

# Factors Influencing the Turnover Intention of Middle Managers at a Company in China

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**Abstract.** *The purposes of this study are as follows: (1) to explore the factors influencing turnover intention of middle managers at the Peisidun Lock Industry Company in China; and (2) to compare the influences of age, gender and years of experience on turnover intention of these middle managers. A sample of 44 employees were randomly selected from Peisidun Lock Industry Company in Ruan city of China. A questionnaire was used to collect the data, and was divided into two sections. The first part included demographic data, and the second part used a job satisfaction scale based on the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), a short-form, organizational commitment scale designed by Allen and Meyer (1991), and a turnover intention scale adapted from Chen, Hui and Sego (1998). The findings reveal that job satisfaction was at a high level and the organizational commitment was at a moderate level. From the comparison between different gender and different years of experience, there were no significant differences. In the comparison between different age groups of middle managers, a significant difference in organizational commitment was found. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment had a negative relationship with turnover intention, and organizational commitment was a significant predictor of middle manager turnover intention. The job satisfaction of the 1980's group having 6 years of experience or less were significant predictors of turnover intention.*

**Keywords:** Middle Manager; Turnover Intention; Job Satisfaction; Organizational Commitment.

## Introduction

With today's economic globalization and changing economic system, human resources have become a more important factor for influencing the survival and development of enterprise, making it more competitive for people at every level. When the labor market became tighter and labor scarcity grew, the emphasis shifted towards the detrimental effects of turnover (Robert, 2000). Nancy (2001) reported that firms in the U.S pay more than \$140 billion annually in recruitment, training, and administrative expenses to replace employees who leave.

Accompanied by an improvement in the social security system and reform of labor and employment mechanisms in China, the phenomenon of voluntary turnover has extended gradually from corporations to such sectors as public institutions (Ye, 2005). According to Zhang (2013) research showed that China's high turnover rate had a serious impact on every industry. For example, staff turnover rates in 2012 were 31% in retail, 26.6% in high-tech/manufacturing, 19.5% in fast moving consumer goods, and 19.2% in the health care industry. Every industry has this turnover problem in China. Though turnover is to some extent favorable for the optimal allocation of human resources, high turnover rates clearly affect the sustainable development of an organization and also may deeply disrupt the morale of the employees that remain (Hom & Griffeth, 1994).

A middle manager acts in many roles, and is a core power of the enterprise. Given this responsibility for the development of enterprise and oversight of every employee, the function of

middle manager cannot be replaced. Employee turnover for the enterprise will bring many negative effects, such as increasing the cost of labor, possibly reducing employee morale and so on, therefore middle manager turnover behavior will create larger losses for the enterprise. Holtom, Mitchell and Lee (2006) add to that list of variables ones not as obvious. These include: 1) diminished customer service ability, 2) the lack of continuity on key projects, and 3) the loss of future leadership talent.

As the middle manager is the link both to the top management and to first-line employees, a middle management employee will obviously be under pressure, possibly leading to psychological problems that could cause such middle manager turnover. A wealth of human resources is contained in a huge population such as China (Cooke, 2005). The enterprise can easily find the human resources they require, but an outstanding middle manager needs a long time to train, making highly talented middle managers very scarce.

Middle manager is the person who performs management at the middle level of a company. This person functions as the link of top manager and first-line employees. Middle managers must have all kinds of basic operational knowledge. They are both a leader and an employee.

Even though the middle manager turnover rate may be less than for other staff members, turnover is a concern as the middle manager is the “motor” in an organization (Haneberg, 2005). Reducing the turnover rate of middle managers is very important. According to another report (jobsDB Q1 Hiring Index, 2013), the average turnover rate among all respondents was 8.6%, for companies with 201-500 staff, the average turnover rate in the past three months was 6.6%, while for middle management it was 23.0%.

In order to solve the problem of turnover, it is important to understand factors influencing it. This study aimed to explore the factors influencing turnover intention of middle managers by analyzing the relationship of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention.

