RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Colleague Turnover Impacting on Employee Turnover Intention at SMEs in Chongqing, China

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of interpersonal interaction factors (employee similarity, performance differences, and employee personality traits) resulting from colleague turnover on employees' turnover intention. Additionally, the study sought to explore the mediating role of perceived job opportunities in above relationship. Research sample comprised 960,000 employees from SMEs enterprises across various industries in Chongqing, China. Employing a two-time point matching method, 466 valid questionnaires were ultimately collected. Correlation and hierarchical correlation analyses were utilized to examine the hypotheses. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between factors of interpersonal interactions stemming from colleague turnover and employees' turnover intention. Furthermore, the results supported the mediating influence of perceived job opportunities on the association between colleague departing and employee turnover intention. This research addresses the current gap in the discussion of interpersonal interaction theory within employee turnover research, thereby advancing theoretical exploration in this domain. Drawing upon social comparison theory, personality trait theory, and the turnover process model, the study elucidates how colleagues' turnover behavior impacts employees' turnover intention, contributing to practical, industrial, and theoretical advancements. Moreover, this study fills a crucial void in turnover research, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which witnessed a notable surge in employee turnover rates.

INTRODUCTION

The weakening impact of COVID-19 has led to an increase in job demand and organizational mobility in the employment market, potentially contributing to a sustained rise in employee turnover rates amidst ongoing economic uncertainty (SHRM News, 2021). Resignation, particularly, has been contagious when faced with such novel, perilous, or ambiguous situations like COVID-19 (Morgan Smith, 2023). According to a CNBC (2023), over half of American workers (61%) are contemplating resigning.

The impact of colleague turnover on employee retention has become a new focus in turnover research (Pi Xin, 2017). The Human Resources Research Center noted that Chinese firms affected by high turnover rates perceive the influence of interpersonal interactions on employees' intention to leave due to colleague turnover (HR Research Center, 2022). This topic has been continuously raised

in recent corporate turnover incidents. Employee turnover contagion is a real phenomenon, and managers have limited time to mitigate or prevent its effects (Visier Insights Report, 2024).

Researchers have found that colleague turnover affects the attitudes of retained employees, potentially prompting others to leave as well, and this influence is difficult to intervene or prevent (Christine Ro, 2021; Felps et al., 2009; Wang Zhenyuan et al., 2016). However, previous turnover research has largely overlooked the impact of interpersonal factors on employee turnover (Ployhart et al., 2014). Traditional factors in existing interpersonal interaction models have not fully explained why people want to leave (Pi Xin, 2017; Wang Zhenyuan et al., 2015). Some studies have not covered a sufficient range or included large enough samples. Empirical evaluations of turnover contagion models based on interpersonal factors are still lacking (Huang et al., 2022; Porter & Rigby, 2021).

This study provides a preliminary exploration of the inevitable factors and impacts of interpersonal interactions within organizations through an in-depth examination of relevant literature in the field. By delving into the mechanisms through which colleague resignations affect employees' intentions to leave, particular emphasis is placed on employees' subjective perceptions and attitude changes. Three influencing mechanisms of employee similarity, performance difference, and employee personality traits are proposed to enhance the interpersonal interaction model in turnover research. Through the analysis of this phenomenon, relevant management suggestions are provided for enterprise managers to effectively control and reduce the negative impact caused by human interaction and infection.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the surge in employee turnover rates, particularly influenced by factors like COVID-19, there remains a lack of understanding of the interpersonal communication processes contributing to resignations. Few studies have explored how attribution impacts turnover intention within colleague turnover contexts, while the significance of interpersonal interaction processes in employee resignation has been overlooked. Prevailing research primarily focuses on antecedent variables without delving into specific mechanisms. Additionally, there is insufficient understanding of how resignation behaviors spread within groups.

Further exploration into the mechanisms driving turnover behavior is needed. Key inquiries include understanding how colleague resignations influence remaining employees' intentions to leave and the factors shaping how they interpret this information. Before implementing solutions, gathering more information on factors such as surface similarity between employees, performance differences, different personality traits, and the perception of job opportunities is essential. Only with a comprehensive understanding can effective solutions be developed to address the challenges posed by high turnover rates in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge these research gaps by investigating the following questions:

RQ1: Is there a positive correlation between high employee similarity and turnover intention?

