

Effect of Transformational leadership on Turnover intention among University Lecturers in Germany: The Moderating effect of Perceived Justice

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention, the direct relationship between perceived organizational justice and turnover intention, and the moderating role of perceived organizational justice in the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among lecturers at German universities of applied sciences. This study addresses limited empirical evidence concerning the interplay between transformational leadership, perceived justice, and turnover intention in the academic context of Germany. It offers new insights into how leadership and justice perceptions can be leveraged to retain academic staff. A quantitative research methodology is employed to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership, perceived justice, and turnover intention. Data collected via online questionnaires distributed to a cross-sectional and purposive sample of 123 lecturers at applied science university (Fachhochschulen) in Germany. To analyze the data, structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in Smart PLS4 and SPSS software were used.

The finding of this paper confirmed that transformational leadership has a negative and significant relationship with turnover intention among university faculties. Moreover, this study found the robust negative and significant relationship between perceived justice and turnover intention among faculty members in universities. By evaluating the moderating role of perceived justice on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention, this study found the negative association between transformational leadership and turnover intention became weaker as perceived justice increased.

This paper recommends to university administrators that in addition to developing effective transformational leadership style, they should emphasize creating a fair and supportive environment in their organization to prevent professors from leaving the job. The findings have significant implications for university administration and policy-making. It is recommended to universities to provide feedback mechanism to enhance organizational justice, transformational leadership training, career development policies, and communication facilities to enhance the workplace environment.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership, Perceived justice, Turnover intention, Faculty turnover, Universities of Applied Sciences, Germany*

1- Introduction

Universities and educational institutions play pivotal and fundamental role in influencing the professional and intellectual development of both individuals and society worldwide. Educators, specifically university lecturers and professors, are in the central of this educational mission, who serve as purveyor of knowledge and facilitators of student advancement. However, the intention to leave of experienced and skilled university lecturers is a critical concern for higher education institutions globally (Siswanto & Yuliana, 2022). Leaving the positions of educators, commonly referred to as “turnover”, can have significant consequences for both universities and the broader educational environment. In this investigation, the moderating role of perceived organizational justice concept measures in the relationship between transformational leadership and the lecturers’ intention to leave the position, specifically focus of the applied science universities (Fachhochschulen) in Germany.

Turnover intention among faculty members has become a significant realm of problem worldwide in many studies and various factors contribute to this occurrence. Although there are many factors contribute to make the decision to leave or stay an institution by professors, this study conducts special focus on transformational leadership which is one of the effective factors reducing turnover intention in academia. Transformational leaders have a significant impact of reducing intention of turnover by inspiring motivating and supporting academic staffs to remain the professionals in university (Oh & Chhinzer, 2021). Transformational leadership concept which primary articulated by Burns (1978), followed and expanded by Bass (1985), introduces characteristics such as vision, providing intellectual stimulation, offering support, and charisma (Bass & Riggio, 2006). it has been correlated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment within the academic areas in many research (Birks et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2010).

Transformation in university governance has introduced new leadership structures towards managerially oriented self-governance and responsibility-centered decision making (Sziegat, 2022). Structural changes have an influence over academic leadership patterns and work conditions, which can have an influence over turnover intentions among lecturers. As much as governance effectiveness has been researched in previous studies, countering lecturers' turnover intention through the role of transformation leadership is not yet researched to an appreciable degree.

Perceived justice, also explores perceptions of fairness and equity for employee’s work place, and first introduced by Greenberg (1987). Dimensions of perceived justice is discussed in many studies, includes distributive justice as the fairness of outcomes, procedural justice as the feeling of fair processes, interactional justice as the fairness of interpersonal treatment, and finally, informational justice which investigators added later. In academic environment, perceived justice has a positive relationship with lecturer’s job satisfaction (Colquitt et al., 2001), and negative relationship with their intentions to leave their positions (Fisher et al., 2017).

To address the existing gap in the literature concerning how perceptions of organizational justice influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership in reducing turnover intention, this study investigates these relationships among university lecturers in Germany. Although previous studies have examined the direct relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention, as well as the role of perceived organizational justice in academic settings, the moderating role of perceived organizational justice in this relationship remains comparatively underexplored. Given the ongoing transformation of German higher education institutions, Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen) were selected as the research

context because they provide a relevant setting for examining leadership practices and employee retention. By focusing on this context, the study aims to provide contextually relevant insights into the interplay between transformational leadership, perceived organizational justice, and turnover intention, thereby contributing to the understanding of leadership dynamics in German higher education.

2- Literature Review

Turnover Intention

The concern of turnover intention and following by actual turnover is growing globally, especially in the higher education institution among faculty members (Rahman et al., 2025). Faculty turnover is a concern in educational institutions, which result in loss talented and experienced staff, lower productivity, and high cost of hiring new professors. Universities should develop retention strategies to prevent lecturers' actual turnover by offering competitive salaries, benefits, and career growth opportunities among lectures in Malaysia universities (Zamri, 2023). Work burnout and stress are the most significant indicators of turnover intention among university teachers in university of China, and to avoid the effect of these factors self-efficacy can serve as a moderating role to reduce turnover intention among faculty members (Pei et al., 2024). The increasing competition among lecturers has posed physical and mental health problems, especially for young and middle-aged faculty members in China (Zhou & Wang, 2025).

It is suggested that universities apply human resource policies and practices to enhance career growth and development of academic staffs in educational environment. Therefore, attention to characteristics such as salary, performance appraisals, promotion speed and remuneration growths is pivotal in higher education institutions, and these factors can significantly decrease the level of turnover intention among faculty members (Nawaz, 2019). Creating a supportive workplace is the best practices and strategy, and enhances the likelihood of employee retention, which includes factors namely autonomy, supervisor support and achievable key performance indicators (KPIs) for lecturers. Improving overall person-role fit (PRF) and overall job satisfaction can significantly reduce turnover intention in organizations, and leads employees to individual development in workplace (SMBBVKS et al., 2024; Al-Azaar, 2023).

