

## Causes of Voluntary Employee Turnover in the Public Service of Zambia: A Case of Ministry of Agriculture

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### Abstract

This study examines the key factors influencing employee turnover in Zambia's public sector, with a focus on understanding employee experiences and identifying effective strategies and practices to reduce turnover and improve retention within the Ministry of Agriculture in Lusaka. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study employed structured questionnaires distributed among Ministry staff and analysed the data using SPSS software. The variables examined included job satisfaction, compensation, career development opportunities, work environment, leadership, organizational culture, and political interference all known contributors to public sector turnover. The findings reveal that limited career advancement opportunities, inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, and political interference significantly drive employee dissatisfaction and increase turnover intentions. Many employees expressed frustration over high workload stress, insufficient resources, and a lack of support from leadership. These issues were found to have a direct impact on morale and overall job satisfaction. The presence of political interference was particularly notable, as it undermines professionalism, transparency, and merit based promotion, further deepening dissatisfaction among employees. The study emphasizes the need for the Ministry to create a supportive and inclusive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to grow professionally. Effective leadership, transparent communication, and fair treatment were identified as essential to improving employee engagement and reducing turnover rates. Furthermore, the research highlights that without meaningful changes, the Ministry risks continued loss of skilled personnel, reduced service delivery, and long term inefficiencies. Based on the analysis, several key recommendations are proposed. Firstly, enhancing career development programs through training, mentorship, and clear promotion pathways can help employees feel more invested in their work. Secondly, revising compensation structures to reflect market standards would improve motivation and job satisfaction. Thirdly, improving the physical and psychological working environment by ensuring adequate resources, reducing excessive workloads, and providing employee support services would foster a more productive workforce. Additionally, addressing leadership gaps by promoting accountability, emotional intelligence, and participative management styles can rebuild trust between staff and management. Another significant recommendation is increasing employee involvement in decision making processes. This not only enhances employee engagement and ownership but also contributes to a more collaborative and transparent organizational culture. Finally, limiting political interference and ensuring adherence to merit based recruitment and promotion practices will restore professionalism and fairness in the Ministry. In conclusion, this study provides critical insights into the root causes of employee turnover in Zambia's public sector and offers actionable strategies for addressing them. By focusing on employee satisfaction, leadership development, fair compensation, and inclusive decision-making, the Ministry of Agriculture can build a more stable, motivated, and high-performing workforce. Implementing these recommendations can significantly reduce turnover, enhance service delivery, and contribute to the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of public sector operations in Zambia.

**Keywords:** Employee Turnover, Public Sector, Job Satisfaction, Compensation, Leadership

### 1. Introduction and Background

Employee turnover defined by McCarthy et al, (2002: 10), "as the rate at which employees exit an organization and are subsequently replaced" remains a persistent and pressing challenge within the public service sector.

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Unlike in the private sector, where turnover may be absorbed through increased operational flexibility or financial incentives, public institutions often operate under constrained budgets, rigid bureaucratic systems, and a mandate to serve the public interest. High rates of voluntary turnover in public service can lead to a significant disruption in service delivery, decreased institutional memory, increased recruitment and training costs, and ultimately, diminished trust and satisfaction among the communities these agencies serve.

This research undertook a comprehensive investigation into the underlying causes of voluntary employee turnover within the public service context, with a focus on identifying and analyzing the specific factors that influence public employees to resign from their positions. These factors may include, but are not limited to, inadequate compensation, limited career advancement opportunities, poor management practices, job dissatisfaction, work life imbalance, organizational culture, and lack of employee recognition. By delving into these root causes, the study aimed to generate valuable insights that can inform the development of targeted retention strategies and policy recommendations tailored to the unique needs and constraints of public sector organizations.

Employee turnover, particularly voluntary turnover, has been a longstanding challenge in the public sector globally. Historically, public organizations have faced difficulties in retaining skilled and experienced employees due to factors such as limited financial incentives, bureaucratic structures, and rigid career progression pathways. In the mid 20th century, studies indicated that public sector employees often experienced lower job satisfaction compared to their private sector counterparts, primarily due to lower pay and limited advancement opportunities.

In recent decades, these challenges have persisted and, in some cases, intensified. In the United States, for instance, approximately 59 million employees left their jobs in 2015 (Catalyst, 2016), with the healthcare sector expected to reach a 29% turnover rate by 2020 (Obiero Report, 2011). In the United Kingdom, turnover rates in the public sector hover around 15% annually (CIPD, 2016). Similarly, in South Africa, public service departments have struggled with retaining skilled employees due to low salaries and better opportunities in the private sector (Crous, 2012; Mabindisa, 2013).

In Zambia, the issue of employee turnover has been particularly pronounced in the Zambia Police Service. Reports from the Zambia Police Annual Report (2018) indicate that 274 officers left in 2017, and 280 left in 2018, with 287 officers departing in 2019 (Nsama & Lumai, 2023). Key reasons for this turnover include poor working conditions, job dissatisfaction, lack of career progression, inadequate pay, and ineffective management. This turnover not only affects the operational efficiency of the Zambia Police Service but also creates a challenge in maintaining expertise and continuity, as new recruits may lack the experience and training of their predecessors.

Further, according to the Zambia Statistics Agency (2021), the education sector experienced a turnover rate of 18.7%, indicating that nearly one in five employees within the sector left their positions over a specified period, typically one year. This high turnover rate could be attributed to several factors, such as low salaries, heavy workloads, lack of professional development opportunities, poor working conditions, and job insecurity. Teachers and education staff often face emotional and psychological strain due to the challenges of managing classrooms, meeting academic expectations, and coping with inadequate resources. The resulting turnover not only disrupts the continuity of education but also incurs significant recruitment and training costs, further straining the system.

The challenge of employee turnover is not limited to Zambia or individual countries but extends across many regions, especially in Africa. Research by Bossaert and Bouckaert (2017) found that in various African countries, turnover rates were higher among employees who felt demotivated and had little hope of career progression. In Zambia, as highlighted by Masaiti (2013), turnover rates could reach as high as 18% to 25%, driven by factors such as low salaries and insufficient training. This suggests a persistent problem of employee retention that, if left unaddressed, could have long-term implications for public sector service delivery.

