

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKLOAD, WORK MOTIVATION, AND TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG EMPLOYEES: CASE STUDY AT PT ETTA INDOTAMA PERSADA



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Abstract

This study aims to explore and understand how employees perceive the relationship between workload imbalance, work motivation, and turnover intention at PT Etta Indotama Persada. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving four informants selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings indicate that workload imbalance is perceived as a mismatch between job demands and employees' capacities. Work motivation plays an important role in shaping how employees cope with their workload, while turnover intention is influenced by a combination of workload, work motivation, supervisor support, the work environment, and the reward system. The study also reveals that the relationship between workload and turnover intention is dynamic and influenced by employees' level of work motivation. Therefore, the company should ensure a more balanced workload distribution, strengthen managerial support, and enhance work motivation to reduce employees' turnover intention.

Keywords: Workload, Work Motivation, Turnover Intention, Qualitative Research, Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover intention has become a major concern for organizations because it affects operational continuity, organizational performance, and long-term competitiveness. High turnover increases recruitment, training, and replacement costs while reducing employee productivity and organizational stability (Latief *et al.*, 2025). According to the 2022 Mercer Global Talent Trends Survey, employee turnover in Indonesia ranges from 15% to 20% annually, indicating that retaining qualified employees remains a significant challenge across industries (An-Nisa & Martah, 2025). Previous studies have identified workload as one of the key factors influencing employees' intention to leave an organization. Excessive workload may increase work-related stress, reduce job satisfaction, and encourage employees to seek alternative employment (Laguerre & Barnes-Farrell, 2025). In addition to workload, work motivation has been recognized as an important factor affecting employees' willingness to remain in an organization. Employees with higher levels of motivation are generally more committed to their organizations and demonstrate lower turnover intention (Hasibuan, 2021).

Self-Determination Theory explains that employees are more motivated when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Deci & Ryan 1985, as cited in Laguerre & Barnes-Farrell, 2025). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further emphasizes that employee motivation is influenced by motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, and opportunities for growth, as well as hygiene factors, including salary, supervision, organizational policies, and working conditions (Herzberg *et al.*, 2011, as cited in Nasir, 2024). These theoretical perspectives suggest that employees' perceptions of workload and work motivation influence how they respond to organizational demands and ultimately shape their intention to remain with or leave an organization.

Although previous studies have consistently reported significant relationships between workload, work motivation, and turnover intention, most have relied on quantitative approaches that focus on measuring statistical relationships among variables. Consequently, limited attention has been given to understanding how employees interpret excessive workload, declining motivation, and turnover intention based on their workplace experiences. Exploring these issues from a qualitative perspective is important because employees' perceptions may vary depending on organizational conditions, leadership practices, and the distribution of work responsibilities.

PT Etta Indotama Persada provides a relevant context for examining this phenomenon. Company records and field observations indicate that employees experience an imbalance between workload and available human resources, which is reflected in long working hours, overtime, overlapping job responsibilities, and unequal task distribution. These conditions require employees to perform multiple responsibilities simultaneously and may affect both their physical and psychological well-being. Interviews conducted during the preliminary stage of this study also revealed that employees' work motivation is influenced by managerial support, career development opportunities, the work environment, recognition, and the organizational reward system. These findings indicate that employees evaluate not only the amount of work assigned to them but also the extent to which the organization supports their professional development and well-being.

