



## Examining job satisfaction and turnover intent among lawyers in the Maldivian public sector

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#### ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this paper is to ascertain how job satisfaction influences the reduction of turnover intention among lawyers in the public sector in the Maldives. Employing a quantitative research design, the study adopts a cross-sectional data collection approach, gathering data from 218 public-sector lawyers in the Maldives. The analysis shows a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. The findings provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to improve their human resource management practices, particularly within the legal profession. Implementing strategies to enhance job satisfaction among lawyers could serve as a key mechanism for reducing turnover and fostering a more stable and productive workforce in public sector organizations.

#### KEYWORDS

job satisfaction, lawyers, Maldives, public sector Maldives, turnover intention



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## INTRODUCTION

The Maldives, as a growing legal jurisdiction, provides a persuasive context for exploring the interplay between job satisfaction and turnover intention among public-sector lawyers. With the expansion of legal services and the increasing complexity of legal issues, public-sector lawyers in the Maldives face unique challenges and pressures in their professional roles. Understanding the factors influencing their job satisfaction and turnover intentions is essential for informing organizational strategies aimed at retaining talent and enhancing workplace effectiveness.

Lawyers are one of the least happy careers in the United States (Carrier Explorer, 2022). A survey conducted by the American Bar Association (ABA), stated over 50% of lawyers are satisfied and the other 50% of lawyers are not satisfied with their jobs. The determinants of job satisfaction may vary from country to country (Nica, 2016). According to researchers (Pradiptha, Kio, Adi, Purwanto & Redho, 2023), job satisfaction is a factor that negatively affects employee turnover intention. Employee turnover and turnover intention are extensively studied in organizational research, yet there is a notable scarcity of studies specifically focusing on lawyers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention among public-sector lawyers in the Maldives.

Studies say job satisfaction is linked to turnover intention and employee behavior. Employees who are satisfied at work are more likely to have a positive attitude toward their organization, which, in turn, contributes to lower turnover intention (Meyer et al., 2002). According to research (Farber, 1994; Griffeth and Hom, 2001), organizations are affected by turnover. Employee turnover intention is one of the most researched topics in organizational research (Basariya & Ahmed, 2019; Islam, Rumman, Nower, Rahman, Niaz, & Afrin, 2019; Oosthuizen, Coetze, Munro, 2016). Job satisfaction is recognized as one of the most studied factors that influence employee turnover intention (Savickas, 2004; Rao and Kumari, 2019). Research has covered various professions but rarely focuses on lawyers. Studies often examine job satisfaction and turnover intention in fields like nursing (Gebregziabher, D., Berhanie, Berihu, Belstie, & Teklay, 2020; Pradiptha et al., 2023; Chung and Han, 2023), teaching (Shah, Danish, Siddiqui, Ali, Hussain & Jan 2024), event work (Karo, Djohan, & Amalia, 2023), and accounting (Torlak, Kuzey, Dinc & Gungormus, 2021). Despite extensive research in these areas, lawyers remain underrepresented (Carmeli and Weisberg, 2006; Cohen, 1999). Hence, there is a need to investigate to understand the role of job satisfaction in reducing employee turnover among lawyers (Kanchana & Jayathilaka, 2023). According to Mobley's (1977) turnover model, employees may decide to quit at various points during their tenure, with job satisfaction or dissatisfaction being the first phase. Researchers use Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966) to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. Herzberg's theory posits that job satisfaction is influenced by hygiene factors and motivators. Ajzen (1991) identified turnover intention as the most significant predictor of actual turnover. Job satisfaction is crucial in managing employees (Walga, 2018). Locke (1969) defined it as an emotional state derived from one's job, while recent studies describe it as a positive emotional state when personal values or characteristics are met by the job (Astuti and Amalia, 2021; Walga, 2018). Job satisfaction is a key factor in turnover intention (Brough, Timms, Driscoll, Kallith, Siu, Sit & Lo, 2014; Daves & Sheehan, 2010). Positive job perceptions are linked to increased satisfaction (Singh, Singh, & Srivastava, 2020; Yadav and Sharma, 2021). Equally, dissatisfaction leads employees to consider leaving their jobs or the organization (Novianti and Fuadiputra, 2021). For lawyers, job satisfaction significantly affects their decision to continue or quit practicing law (Wallace, 2001). According to Alias, Rohmanan, Ismail, Koe, & Othman, (2018), dissatisfied workers have higher turnover intentions. These findings are consistent with Aliya's (2019) and Oosthuizen et al. (2016). De Moor and Benschop (2022) recently confirmed that increased job satisfaction reduces turnover intention. Therefore, the authors proposed the hypothesis: *There is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention.*