## Significance of the Study

The intentions of this study are to investigate middle managers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention at the Peisidun Lock Industry Company.

The benefit to the middle manager would be in the sense that each middle manager was given an opportunity to state their individual opinions of their work, the organization, their feelings regarding job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus possibly achieving some positive effect on potential middle management turnover.

The management will benefit from the study too. This study will assist management to find and ameliorate those factors that may result in turnover intention. Therefore this will create and strengthen a reciprocal relationship between the middle manager and management.

## Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were as follows: (1) To explore the factors influencing turnover intention of middle managers at the Peisidun Lock Industry Company; and (2) To compare the factors influencing turnover intention of middle managers according to age, gender and years of experience.

## Literature Review

### Middle Managers' Roles

A middle manager is the link between the top manager and first-line employees. For the top manager, middle managers are executors of orders, for the first-line employees they are leaders, so middle managers have many different roles in the organization. Organization development cannot leave out the middle manager. Middle managers have been defined by many scholars. Huy (2001,

p.73) described them as “any managers two levels below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals.” Middle managers get supervision from top managers, and at the same time supervise first-line employees (Noble, 1999). Werner and Bagraim (2007) defined different groups of professionals and found that the key position was middle manager and not the manager. Middle managers need to act as leaders, managers, innovators, motivators, developers, communicators, listeners, coordinators, evaluators and members of a team (Holden & Roberts, 2004).

Demerouti (2001) stated that middle managers can provide the best way to solve every question in each organization, since they know how projects can change, they can adapt and understand how to actualize change in these projects. Robbins and Judge (2009) stated that middle manager can give innovative suggestions in particular areas, such as changing markets and manufacturing, and their attitude will affect the success or failure of the organization. Business organizations, the state sector and schools went through reform from 1980 to 1990, including commercialization, privatization, decentralization, rationalization and downsizing, all of which required middle managers to use new skills to keep up the vitality and growth of organizations (Avery, Everett, Finkelde & Wallace, 1999; Denny & Richard, 2003)

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as individual evaluation of a job and work context (McShane and Von Glinow, 2008). Robbins (2005, p29) defined job satisfaction as “a collection of feelings that an individual holds towards his or her job.”

Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003) added that individuals who have high job satisfaction will show positive attitudes to their jobs, but individuals with dissatisfaction will have negative attitudes to their jobs. Employee thoughts of quitting and job satisfaction are closely linked, and job satisfaction is the best predictor to find turnover intention leading to actual turnover (Mowday, Koberg, & McArthur, 1984, Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008).

Bigliardi, Petroni and Dormio (2005) indicate the turnover often means lack of motivation through individual dissatisfaction with some aspect, maybe the work environment including the job, co-workers or the organization; the organization has some aspect which affects the individual such as poor performance or attendance. Common job satisfaction factors include co-workers, appreciation, benefits, job conditions, pay, promotion, supervision, and the organization’s policies or procedures (Spector, 1997). Armstrong (2006) indicated that the key factors influencing job satisfaction included career opportunities, job influence, teamwork and job challenge.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Martin and Roodt (2008) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization.

Allen and Meyer (1991) created the three-component model of organizational commitment. Affective commitment refers to the degree to which a person identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in an organization; continuance commitment involves a person’s bond to an organization based on what it would cost that person to leave the company; normative commitment involves a feeling of moral obligation to continue working for a particular organization. Martin and Roodt (2008) summarized organizational commitment as having three characteristic traits: (1) Identification: identifying with an organization and organization goals and values; (2) Loyalty: a strong desire to maintain investment with the organization; and (3) Involvement: willingness to work hard on behalf of the organization.

Studies have consistently supported that existence of a positive relationship between increased organization commitment and individual actions, such as decreased intention to search for new jobs and reduced turnover (Bergmann, Lester, Meuse & Grahn, 2000; Boles, Madupalli, Rutherford & Wood, 2007). Meyer and Allen (1997) noted that employees having organizational commitment will have a higher tendency to stay in their jobs.

