

# Impact of Quality of Work Life on Turnover Intentions with the Mediation Effect of Mental Health amongst Academic staff

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## Abstract

**Background:** Today Indian higher educational institutions exclusively technical institutions encounter high turnover rates of academic faculty members resulting from unfavourable work environment which represents Quality of Work Life (QWL). Understanding more about academic faculty member's intent to leave in relation to QWL is important to develop general guidelines to improve the relevant QWL facets that are found to be lacking in the organizations.

**Objective:** The objective of this research study is to examine the relationship among the Quality of Work Life, mental health and turnover intentions of faculty members.

**Methodology:** The respondents for this study comprised 729 faculty members from private engineering colleges in Coimbatore region of Tamilnadu, India. This study employed the simple random sampling method. To collect required information three instruments representing QWL, mental health and turnover intentions have been employed.

**Results:** The Spearman correlation analysis has been conducted to identify whether the dimensions of QWL are related with QWL and also to determine the extent of the relationship. Analysis shows that the nature of the correlation is positive for all the cases, as the coefficient values are positive. The regression analysis has been employed to test the hypotheses. The results supported all the hypotheses.

**Conclusion:** This new approach will enable the institutions to understand the faculty members' perception towards QWL. It also enables them to attract and retain qualified and motivated faculty members.

**Keywords:** Quality of work life, Mental health, Turnover intentions, Academic faculty members, and Higher educational institutions.

## Introduction

Due to economic crisis and down trend of economy, organizations across the world are facing immense challenges. Specifically, challenges are in attracting, retaining and protecting their employees. In this scenario, organizations have to focus their attention towards QWL as it is essential to continue to attract and retain employees. Even though QWL originated over four decades ago, in the last two decades it has assumed increasing interest and importance in both industrialized as well as developing countries of the world. This is because of the changed business environment and family structure. QWL reflects the relationship that exists between the employees and their work environment whether favourable or unfavourable for them. Numerous works on QWL subsequently provide variety of definitions and also suggestions of the elements of QWL. Various conceptual as well as operational frameworks of QWL have been developed under different settings and their research findings are highly diverse and often contradictory in nature. Several researchers agree in general that QWL is a construct that deals with the well being of employees.

Another important area where organizations have to concentrate is well being of employees including physical and mental well being as relatively low level of health problems will affect the organizational effectiveness and employees' performance. In order to actualize their full potential and to add value to the organization, it is imperative for employees in the work place to have a sound mental health. Today, employees of technical educational institutions are exposed to a broad range of stressors and these stressors could impact their mental health. Hence, to be competitive, organizations must focus on their employees' overall physical and mental health.

In today's competitive and dynamic environment retaining precious employees is one of the most challenging issues for modern organizations. As organizational performance largely depends on the presence of satisfied and committed employees, the organizations are putting enormous efforts in retaining the quality employees. However, increasing employee turnover has been a major problem and the same is the major reason for performance inefficiency in many

organizations in India. Reviews on the antecedents of turnover have tinted turnover intention rather than actual turnover as the outcome variable. Hence, it is imperative for organizations to investigate the factors that influence turnover intentions.

This research study is conducted with the objectives to identify various antecedents of QWL and also to investigate their impact on turnover intention of academic faculty members of higher educational institutions of India. Additionally, this study investigated the mediating relationship of mental health between QWL and turnover intentions. Eight antecedents of QWL such as teaching and learning process, learning opportunities, work-life balance, compensation, employee support services, feedback on performance, leadership and professional relationship have been identified as independent variables with the help of thorough literature review.

This study will shed some light for higher educational institutions exclusively technical institutions that encounter high turnover rates of academic faculty members resulting from unfavourable work environment which represents QWL. Knowing more about academic faculty member's intent to leave with relation to QWL is important to develop general guidelines to improve the relevant QWL facets that are found to be lacking in the institutions. Since the literature indicates that QWL plays an important role in the mental health of employees, it would be of value to investigate which QWL variables play a significant role in determining mental health and its mediating effect on turnover intentions especially in technical educational institutions where demands are high. Based on the aforesaid discussion, the researcher has decided to conduct this research study with the following objectives.