RQ2: Does performance difference correlate positively with turnover intention?

RQ3: Is there a positive correlation between employees' intention to leave and their locus of control personality traits?

RQ4: Does perceived external job opportunities plays mediating role between employee similarities, performance differences, personality traits, and turnover intention?

1.2 Study Significance

This study offers novel insights into the relationship between colleague departing and employee turnover intention, contributing to the understanding of interpersonal interaction processes in turnover phenomena. While existing research on collective turnover has predominantly focused on

antecedents and consequences, this study fills a gap by analyzing the process of collective turnover, particularly the interpersonal influence process. Through empirical analysis, it uncovers how colleague turnover influences individual turnover intention, expanding the scope of research on collective resignation processes.

Additionally, this study strengthens the link between decision-making theory and turnover research by clarifying the turnover decision-making process. It emphasizes that resignation is essentially a decision-making process influenced by employees' perceptions and evaluations of job opportunities. By integrating decision theory with turnover research, this study provides a theoretical framework to explain the mechanism of colleague turnover, highlighting the significance of job opportunity evaluation.

Furthermore, this study explores the intermediary path through which colleague leaving affects employee turnover intentions from the perspective of job opportunity utility evaluation, merging decision theory with turnover research. By empirically testing the mediating role of job opportunity perceptions, it demonstrates how colleague turnover impacts individual turnover intentions, shedding light on the contribution of decision-making theory to turnover research.

Moreover, this study delves into the unique interpersonal interactions in collective resignation and their impact on turnover intention, highlighting the theoretical significance of interpersonal influence. By examining the influence of colleague turnover on individual turnover intentions, it reveals that employees are influenced not only by their own decisions but also by interpersonal interactions during collective resignation. This expands on traditional individual resignation research, offering a new theoretical perspective on the role of interpersonal interaction in turnover intentions.

Lastly, this research deepens understanding of the boundary conditions of colleague turnover's impact on individual turnover intentions by analyzing situational factors. It considers factors such as similarity, performance differences between colleagues and individuals, and individual personality characteristics, enhancing the explanatory power of the model and offering insights into the complex process by which colleague turnover influences individual turnover intentions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Turnover Research Based on Interpersonal Interaction

In this era of career fluidity, managers have observed a phenomenon of cascading resignations. That is to say, the voluntary departure of one employee may trigger a series of voluntary departures among others

(De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2023). Driven by both practical and theoretical considerations, this trend has garnered increasing attention in recent years (Visier Insights Report, 2024).

Previous turnover research has failed to fully explain the phenomenon of interpersonal contagion. Researchers need to explore factors between macroeconomics and micro-psychology, with a focus on individual behaviors within a social context (Johns, 2006). Examining the effects of colleague turnover can expand the depth and breadth of research, enhancing theoretical understanding in the field of organizational behavior (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2005). It reveals how social structures and interpersonal factors influence individual decisions.

The impact of colleague turnover on individual turnover intentions is explained by three primary theories, which are discussed in the literatures of social comparison, social contagion, and information diffusion. According to the information diffusion approach, employees actively or passively learn about the state of the labor market and start to think about their own chances of finding other employment when they witness colleagues departing the company (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985). According to the social contagion theory, employees imitate behavior by interacting

with and comparing themselves to departing colleagues (Liu Lihua et al., 2023). Social comparison theory indicates that when social comparisons reveal differences in thinking, feelings, or behaviors compared to others, individuals often adjust their understanding of the environment and align their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors with others (Festinger, 1954). Further researches have provided multiple factors influencing employees' turnover intentions from an interpersonal interaction perspective(De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2023). Overall, these viewpoints and theories contribute to better explaining the variable mechanisms of interpersonal interactions as they relate to the impact of coworker turnover on employees' turnover intentions.

2.2 Turnover Research Based on Employee Similarity

The social comparison theory posits that the clarity of information affects individuals' self-assessment in social comparisons (Brockner & Kim, 1993; YUAN Jingbo et al., 2023). Employee similarity refers to the degree of similarity in explicit characteristics between two parties (Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Thus, individuals are more inclined to seek comparison information from those who are similar to them when they are in situations of information ambiguity or high risk (Liu Lihua et al., 2023; YUAN Jingbo et al., 2023). The concept of "comparative relevance" suggests that individuals choose comparison targets based on their perceived relevance to potential reference objects (Goodman & Haisley, 2007).