### **Turnover Intention**

Bigliardi, Petroni and Dormio (2005) defined turnover intention as the perception of an individual employee to stay or leave the organization. Gregory, Way, LeFort, Barrett and Parfey (2007) found that behavior of intention to quit is the strongest predictor of personnel turnover.

According to Joel, Vicky and Ngoh (2007), turnover intention involves three kinds of variables: demographic factors (employee age, gender, marital status and number of children), organizational factors (employee length of service, salary drawn and number of staff), and attitudinal factors (job satisfaction, work-related stress and level of commitment in the organization). Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner (2000) in their report believed both variables of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are mediating factors of actual turnover behaviors.

### **The Lock Industry Company**

Peisidun Lock Industry Co.,Ltd was established in March 2005, and is located in the western suburbs of Wenzhou. It performs research, development, manufacture, and sales of decorative hardware, building hardware, middle-grade lever handle door locks, anti-theft door locks, and intelligent locks as one of the high-tech growing enterprises. The company has formatted enterprise groups during its development. The company has also formatted the group enterprise as the long term development. The subsidiary, Peisidun Lock Industry Company has 240 workers, include 50 middle managers. As technologies progress, industry may need more and more new professionals to join the company and make sure key employees are retained, especially middle managers. The company needs middle managers to promote employees to achieve every goal. (Su, 2009).

### **Scope of the Study**

This study falls within the following parameters: (1) this study focuses on the middle manager in the Peisidun Lock Industry Company; (2) the study analyzes the influencing factors on turnover intention according to job satisfaction and organizational commitment; and (3) the study compares factors of gender, age, and years of experience of middle managers in influencing turnover intention.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study was 50 middle managers from different departments at Peisidun Lock Industry Company, China. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size estimation formula, the sample size of this study was 44 middle managers.

#### **Instrument**

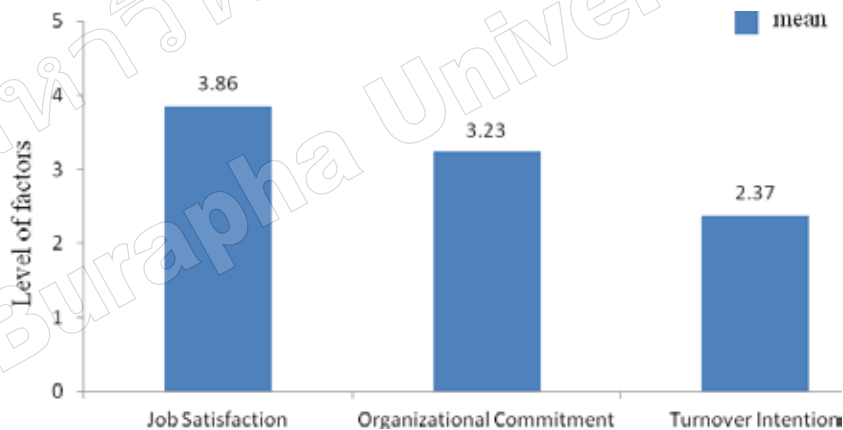
The instrument of this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire contents were divided into two sections: part one - demographic data; part two - job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention. (1) Demographic data: gender, age and years of experience. The sample was divided into two groups according to Chinese generations: born between 1970-1979 and born between 1980-1989; the years of experience of middle managers (between 2 to 9 years) was divided into two groups, 5 years of experience and below and 6 years of experience and above; (2) Job satisfaction scale was based on the original Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), the short-form has 20 items as designed by Weiss (1977); (3) Organizational commitment scale designed by Allen and Meyer (1990); and (4) Turnover intention scale was assessed using a 3-item scale adapted from Chen, Hui & Segó (1998).