1. To study the level of QWL among faculty members in private engineering colleges in Tamilnadu, India.
2. To study the turnover intentions of the same respondents.
3. To determine whether mental health of faculty members mediate the relationship between QWL and turnover intentions.

## **Subjects and Methods**

### **Quality of Work Life**

The literature review explored that there exists several research studies conducted in several industrial environment that showed the association of QWL with organizational performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Research on QWL concluded that employees, who are working in an environment which provides a high QWL, are more productive and effective [Janes, P., & Wisnom, M., 2010]. Correspondingly, another study in India highlighted that absence of QWL leads to several outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, lack of motivation, diminished morale, increased accident rates, lack of productivity, etc., which leads to poor organizational performance [Stephen, A., & Dhanapal, D., 2012]. It is also found that QWL significantly reduces absenteeism, minor accidents, grievances, and quits [Havlovic, S. J. 1991]. Apart from this, it is found from literature that QWL correlates with organizational and

individual efficiency [Singh, T., & Srivastav, S.K. (2012)]. The results of several studies concluded that QWL is associated with job satisfaction [Wilcock, A., & Wright, M. 1991, Hanita Sarah Saad et al. 2008]. And another study explored that QWL is found to be a significant predictor of organisational commitment [Anuradha, S., & Pandey, P.N. 1995]. A further study among academic staff in Malaysian higher learning institutions developed QWL measures with seven dimensions and concluded that there exists a relationship between QWL and organizational commitment among academic staff [Daud, N, 2010]. Very few studies focused the association of QWL with mental health [Lyle Grant Markham., 2010] and concluded that QWL variables are predictors of employees' mental health.

### **Mental health**

In today's globalised business environment, the most part of employees' lives are spent at workplaces. Work can have a significant impact, either detrimental or enhancing, on an individual's mental and physical health. A comprehensive body of research suggests that an increasing percentage of the people suffer from work-related stress [Edwards, D. and P. Burnard., 2003]. Several health researches in different countries found that the high level of organizational changes, such as restructuring [Bourbonnais, R., C et al., 2005, Hansson, A., et al., 2008] can have negative consequences for health and wellbeing. A systematic review of European literature [Platt, S., et al, 1998], covering all industries, highlighted that downsizing may have a positive effect on mental health because of clearer roles and responsibilities for employees and increasing worker participation. Contrary to this, it is established that 'survivors' of organizational downsizing were more liable to experience poor mental health due to work intensification [Dragano, N. et al, 2005].

In the working environment, the nature of the job could prevent the worker from attaining full mental health [Thomas, J.C., & Hersen, M., 2002]. The workplace itself may contribute to distress and, ultimately to mental disorders. Also, both high work demands and job insecurity will lead to poor mental health [D'Souza, R.M., et al 2006]. The results of several studies concluded that the perception of roles, particularly role conflict and overload, is related to psychological health and overall wellbeing [McBride, A. B. 1990, Paden, S. L., & Buehler, C. 1995]. It is found that role overload also a powerful predictor of many types of strain in academic faculty [Lease, S. H. 1999]. Consequently, mental and emotional health problems may take a heavy toll on the workplace in the form of absences and decreased productivity. Employers may be able to improve productivity in the workplace by promoting the mental health of their employees.

### **Turnover intention**

Turnover intention may be defined as the intention of employees to quit their organization. Present day organizations are very much concerned about knowing what makes an employee leave or intend to leave an organization. Several studies have examined job satisfaction as an antecedent of turnover intentions [Ghiselli, R.F., et al., 2001,

McBey, K. and L. Karakowsky. 2001, Khatri, N., & Fern, C. T. 2001]. These studies have reported a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization. It is found that the lack of superior support also the best predictor of turnover intention [Hatton, C. and E. Emerson, 1998]. It is evident from research studies that the work life conflict and work life imbalance have an enormous influence on an employee's quit intention [Noor, S & Maad, N. 2008, Khurram S. et al., 2011].