## METHODS

This is a cross-sectional study, performed in a natural setting where there is limited interference from the researcher and administrators involved, and a quantitative approach to analysis, and a positivist approach, using a self-administered questionnaire. There are two parts to this survey. Section one comprises demographic characteristics and section two involves items related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions of lawyers. The questionnaire consisting of 29 items, 13 items for job satisfaction and 16 items under turnover intention, was employed to gather a substantial amount of quantitative data as recommended by Bougie and Sekaran (2020). The questionnaire utilizes a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932).

Statistics were gathered from lawyers in the Civil Service Commission, Judicial Service Commission, Prosecutor General's office, and Attorney General's office, focusing on 315 public sector lawyers. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Cohen (1969), the minimum required sample size is 175. An online questionnaire was distributed to 255 lawyers, and 244 completed forms were returned. After excluding questionnaires with missing data and outliers, the final usable sample size was 218, resulting in an 88% response rate. Internal consistency and reliability were assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was performed with SPSS version 25.00, and the measurement and structural models were analyzed using AMOS version 23.00, which is suitable for Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM). Hair, Hult, & Ringle, (2017) recommended using CB-SEM for validating established theories and removing error variances before model analysis. Discriminant validity was evaluated with the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, and convergent validity was examined using Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the main findings, analysis, and discussions of the study. A demographic analysis was carried out, followed by a descriptive analysis of the study respondents. Exploratory factor analysis was employed, and confirmatory factor analysis was also done. A measurement model was formulated to assess model validity and reliability. Furthermore, structural equation modeling was applied to test the postulated hypothesis.

### *Demographic Analysis*

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics about the respondents in this study.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics (n=218)

		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	124	56.9
	Female	94	43.1
Age	Between 18-24 years	13	6.0
	Between 25-35 years	157	72.0
	Between 36-45 years	39	17.9
	Between 46-55 years	6	2.8
	Age 56 and above	3	1.4
Level of Education	Diploma	4	1.8
	Degree	125	57.3
	Masters	88	40.4
	Doctorate	1	0.5
Income Level	Below 5000RF	5	2.3

5001 TO 15000 RF	33	15.1
15,001 to 25,000 RF	133	61.0
25,001 to 35,000 RF	24	11.0
35,000 RF Above	8	3.7
Do Not Like to Disclose	15	6.9

Table 1 illustrates that the total respondents numbered 218, with 57% being male and 43% female. This distribution reflects a male-dominated population structure. Most of the respondents fall within the 25 to 35 age group, 18% in the 36 to 45 range, 6% in the 18 to 24 range, 3% in the 46 to 55 range, and 1% in the 56 and above category. Concerning educational attainment, 98% of lawyers possess qualifications higher than a degree level while 2 hold a diploma certificate. In terms of income level, 61% of respondents reported a salary range of 15001 to 25000. Most of the respondents receive a salary that surpasses the recommended minimum wage (MVR 7000/-) for the public sector (Maldives National Pay Commission, 2021).

#### *Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)*

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) method was used to examine the underline patterns or relationships for the variables and determine whether the information can be summarized into a smaller set of factors (Hair et. al, 2010).

**Table 2.** Items retained

Variables	No of Items (Initially)	No of Items (Retained)
Job Satisfaction	13	10
Turnover Intention	16	9
Overall	29	19

Table 2 provides information on the number of items initially included and the number of items remaining for two variables. For job satisfaction, initially, there were 13 items considered. After the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) process, 10 items were retained. For turnover intention, initially, there were 16 items considered. After the EFA process, 9 items were retained. Overall, across both variables, there were initially 29 items considered, and after the EFA process, 19 items were retained for further analysis. This indicates that some items were eliminated during the data analysis process, possibly due to factors such as redundancy, low reliability, or lack of relevance to the constructs being measured.

#### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Via Measurement Model*

CFA is a statistical technique used to assess how well-observed data align with a pre-specified measurement model. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to evaluate the measurement models for job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Figure 1: Initial Measurement Model of Job Satisfaction (1<sup>st</sup> Iteration)

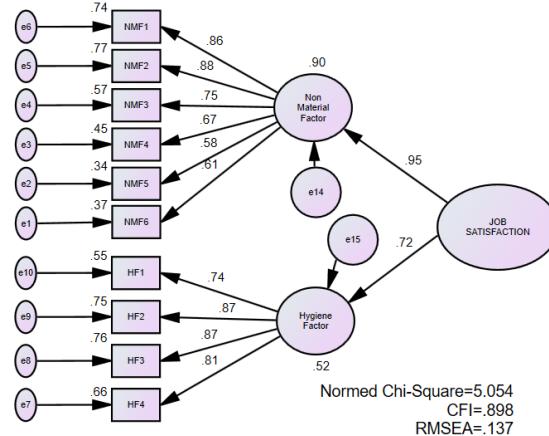


Figure 2: Final Measurement Model of Job Satisfaction (2<sup>nd</sup> Iteration)

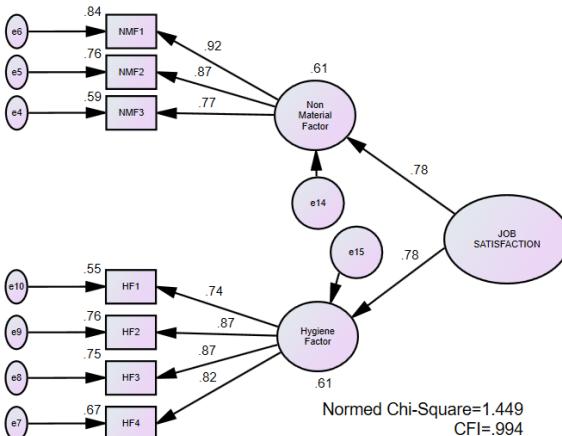


Figure 1 & 2. Measurement models of job satisfaction

The initial measurement model for job satisfaction, illustrated in Figure 1, included ten items. However, due to low factor loading and R<sup>2</sup> values, three items were removed, reducing the model to seven items, as shown in the final measurement model in Figure 2.

Figure 3: Initial Measurement Model of Turnover Intention (3<sup>rd</sup> Iteration)

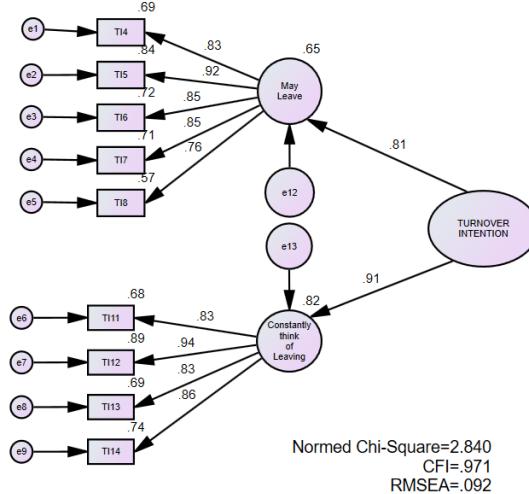


Figure 4: Final Measurement Model of Turnover Intention (4<sup>th</sup> Iteration)

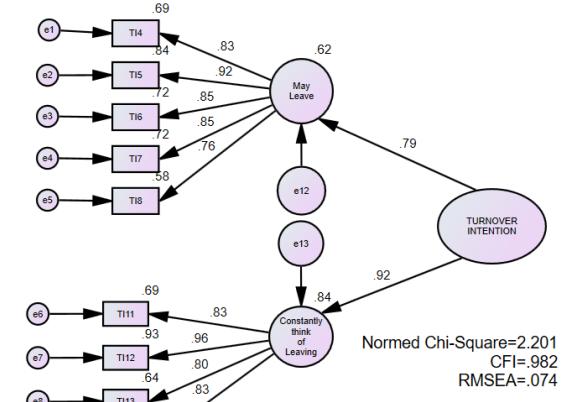


Figure 3 & 4. Measurement models of job satisfaction

For turnover intention, the initial measurement model (Figure 3) retained all items, yet the model fit indices did not meet the desired values. Therefore, modification indices (MI values) were checked to improve the model, and the final measurement model is presented in Figure 4. To refine the model

and improve its fit, covariance was applied between items having the highest modification indices (MI values). All fit indices were within acceptable ranges as shown in Figure 4. The Normed Chi-Square value was 2.201, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.074, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) reached 0.982. Following CFA, 7 items for job satisfaction and 9 items for turnover intention were upheld for further analysis. The retention of all items after adjustments confirm their relevance and reliability in capturing the intended constructs, establishing a solid foundation for further exploration and interpretation.