## Data Collection and Analysis

To collect effective data, the topic and purpose of the research were transmitted to the participants by the researcher. Meanwhile, a guarantee was given by the researcher to the participants that their responses on the questionnaire were protected and used for academic research only. The questionnaires were distributed to each middle manager. The completed questionnaires were collected and returned to the researcher by mail. There were in total 44 sets of questionnaires returned. The 100 percent completed, returned questionnaires were analyzed by descriptive statistics to explore the importance of factors influencing middle manager turnover intention. Data were tallied and fed into a computer by employing the SPSS program. The data were analyzed by using the t-test, correlations analysis and regression analysis.

## Findings

This section interprets the results of this study, based on the quantitative analysis of data from the questionnaire to answer two research questions. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were both factors with negative relationship with turnover intention. In the comparisons of factors among different genders and different years of experience, there were no significant differences. From the comparison of factors among different age groups of middle manager, there was a significant difference in organizational commitment.



**Figure 1** Means of the factors influencing turnover intention of middle managers

### 1) Job Satisfaction

Figure 1 shows that job satisfaction (Mean = 3.86) was high, and was the first ranked for middle managers. From the comparison of different gender, age, and years of experience of middle managers, there were no significant differences in the factors.

### 2) Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was at the medium level (Mean = 3.23). Through the comparison of organizational commitment between genders and years of experience of middle managers, no significant differences were found. There were significant differences in organizational commitment by age group: middle managers in the 1970's group (Mean = 3.50) had a significantly higher mean score for organizational commitment than the 1980's group (Mean = 3.17).

### 3) Turnover Intention

Turnover intention had the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.37) among the three factors. From the comparisons of middle managers of different gender, age, and years of experience, no significant differences in turnover intention were found.

Table 1. Demographic Data for Sampled Middle Managers.

		<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>
Gender	Male	23	44
	Female	21	
Age	1970 – 1979's	11	
	1980 – 1989's	33	
Years of Experience	5 years and below	25	
	6 years and above	19	
Total			44

The respondents' demographic information is as show in the Table 1, results are presented for an analysis of the entire sample of 44 respondents. Means and standard deviations of levels of agreement were calculated for each of two turnover intention factors and for each of the 46 questionnaire statements

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Job Satisfaction Scores of Middle Managers.

Question NO.	Job Satisfaction	(N = 44)		
		Mean	SD	Level
1	Being able to keep myself busy all the time	4.14	0.85	High
7	Being able to do work that doesn't go against my conscience	4.14	0.98	High
11	The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	4.09	0.68	High
18	The way my co-workers get along with each other	4.09	0.52	High
9	The chance to do things for other people	4.02	0.76	High

Table 2 shows the first three Means of the job satisfaction items for middle managers. The first three were "Being able to keep myself busy all the time" and "Being able to do work that doesn't go against my conscience" (Mean = 4.14), "The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities" and "The way my co-workers get along with each other" (Mean = 4.09), "The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities" (Mean = 4.02).

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of organizational commitment Middle Managers.

Question NO.	Organizational Commitment	(N = 44)		
		Mean	SD	Level
41	Things were better in the days when people stayed in one organization for most of their careers	3.61	0.97	High
42	I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization	3.59	0.90	High
23	I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own	3.59	0.95	High
27	This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me	3.52	0.88	High
30	It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to	3.52	0.85	High
36	I think that people these days move from company to company too often	3.52	1.02	High

Table 3 shows the first three Mean scores for the organizational commitment items for middle managers. The most popular responses were "Things were better in the days when people stayed in one organization for most of their careers" (Mean = 3.61), "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" and "I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization" (Mean = 3.59), "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me", "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to" and "I think that people these days move from company to company too often" (Mean = 3.52).

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Turnover Intention Items for Middle Managers.

Question NO.	Turnover intention	(N = 44)		
		Mean	SD	Level
45	If I may choose again, I will choose to work for the current organization	2.50	1.00	Medium
46	It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year	2.48	0.93	Low
44	I often think of leaving my organization	2.14	0.96	Low

Table 4 shows the ranking of the turnover intention items for middle managers. The order was "If I may choose again, I will choose to work for the current organization" (Mean = 2.50), "It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year" (Mean = 2.48), "I often think of leaving my organization" (Mean = 2.14).