The costs associated with faculty members' leaving can be measured in several ways namely loss of productivity, costs associated with recruiting and hiring a replacement, costs associated with training a new hire, and the loss of institutional reputation (Hom et al., 2017; Zamri, 2023; Sharma & Syal, 2022). In Nigeria, the organizational climate was significant factor, where private university lecturers' turnover intentions were strongly reduced by the peaceful climate and support from management. Additionally, turnover intentions among early-career academicians were strongly reduced by work engagement and career adaptability in workplace (Kanu et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is the powerful approach to enhance innovation and educational outcome, which can promote a cultural sharing knowledge and collaboration among faculty members in university (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). To recognize dimensions of transformational leadership and the extant leadership literature, according to study by Bass (1990) it consists of four distinct yet interrelated types of behavior,

including idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation.

Idealized influence means that the leader serving as role-models of competence and ethical standards that employees can follow. Transformational leaders present charismatic qualities that influencing individuals in many ways, and it provides vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect and trust. Individualized consideration defines as a concern for the well-being among employees and the individuals' needs and development of their followers. By attention to reach the full potential for employees, individualized consideration gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches, and advises.

Inspirational motivation means the communication by leaders toward the vision for the future, so that create a sense of purpose and positive appeals to motivate followers to work toward purpose of the organization. Intellectual stimulation refers to encouraging team members to creativity and innovation by promoting critical thinking and supporting employees in exploring new ideas. This factor promotes intelligence, rationality and problem solving, suggest thinking outside the box (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Manafi et al., 2025).

Cheng et al. (2016), state that a key factor in lowering the rate of employee turnover is transformational leadership. The best transformational leaders are recommended to possess charisma, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration, all of which motivate their team members to put aside their own interests and accomplish extraordinary goals. Asgari et al., (2008) mentioned organizations led by transformational leaders tend to experience higher levels of engagement and motivation. By setting high expectations and providing support, transformational leaders help employees achieve their goals which cause individuals improvement and performance enhancement. As a result, continuous professional development is conducted by transformational leaders, and lecturers can hope to be updated with the latest educational trends and practices (Ghasemy et al., 2023; Dawson et al., 2020). Siswanto and Yuliana (2022) focused more closely on the style of transformational leadership in the educational institutions, and highlight the importance of this leadership style for stimulating innovation, job satisfaction, and trust in the leaders of schools, especially as attention grows, both globally and in Indonesia, toward transformational leadership in schools. Educational leaders prioritize invest in continuous professional development, and create strong community partnership to maintain these initiatives. Transformational leadership can effectively absorb the high pressure at workplace and encourage university staff to challenge hard work, and leadership behavior can significantly help to changing the employees' behavior to get a more interested in a job, diagnostic, and reduce turnover and stress in among them in universities (Nguon et al., 2025).

Moreover, by high achievers in transformational leadership approach, which is rooted in affective trust, intrinsic motivation, and creativity, to raise the standard in universities and higher educational institutions (Thu and Pham, 2024). This is recommended lecturers must have digital competencies in the context of digital transformation in education, as they must be able to appropriately and adequately use technology in their profession. This includes being adaptable to new technologies and methodologies in both individually and institutionally (Jarjabka et al., 2024).

Perceived Organizational Justice

Organizational justice primary defined by Greenberg (1987), refers to the perceptions of fairness for individuals in the workplace. To understand how employees assess the fairness in organization, Greenberg (1987) introduced the model with three dimensions of organization namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice respectively. Colquitt (2001) expanded the model of organizational justice and argued the interactional justice factor separated to two distinct dimensions of interpersonal justice and informational justice which provide better reflection the complex and feeling of fairness in organizations. Based on this category, interpersonal justice defines as perceived respect treatment by principals, and informational justice focuses on the transparency and quality of information in the organization. Also, informational justice reflects the individuals' perception of the fairness of information that is used in organizational decision making (Dolan, Tzafrir & Baruch, 2005; Chahar, 2023).

The interplay of these dimensions significantly impacts various organizational outcomes. For instance, distributive and interactional justice have been shown to reduce organizational cynicism among employees, while hope can moderate the adverse effects of perceived injustices (Narosaputra et al., 2023). Many studies indicate organizational justice enhance lecturers' job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors by influencing job satisfaction, commitment, fair treatment and fair transparent processes (Mohanty, 2023; Anis et al., 2023; Naseer & Al-Khalil, 2023). Moreover, perceived justice can mitigate negative factors namely emotional exhaustion, so that interpersonal justice plays a particular vital role in improving psychological well-being for lecturers (Monteiro da Silva et al., 2021).

Attention to organizational justice as one of the characteristics influencing many aspects of organizational performance, leading to higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust, and employee well-being is pivotal to avoid turnover in organizations (Colquitt et al., 2001; Metwally et al., 2018). In the initial study by Folger & Cropanzano (1998); Greenberg (1987), organizational justice defined as social and governing rules that indicate how outcomes should be distributed, the procedures for decision making, and the manner in which individuals treated in organization.

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Turnover Intention (TI)

Many studies investigated on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention in educational realm and found the correlation between many aspects of leadership and numerous outcomes namely job satisfaction and commitment for leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership has been shown to negatively correlate with employee turnover intention in many studies, especially among lecturers in universities. Initially, early studies by Bass & Avolio (1995), and Podsakoff et al. (1997) suggest that transformational leaders can reduce employees' desire to leave by inspiring a vision, empowering intellectual stimulation and having individualized support. Subsequently, many researchers have built upon these outcomes by examining how greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment is developed through transformational leadership.

Sarmiento & Riana (2024) state that transformational leadership has a significant effect on knowledge sharing and lecturer performance. Cheng et al. (2016) also found that it is required to utilize transformational leadership styles in order to reduce employee turnover rates. The study by Bukhari & Kamal (2019), investigated on characteristics that influencing turnover intention among teachers namely organizational politics, organizational support, transformational leadership, and other factors, and found that transformational leadership and supportive environment can reduce the intention to leave among faculty members in universities.

In order to reduce turnover rate, it is essential to use transformational leadership style (Cheng et al., 2016). Sultana & Jabeen (2018) support the hypothesis that transformational leadership has a significant negative effect on turnover intention by analysis conducted, indicating a strong association between these variables. Transformational leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment among lecturers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership is known to have a direct negative association with turnover intentions. Leaders who exhibit transformational qualities, such as individualized consideration and charisma, can inspire employees, thereby reducing their desire to leave the organization (Caillier, 2016).