Therefore, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative case study approach to explore how employees perceive the relationship between workload, work motivation, and turnover intention at PT Etta Indotama Persada. Unlike previous studies that predominantly employ quantitative methods, this research emphasizes employees' lived experiences to explain how excessive workload influences work motivation and how both factors shape turnover intention within a specific organizational context. The findings are expected to enrich the qualitative literature on human resource management while providing practical recommendations for organizations in developing effective workload management and employee retention strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that encourage employees to perform their work and achieve both organizational and personal goals. Employees with high work motivation generally demonstrate better job performance, stronger organizational commitment, and greater loyalty. Conversely, low work motivation may reduce productivity and increase employees' intention to leave the organization (Hasibuan, 2021).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains that intrinsic motivation develops when employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Employees who perceive greater autonomy and receive adequate support from their organization are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their work. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further argues that employee motivation is influenced by motivator factors, including achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for personal growth (Herzberg *et al.*, 2011, as cited in Nasir, 2024). In addition, hygiene factors such as salary, organizational policies, supervision, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions contribute to preventing dissatisfaction in the workplace. Therefore, organizations that provide supportive working conditions and opportunities for professional development are more likely to maintain employee motivation and reduce turnover intention.

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention is defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate intention to voluntarily leave an organization before actual resignation occurs. It is widely recognized as one of the strongest predictors of actual employee turnover and serves as an important indicator of organizational stability (Mobley, 1978) as cited in Karomah (2020).

According to Mobley (1978) , as cited in Karomah (2020), turnover intention develops through three behavioral stages: thinking of quitting, searching for alternative employment, and forming the intention to resign. Employees generally evaluate their current working conditions before deciding whether to remain with or leave an organization. High turnover intention may increase recruitment and training costs, disrupt operational continuity, and reduce organizational productivity (Putra & Kartika, 2021). Consequently, identifying the organizational factors that influence turnover intention is essential for improving employee retention and supporting sustainable organizational performance.

Workload

Workload refers to the amount of work assigned to employees that must be completed within a specified period while meeting organizational performance standards. Appropriate

workload distribution enables employees to perform their responsibilities effectively and supports the achievement of organizational objectives (Afifi *et al.*, 2024).

Workload may arise when there is an imbalance between employees' capabilities and the demands of their assigned tasks (Putra & Kartika, 2021). Besides the quantity of work, workload also includes physical and mental demands that influence employees' well-being and work performance. Excessive workload may cause physical fatigue, occupational stress, and declining work motivation (Tirtaputra *et al.*, 2017). Conversely, insufficient workload may reduce employee engagement and create feelings of boredom. Therefore, organizations should manage workload effectively by aligning job demands with employees' competencies and available resources to maintain work motivation, improve performance, and reduce turnover intention.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design to explore employees' perceptions of the relationship between workload, work motivation, and turnover intention at PT Etta Indotama Persada. A case study was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon within its real organizational context. The study involved four informants selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria. The participants had worked at PT Etta Indotama Persada for at least one year and possessed relevant experience regarding workload, work motivation, and turnover intention. The sample size was determined based on the concept of information power, which suggests that fewer participants are sufficient when they provide rich and relevant information to address the research objectives (Malterud *et al.*, 2016).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed from the research objectives and relevant literature. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted with the participants' informed consent. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to facilitate data analysis. Direct observation was conducted to understand employees' working conditions and organizational practices, while documentation was used to support and verify the interview findings through relevant company records and organizational documents.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis consisted of three stages: open coding to identify meaningful units of data, axial coding to organize related codes into broader categories, and selective coding to generate themes that reflected employees' perceptions of workload, work motivation, and turnover intention. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, while methodological triangulation involved comparing interview findings with observations and organizational documents. Member checking was also performed by confirming the researchers' interpretations with the participants to ensure that the findings accurately represented their experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employees' Perceptions of Workload Imbalance and Work Motivation

The findings indicate that employees perceive workload imbalance as a condition that extends beyond the amount of work assigned. All informants agreed that workload becomes imbalanced when job demands exceed employees' capabilities, available time, or assigned responsibilities. They explained that additional tasks outside their primary job descriptions, unexpected assignments, overlapping responsibilities, and uneven workload distribution frequently created pressure during daily operations. However, employees did not perceive these conditions uniformly. Some viewed increased workload as a source of stress that reduced enthusiasm at work, whereas others considered it an opportunity to demonstrate competence and improve performance. These differences suggest that workload imbalance is not solely determined by objective work demands but is also shaped by employees' subjective perceptions and their ability to cope with workplace challenges.