Table 5. Comparison of Factors of Middle Managers between Ages.

Factor	The 1970's group (n = 11)		The 1980's group (n = 33)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Job satisfaction	3.92	0.42	3.84	0.41	0.59	0.56
Organizational commitment	3.50	0.40	3.17	0.34	2.07	0.04*

\* p &lt; 0.05

Table 5 shows that there were significant differences in organizational commitment; the 1970's group of middle managers indicated a high level of commitment (Mean = 3.50) and the 1980's group of middle managers indicated a medium level (Mean = 3.17). The job satisfaction of both the 1970's group and the 1980's group of middle managers was high (Mean = 3.92 and Mean = 3.84).

Table 6. Correlations between Three Factors Related to Turnover Intention.

	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Turnover intention
Job satisfaction	1.00	0.52**	-0.33*
Organizational commitment		1.00	-0.65**
Turnover intention			1.00

\*\* p &lt; 0.01

\* p &lt; 0.05

Table 6 shows that job satisfaction had a positive correlation with organizational commitment (0.52\*\*) and a negative correlation with turnover intention (-0.33\*). Also, it shows that organizational commitment had a negative correlation with turnover intention (-0.65\*\*).

Table 7. Regression Analysis for Turnover Intention with Job satisfaction and Organizational Commitment for the Each Group

Sample		Variables	
		Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment
<b>Full Sample</b> (R <sup>2</sup> =0.40, p=0.03)	beta	0.01	-0.66
	t-test	0.05	-4.75
	p	0.96	0.00
<b>Male Group</b> (R <sup>2</sup> =0.49, p=0.00)	beta	0.11	-0.75
	t-test	0.61	-4.14
	p	0.55	0.00
<b>Female Group</b> (R <sup>2</sup> =0.43, p=0.01)	beta	-0.04	-0.62
	t-test	-0.19	-2.72
	p	0.85	0.01



Sample	Variables		
	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment	
<b>The 1980's Group</b> (R2=0.44, p=0.01)	beta	-0.05	-0.66
	t-test	-0.31	-3.88
	p	0.01	0.00
<b>6years of Experience and Above Group</b> (R2=0.66, p=0.00)	beta	-0.03	-0.79
	t-test	-0.18	-4.50
	p	0.00	0.00

Table 7 shows the full sample value of R2 of 0.40, showing that 40% of the variation in turnover intention is explained by the two factors, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The model has statistical significance ( $p = 0.03$ ). Beta of organizational commitment (beta = -0.66, t-test = -4.75,  $p = 0.00$ ) shows significance. Organizational commitment has distinct relationship with turnover intention.

The male group value of R2 of 0.49, showing that 49% of the variation in turnover intention is explained by the two factors, job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the male group. The model had statistical significance ( $p = 0.00$ ). Beta of organizational commitment (beta = -0.75, t-test = -4.14,  $p = 0.00$ ) did show significance. Organizational commitment of males has distinct importance in the regression for turnover intention.

The female group value of R2 of 0.43, showing that 43% of the variation in turnover intention of females is explained by the factors job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The model had statistical significance ( $p = 0.01$ ). Beta of organizational commitment (beta = -0.62, t-test = -2.72,  $p = 0.01$ ) did show significance. Organizational commitment of females has distinct importance in the regression for turnover intention.

The 1980's group value of R2 of 0.44, showing that 44% of the variation in turnover intention for this group is explained by the two factors, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The model was statistically significant ( $p = 0.01$ ). Beta of job satisfaction (beta = -0.05, t-test = -0.31,  $p = 0.01$ ) indicates significance for turnover intention. Beta of organizational commitment (beta = -0.66, t-test = -3.88,  $p = 0.00$ ) also shows significance. Both job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the 1980's group has distinct importance in the regression for turnover intention.