To find the factors influencing the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention, it is partially mediated by mission of the organization, which can enhance motivational value within the organization (Caillier, 2016). According to the studies by Saeed & Jun (2022); Gyensare et al., (2016), transformational leadership has a negative correlation with turnover intention, which means that as transformational leadership increases, the intention of employees to leave the organization decreases significantly. This relationship is further explained by the mediating role of affective commitment, where employees' emotional attachment and involvement with the organization lessen their intention to quit in organizations.

Transformational leadership indirectly affects turnover intention through affective commitment, and through creating a solid emotional bond and commitment among employees' transformational leaders can reduce turnover intention and have a more stable and committed workforce. Asgari et al., (2008), state that supervisors should do their best to maintain transformational and transactional behavior with their subordinates. They could accomplish this by trading emotion, loyalty and contribution with their subordinates, which eventually will improve the leader-member exchange relationships. Therefore, under such good interaction, a benign cycle will be formed, which will not only enhance commitment of the employees to the organization and reduce turnover intention, but also promote the OCB of employees to improve organizational effectiveness.

The Relationship between perceived justice and turnover intention

There are plenty of studies investigated on the relationship between perceived justice and turnover intention in educational setting (Mengstie, 2020; Tanoto & Sugiharto, 2018; Jesus & Rowe, 2014; Güven & Güven, 2020; Gabriel & Nwaeke, 2014; Bhatti, 2024; Harris, 2015; Dai & Xie, 2016; Ramkissoon, 2016; Lonsdale, 2013; Yuwono et al., 2020; Fauzi, 2022; Castillo & Fernandez Alarcon, 2017; Emami et al., 2013; Yang & Cho, 2017). The findings indicate perceived justice has a negative association with different dimensions on faculty members' decisions to leave. Lecturers' perceptions of their institutions are greatly influenced by perceived justice, which includes distributive, interpersonal, procedural, and informational justice. As these factors have a significant impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the caliber of social interactions at work, these perceptions can have an impact on turnover intentions.

The leadership in higher education is now increasingly explained in governance models emphasizing autonomy, accountability, and effectiveness in management (Sziegat, 2022). Such governance changes shape fairness perceptions in institutions because they determine who has resources to access, who holds power in deciding things, and who is included in interacting with faculty. Perceived fairness in leadership practices is a key determinant in shaping workers' attitudes in accordance with organizational justice theory by Colquitt (2001). For example, according to previous studies, perceived justice is negatively related to

turnover intention among lecturers. Namely, distributive justice is a significant predictor of turnover intention. Employees who perceive inequity in rewards or compensation are more likely to consider leaving the organization (Mengstie, 2020; Tanoto & Sugiharto, 2018)

The moderating effect of perceived justice on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention

By explore the literatures, many studies argue that there is the lack of a strong predictor effect of transformational leadership and turnover suggest the need for additional moderating factors such as perceived justice. For example, the study by Bukhari & Kamal (2019) find that the regression analysis of the study did not find TL to be a significant predictor of turnover intention, suggesting that other factors, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational justice, may moderate this relationship.

According to the study by Engelbrecht & Samuel (2019), find that transformational leadership positively influence organizational justice, which causes lower employees' intention to quit. They also confirmed that a positive justice climate can significantly reduce turnover. The fairness of the manner in which rewards are distributed and procedures adopted in the decision-making process concerning well-being and career development and progression are of utmost importance to employees. Adams's (1965) equity theory provides support for the empirical finding in this study to the extent that employees conduct comparative input-reward ratio analysis in order to determine the degree of fairness that is demonstrated by management. To explain the role of organizational justice, the researcher divided dimensions of justice in four factors including distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justice.

The study by Cao & Jiang (2024), highlights the positive effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction, which can significantly reduce turnover intention among Chinese private colleges and universities. It is arguable that organizational intention is another key factor that moderates this relationship and strengthen or weaken this effect. Sora et al. (2010) highlight the moderating role of organizational justice in the relationship between job insecurity and job satisfaction, as well as intention to leave the organization. This relationship can moderate the effects of leadership on turnover intentions. Perceived organizational support can moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intentions. When employees feel supported by the organization, the negative relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention is strengthened, as employees are more likely to stay in a supportive environment (Pattali et al., 2024).

To explain the role of organizational justice, the researcher divided dimensions of justice in four factors including distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justice. First, Studies have shown that when employees perceive distributive justice, their turnover intentions decrease, as they feel fairly rewarded for their contributions (Moon et al., 2024; Lambert et al., 2023). This involves the perceived fairness of outcome distributions. While it directly affects turnover intentions, its moderating role in the context of transformational leadership is less pronounced compared to procedural justice (Moon et al., 2024; Kim & Kim, 2024). The perception of distributive justice is linked to emotional exhaustion, which in turn affects organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Cole et al., 2010).

Second, procedural justice has been found to have a significant negative association with turnover intentions, particularly among younger employees, such as Generation MZ compared to the older generation, who value fair processes highly (Moon et al., 2024; Lambert et al., 2023). The fairness of

processes used to determine outcomes also plays a significant role. Lecturers who perceive procedural fairness are more likely to trust institutional authorities and feel engaged, reducing turnover intentions (Główczewski & Burdziej, 2023), (Tekleab et al., 2005). This dimension of justice, which refers to the fairness of processes used to make decisions, can moderate the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intentions. For instance, procedural justice has been shown to enhance the impact of transformational leadership by fostering a fair environment, which in turn reduces turnover intentions (Won et al., 2023), (Moon et al., 2024).

Third, Interactional Justice which focuses on the fairness of interpersonal interactions, can also play a moderating role in this study. Transformational leaders who ensure fair and respectful treatment of employees can further reduce turnover intentions by enhancing interactional justice perceptions (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). Interactional justice can mitigate the negative effects of perceived injustice and reduce turnover intention (Mengstie, 2020). Interactional justice, involving the quality of interpersonal treatment, is crucial in mitigating turnover intentions. It affects emotional exhaustion and organizational commitment, thereby influencing turnover intentions (Cole et al., 2010). The role of interactional justice is particularly important in environments where workplace bullying is prevalent, as it can exacerbate the negative effects of perceived injustice (Reknes et al., 2020)

Lastly, informational justice refers to the fairness of distribution of the information provided for employees during the decision-making processes in organizations. High levels of informational justice can enhance employees' perceptions of fairness and reduce their intention to leave (Mengstie, 2020). Studies have shown that perceived organizational support, which is closely related to justice perceptions, can moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intentions. For example, in the healthcare sector, perceived organizational support was found to significantly reduce turnover intentions when combined with transformational leadership (Pattali et al., 2024).