### Validity and Reliability

As recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the authors of this article evaluated the reliability of each variable. The validity and reliability tests were carried out based on the comprehensive model presented earlier and the detailed results are presented in Table 4. This comprehensive analysis encompassed examinations of unidimensionality, validity, and reliability with considerations given to factor loading of the items, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha values.

**Table 3.** Results of validity and reliability

Construct	Item	Standardized Factor Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (C.R), Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction (JSAT)	I am satisfied with this organization's leave policies.	HF1 0.734	AVE= 0.70. CR= 0.94. $\alpha$ = 0.891
	I am satisfied with this organization's management practices.	HF2 0.868	
	I feel the organization's policies secure my job in this organization.	HF3 0.860	
	I am satisfied with this organization's complaints handling procedures.	HF4 0.796	
	I get enough support and guidance from my direct supervisor.	NMF1 0.908	
	I feel encouraged to come up with innovative ideas for doing things.	NMF2 0.890	
	I can rely on my supervisor's help when I have workplace issues or problems.	NMF3 0.796	
Turnover Intention (TI)	I may leave this organization when I am no longer satisfied with the supervision or the relationship with my colleagues.	TI4 0.846	AVE= 0.72. CR= 0.96. $\alpha$ = 0.936
	I may leave this organization when I am no longer satisfied with the working conditions.	TI5 0.921	
	I may leave this organization when	TI6 0.849	

I am no longer satisfied with the salary and allowances.	
I may leave this organization when my work conflicts with my family/life responsibilities.	TI7
I am no longer satisfied with my job security.	0.851
I may leave this organization when my work conflicts with my family/life responsibilities.	TI8
I often think about searching for a job in another organization.	0.766
I frequently think about leaving my current organization.	TI11
I constantly want to quit working for this organization	0.825
I frequently think about leaving my current organization.	TI12
I constantly want to quit working for this organization	0.969
I is most likely that I will leave this organization soon.	TI13
I is most likely that I will leave this organization soon.	0.786
I is most likely that I will leave this organization soon.	TI14
I is most likely that I will leave this organization soon.	0.815

AVE= Average Variance Extracted, C.R Composite Reliability,  $\alpha$  =Cronbach's Alpha

Factor loadings are above 0.6 which are considered acceptable (Awang, 2015). Validity was evaluated through construct, convergent, and discriminant validity. Reliability was assessed using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Table 4 presents the findings regarding the validity and reliability of the study. The factor loadings of the items range from 0.734 to 0.969, aligning with recommendations by Hair et al. (2019). Notably, all variables exhibit AVE values exceeding 0.50, with job satisfaction at 0.70 and turnover intention at 0.72, indicating notably high and acceptable levels, respectively. Furthermore, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for both variables surpass 0.6, with job satisfaction at 0.89 and turnover intention at 0.936, which is deemed acceptable based on the criteria established by Azam et al. (2021). Moreover, all composite reliability (CR) values exceed the threshold of 0.60, with job satisfaction at 0.94 and turnover intention at 0.96, underscoring the robust reliability of the measures. Importantly, CR values surpassing AVE values signify strong reliability.