The 6 years of experience and above group value of R2 of 0.66, showing that 66% of the variation in turnover intention of the group with more experience is explained by the two factors, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The model had statistical significance ( $p = 0.001$ ). Beta of job satisfaction (beta = -0.03, t-test = -0.18,  $p = 0.00$ ) shows significance for turnover intention. Beta of organizational commitment (beta = -0.79, t-test = -4.50,  $p = 0.00$ ) also shows significance. Both job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the middle managers with 6 years of experience or more have distinct importance in the regression for turnover intention.

## Discussion

### 1) Age, gender and years of experience

Samad (2006) stated that empirical studies show demographic factors of age, gender and years of experience are relevant to turnover intention. There were no gender and years of experience group differences detected in this study. The turnover intention did not differ significantly by demographic groups. There were significant differences between the two age groups in the organizational commitment.

## **2) Jobs satisfaction**

Jobs satisfaction is how people feel about their work and the work setting, it is based on work itself, salary, benefits, co-workers, promotion opportunities or supervision. In this study, middle managers had more satisfaction about work itself and co-workers, such as keeping self busy, doing work that don't go against one's own conscience, the chance to do things for other people, the chance to do something that makes use of own abilities, and the way co-workers get along with each other.

## **3) Organizational commitment**

Organizational commitment emerged at the medium level in this study. Organizational commitment is the degree of agreement, input and loyalty of staff to the organization. This degree may be based on affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. In this study, the majority of middle managers agreed with this notion of responsibility on their organization; this organizational also has a great deal of personal meaning for them, even they agree people leave so frequently, but they would be very hard to leave this organization, because they were taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to this organization, and they also agreed people stayed in one organization for most of their careers.

## **4) Turnover intention**

Turnover intention emerged the lowest level in this study. Turnover intention is subjective, to reflect possibility of an employee changing his or her job within a certain time period, and it is an immediate precursor to actual turnover. In this study, the middle managers had low intention to leave the current organization and look for a new job in next year.

## **5) Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are related to a middle manager's turnover intention**

This finding indicates that the middle managers are more committed with their organization, relative to their turnover intention. "Most empirical studies of organizational commitment have focused on affective commitment. It is because affective commitment is the strongest and most consistent predictor of organizationally desired outcomes such as employee retention" (Mohamed, Taylor & Hassan, 2006, p514). These findings are both well supported in the related literature (Mowday, Koberg, & McArthur, 1984, Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008, Allen & Meyer, 1997, Joel, Vicky & Ngoh, 2007).

In conclusion, in order to keep middle managers working hard, a high job satisfaction and organizational commitment level is necessary. In this study, it was found that the job satisfaction and organizational commitment are important as they reduce the turnover intention. Keeping high job satisfaction and organizational commitment was a primary desire of all of middle managers.

## **6) Significant predictors of middle manager turnover intention**

Regression analysis was used to determine the significance of factors on turnover intention for the sample of middle managers as a whole. Organizational commitment is the best predictors for turnover intention. Therefore, organizational commitment is worth additional consideration as a factor influencing middle manager turnover intention.

Regression analysis was also used to determine the significance of factors influencing turnover intention for different demographic groups. Males, females, the 1980's and 6 years of experience groups yielded significant regression models. For males and females, only organization commitment was significant, and is the best predictor for turnover intention. For the 1980's group and 6 years of experience and above group, both job satisfaction and organizational commitment factors were significant predictors of turnover intention. Therefore, job satisfaction and organizational commitment

are worth additional consideration as factors influencing middle managers turnover intention according to their demographic characteristics.

## Recommendations

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment both have negative relationships with turnover intention. The research suggests company improvement of the working environment, empowerment of middle managers through attendance of conferences, workshops and any other means to inform about the policies. Use of feedback systems gives middle managers a sense of how they are performing and thus what they need to improve on if needs be. Salary increments and staff position should be according to employees' qualifications. This can make middle managers more engaged in the job, and may help to keep higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

There are many studies on turnover intention from around the world. This study only focused on the middle managers' turnover intention. For further research, the researcher suggests examining other positions such as top managers or first-line employees, and determining if factors influencing turnover intention differ among positions.

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