Individuals commonly select reference points that are relevant and easily assessable, such as interdependence and proximity, as well as their connection to information availability. Employees engaged in highly collaborative roles have the opportunity to gain insights into each other's tasks (ZHAO Chen et al., 2024). Consequently, the resemblance in explicit characteristics between departing employees and those who remain will directly lead to the former becoming benchmarks for comparison by the latter (Brockner & Kim, 1993). Should highly similar colleagues secure better employment prospects post-departure, it will significantly influence employees' personal attitudes and work orientations (Christine Ro, 2021; ZHAO Chen et al., 2024).

BBC report indicates that when highly similar colleagues voluntarily leave, employees perceive the existence of external job opportunities (Kate Morgan, 2023). By comparing themselves with departing colleagues based on explicit characteristics, they believe that better jobs can be found after resignation, leading to higher intentions to leave. However, employees rarely compare themselves with departing colleagues who have lower similarity, thus their job satisfaction and turnover intentions are less influenced by departing colleagues. Therefore, we propose the hypothesis. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: High similarity between leaving colleague and employee positively affects turnover intention.

H5: There is a mediation role for perceived external job opportunity in the relationship between employee similarity and turnover intention.

2.3 Turnover Research Based on Performance Difference

In the process of considering job options, employees often evaluate their current status by comparing it with others, especially when faced with a decision that is full of risk and uncertainty such as leaving (SONG et al., 2023; Zhou Huaikang et al., 2023). In addition to the explicit trait comparisons mentioned in the previous point, employees often also consider ability comparisons.

Depending on the direction of comparison, social comparisons can be categorized into upward, parallel, or downward comparisons. Upward comparison occurs when individuals assess themselves in relation to those perceived as superior to them, with the aim of self-improvement (ZHAO Chen et al., 2024). Parallel comparison involves individuals evaluating their own thoughts and abilities by contrasting them with those of similar others, in order to obtain more reliable and authentic information (Goethals & Darley, 1987). Downward comparison, on the other hand, occurs when

individuals compare themselves to those deemed inferior, as a means to enhance subjective well-being and maintain self-esteem (Suls & Thomas Ashby Wills, 2024). The comparison material encompasses abilities, opinions, and emotions. This study specifically focuses on comparing employees' competencies, as it assesses their potential for pursuing enhanced career opportunities.

When contemplating a career transition, individuals often find it necessary to evaluate both their suitability for a new position and the likelihood of securing more favorable employment opportunities elsewhere. Job performance serves as a primary metric in the evaluation of employee effectiveness (Huang et al., 2022; Zhou Huaikang et al., 2023). Personality traits, past experiences, and differences in abilities collectively influence an individual's prospects for success. Peer comparisons can highlight disparities in professional skills and influence one's perceptions of potential career paths (Campbell, 1990). This study utilizes the performance differential between current employees and departed colleagues as a variable for empirical research and assessment, serving as an indicator of social comparison. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: Performance difference between employees and departing colleague has a positive impact on turnover intention.

H6: The relationship between employee turnover intention and performance difference is mediated by perceived external job opportunities.

2.4 Turnover Research Based on Personality Traits

While there exists research investigating the association between individual traits and turnover, conventional turnover studies primarily focus on job characteristics and work environment as determinants of turnover intention. The question of why certain individuals is inclined towards changing employment has been addressed in select studies (Ghiselli, 1974; Zhang Fangyu, 2023). Scholars have noted that an individual's propensity to switch jobs could be influenced by their personality traits.

Allport (1961), renowned as the progenitor of trait theory, proposed that traits represent enduring behavioral tendencies that persist across diverse contexts. A comprehension of personality traits can facilitate decision-making processes and enable the anticipation of employee conduct. Personality traits are commonly employed to delineate individual differences in organizational behavior (Allport, 1961).