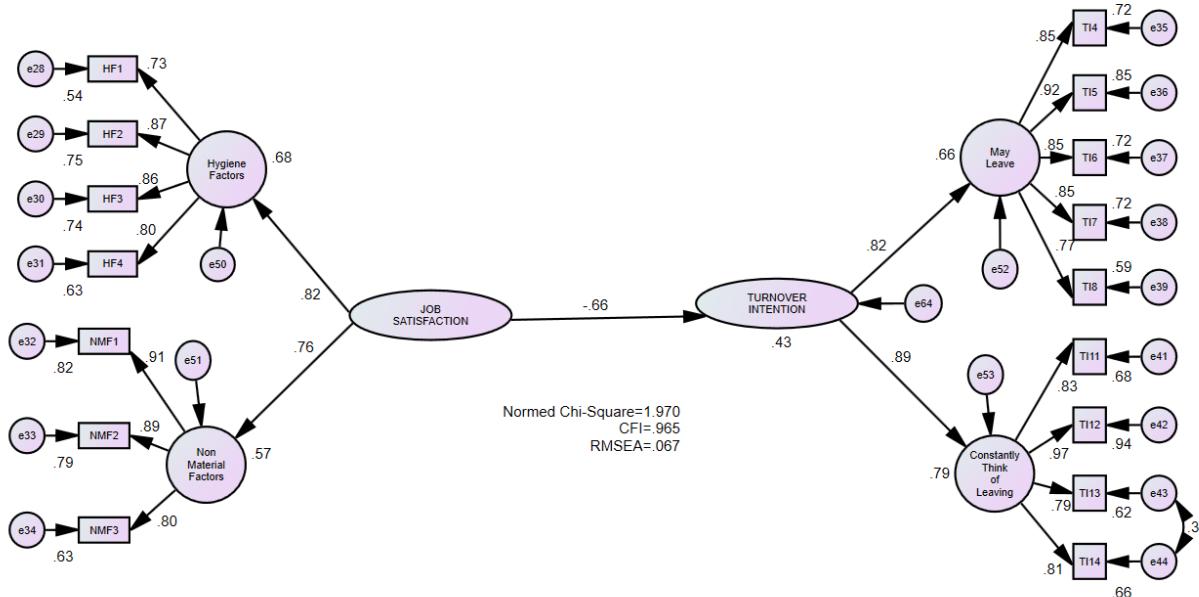
**Table 4.** Correlation matrix of discriminant reliability

Latent Construct	Job Satisfaction	Turnover Intention	R2
Job Satisfaction	0.84		
Turnover Intention	-0.66	0.85	

A discriminant validity assessment was conducted following the Fornell and Larcker criterion (1981), with the outcomes outlined in Table 4. The table illustrates distinct correlations, notably a correlation coefficient of 0.66 between job satisfaction and turnover intention. The R<sup>2</sup> values for each construct are significant, 0.84 for job satisfaction, and 0.85 for turnover intention. Researchers (Awang, 2015; Fornell and Larcker, 1981) propose that correlations among exogenous constructs should stay below 0.85, or the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should surpass correlation values for valid discrimination. As can be seen in Table 4, the results demonstrate discriminant validity as the square root of AVE for each construct exceeds the correlation coefficients among the variables.

### Structural Model

The overall fit of the structural model, as shown in Figure 5, is further outlined in Table 5.



**Figure 5.** Structural model

**Table 5.** Assessing the structural model fitness

Fitness Indices	Indications	Output	Study observation
Normed Chi-Squared	A value between 2.00 and 5.00 is acceptable. Below 2.0 is very good (Hair et al., 2019)	1.970	Absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit values attained for this study
CFI	Above 0.900 (Hair et al., 2019)	0.965	
RMSEA	Below 0.08 (Hair et al., 2019)	0.067	

Table 5 presents the assessment of the structural model fitness based on various fit indices. To assess the model fit, several indices were considered, including the Normed Chi-Square, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The normed Chi-Square value is 1.970, significantly below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating a highly favorable fit (Hair et al., 2019). The CFI value is 0.965 which meets the suggested threshold, and the RMSEA value is 0.067 which is well below the recommended cut-off of 0.08 according to Hair et al. (2019). Therefore, the study achieved satisfactory values for absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit. Overall, the assessment of the structural model fitness based on the normed chi-squared value and CFI and RMSEA suggests

that the model provides a very good and acceptable fit to the data. These results indicate that the structural model sufficiently represents the relationships between the variables in the study.

#### *Hypothesis Test*

The examination of the hypothesis formulated in this study was assessed from the AMOS output, illustrating the Maximum Likelihood Estimates of these hypotheses for the study model, which is detailed in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Maximum likelihood estimates of the hypotheses for the study model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimate	SE	CR	p-Value
H1	Turnover Intention ← Job Satisfaction	-0.656	.115	-7.325	***
Squared Multiple Correlation (R <sup>2</sup> ):					
Turnover Intention	0.43				
Model Fit Statistics:	Parsimonious fit: Chi-square/ df < 5.0:1.970, Incremental fit: CFI > 0.90: 0.965, and Absolute fit: RMSEA<0.08: 0.067				

The three stars (\*\*\* ) in Table 6 indicate that the p-value for the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention is less than 0.01. This suggests the covariance between the construct variable relationships under test is significantly different from 0 at the 0.05 level. The Critical Ratio (C.R.) values for two of the study relationships exceed  $\pm 1.96$ , signifying a significant regression coefficient. The probability of getting a critical ratio of -7.325 in absolute value is less than 0.001. In other words, the covariance between job satisfaction and turnover intention is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level.