The voluntary turnover of skilled personnel in Zambia's public sector is a multi-faceted issue that requires further investigation. Understanding the underlying causes and dynamics of this turnover is crucial for developing strategies to address it. By conducting research in this area, it is possible to identify specific factors contributing to high turnover rates and propose solutions that can help retain skilled personnel, improve working conditions, and enhance the overall efficiency of the public sector.

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the theoretical frameworks listed below in order to theoretically explain the causes of voluntary employee turnover in the public service of Zambia particularly for the agriculture sector.

#### Unfolding Model of Turnover

This model examines how specific events or shocks influence an employee's decision to leave an organization. It considers factors like dissatisfaction, better opportunities, or personal circumstances. The model suggests that turnover is not always a result of a gradual build-up of dissatisfaction but can occur suddenly due to a significant event or realization. This model identifies that employees go through a decision-making process after experiencing such shocks, and they either stay or leave depending on how they interpret the event and how they respond to the situation (Lee and Mitchell, 1994).

**Psychological Goal System Theory**

This framework focuses on how unmet psychological goals or negative emotions drive employees to seek new opportunities. It emphasizes the role of individual motivation and self-realization (Carsten and Spector, 1987).

**Theory of Planned Behavior**

This theory explores how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence turnover intentions. It is useful for understanding the decision-making process behind voluntary turnover (Ajzen, 1991).

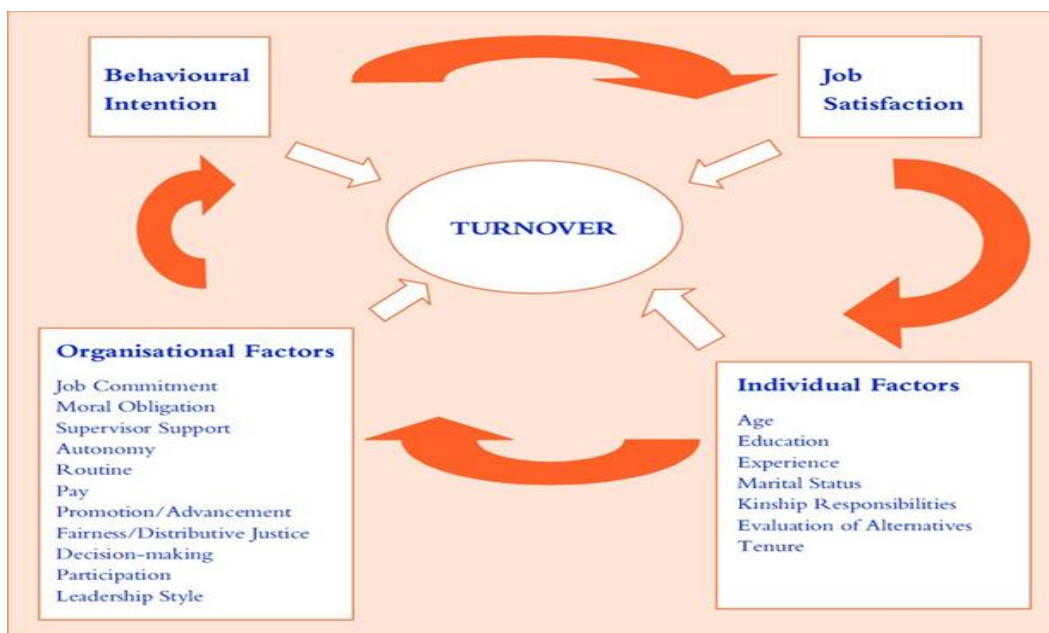
**Evolutionary Job Search Model**

This model highlights the role of job search behaviors and labor market dynamics in turnover decisions. It considers factors like job satisfaction and external opportunities. According to this model, employees engage in job search behaviors when they are dissatisfied with their current job or perceive better external opportunities. The model assumes that employees continuously search for better options, balancing the costs of searching for example, time and effort with the potential rewards of finding a more satisfying job. Job satisfaction and the availability of external opportunities are crucial factors influencing the turnover decision. In the agricultural sector, workers might be motivated to leave if they feel their current role does not align with their skills or career aspirations and if better job offers are available in the labor market (Jovanoic, 1979).

**2.2. Conceptual Framework**

In this study, the McCarthy framework of turnover determinants was used to guide the analysis of factors influencing employee turnover. This model is designed to understand and evaluate the various determinants that impact employees' decisions to leave an organization. The McCarthy Framework emphasizes the interrelationships between these determinants and their direct or indirect effects on turnover. By examining these factors, organizations can uncover the primary drivers of employee attrition and develop strategies to improve retention. The framework provides valuable insights that help organizations focus on enhancing job satisfaction, fostering organizational commitment, improving working conditions, and ultimately reducing turnover rates (McCarthy et al., 2002).

McCarthy et al. (2002) classify the determinants of turnover into two main categories: individual factors and organizational factors. This classification allows for a more structured approach to understanding turnover by addressing both personal and organizational influences on employee retention as illustrated below:



Source: ResearchGate.net figure 1: showing McCarthy et al turnover framework

**2.3. Empirical Literature Review**

A significant body of empirical research has investigated the causes and consequences of employee turnover, with varying focuses and methodologies. (Arvindraj, 2019) conducted a study on turnover intentions in the banking sector, identifying factors such as distributive justice, job stress, job satisfaction, and compensation. The study established a clear relationship between these factors and turnover, providing valuable insights into the specific drivers of turnover in the banking sector. However, the study's focus was somewhat limited, concentrating on only these four variables. This narrow scope leaves the possibility that other critical factors, such as leadership styles, organizational culture, and work-life balance, may also significantly influence employee turnover but were not fully explored in this context.

Despite its contribution, Arvindraj's study has several limitations. First, the research focuses only on a limited number of

variables, leaving out other potential factors that could also contribute to turnover, such as organizational culture or leadership styles, which have been shown in other research to influence employee retention (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schein, 2010). Furthermore, the study's exclusive focus on the banking sector restricts the applicability of its findings to other industries. The banking sector may have unique turnover dynamics that do not translate to sectors with different organizational structures or employee profiles.