There are various categorization schemes available for personality traits within the scholarly discourse. For instance, Rotter (1966) introduced the concept of internal and external locus of control, Tupes and Christal (1958) proposed the "Big Five" model, and Cattell (1970) outlined 16 personality factors. Of these, the locus of control concept, which can explain a substantial portion, up to 25%, of the variance in employee work behavior, holds particular significance within the realms of management and industrial psychology (Peltokorpi & Sekiguchi, 2023).

The concept referred to as locus of control delineates a pervasive anticipation individuals develop through the reinforcement and attribution of their actions and outcomes (Rotter, 1966). Those possessing an internal locus of control attribute events to their own capabilities, while individuals with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to external forces (Chia-Yi Chen, 2023). Variations in profession choices, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and job performance exhibit substantial distinctions contingent upon these personality dispositions (Peltokorpi & Sekiguchi, 2023; Srite et al., 2007). When confronted with equivalent levels of job dissatisfaction, research by Spector (1982) demonstrates that employees with an internal locus of control exhibit a higher propensity for resignation compared to those with an external locus of control. Further investigations by Allen et al. (2005) indicate that the locus of control orientations of employees influence whether they actualize their intentions to leave the organization through tangible turnover

actions. Huang Youli and Zhou Qin (2010) ascertain that in China, job satisfaction and turnover behaviors are significantly influenced by the interplay between locus of control and organizational support (Huang Youli & Zhou Qin, 2010). Moreover, research by Xie Wenxin et al. (2015) suggests that employees who perceive their skills surpass the requirements of their current roles may become dissatisfied and depart the organization, or alternatively seek opportunities to showcase their abilities elsewhere (Xie Wenxin et al., 2015).

The majority of contemporary research concerning employee turnover focuses on the transition from turnover intention to turnover behavior, with relatively less emphasis on the personality traits associated with locus of control. According to Pi Xin (2017), individuals with an external locus of control are more inclined to resort to drastic measures such as resigning, whereas those with an internal locus of control are more predisposed to proactively addressing work-related issues. Conversely, Huang et al., (2010) and Peltokorpi & Sekiguchi (2023) argue that individuals with an external locus of control tend to lack confidence, while those with an internal locus of control perceive a broader array of external opportunities available to them.

This study aims to explore the impact of employees with an internal locus of control on turnover intention, elucidating this relationship through the lens of the perception of external job opportunities. This research is motivated by the limited focus within the existing literature on these specific aspects. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Employees with internal locus of control personality traits have a higher intention to leave their jobs when their colleagues leave.

H7: The relationship between employee turnover intention and employee with internal locus of control personality traits is mediated by perceived external job opportunities.

2.5 Turnover Research Based on Perceived Job Opportunities

Research on turnover has gradually shifted towards a multidimensional interactive decision-making approach, moving away from individual-centric perspectives. Although the impact of attitude variables on turnover propensity may not be highly significant, models that comprehensively consider factors such as interpersonal interactions, personality traits, and social comparisons can offer a more comprehensive explanatory power (Peltokorpi & Allen, 2024; Qi Mingshan, 2005). Viewing the impact of coworker turnover on employee turnover propensity from the perspective of occupational decision-making aligns with current trends and practical realities in the study of employee turnover decision theories (Peltokorpi & Allen, 2024). Decision-making is often based on bounded rationality, where individuals are constrained by the complexity of their environment and their limited computational abilities. Thus, the knowledge individuals possess plays a crucial role in the rationality of their decisions and actions, indicating the significant influence of individuals' acquisition and interpretation of information on final decision-making outcomes.

Since the model proposed by March & Simon (1958), researchers have been investigating the effects of perceived job opportunities on turnover rates. This model encompasses employees' perceptions of the reasonableness and difficulty of organizational turnover. Studies have shown that perceived internal and external job opportunities are important factors influencing turnover propensity (Adekiya, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2017). As the perception of internal career opportunities increases, turnover propensity decreases correspondingly, while an increase in perceived external job opportunities leads to a higher willingness to leave. Scholars have proposed various methods to assess perceived employment opportunities, such as the design of three measurement scales for perceived internal job opportunities by Griffeth et al. (2005), and the introduction of the Employment Opportunity Index (EOI) to measure perceived external opportunities.