The interview findings further revealed that employees with stronger intrinsic motivation were more capable of maintaining positive work attitudes despite experiencing demanding workloads. One informant explained that sudden assignments and changing priorities were common in daily operations, yet these challenges encouraged personal growth and improved problem-solving skills. Another participant emphasized that workload only became problematic when tasks accumulated because of ineffective work distribution or unrealistic deadlines. Conversely, employees who perceived a mismatch between assigned tasks and their competencies reported lower motivation, as they required additional effort to complete responsibilities outside their areas of expertise. These findings highlight that employees' competence and confidence significantly influence how workload is interpreted within the organization.

The findings support Self-Determination Theory, which argues that employees are more motivated when their psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are fulfilled. Likewise, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that achievement, responsibility, and recognition strengthen work motivation even under demanding conditions. Therefore, workload imbalance does not directly reduce employee motivation. Instead, its impact depends on employees' perceptions, competencies, and the level of organizational support available. These results are also consistent with previous studies reporting that excessive workload only becomes detrimental when employees perceive insufficient organizational resources or support to manage job demands (Safutri *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, organizations should focus not only on balancing workload but also on ensuring that work assignments align with employees' competencies and are supported by effective managerial practices.

The Role of Work Motivation in Shaping Turnover Intention

The findings demonstrate that work motivation plays a significant role in shaping employees' turnover intention at PT Etta Indotama Persada. All informants agreed that employees with strong work motivation are more likely to remain committed to the organization despite experiencing demanding workloads. In contrast, declining motivation increases the likelihood of employees considering alternative employment opportunities. The interviews revealed that motivation was influenced not only by financial rewards but also by non-financial factors, including supportive leadership, recognition, opportunities for career

development, positive relationships with colleagues, and a conducive working environment. These findings indicate that employees' decisions to stay or leave are influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors rather than by workload alone.

The interview results also suggest that motivated employees perceive workplace challenges differently from those with lower motivation. One informant explained that work pressure could be managed effectively when employees felt appreciated and supported by their supervisors. Another informant stated that motivation originates from a sense of responsibility and commitment toward the organization, making demanding tasks more manageable (Li & Shi, 2024). Conversely, employees who felt that their contributions were not recognized or that career advancement opportunities were limited were more likely to experience declining enthusiasm for work. Over time, this decrease in motivation contributed to thoughts of seeking employment elsewhere. These findings suggest that turnover intention develops gradually as employees become dissatisfied with both their work environment and their opportunities for personal and professional growth.

These findings are consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes that motivation is influenced by both motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and career advancement, and hygiene factors, including organizational policies, supervision, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions. When these factors are adequately fulfilled, employees tend to experience higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intention. The findings also support previous studies showing that higher work motivation is associated with lower turnover intention because motivated employees generally exhibit stronger organizational commitment and greater job satisfaction (Mustafa & Ali, 2019). Therefore, organizations seeking to reduce employee turnover should not focus solely on compensation but should also strengthen motivational practices through supportive leadership, fair recognition systems, and opportunities for continuous professional development.

The Relationship between Workload, Work Motivation, and Turnover Intention

The findings indicate that workload, work motivation, and turnover intention are closely interconnected rather than operating as independent organizational factors. Although all informants acknowledged that excessive workload can create physical and psychological pressure, they emphasized that workload alone is not the primary reason employees intend to leave the organization. Instead, work motivation determines how employees perceive and respond to demanding work conditions. Employees who remain motivated tend to interpret high workloads as part of their professional responsibilities and opportunities for personal growth. Conversely, employees experiencing declining motivation are more likely to perceive similar workloads as overwhelming, increasing dissatisfaction and the desire to seek alternative employment. These findings suggest that work motivation plays a crucial role in explaining the relationship between workload and turnover intention.