(Mwami, 2014) examined the causes of high employee turnover in commercial banks in Kenya, focusing on leadership, technology, work roles, and workload. These factors, which are crucial to understanding turnover in this specific context, provide valuable insights into the dynamics affecting employee retention within the banking industry. However, the study's scope was limited by its narrow focus on only these variables, omitting other significant factors such as employee recognition, organizational culture, work-life balance, and job satisfaction factors that have been highlighted in other research as contributing to turnover (Judge & Klinger, 2009; Allen et al., 2000). In contrast, the current study aims to identify a more comprehensive set of factors contributing to employee turnover, extending beyond the four factors highlighted in Mwami's research, and exploring additional aspects that may play a significant role.

Despite the study's contributions to the understanding of turnover in Kenya's commercial banking sector, there are notable limitations. The research relied on a limited set of variables, and although leadership and workload are critical to employee retention, other factors, such as organizational culture, work-life balance, and employee recognition, were not explored. These factors, as indicated in broader employee turnover literature, have been shown to influence retention and turnover intentions (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). By excluding these important variables, Mwami's study provides an incomplete picture of the factors affecting turnover in the commercial banking sector.

(Ogony and Majola, 2018) conducted research on employee turnover in the public sector in South Africa, focusing on factors such as poor salaries, lack of career advancement, and poor working conditions. These factors are critical in understanding turnover within the public sector, where employees often face unique challenges compared to those in the private sector. However, the study had notable limitations in its methodological approach, which introduced bias and reduced the generalizability of its findings. One key issue was the exclusion of senior management from the sample. While this was done under the assumption that senior management might be too busy to participate, it resulted in a skewed sample that may not accurately represent the entire employee population. Senior management plays a critical role in influencing organizational culture, employee morale, and retention strategies, so their exclusion from the research renders the findings incomplete and potentially misleading.

The study by (Ogony and Majola, 2018) used stratified random sampling, but by omitting senior management, the sample failed to capture the full spectrum of perspectives on turnover, particularly those related to leadership, organizational policies, and job security factors that are often influenced by higher level decisions. Furthermore, the study did not take into account the role of organizational culture or job security, two key factors that have been repeatedly identified in the literature as essential to understanding employee turnover. For instance, (Schein, 2010) emphasizes the importance of organizational culture, and (De Witte, 2005) highlights job security as a crucial element for retention. The failure to include these factors in Ogony and Majola's research represents a significant gap, as these issues are fundamental in shaping employee perceptions and turnover decisions.

Moreover, Ogony and Majola's focus on basic factors like salary and career advancement does not fully capture the complexity of employee turnover. Recent studies show that turnover is not solely determined by tangible factors such as pay and job roles but is also influenced by more intangible aspects like workplace culture, job security, leadership styles, and the overall work environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This broader perspective is crucial for developing comprehensive retention strategies.

(Banda, 2021) conducted a study on factors influencing employee turnover in Zambia's aviation industry, focusing specifically on factors like lack of recognition, poor communication, and low salaries. While these factors are certainly important in understanding turnover within the aviation sector, the research has several limitations regarding its methodology and scope. Banda's study utilized a survey method with a sample size of 255 participants, including both current and former employees of Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL). This sampling approach, while offering valuable insights, introduces a key limitation: the inclusion of former employees whose experiences may not accurately reflect the current organizational context. Former employees' perspectives might be influenced by past conditions or their decision to leave the organization, and they may not be in a position to offer an accurate assessment of the present work environment or the factors that currently influence turnover. Current employees, on the other hand, are likely to have a more direct experience with the current work environment, organizational culture, and management practices. This reliance on responses from former employees creates a potential bias in the findings and reduces the relevance of the conclusions for current organizational dynamics.

Additionally, Banda's study focused exclusively on the aviation industry, a sector that has unique operational and organizational structures, which may not be comparable to other industries, particularly those in the public sector. The aviation industry often experiences high turnover rates due to factors such as flight schedules, safety concerns, and specific regulatory requirements. However, these factors may not apply to other sectors, especially the public sector, where turnover drivers can be influenced by different organizational and external factors such as policy changes, public sector wage structures, and government-imposed budget constraints. The findings of Banda's research, therefore, may not be applicable to organizations outside of the aviation sector.

The current study is poised to fill the gap identified in Banda's research by broadening the scope of factors examined and

expanding the organizational context beyond the aviation industry. While Banda's study explored a number of important turnover factors such as recognition, communication, and compensation, it did not take into account other critical factors such as leadership, organizational culture, job security, and work-life balance, which are frequently cited in the literature as influencing turnover decisions (Vulpen, 2024; Allen et al., 2000; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The current study, therefore, aims to expand on Banda's findings by identifying additional turnover determinants and exploring how they apply to a more diverse range of sectors, with particular emphasis on the public sector.

The current study will address the methodological limitations of Banda's research by ensuring that only current employees are surveyed. This approach will provide a more accurate snapshot of the present organizational climate and allow for a better understanding of the factors influencing turnover in real-time. Furthermore, to ensure greater generalizability and validity, the current research will adopt a broader sampling technique that includes participants from multiple sectors, including both public and private sector employees, to explore the differences and similarities in turnover causes across industries. This more inclusive sampling method will provide a more comprehensive and applicable understanding of turnover across various sectors, as opposed to Banda's sector-specific focus.

(Mwansa and Hapompwe, 2023) conducted a study on the causes of employee turnover at Ecobank in Zambia, utilizing a case study design that combined both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This approach allowed the researchers to gather a richer, more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing turnover within Ecobank. The qualitative component included interviews with employees, while the quantitative component involved surveys to capture the broader patterns of turnover and the statistical relationships between various turnover factors.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, which is often seen as advantageous in turnover research because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of both numerical patterns and personal experiences. The quantitative data collected through surveys provided a broad overview of the factors influencing turnover, such as job satisfaction, compensation, and career development opportunities. In contrast, the qualitative interviews offered deeper insights into employees' personal perspectives on turnover, organizational culture, leadership, and other intangible factors.

The sample size consisted of a representative cross-section of current employees from Ecobank, based on the case study design. Interviews were conducted with both front-line staff and middle-management employees to capture a range of experiences and views. This dual data collection method helped ensure a more complete understanding of the factors influencing turnover at Ecobank.