While most studies on turnover rates use job opportunities as variables, some models still have explanatory deficiencies, such as the lack of clarity on how employees measure the value and net benefits of external job opportunities. This study conducts an in-depth identification and analysis of the concept of job opportunities in turnover research by drawing on relevant theories of occupational advancement. Therefore, we hypothesis:

H4: Employee turnover intention is positively impacted by perceived external job opportunities.
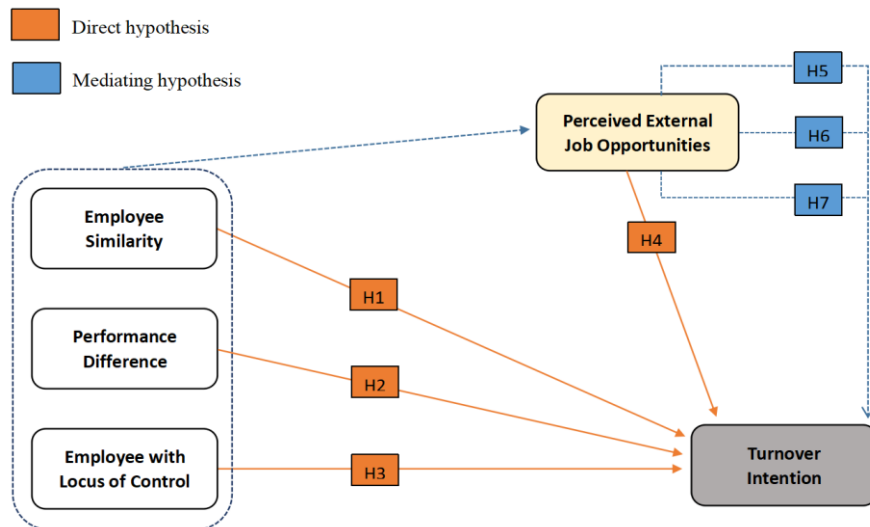

Fig. 1: Research Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach to collect the necessary primary data. In the empirical measurement of this study, the subjects directly answered the questionnaire about the turnover status of their department within one year, which was used as the data of "colleague turnover". Doing so can jog employees' memories of former colleagues and use them to fill in follow-up questions. During the screening process of the author's questionnaire, questionnaires in which no colleagues from the department resigned within one year were deleted. All variables in this study used existing maturity scales, and all scales used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree.

Employee similarity is measured based on the revised Surface Similarity Scale (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Wang Zhenyuan et al., 2015). Performance differences were measured using the Job Performance Measurement Scale (Law et al., 2000; Williams, 1988), which is the most widely used performance measurement tool in previous studies. Personality traits were measured using the Task-based Internal and External Locus of Control Scale (Judge et al., 1998; Pi Xin, 2017). Perceived external job opportunities are measured using EOI (Griffeth et al., 2005; Steel & Landon, 2010). Finally, the Resignation Intention Scale (Farh et al., 1998; Pi Xin, 2017) is used for turnover intention, because the scale has a moderate number of questions and can improve measurement efficiency.

3.1 Population and Sample Selection

The samples of this research come from 960,000 SMEs in different industries in Chongqing, China (Chongqing News, 2021). According to Krejcie & Morgan sample size calculation formula, the population of this study is (N=384).

The study's questionnaire comprises three sections. The first part provides instructions, emphasizing ethical guidelines, and aims to alleviate respondents' psychological pressure. It assures respondents

that the survey is solely for academic research, ensuring strict confidentiality of all information collected without any commercial use. The questionnaire has been stated to impose no greater risk to respondents than their daily life situations, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and respondents' right to withdraw at any time. The survey ensures anonymity, explicitly stating that respondents' personal information is protected. The formal survey section employs a validated 5-point Likert scale. The third part expresses gratitude to the respondents and provides instructions for questionnaire submission.

The following prerequisites must be satisfied by the research subjects: 1) Chinese small- and medium-sized business employees in Chongqing; 2) Employed by the company for more than six months; 3) Requires at least two colleagues; 4) Colleague turnover occurred within one year.

This study employed two rounds of online questionnaire surveys. Approximately two weeks elapsed between each round of questioning. The researcher preemptively gathered all respondents' cell phone numbers through the questionnaire settings. These numbers facilitated the matching of subjects across both survey rounds.

