi et al., (2012), & Hwang & Kim (2021). Section A of the survey consisted of eight (8) demographic questions. A total of twenty-five (25) items were measured using Likert-type responses, ranging from strongly disagree at "1" to strongly agree at "5." The six-month study was based on a self-administered questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Science was used to analyse the data using the purposive sampling approach (SPSS). About the scale reliability and validity, the Cronbach's a reliability coefficient was used to measure the reliability of all instruments.

The research process in this study is shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2: Research Process**

## Findings

### Correlation Analysis

A total of 228 sample respondents were usable. Of this, 158 of these respondents (69.3%) were women, and 70 (30.7%) were men. In this study, all independent variables and mediating variable components were correlated with the dependent variable, turnover intention. Table 2 demonstrates substantial negative connection between turnover intention and job satisfaction, and also mediating variable (meaningfulness of work). The correlation between turnover intention and job stress showed positive connection.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients**

Variables	JS	JOBS	MW	TI
Job satisfaction (JS)	1			
Job stress (JOBS)	-0.42**	1		
Meaningfulness of work (MW)	0.46**	-0.38**	1	
Turnover intention (TI)	-0.57**	0.71**	-0.51**	1

Note: N= 228, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

### Regression Analysis

Results of regression analysis in Table 3 indicated that job satisfaction and job stress were significant with dependent variable (turnover intention). The R Square of 0.685 explains 68.5% of variability contributing to turnover intention. The mediating variable (meaningfulness of work) was significant with dependent variable (turnover intention). The R Square of 0.255 explains 25.5% of variability contributing to turnover intention.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

Variables	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Significance value
Job Satisfaction	-0.161	0.001**
Job Stress	0.310	0.000**
R Square	0.685	
Adjusted R Square	0.677	
F Test	80.198	0.000
Mediating Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Significance value
Meaningfulness of Work	-0.505	0.000**
R Square	0.255	
Adjusted R Square	0.251	
F Test	77.245	0.000

### Mediation Analysis

Table 4 showed the mediation of meaningfulness of work towards all independent variables and turnover intention. Based on the results, meaningfulness of work mediated job satisfaction ( $\beta$ : -0.431\*\*) and job stress ( $\beta$ : 0.603\*\*), towards turnover intention.



**Table 4: Mediation Results**

Variables	(MW)	TI (without MW)	TI (with MW)	TI
	Std. $\beta$			
Job satisfaction (JS)	0.462**	-0.572**	-0.431**	
Meaningfulness of Work (MW)				-0.306**
Job stress (JOBS)	-0.382**	0.708**	0.603**	
Meaningfulness of work (MW)				-0.275**

## Discussions

The analysis posits a negative and significant association between job satisfaction and intention to leave. This finding is consistent with previous research by Quynh & Tran (2021), Rijasawitri & Suana (2020), Al-Muallem and Al-Surimi (2019), Sugiono et al. (2019) and Susanti et al. (2020). These studies have consistently demonstrated that higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with lower intentions to leave one's current job. In the context of community pharmacy, this finding suggests that community pharmacists who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to consider changing their jobs. Job satisfaction plays a crucial role in retaining employees and reducing turnover intention in the pharmacy profession. Therefore, organizations and managers in community pharmacy settings should prioritize efforts to enhance job satisfaction among their employees as a strategy for retaining talent and improving workforce stability.

For job stress, the analysis posits a positive and significant relationship between work stress and turnover intention. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Sugiono et al. (2021), Al-Muallem and Al-Surimi (2019), Efendi (2021), and Rijasawitri & Suana (2020). These studies have consistently demonstrated that higher levels of work stress are associated with higher intentions to leave one's current job. The positive correlation between work stress and turnover intention suggests that as community pharmacists experience higher levels of stress in the workplace, they are more likely to consider leaving their jobs. Work stress can negatively impact job satisfaction, engagement, and overall well-being, leading community pharmacists to seek alternative employment opportunities or leave the workforce altogether. Organizations should implement strategies to identify and mitigate sources of work stress, provide support and resources for employees to manage stress effectively, and foster a positive work environment conducive to employee well-being and performance.

The negative impact of the meaningfulness of work on turnover intention is a consistent finding across several studies, including those conducted by Heath et al. (2022), Xu et al. (2023), Hwang & Kim (2021), and Vermooten et al. (2019). These studies collectively emphasize the significant role that the perceived meaningfulness of work plays in shaping employees' intentions to leave their current positions. This finding suggests that employees who perceive their work as meaningful are less likely to entertain thoughts of leaving their jobs.

## Recommendations

Based on the research findings indicating the significant relationships between job satisfaction and job stress with turnover intention in community pharmacies, it is essential for management to develop targeted strategies to address employee turnover effectively. To boost job satisfaction, management should prioritize understanding and meeting employee needs,

offering skill development opportunities, and recognizing their contributions. Since job stress links closely to turnover, management must identify and reduce stress sources through stress management programs and better workload management.

In this study, only two independent variables, which are job satisfaction and job stress, were included in the list of antecedents examined in this study. Investigating the impact of additional factors on turnover intention would be crucial. Future researcher can use other independent variables that may related to turnover intention. For example, work-life balance and leadership styles variables. This may bring the new picture of factors that affect turnover intention. Belete AK (2018) indicated that leadership styles also one of the important factors of turnover intention.

The present study only focused on one organization, which is community pharmacy. Future researcher should wider the scale of study by consider focusing in both public and private organization (Nawawi et al., 2019). Employees in each sector may have different opinion about turnover intention. The result of finding perhaps different with the large of sample size. Besides, if future researcher uses large of sample size, there a chance for greater significance result (Cornish, 2006). Other than that, this research only focused on community pharmacies in northern regions, so the future research can be conducted in other regions of Malaysia to examine the variety of the result.

## Conclusion

This study revealed that job satisfaction was negative and significantly influences turnover intention. Meanwhile, job stress was positive and significantly influences turnover intention. The presence of meaningfulness of work as mediating variable has proven that when employees find their work meaningful, it tends to foster a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Meaningful work can contribute to a higher level of job satisfaction and overall well-being. Furthermore, a sense of purpose and connection to one's work can act as a buffer against the desire to leave the organization. The objectives investigated in this study are achieved.

Based on the findings, top management of community pharmacies can take more precautions to formulate the strategy on how they can reduce the turnover intention among their employees according to the factors that affecting turnover intention. The organization need to reduce pharmacists stress level and increase their satisfaction towards their jobs to avoid them from thinking to quit their jobs. This study also contributed to The Pharmacy Services Programme, under Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) to revise current situation regarding turnover intention in community pharmacies. The findings of this research presented to them the potential risks associated with employee intention to quit and the relevant strategies towards managing these problems.

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