The limitation of this study is its exclusive focus on Ecobank, a private sector banking institution. While this focus allowed for an in-depth analysis of turnover within one company, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries or sectors. The dynamics of employee turnover in the banking sector may differ significantly from those in public sector organizations or other industries, as the drivers of turnover can be influenced by sector-specific factors such as pay structures, career progression opportunities, and regulatory requirements. For example, the banking sector may be more sensitive to compensation and incentives due to market competition, while the public sector may place a higher emphasis on job security and work-life balance. Therefore, the findings from (Mwansa and Hapompwe, 2023) may not be applicable to the public sector or other industries with different organizational cultures and structures.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This chapter outlined the research strategy and methodology that will be employed to address the research questions presented in the previous chapter. The methodology section provided a detailed approach to how data will be collected and analyzed to address the research problem. The chapter is structured into several key sections, including: research design, study population, study sample, sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, work plan, budget, and references. Each of these sections provided a clear justification for the chosen methods and procedures, ensuring the study's approach is both rigorous and aligned with the research objectives.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive research is one that can be best used to address the "what" questions and also it has a high degree of representativeness and the ease in which the researcher can obtain the participant's opinions (Polit & Beck, 2004). Therefore, this research design was the most adequate to provide answers to the research problem.

#### **3.2. Research Approach**

This research followed a quantitative research approach to address the research problem.

#### **3.3. Study Population**

The study population was drawn from about 200 employees at the Ministry of Agriculture, Headquarters in Lusaka; it focused on top management, middle management, frontline management and frontline officers. The research focused on this group of employees because they are the ones who are most likely to have the capacity to provide valid information to answer the research questions.

### 3.4. Study Sample

Ministry of Agriculture, Headquarters is estimated to have a workforce of 200 employees at the Headquarters building; the research targeted a sample of 132 respondents to answer the research questions. To come up with this sample size, Cochran's formula for finite populations was used:

$$n = n_0 \div 1 + (n_0 - 1) / N$$

$$\text{Step 1: } n_0 = z^2 pq / e^2$$

$$= 1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5) / 0.05^2 = 385$$

$$\text{Step 2: } n = n_0 / 1 + (n_0 - 1) / N = 385 \div 1 + (385 - 1) / 200$$

$$= 385 \div 2.536 = 152.81 = 132$$

$$(P = 50\%, Z = 95\% \text{ (z-score-1.96)}, E = \pm 5\%, p = 1 - p)$$

Where:  $n_0$  = sample size from infinite population,  $n$  = the required sample,  $P$  = is the variance of population,  $E$  = is the margin of error,  $Z$  = the level of confidence,  $N$  = population size) (Cochran, 1977).

### 3.5. Sampling Procedure

The researcher employed probability sampling methods to ensure a comprehensive and representative understanding of the factors influencing employee turnover. Specifically, systematic sampling techniques was used to select respondents, with careful attention to ensuring that the sample reflects diverse perspectives across the organization.

The researcher used systematic sampling to select a sample of 132 permanent employees. Systematic sampling is a type of probability sampling that offers a structured and reproducible method of selection, making it suitable for obtaining a representative sample from a list of employees (Flick, 2018). The first step in this method involved selecting a starting point randomly from the employee list, and then every  $n$ th employee will be selected until the desired sample size is reached.

This approach is particularly beneficial for large organizations, as it helps ensure that the sample is spread across the entire organization without the need for exhaustive, individual selections. Systematic sampling is also cost-effective and time-efficient compared to simple random sampling, particularly in cases where an employee database is already organized (Cohen et al., 2018). By employing this method, the study was able to capture a diverse array of employee experiences, including those who work at different levels and in different departments, while ensuring a broad and representative sample of permanent staff.

### 3.6. Research Instruments

The study employed questionnaires as the primary data collection method, utilizing closed-ended questions to gather quantitative data. This approach is particularly well suited for studies examining large groups of employees, as it allows for the efficient collection of standardized responses, which can easily be analyzed and compared (Fink, 2017). Closed ended questions are effective for addressing specific research questions and obtaining clear, quantifiable data on factors such as compensation, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and other key variables associated with employee turnover (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, this format enhances the reliability and consistency of the data, as respondents are provided with a set of predefined options to select from, minimizing the risk of varied interpretations of questions.

#### Data Collection Procedure

To collect data, the researcher followed a series of key steps, including: (1) obtaining ethical clearance from the University of Zambia (UNZA); (2) acquiring an official introduction letter from the Graduate School of Business (GSB); (3) seeking permission from the Ministry of Agriculture management to conduct research on the Ministry's premises; and (4) upon receiving approval, personally distributing the questionnaires to the respondents. These steps are crucial to ensure the research complies with ethical standards and institutional requirements while facilitating a smooth data collection process.

### 3.7. Data Analysis

SPSS 20 was utilized for data analysis, leveraging its powerful capabilities to generate complex statistical distributions and identify relationships between key variables in the dataset. This software was chosen for its widely recognized strength in handling large datasets, conducting various statistical tests, and providing clear outputs that aid in interpreting the data (Field, 2013). SPSS is particularly effective for analyzing survey data, offering tools for descriptive statistics, correlation, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing, making it a suitable choice for the current research (Pallant, 2020). Additionally, its user friendly interface ensures that even complex analyses can be conducted efficiently, thereby enhancing the overall quality and reliability of the research findings.

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## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4.1. Demographic Factors

Sex

The sex distribution of the sample shows a higher representation of females (56.1%) compared to males (38.6%), with 5.3% of respondents choosing not to disclose their gender. The higher number of female respondents could reflect the gender composition within the organization or sector from which the data was drawn. This gender breakdown is important for understanding the potential gender dynamics in the organization and how these might influence experiences or perceptions about work-related issues, such as job satisfaction, retention, or career development opportunities. In many sectors, particularly in public administration or caregiving roles, women are often overrepresented. The higher percentage of female respondents could also suggest that the findings might have gendered patterns or that women are more likely to respond to surveys about workplace satisfaction or employment concerns.