To alleviate potential biases inherent in conventional methodologies, the questionnaire administered at time point 1 assessed the following variables: gender, age, education level, number of colleagues, perceived similarity among employees, performance differentials, personality traits, and perceived external job opportunities. At time point 2, the questionnaire investigated employees' intentions to resign. Initially, a total of 702 questionnaires were distributed, and two weeks later, during the second phase, 523 questionnaires were returned. Questionnaires that were inconsistent with the number of colleagues, inconsistent with the resignation status of colleagues, incorrect formats, duplicate data, etc. were eliminated, resulting in a total of 466 valid data.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Examining the mediating role of perceived external job opportunities on coworker turnover and employee turnover intention (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze and test the results of the hypotheses (Mohammadi et al., 2018). To ensure the integrity of the analysis, preliminary steps involve the removal of outliers, addressing questionable responses, and handling missing values, as recommended by Van den Broeck et al., (2005). Subsequently, an examination of the measurement model is conducted to ascertain its adherence to PLS-SEM standards. This evaluation encompasses considerations such as composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, and convergent validity, in line with the guidelines proposed by Mikhalkin et al. (2017). Following this, structural models are employed to evaluate the predictive relevance of the model, as well as the significance of coefficients and effect sizes pertaining to the variables used in hypothesis testing, as suggested by Joseph F. Hair et al., (2021) and Sarstedt et al., (2020).

4.1 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of study variables. As shown in Table 1, all variables in this study showed good consistency, with Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.6. Furthermore, the AVE values exceeded the threshold of 0.50 and all constructs showed high reliability, indicating that the reliability of the measurement model was ensured.

Table 1: Research Construct Reliability

V	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EJO	0.916	0.930	0.598
ES	0.908	0.927	0.643

IC	0.890	0.912	0.565
PD	0.910	0.930	0.689
TOI	0.894	0.926	0.759

A method for enhancing the Fornell-Larcker criteria (AVE) for discriminant validity and identifying any associated issues is the heterogeneity-monogenism ratio (HTMT). This study employs latent variable comparisons to validate the external coherence of the model and evaluate discriminant validity. The study demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, as evidenced by the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) in this table surpassing the correlation between latent variables (Henseler et al., 2016; Hubona et al., 2021).

Table 2: Research Fornell-Larcker Criterion

V	EJO	ES	IC	PD	TOI
EJO	0.773				
ES	0.348	0.802			
IC	0.358	0.317	0.752		
PD	0.363	0.315	0.428	0.830	
TOI	0.472	0.419	0.560	0.482	0.871

In addition, the HTMT values of each variable are shown in Table 3, ranging from 0.381 to 0.835. None of the values exceeded 0.9 or 0.85, indicating the existence of discriminant validity between variables (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3: HTMT – Matrix

V	EJO	ES	IC	PD	TOI
EJO					
ES	0.380				
IC	0.394	0.350			
PD	0.396	0.344	0.470		
TOI	0.519	0.461	0.621	0.534	

4.2 Structural Model Relationships

The PLS-SEM algorithm is performed to obtain estimates of structural model relationships between building blocks, which can be expressed in terms of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2021). To determine the statistical significance of path coefficients, this study generated A subsample of 10,000 was taken and a two-tailed test was performed. As can be seen in Figure 2, all path coefficients are statistically significant.
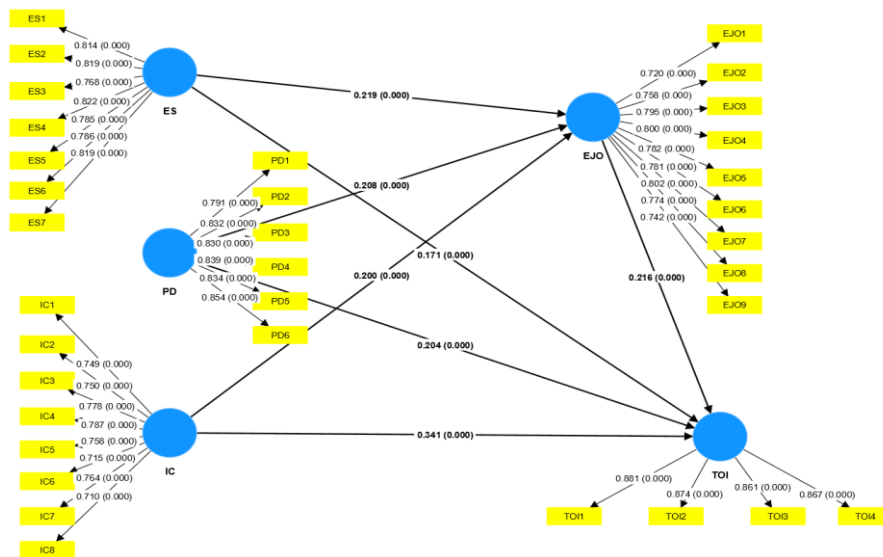
Fig. 2: Structural Model of Two-tail Test Results