**Table 7.** Hypothesis test results

H#	Hypothesis	Direction	Significance	Status
H1	<i>There is a negative relationship between job satisfaction on turnover intention.</i>	Negative	Significant	Supported

Table 7 shows that the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention among lawyers in the public sector in the Maldives. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. The test results of this research suggest the importance of job satisfaction in minimizing the turnover intention of lawyers in the public sector in the Maldives. The elements of turnover intention can explain 43% of job satisfaction given by the R<sup>2</sup> value. Based on the provided findings, it appears that the study shows a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. This implies that the study expected to find that higher levels of job satisfaction would be associated with lower intentions to leave the job. In other words, employees who are more satisfied with their jobs are less likely to intend to leave. The finding supports this hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. The finding is consistent with numerous previous studies (Asim & Alam (2019),

Chen & Qi (2022), Li & Yao (2022), Mulang (2022), Mete & Sokmen (2017), Pratama et al. (2022), Rembang & Wijono (2023), Rathi & Prabhash (2023).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The demographic profile of this study showed a bias in favor of males. The participant's educational level, which includes a sizeable number of students and postgraduates, demonstrates that a major section of the lawyers in the survey is educated at the degree and master's level, which explains why the most active respondents are between the ages of 25 and 35. The reliability test results show that the data set utilized for this study is reliable because Cronbach's alpha value for each factor is more than 0.7 (Azam et al., 2021; Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). Both constructs have an AVE value (JSAT, 0.70 and TI, 0.72) above the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) indicating that the items used to measure the construct are reliable and effectively represented the concept in this study. This finding enhanced the credibility, and this proved that the measurement model provides a strong convergent validity. According to the standardized coefficients, -0.65 indicates a strong negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention of lawyers. *P- value* shows these two variables have a highly significant relationship ( $p<0.001$ ). The study provides concrete data to support the study hypothesis suggesting that job satisfaction negatively influences the turnover intention of lawyers in the public sector in the Maldives.

The findings, which provide theoretical contributions as well as practical strategies for the legal profession in the Maldives, suggest that increasing job satisfaction can significantly reduce turnover. Government organizations and legal professional associations, such as the Bar Council of the Maldives, can utilize these findings to formulate policies and initiatives aimed at supporting the well-being and professional growth of lawyers. Supporting Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Mobley's turnover model, this study demonstrates that job satisfaction has a significant impact on a lawyer's turnover intention. Therefore, this study opened the doors for academicians and researchers to conduct further studies of this nature in the future. The result of this study contributes not only to academic knowledge but also provides valuable insights for policymakers, employers, and individuals seeking to enhance the well-being and satisfaction of employees in the context of their work and personal lives and turnover intention.

In summary, the study did confirm the expected negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. Therefore, the finding supports the hypothesis developed in this study. The findings of this study also support the Herzberg motivation theory and Mobley's turnover model. Additionally, the findings provide insights into the complex dynamics of employee attitudes and behaviors within the specific context of the study. They also emphasize the need for further research to explore the multifaceted factors influencing job satisfaction and turnover intention in different organizational contexts.

The small example size, restricted to public area legal counselors in the Maldives, additionally limits generalizability. By including private sector lawyers and cultural factors in the scope of future research, longitudinal studies, additional factors, and expanding the scope to include these limitations could be addressed. Applying this framework to a variety of professions and settings may also yield more comprehensive insights. Due to the scarcity of studies on this topic in the Maldives, the study at hand can be considered a potential area for future research. As this is a cross-sectional study, that may limit the establishment of a causal relationship between the variables used in this study. Therefore, future research may be conducted utilizing a longitudinal study to understand whether the intention changes over time or not. Only one factor was incorporated while there might be other factors that may influence the turnover intention of lawyers. Future studies should use different factors to examine the unique effects among the variables and on the outcome variables. The third limitation is that the data was collected from a very small sample size and the study was focused on lawyers in the public sector in the Maldives. Future studies should examine lawyers in the private sector as well to increase the generalizability of the findings. Finally, we asserted that the

study is limited to lawyers in the Maldives, therefore, researchers could use the same framework to study lawyers in a different context and employees in different professions too.

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