### Age

A significant proportion of respondents are in their 40s (34.8%), which may indicate that the workforce in this particular sector is relatively experienced. This group is often seen as being at a crucial stage in their career, where decisions about career progression, work-life balance, and retention are critical. Their needs may differ from younger employees who are still in the early stages of their career. Another proportion of respondents representing 29.5% in the age group of 21 - 40 are mid-career employees who may also be focused on career advancement and stability. Their concerns may align with balancing career growth with personal life or the pressures of progressing to leadership roles. While 12.1% of the respondents in the age group of 20 - 30 years may either be underrepresented in this sector or may have lower retention rates, potentially due to lack of advancement opportunities or the sector's challenges in attracting younger talent.

9.8% of respondents were in the 51-60 age group representing a segment nearing retirement age. Concerns related to career advancement may be less relevant for this group, but issues like work-life balance, job satisfaction, and preparation for retirement could be key factors impacting their engagement and retention. 13.6% of respondents did not provide their age and this is a relatively large percentage of non-responses, which could reflect privacy concerns or a lack of interest in sharing personal details. However, this also highlights a potential limitation in data accuracy or transparency.

The distribution of respondents across different age groups suggests that the organization likely has a mix of experienced, mid-career, and older employees, each with different concerns. The relatively low representation of younger employees (ages 20-30) could raise questions about the sector's ability to attract and retain younger talent, which may be an important factor for future workforce planning.

## 4.2. Key Factors Contributing to Employee Turnover, Challenges, and Difficulties faced by Employees in the Public Service

### Job Satisfaction and Consideration to Leave Current Job

Job satisfaction, a central theme in Arvindraj's study, was also identified as a crucial factor in the current research. According to the empirical data, 43.9% of respondents reported being satisfied with their jobs, but a significant portion (14.4%) expressed dissatisfaction. This aligns with Arvindraj's findings, which indicate that job satisfaction directly correlates with turnover intentions. However, the current study also reveals nuances such as the importance of work-life balance and career advancement opportunities, which were not explored in Arvindraj's study but are critical in the current context, especially in the public sector. For instance, 59.1% of respondents felt that career advancement opportunities were limited, which could contribute significantly to turnover intentions.

Further, Mwami's (2014) study emphasized leadership, workload, and technology as key drivers of employee turnover. However, the current study demonstrates that job satisfaction is a significant factor contributing to turnover in the public sector, with a notable portion of employees reporting dissatisfaction or only partial satisfaction with their jobs. The data shows that while 43.9% of employees are satisfied with their jobs, a substantial portion remains neutral or dissatisfied, reflecting a key element highlighted in broader turnover literature (Judge & Klinger, 2009). In contrast, Mwami's research did not specifically examine how job satisfaction or alignment with personal values influences turnover, a critical factor revealed by this study.

Ogony and Majola (2018) highlighted poor job satisfaction as a significant factor contributing to turnover, emphasizing the role of job dissatisfaction in employees' decisions to leave. The findings from the empirical research confirm that job satisfaction plays a role, with 43.9% of employees reporting satisfaction, but only 9.1% indicating very high satisfaction. A significant number of respondents (14.4%) reported dissatisfaction. This suggests that while job satisfaction is generally positive, notable dissatisfaction exists, pointing to the need for improvements in work culture.

Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023) found that job satisfaction influenced turnover at Ecobank. Employees in the private sector were more dissatisfied due to lower compensation and limited career growth opportunities. While the survey indicates that 43.9% of employees in the public sector are satisfied with their jobs, a portion (14.4%) expressed dissatisfaction. Both studies highlight job satisfaction as a crucial element. While employees in both sectors express satisfaction, dissatisfaction in the public sector (especially in terms of job satisfaction and recognition) may be indicative of unmet needs compared to Ecobank's employees, whose turnover was driven primarily by job satisfaction related to pay and growth.

### Job Stress and Workload Being Manageable

Another key finding in Arvindraj's study is the relationship between job stress and turnover, which is echoed in the current research. The data on workload being manageable shows that while most employees felt their workload was manageable

(63.6%), 2.3% reported it as very unmanageable. This discrepancy could indicate that excessive job demands or lack of support might lead to burnout and higher turnover, aligning with job stress as a predictor of turnover. The literature also emphasizes the role of organizational support in mitigating job stress, a factor that could be explored further in future research.

### **Career Advancement Opportunities**

Ogony and Majola (2018) highlight the lack of career advancement opportunities as a critical factor for turnover in the public sector, alongside poor salaries. Similarly, studies by Bass & Riggio (2006) and Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) suggest that employees who perceive limited career growth are more likely to leave. The data supports these findings, with 59.1% of respondents feeling that career advancement opportunities are limited. A further 15% reported having little to no opportunities for advancement. This reinforces the importance of providing clearer career progression paths to retain employees, aligning with the findings in the literature.

The current study indicates that 59.1% of employees believe career advancement opportunities are limited, and 41.7% view low salary and benefits as their primary job challenge. Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023) also found that at Ecobank, compensation and career development were critical factors influencing employee turnover, with employees often citing dissatisfaction with pay and lack of promotional opportunities. The findings from both studies align regarding the importance of compensation and career advancement. Employees in both the public and private sectors report dissatisfaction with pay, and career progression opportunities seem to be a critical factor for retention in both environments.

### **4.3. Primary Challenge in the Current Job Role**

Arvindraj's study highlighted compensation as a major driver of turnover intentions. In the current data, low salary and benefits were identified as the most significant challenge by 41.7% of employees. This aligns with the literature, which posits that inadequate compensation, especially when compared to industry standards, can drive employees to seek alternative employment (Mobley, 1977). The finding that employees value competitive salaries and benefits as the most effective strategy for retention further corroborates this view. Additionally, the relationship between distributive justice (fairness in pay and resource distribution) and turnover could be explored in the current dataset, particularly in the context of the public sector, where compensation structures may be less flexible.

Further, Ogony and Majola (2018) specifically point to low salaries as a key factor in turnover, a conclusion echoed by other studies suggesting that employees in the public sector often face financial dissatisfaction. The data from this study shows that 41.7% of respondents identify low salary and benefits as the primary challenge in their current role. This result aligns with the literature's emphasis on financial dissatisfaction as a significant driver of turnover.