To mention the theories related to this study, transformational leadership theory developed by Bass (1985), used to examine the possibility of reducing turnover intention among academic staffs. To understand the foundation how justice perceptions is related to employee behavior, with focus on their decision to leave or stay in the organization, this study adapted the organizational justice theory conducted by Colquitt (2001); Greenberg (1987).

Specifically, equity theory (Adams, 1965) is related to distributive justice dimension of organizational justice, which indicates that individuals compare their input (for lecturers meaning as teaching, research), and output (for lecturers meaning as recognition, salary) with colleagues to assess the fairness. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), is directly linked with procedural and distributive justice, supporting the idea how fairness in rewards and performance expectations impact turnover intention. Theory of planned behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991), needs to be mentioned as it offers a useful framework for understanding social norms and perceptions lead lecturers' decision to turnover.

Hypotheses Development

In the academic landscape, the challenge of retaining qualified university lecturers is a matter of paramount importance, prompting an in-depth exploration into the factors that shape their decisions to stay or leave. This research endeavors to investigate the intricate dynamics between three key variables, including turnover intention, transformational leadership, and perceived justice by sample of academic staffs in applied science universities located in Germany.

To achieve the goals of study, turnover intention is chosen as the dependent variable, reflects the proactive decisions of university faculty members to either maintain or abandon their current positions, addressing a critical facet of employee retention within the academic sector. To state the importance of this variable, it directly addresses the challenge of employee retention in the academic environment. Introducing transformational leadership factor as the independent variable holds a central attention to this study, as this style characterized by motivating and inspiring faculty members. This study investigates the potential significant relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among lecturers. Perceived justice serves as the moderating variable, adding another layer of complexity to this investigation. By review and explore definition of variables and find characteristics effecting academic staffs' decision to stay or leave the organization, the researcher developed the framework to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between these variables.

After review literature related to the study, the researcher detected the most significant factors which has an effect on the relationship between variables of the study. Transformational leadership adapted from Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000), turnover intention adapted from the study by Roodt (2004), and finally after reviewing and investigating on factors affecting perceived justice variable, the researcher adapted a short version survey based on Colquitt's (2001) research.

Figure 1 represents the following hypotheses ascertain the anticipated relationships among the concepts of transformational leadership and turnover intention with the moderating role of perceived justice:

H₁: Transformational leadership has a negative relationship to turnover intention among university lecturers in Germany.

H₂: Perceived justice has a negative relationship to turnover intention among university lecturers in Germany.

H₃: Perceived justice moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among university lecturers in Germany.

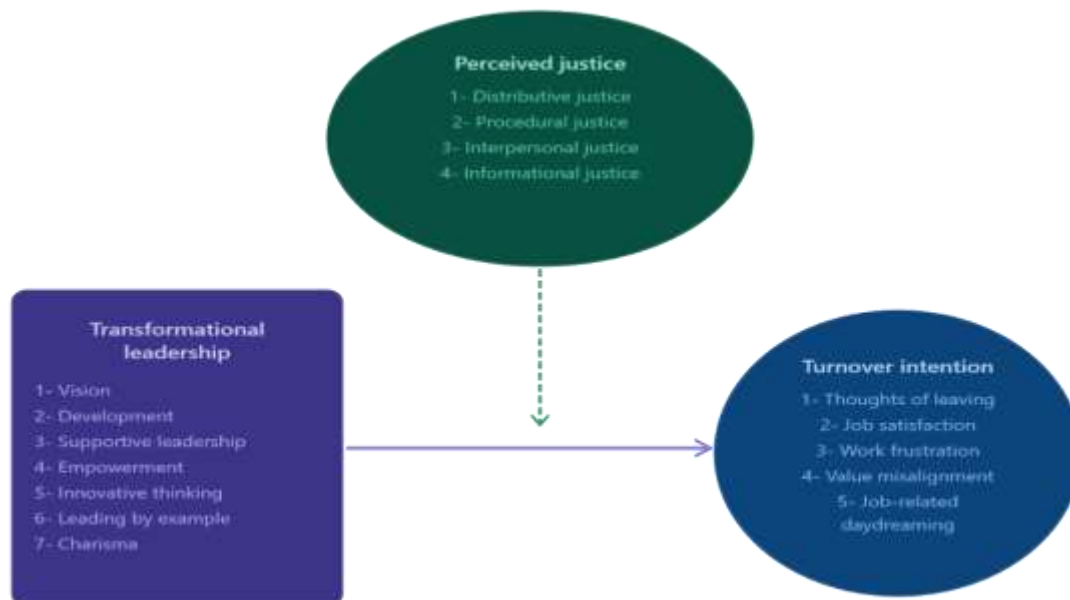


Figure 1: Conceptual framework and dimensions of the study variables

3- Method & Result

Having a concentrate on understanding the moderating function of perceived justice, this comprehensive study used a quantitative research methodology to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among German university professors. In order to systematic analyze and find the various correlations between variables using statistical methods, the study made use of a correlational design to look at these links. The decision to adopt a quantitative approach was primarily based on collecting and examining numerical data, which allows for a clear and better understanding of the extent if transformational leadership and perceived justice can significantly influence individual's intention to leave from their position.

Questionnaires were utilized for collecting data from a diverse cross-sectional and purposive sample of faculty members from variety of German applied science universities. The positivist research philosophy is the foundation of the study's design and methods, which emphasize the objective measurement and analysis of the variables being studied. This strategy makes sure that the results apply to a larger group of people and offers insightful information on how academic staff members in higher education institutions might use their perceptions of justice and leadership styles to mitigate their intention to leave.