Another study of academics in Malaysian public higher education institutions revealed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are partial mediators for the relationship between work-life balance and intention to leave [Mohd Noor., 2011]. It is found that different dimensions of QWL result in distinctive effects on organizational and career commitments and turnover intentions [Tung-Chun Huang., et al 2007]. Most studies have focused on the impact of attitudinal factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intentions.

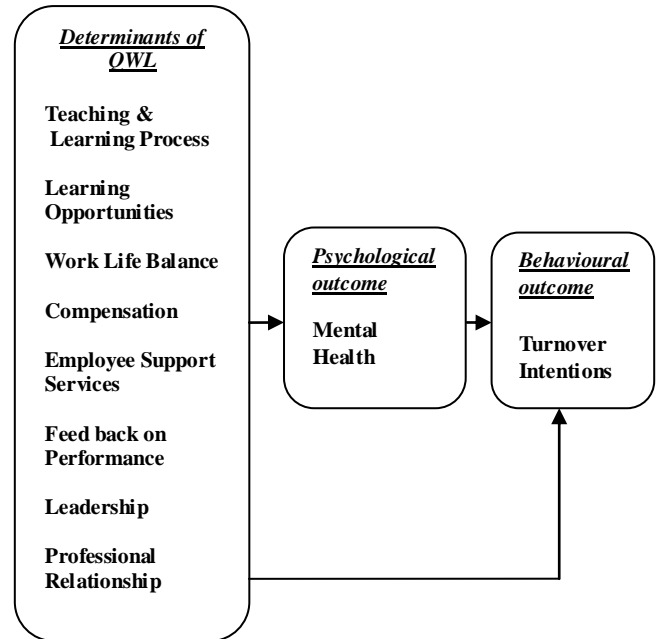
However, to our knowledge, no study has focused on the impact of QWL on turnover intentions with mediating role of mental health among academic faculty members of higher educational institutions of India. Therefore this study has been taken to investigate the relationship between QWL, Mental health and Turnover intention among academic faculty members.

### Research Model and Hypotheses:

This research is based on the conceptual framework which has been shaped after extensive literature review and presented in the figure1. The determinants of QWL such as teaching and learning process, learning opportunities, work-life balance, compensation, employee support services, feedback on performance, leadership and professional relationship have been included after thorough literature review. These eight dimensions have been included in determining the QWL of faculty members in India. Perception of QWL leads to the psychological outcome such as mental health and it leads to the behavioural outcome such as Turnover intentions. In this research, mental health has been used as a mediating variable. It mediates the link between QWL and the Turnover intentions.

Derived from the preceding literature review, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H1:** There is a negative relationship between QWL and turnover intentions.
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between QWL perception and mental health.
- H3:** There is a negative relationship between mental health and turnover intentions.
- H4:** The good mental health mediates the relationship between QWL and Turnover intention.



**Fig.1. Research Model - QWL and Turnover Intention Model**

### Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised the faculty members from 55 private engineering colleges of Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu, India where about 6076 fulltime faculty members are employed during the study period (Till May 2013). Thus, 6076 faculty members are the target population for this research study. From this target population the researchers drew a sample of 729 full time faculty members through simple random sampling method which represents roughly 12 percent of the overall samples. Data were collected by distributing the questionnaires and also through online survey. Finally 426 useable questionnaires were obtained from among the sample respondents.