#### **One's Work Being Valued By Their Supervisor/ Manager**

In Mwami's study, leadership and workload were identified as key drivers of turnover, but the factors of employee recognition and feeling valued by supervisors or managers were not extensively explored. In contrast, the current study reveals that many respondents feel their work is only sometimes valued by their managers (34.8%), which aligns with findings from other research (Allen et al., 2000) emphasizing the importance of recognition in employee retention. The lack of consistent recognition can contribute to higher turnover intentions, as employees may feel unappreciated and disconnected from their roles.

### **4.4. Stress or Burnouts Due to Workloads or Job Demands and Work load Being Manageable**

The present study also highlights that a significant portion of employees occasionally experiences stress or burnout due to workload demands (48.5%), reflecting Mwami's (2014) findings on workload and its impact on turnover. However, it also introduces the broader issue of work-life balance and its potential effect on retention. Literature, such as Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), suggests that work-life balance plays a vital role in turnover intentions, though Mwami's study did not directly examine this aspect. This study suggests that burnout and stress related to workload are closely tied to the challenges faced by public sector employees, indicating a need for improved workload management and better support for work-life balance.

Ogony and Majola (2018) did not directly address workload as a contributing factor but acknowledged the importance of stress in employee turnover. Studies such as Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) emphasize the negative impact of burnout and stress on retention. The data from the current study shows that a significant number of employees (48.5%) experience stress occasionally, with 22.7% reporting frequent stress or burnout due to workload. This indicates that managing workloads and reducing burnout are crucial factors for improving retention.

In line with Mwansa and Hapompwe's (2023) findings, which highlight workload management as a critical factor in turnover, the current study also shows that high workloads contribute to burnout and stress. Both studies suggest that heavy workloads represent a central challenge in retaining employees.

### **4.5. Physical Work Environment and Lack of Resources and Equipment**

A significant portion of respondents in this study reported that the physical work environment is not ideal, with 28.8% describing it as poor and 11.4% as very poor. This aligns with broader studies that link organizational culture and physical environment to employee morale and retention (Allen et al., 2000). However, this aspect was not as thoroughly discussed

in Mwami's research, which focused more on operational factors like technology and leadership rather than the broader cultural and environmental aspects affecting retention.

Additionally, Ogony and Majola (2018) and other sources noted the importance of the work environment and availability of resources as factors influencing employee turnover. Employees who lack the necessary tools and resources may feel frustrated, which can lead to higher turnover rates. The findings reflect this concern, with 33.3% of respondents reporting a lack of resources and equipment and 39.4% experiencing occasional shortages. Moreover, 27.3% of respondents rated their physical work environment as good, but a significant portion (28.8%) rated it poorly, highlighting the need for improvements in working conditions.

Furthermore, the public sector employees expressed challenges related to work environment conditions, with many employees experiencing stress or burnout due to their workload or job demands (48.5% occasionally and 22.7% frequently). Additionally, the lack of resources and equipment was a significant issue for many employees. Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023) in their study found that organizational culture and work conditions were essential factors in turnover. Negative perceptions of the work environment, including lack of resources, were likely contributors to turnover. Both studies highlight the importance of a conducive work environment. In the public sector, insufficient resources and burnout were key challenges, which may also affect employees' job satisfaction and increase turnover, a finding consistent with the private sector study's conclusion about work environment issues.

#### **4.6. Political Interference and Bureaucracy**

The study also delves into the challenges posed by political interference (30.3% reporting rare occurrences) and high levels of bureaucracy (55.3% perceiving it as high). These findings highlight the unique challenges of the public sector, which were not present in Mwami's study on the banking sector. These factors reflect a complex organizational culture that may contribute to frustration and burnout among employees, suggesting that the public sector faces unique challenges regarding politics and bureaucracy that may not be as relevant in the commercial banking sector.

Ogony and Majola (2018) mention the general challenges in public sector work environments but do not specifically discuss bureaucracy or political interference. However, many studies highlight these as significant obstacles to employee morale in the public sector (Schein, 2010). The findings from this study highlight high levels of bureaucracy, with 55.3% perceiving it as high or very high. Additionally, 30.3% of employees reported encountering political interference occasionally or rarely. These factors are less emphasized in the literature but emerge as significant concerns in this research, pointing to the need for greater autonomy and clearer boundaries between politics and day-to-day operations.

Further, Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023) in their study did not specifically address political interference, but trust in leadership was a significant factor influencing turnover. Employees' trust in management was crucial for retention. While political interference does not feature prominently in the Ecobank study, the lack of strong trust in leadership in both studies can be seen as a common theme. A neutral or low level of trust, combined with political interference, is likely to cause employee dissatisfaction, leading to higher turnover intentions.

#### **4.7. Relationship with Supervisor and Manager**

Effective leadership is critical in retaining employees, with Ogony and Majola (2018) noting the impact of management on turnover decisions. Studies by Schein (2010) and De Witte (2005) also emphasize the role of leadership in fostering job security and trust. In the empirical data, 49.2% of employees reported having a good relationship with their direct supervisor, but 25% rated the relationship as average, and 13% reported poor relationships. This suggests that leadership quality and supervisor relationships are key areas of concern. Additionally, 45.5% of employees reported a neutral level of trust in management, which indicates room for improvement in leadership practices to enhance employee retention.

The current study showed a mixed perception of their relationship with their managers, with a significant portion (49.2%) indicating good relationships, but 13% reporting poor relationships. While Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023) in their study with Ecobank, found leadership and relationships with managers to be essential to employee retention. Dissatisfaction with leadership and organizational culture was seen as a driver of turnover. Both studies find that leadership and employee relationships significantly impact turnover. In the public sector, while many employees report positive relationships with their supervisors, the issues faced by a notable portion of the workforce (13% reporting poor relationships) could potentially lead to dissatisfaction and turnover, mirroring the findings from Ecobank.

Having discussed the current research in relation to the literature, it is worth noting that there are other factors and challenges affecting employees that were found to contribute to employee turnover in the public sector, which may not be reflected in the discussion above. The following are the factors and challenges:

#### **4.8. Job Stability**

The majority of respondents (54.5%) feel secure in their positions, with 15.9% feeling "very secure." This suggests that a large portion of employees perceives job stability positively, which is essential for retention, as job security is a key factor in reducing turnover intentions. However, the 6.2% of employees who feel insecure or very insecure about their jobs represent a concerning minority. These employees may experience anxiety and dissatisfaction, potentially affecting their engagement and commitment to the organization. Addressing the concerns of this group could help improve overall morale and retention.