Sampling and data collection

To find the best sample for the study, the researcher focused on universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) in Germany. There are many different governmental universities (also called research universities) and Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen) in Germany which have differences for lecturer's job. lecturers at governmental universities might experience more pressure related to research output and securing tenure, but they benefit from a prestigious career path and higher potential earnings. In contrast, lecturers at Universities of Applied Sciences generally have a stronger teaching focus, more stable contracts, and closer ties to industry, but may face limited research opportunities and lower salaries.

By investigating on previous studies and variety of models for types of data, in sample used cross sectional and purposive sample models to collect the data. The Researcher sent 1500 survey by email for lecturer's who working in institutions and applied science universities, and 134 lecturers answered and responded to the questionnaire. The data analysis software was sorting the data electronically, and then 11 responses excluded for the data set due to incomplete answers. As a result, this research used 123 valid and fully completed questionnaires to start the data analysis. The software generated a web link that emailed to all faculty members in the email dataset. There was no time limit on how long a participant chose to read the page.

Measurement

Upon completion of the data collection procedures, data were analyzed to determine the degree of support for the hypotheses. This study aims to evaluate and identify complex relationship among transformational leadership and perceived justice affecting turnover intention among lecturers in Germany. To understand these relationships, the researcher utilized SmartPLS software, particularly useful for structural equation model (SEM) using the method of partial least squares (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2022; Memon et al., 2021). The use of SmartPLS is effective in large number of variables and the possibilities of not meeting the normal distribution, appropriate and methodologically acceptable. SmartPLS is effective tool in testing direct and indirect effects for structural models. In this study, the researcher used questionnaire tools to collect data.

The study employs quantitative method and used a survey strategy to collect the data by Structured questionnaires. The questionnaire is close-ended questions and used 5-point Likert scales 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

After reviewing the literature and previous research, the researcher adapted the valid existing instrumentation to measure transformational leadership and turnover intentions with moderator role of perceived justice among lecturers in universities. Table 1, shows the four main parts of questionnaire which describes details of the survey was used for the study.

Table 1: Descriptions of questionnaire, created by the author

Questionnaire	Description
Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIS-6)	Short turnover intention scale consisting of 6 items, developed by G. Roodt (2004).
Transformational Leadership Questionnaire	The Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) scale consisting of 7 items, developed by Carless, Wearing, & Mann (2000).
Perceived Justice Questionnaire	The revised Organizational Justice Scale consisting of 8 items, developed by Colquitt (2001).

To measure and analysis turnover intention as the dependent variable of the framework, turnover intention scale (TIS-6) adopted by Bothma & Roodt (2013) utilized to collect the data from faculty members in applied science universities in Germany. This scale is based on the theory of planned behavior, which discusses the employee's decision to leave by the function of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control for this behavior. Permission to use TIS-6 scale was obtained from Prof. Dr. Gert Roodt, who is the lead author, via email.

To measure transformational leadership as an independent variable of the study, GTL was utilized as the primary instrument. The examples of Items are "Communicates a clear and positive vision of the future", "Fosters trust, involvement, and cooperation among team members". In this study, researcher modified the term "staff" to "lecturers" to respect the academic members and distribute among faculty members in applied science universities in Germany. Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) scale for transformational leadership on the basis of seven essential dimensions and conducted questions, namely Communicating a vision, developing staff, providing supportive leadership, empowering others, creating innovation, leading by example, and charisma respectively. According to prior research and conceptual relevance adapted the shorten version of organizational justice scale, this study selects 8 items, which can effectively retain validity and reliability (Holtz & Harold, 2009; Simons & Roberson, 2003). This methodological approach all core dimensions of organizational justice are assessed and simultaneously have the practical and feasible of the data collection among lecturers. Table 2, shows the blue print of organizational justice scale consist of four main dimensions of this variable by addressing questions related to each factor.

Table 2: The Blue Print of Organizational Justice Scale

Dimension	Item's example
Distributive justice	your job's benefits package reflects the effort you put into your work
Procedural justice	the procedures used to make decisions about your job free of bias
Interpersonal justice	Does your principal (Head of department or Directors) treat you with respect and dignity

Informational justice	your principal (Head of department or Directors) communicated details about work-related decisions honestly
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Findings

Data Normality: In testing the data normality, Hair et al. (2010) recommend testing the Skewness and Kurtosis of the data for variables which evaluating the distribution of the responses in this study. Table 3 shows that the Skewness values are (-1.307 to 1.083), and the Kurtosis values are (-0.265 to 3.686), indicating data normality. According to the recommended values of Byrne (2016), the Skewness values are between -2 to + 2, and Kurtosis values are between -7 to + 7 for standard data.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and data normality

	Mean	Median	Observed min	Observed max	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness	Number of observations used	Cramér-von Mises test statistic	Cramér-von Mises p value
PJ	0.000	0.089	-3.435	2.527	1.000	1.668	-0.851	123.000	0.340	0.000
TI	0.000	-0.157	-2.061	3.699	1.000	1.909	1.177	123.000	0.558	0.000
TL	0.000	0.192	-2.878	2.037	1.000	0.854	-0.805	123.000	0.275	0.001

Goodness of model fit: Table 4 summarized the results of the model fit assessments, using the structural equation model (SEM), carrying out the Goodness of model fit. This is mandatory to assess the data fit and inference statistics, and approximate model fit needs to be utilized to evaluate the model fit. This reveals that the standardized root means square residual (SRMR) is 0.107. According to Dijkstra & Henseler (2015), the calculated SRMR value should be less than 0.1 to be a good fit, the value is close to be considered in exploratory research. Also, unweighted least squares discrepancy (d_ULS) and geodesic discrepancy (d_G) are 2.667 and 0.773 respectively. According to Hair et al. (2017), the calculated d_ULS and d_G values should be < 95% to be a good fit.

Table 4: Goodness of model fit

Model fit	values	
SRMR	0.107	Acceptable but not ideal (should be <0.1)
d_ULS	2.667	Moderate
d_G	0.773	Moderate
Chi-square	483.178	Sensitive to sample size
NFI	0.647	Moderate Acceptable level

Sarstedt et al. (2021), state that, to assess the discriminant validity, it is mandatory to test the Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), and the values should be less than 0.90. Accordingly, the discriminant validity by the HTMT criterion was measured, and all the result are found below the conservative threshold of 0.90.