The interview results further revealed that several organizational factors influence this relationship. Informants highlighted that equitable workload distribution, supportive supervisors, effective communication, and appreciation for employees' contributions help maintain motivation despite increasing job demands. In contrast, unclear job responsibilities, limited career development opportunities, and inadequate recognition reduce employees' willingness to remain committed to the organization. One participant explained that heavy workloads become more acceptable when supervisors provide guidance and acknowledge

employees' efforts. Another informant emphasized that fair treatment and opportunities for learning contribute significantly to employees' decisions to stay, even during periods of high work pressure. These findings imply that organizational support functions as a protective factor, enabling employees to manage workload more effectively while maintaining their motivation and organizational commitment.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that high workload does not inevitably lead to high turnover intention. Based on the experiences shared by the informants, employees who possess strong work motivation tend to perceive heavy workloads as part of their professional responsibilities and as opportunities to develop their competencies rather than as burdens. This perspective enables them to maintain their commitment to the organization despite demanding work conditions. In contrast, when employees experience declining motivation, excessive workload is more likely to be interpreted as psychological pressure, leading to frustration, reduced job satisfaction, and stronger intentions to seek employment elsewhere. These findings suggest that work motivation acts as an important psychological resource that buffers the negative impact of workload on turnover intention. Therefore, the influence of excessive workload on employees' intention to leave can be minimized when organizations successfully foster both intrinsic motivation, such as personal achievement and responsibility, and extrinsic motivation through supportive leadership, recognition, and organizational support. This finding further reinforces the view that turnover intention is not merely the direct consequence of high workload but is shaped by the interaction between job demands and employees' motivational resources.

The findings are consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, which argues that high job demands do not necessarily produce negative outcomes when employees receive sufficient organizational resources, including supervisory support, recognition, autonomy, and opportunities for development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The results also align with previous studies demonstrating that work motivation weakens the negative effects of excessive workload on turnover intention by enhancing employees' resilience and commitment to the organization (Li & Shi, 2024). Therefore, reducing turnover intention should not rely solely on decreasing workload. Organizations should adopt a comprehensive strategy that combines fair workload allocation with initiatives to strengthen employee motivation through supportive leadership, recognition programs, effective communication, and career development opportunities (Merlin *et al.*, 2024). By addressing both job demands and motivational resources simultaneously, organizations can foster stronger employee commitment and minimize the likelihood of turnover intention.

CONCLUSION

This study explored employees' perceptions of the relationship between workload, work motivation, and turnover intention at PT Etta Indotama Persada using a descriptive qualitative case study approach. The findings reveal that workload imbalance is not solely determined by the quantity of work assigned but also by uneven task distribution, additional responsibilities, unexpected assignments, and the compatibility between job demands and employees' competencies. Employees perceived workload differently based on their individual experiences, capabilities, and organizational support. Consequently, workload did not automatically reduce work motivation, as motivated employees tended to interpret

demanding tasks as opportunities for learning and professional growth rather than organizational pressure.

The study also found that work motivation plays a central role in shaping turnover intention. Employees with higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation demonstrated stronger organizational commitment and were less likely to consider leaving the organization despite experiencing heavy workloads. Factors such as supportive leadership, recognition, career development opportunities, and a positive work environment contributed to maintaining employee motivation and reducing turnover intention.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that work motivation explains the relationship between workload and turnover intention. Excessive workload alone was not sufficient to trigger employees' intention to leave; instead, turnover intention emerged when high job demands were accompanied by declining motivation and insufficient organizational support. These findings reinforce the relevance of Self-Determination Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the Job Demands–Resources Model, emphasizing that organizational resources can mitigate the negative effects of workload on employee retention. Therefore, organizations should adopt integrated human resource strategies that ensure equitable workload distribution while simultaneously strengthening employee motivation through supportive leadership, recognition, effective communication, and career development opportunities to enhance organizational commitment and minimize turnover intention.

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