#### **4.9. Recommending People to Your Organization**

While 47.7% of respondents would "likely" recommend their organization and 18.2% would "very likely" do so, a significant portion (22%) remained neutral, and 12.1% (9.8% unlikely and 2.3% very unlikely) would not recommend the organization. This mixed sentiment suggests that while a considerable number of employees are somewhat satisfied with their workplace, others may have reservations about their employer. These employees' reluctance to recommend the organization could reflect underlying dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the work environment or organizational culture. This highlights the need for organizations to focus on areas of improvement to increase employee advocacy and satisfaction.

#### **4.10. Job Alignment with Personal Values and Goals**

A significant portion of employees (47%) agreed that their job aligns with their personal values and goals, with 11.4% strongly agreeing. This indicates a reasonable alignment between employees' motivations and their job roles, which is essential for fostering job satisfaction and long-term engagement. However, 17.4% of employees disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that a portion of the workforce feels disconnected from their roles. This misalignment could affect their motivation, job satisfaction, and retention. Addressing these concerns through tailored career development programs or role adjustments may improve employee satisfaction and commitment.

#### **4.11. Likelihood of Seeking Another Job Outside the Public Sector**

Over half of the respondents (53.8%) indicated that they are either likely or very likely to seek employment outside the public sector. This is a critical finding, as it suggests a substantial level of dissatisfaction or desire for new opportunities outside the sector. While 20.5% were neutral, and only a small percentage (0.8%) were very unlikely to leave, this reveals a potential challenge for retention. If employees are actively considering leaving for other sectors, the organization may need to focus on improving job satisfaction, career development opportunities, and compensation to retain talent within the public sector. This finding aligns with the broader concern that job satisfaction and career progression within the public sector are areas that require attention.

#### **4.12. Rating Overall Work Experience in the Public Sector**

The majority (63.6%) of respondents rated their overall work experience in the public sector positively, suggesting that a large portion of employees has a favorable view of their workplace. However, 28.8% remained neutral, and 7.6% rated their experience negatively. This indicates that while many employees are satisfied, there is a notable portion that feels indifferent or dissatisfied. These neutral or negative sentiments highlight areas where improvements in work conditions, management practices, or organizational culture may be needed to boost overall satisfaction and engagement.

#### **4.13. Delays in Delivery of Essential Materials and Services**

A significant number of employees (40.2%) reported frequently encountering delays in the delivery of essential materials and services, with an additional 33.3% experiencing delays occasionally. This issue is concerning, as delays can directly impact employee efficiency and morale. The frustration caused by these delays could lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement, especially if employees feel their work is hindered by factors outside their control. Addressing these logistical issues and ensuring timely delivery of essential resources could improve job satisfaction, morale, and productivity.

#### **Adaptations to Technological Changes or Advancements**

The findings on technological adaptability show mixed results. While 32.6% of employees felt their organization adapted well to technological changes, and 12.9% felt they adapted very well, 11.4% felt the adaptation was very poor. This highlights that while many employees are confident in the organization's ability to manage technological advancements, there is still a significant portion of employees who are dissatisfied with how these changes are being handled. This could be due to inadequate training, poor communication, or slow implementation of new technologies. Investing in employee training and support during technological transitions could help improve confidence in these changes and enhance overall satisfaction with the organization's technological adaptability.

#### **4.14. Strategies, Policies and Practices to be Implemented to Mitigate Employee Turnover**

##### **Most Effective Strategy to Reduce Employee Turnover and Efforts Made to Reduce Employee Turnover**

The study reveals a gap between employee satisfaction with turnover-reduction efforts and the organization's actual impact. A majority (52.3%) of employees were neutral about the organization's efforts to reduce turnover, and only 28% were satisfied. This finding suggests that although the public sector may have strategies in place to address turnover, these efforts may not be sufficiently impactful or visible to employees. Mwami's study did not emphasize organizational efforts to reduce turnover, focusing more on internal job roles and leadership. However, the current study highlights the need for more effective and visible retention strategies, such as competitive salaries and career progression opportunities, which are in line with the broader literature on employee retention.

Ogony and Majola (2018) suggest that offering competitive salaries and career advancement opportunities are the most effective strategies for reducing turnover. However, they fail to explore other potential strategies, such as employee engagement or involvement in decision making. The empirical data shows that employees also consider flexible working arrangements (37.9% agreed it would help retention), career development opportunities, and better recognition and

rewards as important strategies for improving retention. This highlights a broader range of strategies than those discussed in the literature.

The respondents in the current study felt that current efforts to reduce turnover were inadequate (52.3% neutral, 19.7% dissatisfied). In the study of Mwansa and Hapompwe (2023), Ecobank's turnover mitigation strategies included improving compensation and career development. However, like the public sector, efforts were not always perceived as effective. Both studies show that employees are dissatisfied with retention strategies, though the emphasis on compensation and career progression was more apparent in the Ecobank study. In the public sector, other factors like political interference and job security might play additional roles in shaping turnover.

Having discussed the above strategies in line with the literature, there are strategies, policies and practices that were found and would be helpful in mitigating employee turnover and these include the following:

#### **Career Progression Plan**

The data indicates that a clear career progression plan is essential to a large portion of the workforce, with 43.2% of respondents stating it is very important and 34.1% considering it important. This suggests that employees in the public sector are highly motivated by opportunities for growth and advancement. A lack of clear career progression pathways can lead to dissatisfaction and potentially increase turnover. Organizations need to develop transparent career development programs and clearly communicate growth opportunities to employees to enhance retention.

#### **Level of Recognition and Rewards**

Recognition and rewards are areas that need significant improvement, as reflected by the mixed responses. While 22% of employees reported being satisfied with recognition and rewards, a notable percentage (22.7% dissatisfied and 12.1% very dissatisfied) feel undervalued. Additionally, 34.1% of respondents remained neutral on the matter. This indicates that employees may not always feel adequately recognized for their efforts, which is a key driver of engagement and job satisfaction. Improving recognition programs and ensuring fair, consistent rewards are crucial in fostering a more motivated and committed workforce.