As can be seen in table 5, HTMT for interaction between perceived justice and transformational leadership is 0.648, for perceived justice and turnover intention is 0.701, and for transformational leadership and turnover intention is 0.524 respectively. Therefore, the ratio of the interaction term to the three main constructs for all values are less than 0.85 (from 0.322 to 0.475), and this is confirmed that all constructs are distinct and the model has a strong discriminant validity in this study. The finding of HTMT confirmed that all latent variables are conceptually different from others, and supports the robustness and stability measurement model to further examinations of analysis.

Table 5: Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	Perceived Justice	Transformational Leadership	Turnover Intention	Perceived Justice x Transformational Leadership
Perceived Justice				
Transformational Leadership	0.648			
Turnover Intention	0.701	0.524		
Perceived Justice x Transformational Leadership	0.390	0.322	0.475	

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Table 6 shows outer loadings for all the observed variables (indicators) on their respective latent constructs within the model. Such loadings present how each item correlates with the construct for which it is designed to measure. Outer loadings above 0.70 are typically accepted as strong in PLS-SEM, although values above 0.60, it also be sufficient in exploratory research, especially if other signs of validity are excellent. In this measurement, all the external loadings are significant statistically with p-values = 0.000 and t-values greater than double the value of 1.96 (for a level of significance of 5%). This confirms that each item contributes systematically to its underlying latent construct, indicating valid indicator reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

For the charisma variable which is one of the dimensions of transformational leadership in relation to the PLS model, the item possesses a loading value of 0.748, which indicates strong and reliable. For the perceived justice construct, in contrast, the two items of distributive justice load with weights of 0.532 and 0.540 respectively, both are lower than what is acceptable in terms of points. Misalignment in values, job frustration, and the satisfaction all factor significantly related to intention to leave the position, making this a multi-faceted construct that has been validated. These findings also confirm the results discussed in previous chapter regarding the measurement model, and is appropriately specified through indicators that have significance impact on these relationships.

Table 6: Factor loading

	Path coefficients (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
leaving <- Turnover Intention	0.781	0.773	0.059	13.176	0.000
satisfactions <- Turnover Intention	0.770	0.762	0.059	13.128	0.000
frustrations <- Turnover Intention	0.609	0.604	0.111	5.500	0.000

misalignments <- Turnover Intention	0.803	0.796	0.052	15.536	0.000
Satisfaction <- Turnover Intention	0.577	0.576	0.121	4.786	0.000
daydreaming <- Turnover Intention	0.511	0.504	0.121	4.212	0.000
Charisma <- Transformational Leadership	0.748	0.741	0.059	12.740	0.000
Development <- Transformational Leadership	0.832	0.829	0.039	21.144	0.000
Distributive Justice1 <- Perceived Justice	0.532	0.524	0.130	4.108	0.000
Distributive Justice2 <- Perceived Justice	0.540	0.532	0.123	4.408	0.000
Empowerment <- Transformational Leadership	0.836	0.835	0.035	23.784	0.000
Informational Justice1 <- Perceived Justice	0.661	0.649	0.080	8.304	0.000
Informational Justice2 <- Perceived Justice	0.657	0.646	0.073	8.977	0.000
Innovative thinking <- Transformational Leadership	0.833	0.827	0.044	19.021	0.000
Interpersonal Justice1 <- Perceived Justice	0.628	0.608	0.117	5.383	0.000
Interpersonal Justice2 <- Perceived Justice	0.613	0.598	0.094	6.550	0.000
Leading by Example <- Transformational Leadership	0.665	0.653	0.099	6.729	0.000
Procedural Justice1 <- Perceived Justice	0.769	0.772	0.038	20.234	0.000
Procedural Justice2 <- Perceived Justice	0.596	0.592	0.076	7.835	0.000
Supportive Leadership <- Transformational Leadership	0.864	0.862	0.033	26.427	0.000
Vision <- Transformational Leadership	0.808	0.804	0.049	16.341	0.000

Hypothesis Testing Results, Structural Model

Table 7 shows the final test of hypothesis results and supports the significant results of this research, as all three hypotheses were verified, with statistically significant path coefficients and p-values < 0.05, which confirmed the hypothesis relationships in the research framework.

Hypothesis 1 examined the direct effect of transformational leadership towards turnover intention. A statistically significant negative effect is represented by the negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.163$) with a p-value of 0.049. It indicates a statistically significant relationship, if the university lecturers perceive their leaders to be transformational, then they are providing the followers with the vision, empowerment, and support, they will have less intention to think of quitting the workplace in universities.

Hypothesis 2 examined the effect of perceived justice on turnover intention, which has a strong negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.411$) and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. This relationship is both statistically and practically meaningful, and lecturers who feel they are treated fairly in terms of processes, interpersonal interactions, and communication are significantly less likely to intend to leave their institutions.

Hypothesis 3 focused on the moderator function of perceived justice on the transformational leadership and turnover intention relationship. The $PJ \times TL$ interaction effect is significant ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.009$), indicating that perceived justice strengthens or changes the influence of leadership on turnover. These results confirmed that the full conceptual model and show the significant of both organizational justice and leadership behaviors in establishing employee retention, especially in academic communities.

To explain the interpretation of positive interaction between PJ and TL, when perceived justice is low among faculty members and they treated unfairly and under stress, the effect of transformational leadership is high and leaders can make changes in the workplace. On the other hand, when perceived justice is high in the academic environment, the impact of transformational leadership is weak and there is no strong effect on turnover intention among them. This is confirmed by some faculties that most of them working

independent and leaders responsible for development of department rather than leading the process in universities.

Table 7: The Path Value of relations

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficients (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Interpretation
Hypothesis 1	Transformational Leadership -> Turnover Intention	-0.163	-0.165	0.099	1.651	0.049	Negative relationship - Accepted
Hypothesis 2	Perceived Justice -> Turnover Intention	-0.411	-0.442	0.093	4.412	0.000	Negative relationship - Accepted
Hypothesis 3	Perceived Justice x Transformational Leadership -> Turnover Intention	0.154	0.158	0.065	2.370	0.009	positive relationship - Accepted

Figure 2, represents the path value of the study according to the framework mentioned in previous chapters. Considering latent variables in smart pls software, turnover intention as dependent variable, connecting to transformational leadership variable as the independent variable, and also connecting to perceive justice as the moderation role of this relationship. As you can find the number in the figure, R-squared ($R^2 = 0.408$) in current research model describes 41.0% of the turnover intention.