### Development of the Measuring Instruments

#### Independent Variable

The most common evaluation of QWL is the individual attitudes. This is because individual work attitudes are important indicators of QWL. Thus a structured questionnaire has been designed based on an earlier Quality of Working Life (QWL) Survey Report of Curtin University of Technology and modified according to the Indian education sector which represents the eight dimensions of the QWL. The questionnaire used in the survey consisted of two sections. The first section includes the demographic information of respondents namely; gender, age, marital status, number of children, level of education, income level, position, years of service in their respective institutions and in higher education sector. The last section, including 64 statements, has been designed to measure the perception by faculty members on eight dimensions of QWL. Respondents have been asked to rate their level of agreement on each statement from "1" as "strongly disagree" to "5" as "strongly agree".

## Dependent Variable

The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire [Cummann C., et al. 1979] has been used to measure turnover intention. The questionnaire includes three items viz., "I will actively look for a new job in the next year"; "I often think about quitting" and "I will probably look for a new job by the next year". The responses have been recorded on 5 point likert scale from "1" as "strongly disagree" to 5 as "strongly agree".

## Mediating Variable

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, 2006 (WEMWBS) with 14 items has been adapted to measure mental health. The responses have been recorded on 5 point scale from 1 as "none of the time" to 5 as "all of the time".

## Assessment of the internal consistency of each scale - Reliability Analysis

As the current study uses multiple items in all measuring instruments, the internal consistency analysis method is applied. The Cronbach alpha of all the dimensions under QWL is ranged from 0.842 to 0.897. For mental health Cronbach alpha is 0.910 and for turnover intention it is 0.920. The Cronbach alpha with acceptable cut off point at 0.70 demonstrates that all attributes are internally consistent [Fujun, L., et al., 2007]. In fact, all the individual dimensions of QWL, mental health and turnover intentions meet the criteria of cut-off point according to the internal consistency reliability, as all the values of Cronbach alpha are greater than 0.70. Thus all the item scales and dimensions of the study are reliable.

## Results

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Male and female constitutes 58.2% and 41.8% respectively; 25.5% are aged between 26 to 35 years, 35.8% respondents aged between 36 to 45 years, 23.2% respondents aged between 46 to 55 years and 15.5% respondents aged above 55 years. 58% of the respondents are married. About 71.9% completed Master's degree, and the rest are PhD holders. In terms of job title, about 29.7% respondents are Assistant Professors, 22.0% respondents are Assistant Professors (Senior Grade), 21.2% respondents are Associate Professors and the rest are Professors.

### Correlation between QWL and its Dimensions

The Spearman correlation analysis was conducted in the special case of rating of perception of the respondent to identify whether the dimensions of QWL are related with QWL and also to determine the extent of the relationship. Table 1 show that all the dimensions of QWL are significantly correlated with it at just 1% level of significance as the p-value for each of the cases is less than 0.01. The nature of the correlation is positive for all the cases, as the coefficient values are positive. So it can be ascertained that an increase in all the dimensions of QWL can lead to an increase in overall QWL.

**Table 1. Spearman's Correlation between QWL and its dimensions**

Dimensions of QWL	QWL	
	Spearman correlation coefficient	Significance level (1 tailed)
Teaching and Learning Process	0.773**	0.00
Learning Opportunity	0.782**	0.00
Compensation	0.779**	0.00
Work Life Balance	0.719**	0.00
Feedback on Performance	0.682**	0.00
Leadership	0.836**	0.00
Professional Relationship	0.723**	0.00
Employee Support Services	0.819**	0.00

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

## Hypotheses Testing- Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis and Baron & Kenny (1986) technique is carried out to test the hypotheses involved in this research. The selection of the Baron and Kenny's mediation technique in this study is based on the sense that this study focused on investigating simple relationships between the predictor, the mediator, and the output variables.

**Table 2. Regression Analysis (QWL and Turnover Intentions)**

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	F	P value
QWL	0.912	0.832	0.776	-1.652	36.52	0.000

Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions

Hypothesis 1: It was proposed in the hypothesis 1 that there is a negative relationship between QWL and turnover intentions. The findings of the regression analysis presented in the table 2, the value of correlation coefficient r is 0.912, representing a strong correlation between QWL and turnover intention. By analysing the coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> (0.832), it is divulged that 83.2 % variation in turnover intention is because of QWL. The P value is 0.000 i.e. less than 0.05. Hence, the hypothesis 1 is accepted.