#### **Flexible Working Arrangements**

Flexible working arrangements appear to be a potential solution for improving retention, as 37.9% agreed and 15.2% strongly agreed that flexibility would enhance retention. However, the responses also show that flexibility is not universally embraced, as 15.2% disagreed and 5.3% strongly disagreed. This mixed response highlights the need for organizations to assess their workforce's preferences and create a balance between flexibility and organizational requirements. Offering flexible work options, such as remote work or flexible hours, could improve employee satisfaction and retention, but it must be implemented thoughtfully to meet diverse needs.

#### **Confidence in Leadership**

The findings reveal a concerning lack of confidence in leadership, with 31.1% of respondents expressing a lack of confidence and 28% being very unconfident in leadership's commitment to improving retention. Only 10.6% felt very confident in leadership's efforts. This low confidence points to a significant gap in trust between employees and leadership. Effective communication, transparent decision making and genuine efforts to address employee concerns are crucial to building trust and confidence. Leadership should take proactive steps to engage employees and demonstrate commitment to improving retention.

#### **Involvement in the Decision-Making Process**

A significant portion of respondents (76.5%) expressed a desire for more involvement in decision-making processes, while only 18.2% were satisfied with their current level of involvement. This suggests that employees feel disconnected from the decision-making process, which may lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Providing employees with a more active role in decision-making can foster a sense of ownership and empowerment, contributing to higher engagement and retention. This finding highlights the importance of involving employees in shaping organizational policies and decisions that directly affect them.

#### **Importance of Career Development**

The availability of career development opportunities was a key concern, with 59.1% of respondents feeling that career advancement opportunities were limited. This reflects a clear gap in the organization's ability to offer career growth, which is a critical factor in employee retention. Although 24.2% of employees felt there were many opportunities, the majority seem to feel that their professional growth is stifled. To retain talent, organizations must invest in development programs, mentorship, and opportunities for upskilling and career progression.

#### **Consideration of Staying Longer Because of Incentives or Bonuses**

The data suggests that incentives and bonuses could play a significant role in employee retention, though there seems to be a lack of effective or adequate incentives. As noted in 5.3.7, the limited career advancement opportunities are compounded by the fact that financial incentives or bonuses could motivate employees to stay longer. It is evident that competitive compensation, in addition to clear career growth opportunities, is essential for encouraging employees to stay with the organization.

#### **Likely to Recommend Changes**

The strong desire for change is evident, with 43.2% of respondents very likely and 37.9% likely to recommend changes to improve retention practices. This indicates that employees are not only aware of the challenges they face but are also eager to contribute to solutions. Employees seem motivated to improve retention strategies, and their input could be a valuable resource in formulating effective retention policies. It is essential for leadership to listen to employee feedback

and incorporate it into retention strategies to ensure continuous improvement.

#### **4.15. Discussion of Findings in Line with the Theories**

The Unfolding Model of Turnover suggests that employees may leave their jobs suddenly due to unexpected events or "shocks." These shocks can result from significant challenges or dissatisfaction that prompt a decision to leave. In the study, several findings align with this model. For example, the 34.1% of employees who occasionally considered leaving their job could be experiencing shocks, such as dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities or strained relationships with supervisors. Additionally, challenges like low salary and lack of resources (41.7% and 33.3%, respectively) act as triggers that could intensify dissatisfaction over time, potentially leading employees to seek alternative employment opportunities.

Further, the Psychological Goal System Theory posits that unmet psychological goals, particularly related to recognition and career development, lead to negative emotions and turnover intentions. In this study, a significant portion of employees (34.8%) reported that their work was only sometimes valued by their supervisors, with 12.1% feeling rarely valued. This suggests unmet psychological needs for recognition and validation, which could cause frustration and drive employees to search for better opportunities where they feel appreciated. Additionally, the perception that career advancement opportunities are limited for 59.1% of employees creates an unmet goal of personal growth and career progression, leading to dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of turnover.

Furthermore, the theory of planned behavior emphasizes the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control in decision-making, such as turnover intentions. The study findings suggest that many employees have negative attitudes towards their jobs, as indicated by the fact that only 43.9% of employees are satisfied with their jobs, and 28.8% are neutral. This dissatisfaction, combined with low confidence in leadership and career advancement opportunities, can foster a sense of helplessness or lack of control, increasing turnover intentions. Further, the 53.8% of employees who are likely or very likely to seek a job outside the public sector reflects how negative attitudes toward job conditions and perceived better opportunities elsewhere influence the decision to leave.

The evolutionary job search model focuses on the decision-making process related to job search behaviors and external opportunities. According to this model, employees are constantly evaluating external job opportunities, especially when they are dissatisfied with their current role. The study shows that 34.1% of employees consider leaving their jobs, indicating active job search behaviors. This is driven by factors such as dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities (59.1% perceive limited opportunities), low salary, and the potential for better conditions elsewhere. As employees weigh the costs of job searching against the potential rewards of finding a better job, these external opportunities become more attractive, leading to turnover decisions.

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## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study highlighted the complex and multifaceted causes of voluntary employee turnover in the public sector, identifying both universal and sector specific challenges. Key drivers of dissatisfaction include limited career advancement opportunities, low compensation, inadequate recognition, poor working conditions, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, high workloads, and a lack of resources. These factors, combined with an aging workforce and difficulty attracting younger talent, significantly impact employee morale and retention. Despite the presence of retention strategies, many employees perceive these initiatives as ineffective or poorly communicated, further eroding trust in leadership and organizational commitment.

To address these issues, the study recommends targeted interventions such as enhancing career development pathways, improving compensation and benefits, reducing workload and stress, and fostering a healthier work environment. It also emphasizes the need to limit political interference, streamline bureaucratic processes, and promote employee engagement through greater involvement in decision making and recognition. Aligning with several established turnover theories, the findings underscore the importance of addressing unmet employee needs and creating a supportive, transparent, and inclusive workplace culture to effectively reduce turnover in the public sector.

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The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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