The negative direct relationship of transformational leadership with turnover intention has a negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.163$), which implies that levels of transformational leadership are larger when the university lecturers experience less turnover intention. Similarly, the direct effect of perceived justice is also negative ($\beta = -0.411$), and it implies that employees will have lower turnover intentions when they perceive fairness and justice within their institutions. The center of the emphasis in this model is the interaction term ($PJ \times TL$) to examine the moderating effect. The significant path coefficient of the interaction suggests that perceived justice actually moderates the strength of the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.154$). This suggests that when perceived justice is high, the impact of transformational leadership weakens, while the perception of fairness in low the effect of transformational leadership is strong in academic environment.

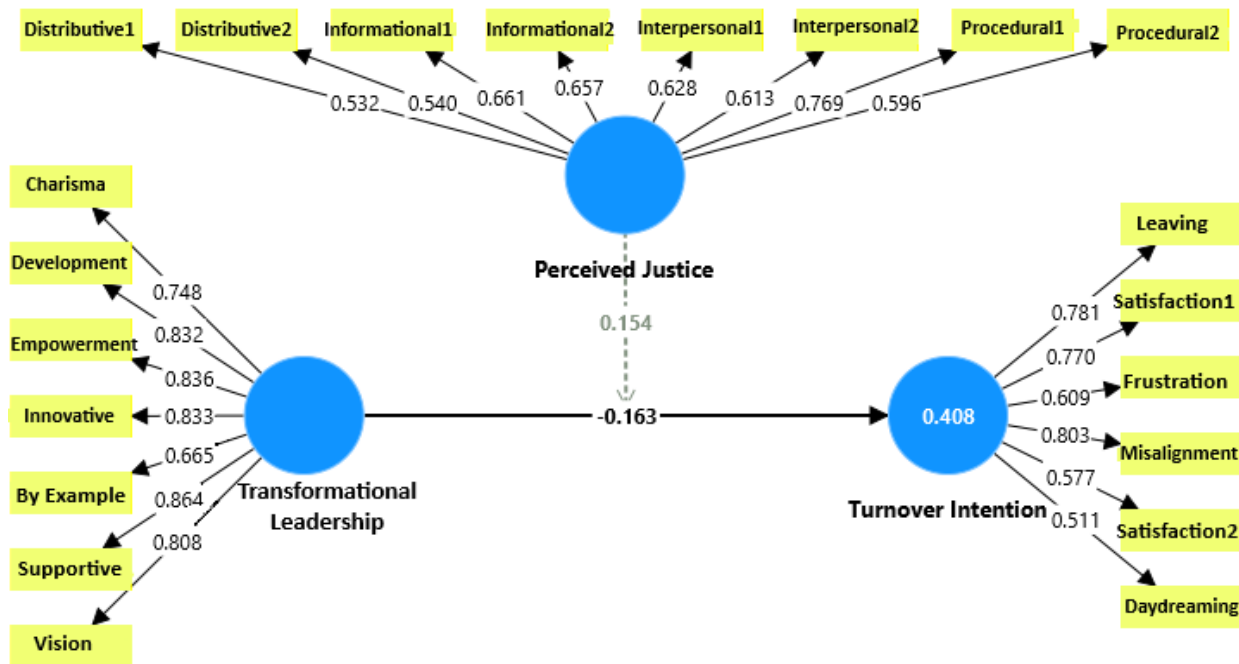


Figure 2: Path value

To find the best result of analysis the data, by using the smart pls4 software, and the bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 samples with percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, one-tailed testing at the 0.05 significance level, which corresponds to a two-sided 90% confidence interval (Sarstedt et.al., 2021). All t-values are greater than the critical value of 1.645, confirming that each hypothesized path is significant at the 5% level. This includes both direct effects and the moderating effect, which further confirms the structural relationships of the model. A t-value defines how much the data supports the existence of a relationship between two variables. In PLS-SEM, the t-value is obtained by dividing the original path coefficient by its standard error.

4- Discussion

This study examined the relationships among transformational leadership, perceived organizational justice, and turnover intention among lecturers at Universities of Applied Sciences in Germany. The findings supported all three proposed hypotheses. Transformational leadership and perceived organizational justice were both negatively associated with turnover intention, while perceived organizational justice also significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. The model explained approximately 40.8% of the variance in turnover intention, indicating that leadership and fairness perceptions together represent important factors associated with lecturers' intention to remain in their institutions.

The results for Hypothesis 1 showed a statistically significant negative relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.163$, $p = 0.049$). This finding suggests that lecturers who perceive their academic leaders as visionary, supportive, empowering, and development-oriented are less likely to consider leaving their institutions. Although the effect was relatively modest, the result supports the relevance of transformational leadership for employee retention and is consistent with previous research linking transformational leadership with lower turnover intention and more positive

employee attitudes. In the context of higher education, leadership behaviors that provide support, communicate a clear vision, and encourage professional development may contribute to lecturers' willingness to stay in the organization.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported, with perceived organizational justice showing a stronger negative relationship with turnover intention ($\beta = -0.411$, $p < 0.001$). Among the predictors examined in this study, perceived justice had the strongest direct relationship with turnover intention. This finding highlights the importance of lecturers' perceptions of fairness regarding organizational procedures, outcomes, interpersonal treatment, and communication. Lecturers who perceive institutional decisions and workplace practices as fair are therefore less likely to consider leaving their universities. This result is consistent with previous research showing that perceptions of organizational justice are associated with lower turnover intention and more positive organizational attitudes (Mengstie, 2020; Moon et al., 2024).

The findings for Hypothesis 3 confirmed that perceived organizational justice significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.009$). The positive interaction coefficient, together with the negative direct effect of transformational leadership, indicates that the negative relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention becomes weaker as perceived justice increases. Conversely, when perceived justice is lower, transformational leadership appears to have a stronger negative association with turnover intention. This suggests that leadership may become particularly important when lecturers perceive weaknesses in institutional fairness. When organizational justice is already high, fair procedures, respectful treatment, and transparent communication may themselves contribute strongly to retention, reducing the relative importance of transformational leadership in explaining turnover intention. The finding therefore suggests that organizational justice does not simply strengthen the effect of transformational leadership; rather, it changes the strength of the relationship depending on the level of perceived fairness.