The results of Table 4 present the P values and T statistics for each route coefficient in the structural model. The path coefficient linking TOI and EJO is 0.216 (T=5.392, p<0.05), indicating a statistically significant and positive association. EJO exhibits a considerable mediating effect, with a statistically significant positive correlation between ES and EJO evident through a path coefficient of 0.219 (T=5.231, p <0.05). Both TOI and ES demonstrate positive and statistically significant path coefficients at 0.171 (T=4.624, p<0.05). The path coefficient between EJO and IC is 0.2 (T=4.118, p<0.05), suggesting a statistically significant and noteworthy mediating effect for EJO. Additionally, T=PD and EJO exhibit a route coefficient of 0.341 between IC and TOI. EJO demonstrates a substantial mediating effect, with a path coefficient of 0.208 (T=3.984, p<0.05), which is positive and statistically significant. Consequently, these findings enable us to make informed management decisions and construct a reliable structural model.

Table 4: Research Path Coefficient

Path coefficients	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
EJO -> TOI	0.216	0.215	0.040	5.392	0.00
ES -> EJO	0.219	0.221	0.042	5.231	0.00
ES -> TOI	0.171	0.172	0.037	4.624	0.00
IC -> EJO	0.200	0.201	0.049	4.118	0.00
IC -> TOI	0.341	0.342	0.043	7.994	0.00

PD -> EJO	0.208	0.209	0.052	3.984	0.00
PD -> TOI	0.204	0.204	0.041	4.935	0.00

4.3 Testing Hypotheses

PLS-SEM analyzes were conducted to examine the impact of coworker turnover and the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and employee turnover intentions. As indicated in Table 5, the positive path coefficient of colleague mobility's interpersonal interaction effect (comprising employee similarity, performance disparities, employee with internal locus personality traits, perceived external job opportunities) ranges from 0.171 to 0.341, with a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.05. It underscores a noteworthy positive association between employee similarity, performance disparities, employee internal locus of personality traits, perceived external job opportunities, and employee turnover intention. Hence, enhancing the retention and job satisfaction of employees who closely resemble departing colleagues, exhibit significant performance gaps, and possess internal locus of control personality traits may mitigate employees' inclination to resign voluntarily. This strategy can potentially curtail resignation contagion and diminish the likelihood of collective resignations. The findings of this study lend support to research hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4.

Table 5: Direct Hypothesis Testing

path	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	P values	findings
ES→TOI	H1	0.171	0.000	**Supported**
PD→TOI	H2	0.204	0.000	**Supported**
IC→TOI	H3	0.341	0.000	**Supported**
EJO→TOI	H4	0.216	0.000	**Supported**

The results of three path analyses are presented in Table 6, which delineates the mediation role of internal control personality traits, performance differentials, and interpersonal factors such as employee similarity, influencing employees' intentions to leave their current job and the occurrence of colleague resignations. Among these findings, H5 demonstrates a statistically significant p-value of 0.000 and a path coefficient of 0.047, providing empirical support for the hypothesis that employees' desire to leave their current position is mediated by their perception of external job opportunities relative to performance differentials. Similarly, H6 is supported with a p-value of 0.002 and a path coefficient of 0.045. Moreover, the outcome of H7 illustrates that internal locus personality traits and turnover intentions are mediated by perceived external employment prospects, with a path coefficient of 0.043 and a p-value of 0.002.