**Table 3. Regression Analysis (QWL and Mental Health)**

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	F	P value
QWL	0.935	0.874	0.812	2.341	19.542	0.000

Dependent Variable: Mental Health

Hypothesis 2: It was projected in the hypothesis 2 that there is a positive relationship between QWL perception and mental health. The findings of the regression analysis presented in the above table 3, r is 0.935, representing a strong relationship between QWL and employee mental health. By analysing R<sup>2</sup> (0.874), it is revealed that 87.4 % variation in employee

mental health is because of QWL. The P value is 0.000 less than 0.05 resulting in the acceptance of hypothesis 2.

**Table 4. Regression Analysis (Mental Health and Turnover Intentions)**

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	F	P value
Mental Health	0.984	0.968	0.943	-0.025	72.621	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions*

Hypothesis 3: It was proposed in the hypothesis 3 that there is a negative relationship between mental health and turnover intentions. In the above table 4, r is 0.984. It shows that a strong relationship between mental health and turnover intention. R<sup>2</sup> is 0.968 which represents the 96.8% variation in employee turnover intention because of mental health. The P value is 0.000 i.e. less than 0.05 resulting in the acceptance of hypothesis 3.

**Table 5. Regression Analysis (QWL and Mental Health – referred as Control Variables)**

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	F	P value
QWL and Mental Health	0.962	0.925	0.879	0.921	50.36	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions*

Hypothesis 4: it was proposed that the good mental health mediates the relationship between QWL and Turnover intention. In table 5, the mental health and QWL were treated as control variables to check the mediation effect. The resulting r value 0.962 indicates that there is a strong mediation effect of mental health on turnover intention and QWL. The P value is also 0.000 that is less than 0.05 leading to the approval of hypothesis 4.

## Discussion

The current study incorporated attitudinal variable namely mental health to mediate the relationship between QWL and turnover intentions. From the perspective of QWL and intention to leave among academic faculty members in higher education, this study successfully found some key findings. The findings of the current study suggest that perceived QWL is negatively correlated with intention to leave among the academic faculty members. This study extends past research and support literature that employees' satisfaction on QWL will in turn minimize their intention to leave the organization [Smart, J. C, 1990, Johnsrud, L. K., and Rosser, V. J. 2002]. The findings of this study also suggest that perceived QWL is positively correlated with mental health of academic faculty members. This study supports literature that QWL improves the mental health of employees. Another important finding of this study is the negative relationship between mental health and turnover intentions. With regard to the fourth hypothesis, mental health is found to mediate the relationship between QWL perception and turnover intentions. In a more specific

way, perceptions of QWL predict turnover intentions either directly and/or through the mediating role of mental health.

Based on the results of the current study, only general outcomes of the interrelationships between perceived QWL, mental health, and intention to leave among academics have been sought out. It is worth future studies exploring the relationships of these variables based on the differences of gender, age, tenure, and other personal demographic variables. It must be emphasized that the current study's results are based on academic faculty members working in Anna University affiliated private engineering colleges and it is not be possible to generalize to academic faculty members in other higher education institutions in India. Further similar works need to be done in the broader area of Indian higher education with segregation and focus among private and Government institutions.

Research has suggested that QWL perceptions have significant influences on employees' behaviour and attitudes. Current study indicates that institutions may help to develop employees' mental health and decrease turnover intentions if they invest more in improving QWL. Considering that QWL perceptions have influences on employees' behaviours and attitudes such an investment may enhance not only mental health of their employees, but also employees' overall performance. As a result, for institutions to be effective they should be concerned about how academic faculty members perceive the work environment.

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