Transformational leadership contributes to reducing turnover intention, but perceptions of organizational fairness appear to play an even stronger direct role. At the same time, the significant interaction between the two constructs indicates that the effectiveness of transformational leadership depends partly on the organizational context in which leadership occurs. For Universities of Applied Sciences in Germany, the results therefore emphasize the importance of combining supportive and empowering leadership practices with transparent procedures, equitable treatment, and clear communication when developing strategies aimed at reducing faculty turnover.

Implications, Policy Recommendations

This study found transformational leadership can significantly affects the intention to leave among faculty members in universities, and according to this negative significant relationship, by applying transformational leadership style in academia the rate of turnover intention will decrease. Therefore, it is suggested that university leaders, principals and head of departments recommended to receive training in transformational leadership behavior, adding leadership development by professional training for leaders in universities.

As one of the most impactful factors influencing turnover intention, perceived justice was found the robust significant relationship directly and moderately in this study. As a result, universities should pay special attention and strengthen to perceived organizational justice to support all dimensions of fairness namely

workload distribution, promotion, information and communication among faculty members. Conducting feedback mechanism and assessment can help to find the level of justice within the academic environment.

Moreover, by considering the positive interaction between perceived justice and transformational leadership, the effect of transformational leadership is highly significant when faculty members treat unfairly with low level of justice in workplace. Therefore, this is recommended that when faculty members receive low perception of fairness in academia, transformational leadership can effectively change workplace in universities. This is confirmed by many participants that few professors have a leader that is direct supervisor, and faculty members working independent and autonomously in universities. Therefore, the importance of transformational leadership emerging when faculty members perceive the low level of justice in academic environment.

5- Conclusion and Future Research

The results present strong support that transformational leadership impacts lecturers' intention to remain in their positions. Lecturers who find their academic leaders as visionary, inspirational, supportive, and empowering found lower level of turnover intention. This finding is consistent with previous research and supports the thesis that when leaders are able to inspire and engage their faculty, it will have a positive effect on their commitment and reduce the likelihood of leave the institution. Also to find the role of perceived justice, defined as the sense of fairness on different dimensions, distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational, observed by lecturers. Turnover intention was highly negatively correlated with perceived justice ($\beta = -0.411$), which indicates that fairness is a pivotal aspect of faculty decision-making in the context of remaining or leaving the position. Respectful treatment, equitable procedures, and equitable treatment were found to contribute to greater feelings of belonging and stability in the institution.

The greatest finding in this study is the moderating effect of perceived justice on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. The research established that the ability of transformational leadership to reduce turnover intention is significantly enhanced where justice organization is high. This interaction effect ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.009$) suggests that even a strong leader may not prove sufficient in preventing personnel from leaving unless complemented by an organizational climate of overall justice. On the other hand, in the absence of justice, leadership quality may be compromised, which makes it imperative to integrate the ethics of justice in the practice of leadership such that university policies in institutions and day-to-day interactions are defined by transparency, equity, and respect.

Considering all the finding in this research, the results offer an integrated and multi-component model of lecturers' turnover intention. The findings suggest that faculty retention is not an issue that can be addressed by leadership development without considering effective factors that have an impact of their career. Instead, high rate of retention must be multi-dimensional, pairing strong transformational leadership with equitable culture and supportive academic climate. The utility of adding interactions between leadership and contextual variables is also demonstrated through this study, since these offer a more accurate and dynamic realistic of faculty experiences in universities.

In practical terms, institutions that desire to improve faculty retention would consider investing in leadership growth programs that address empowerment, support, and vision. Additionally, developing organizational justice through fair processes, open communication, and respectful interpersonal conduct, creating a collegial environment that fosters teamwork and psychological safety, and supporting lecturers

in managing teaching loads, particularly at advanced levels, and improving students' engagement and readiness. By paying attention to both the relational and structural dimensions of intellectual work, institutions can build stronger, committed, and satisfied communities of faculty.

This study offers policy recommendations for educational institution and universities, especially for applied science universities in Germany, which can enhance the level of job satisfaction and decrease the level of turnover intention among faculty members. This is recommended that by conducting feedback mechanism and assessment in academia, evaluating the perception of justice and transformational factors for principals can help educational system to expect lower level of intention to leave among faculty members.

This research found limitations, challenges and difficulties in many ways, which needs to consider specially to measure turnover intention. Because of complexity and multifaced concept of this characteristic, understanding the direction of influence between variables is often the issue to analysis the data. Collecting data among faculty members when the research conducted out of the university and polices that avoid accepting survey make limitations to access the faculty members in many universities.

Moreover, according to the busy schedule and high workload of professors, this research may be limited to accessibility to the number of responds to the questionnaire. There are many external factors which can influence the intention to leave or stay in the institutions among faculty members, namely economic conditions, industry trends, and applicability to other contexts or regions. These limitations underline the demand to examine this framework in larger sample and comprehensive approaches in future studies.

This study recommends future research aim to by using the framework introduced in this study, investigate on boarder sampling for more universities, faculty members, head of departments, and possible partnership with institutional leadership or higher education associations to enhance the number of participations and data access. Moreover, adding variables namely burnout, job engagement, research pressure, work-life balance, and institutional culture may provide a comprehensive overlook of the intention to leave for faculty members in academic environment. Moreover, this is recommended to study the impact of each component of perceived justice variable separately.

Applying research in different countries and universities is needed to find the path of international and cultural values, and university structures affect the relationship between turnover intention, organizational justice and leadership in academic institutions. Future studies can expand the sample size and using other methodology design, namely multi-level modeling, laten growth modeling, and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to evaluate transformational leadership, turnover intention and perceived justice among faculty members in universities.

AI Assistance Declaration

Artificial intelligence tools (Grok by AI and ChatGPT by OpenAI) were used solely for language editing, rephrasing, and improving the English expression of the manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate original ideas, research content, analysis, or conclusions. The author is fully responsible for the content of this article.

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