Table 6: Mediating Hypothesis Testing

path	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	P values	findings
ES→EJO→TOI	H5	0.047	0.000	**Supported**
PD→EJO→TOI	H6	0.045	0.002	**Supported**
IC→EJO→TOI	H7	0.043	0.002	**Supported**

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Resignation contagion is a dynamic behavior, characterized by ongoing interactions and mutual influence among multiple individuals. To understand employees' reactions to this phenomenon and implement effective control measures, organizations need a deep understanding of the interpersonal diffusion process of resignations and the impact of colleague resignations on interpersonal interactions.

Research findings indicate that interpersonal factors resulting from colleague resignations significantly influence the perception of external job opportunities. Colleague resignations can increase employees' awareness of external job opportunities, thereby enhancing their turnover intentions (Chen et al., 2023). Employees who draw more favorable conclusions from comparisons with resigning colleagues are more likely to perceive external job opportunities and consider leaving. Thus, it is believed that by prioritizing employees' career development and personal growth,

organizations can effectively prevent resignation contagion, instilling confidence in employees to remain unaffected by perceived external opportunities.

Furthermore, this study also analyzes the interpersonal interaction factors that may result from colleague turnover. It explains how employees are influenced and attempts to elucidate the roots and processes of this influence. The research findings indicate that high similarity with departing colleagues, performance differences, and internal locus of control personality traits have a significant positive impact on turnover intention. This conclusion aligns with previous studies by Wang Zhenyuan et al., (2016), Jinyuan Xu, (2023) and TANG Shaoxue, (2024). Considering the practical situation in Chinese workplaces, most small and medium-sized enterprises lack clear employee career development plans. In contrast to Western countries where employee career development plans are seen as vital means to support and motivate employee growth (Alqudah et al., 2022), Chinese-style employee career development plans lack effectiveness and fail to provide support and motivation to employees. Therefore, the study recommends management to focus on employees highly similar to departing colleagues and implement appropriate retention measures. Additionally, it suggests developing and effectively implementing employee incentive and development plans, focusing on high-performing employees, establishing clear performance evaluation systems, and career advancement plans. Moreover, considering testing and categorizing employees based on personality traits, such as the popular 16 personality traits (MBTI). According to a recent trending topic on Linkedin, some organizations have been using this approach to categorize employees.

5.1 Limitations and Future Recommendations

Due to the complexity of the research problem and limitations in the author's time, resources, and personal capabilities, several aspects require further improvement in future research:

(1) The theoretical model could incorporate factors unrelated to work. The absence of non-work-related factors such as family responsibilities and community involvement is crucial for understanding turnover decisions. Future studies should incorporate these factors to enhance understanding of individual turnover decisions.

(2) Background factors influencing the turnover decision process need further exploration and examination. This study only addresses the influence of three factors, while future research could explore additional factors.

(3) The study employed a relatively limited research method - survey questionnaires. Future research could consider integrating multiple research methods to enhance internal and external validity.

(4) Sample selection has certain limitations. The study samples are all from the same region, consisting of regular employees in small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, there are no differences based on industry or organizational type. Future research should consider regional and industry characteristics and include diverse survey participants, including managerial staff.

(5) There are two issues with data collection. Firstly, all items are self-reported by employees, leading to some common method biases. Future research could consider survey questionnaires covering multiple time points and topics. Secondly, there is a social desirability bias in data measurement. Future research could consider using computer simulation techniques to effectively mitigate social desirability biases.

5.2 Research Implications

The primary theoretical implications of this study include further expanding exploration of interpersonal interaction factors in turnover research, addressing a relative lack in the field. It establishes a theoretical analysis model centered on the evaluation of job opportunities and

incorporates intermediary pathways, elucidating the process through which colleague resignations influence employees' turnover intentions. It delves into the complex interaction between social comparison theory and personality trait theory in turnover research, achieving integration of multiple theoretical perspectives.

Additionally, in practical implications, this study transcends traditional factors like performance, benefits, and salary, providing a fresh perspective on personnel mobility within organizations. Against the backdrop of Covid-19, this study updates the understanding of employee turnover behavior. The crisis and isolation experienced during Covid-19 altered people's mindsets, prompting them to consider worst-case scenarios when making decisions, including resignations. Furthermore, the increasing priority of work-life balance is compelling organizations to reassess the needs of their employees.

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