

Promotion, Not Pay: Antecedents of Turnover Intention among Generation Z Employees of Multinational Corporations in India

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Abstract

Purpose: The generation Z (Gen Z) employee is more likely to change jobs than the generation Y or X employee, and the relative importance of the factors that influence their intention to leave is not known. This study examines which employee, organisational and work-related characteristics have a unique effect on the turnover intention of Gen Z employees of multinational corporations (MNCs) in India.

Design/methodology/approach: A survey of 446 full-time Gen Z employees (born 1997 or later) of MNCs in six sector groups and six metropolitan hubs in India was conducted using fourteen validated scales. Eleven antecedents were tested simultaneously at once with a fourteen factor confirmatory factor analysis and a latent structural equation model estimated by robust maximum likelihood with the control of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and demographic variables.

Findings: The model accounted for 47.9 per cent of the variance of turnover intention. Promotional opportunities had the highest unique effect, as the negative affectivity ($\beta = 0.120$, $p = .006$) and role conflict ($\beta = 0.108$, $p = .020$) increased turnover intention. Pay satisfaction, benefits satisfaction, job security, resource adequacy, role ambiguity, job involvement, and supervisor and coworker support were correlated with turnover intention, but failed to have a unique direct effect. Results were strong in both alternate specifications and there was no difference between sectors, city, work arrangement or gender in terms of turnover intention.

Research limitations/implications: Causal inference is limited because the study was a cross sectional, self-reported design, and longitudinal designs that connect intentions to actual exits are recommended.

Practical implications: MNCs should ensure that promotion criteria are clearly communicated and career paths are clearly defined, minimize conflicting role demands, provide support for the well-being of employees, and ensure that pay and security are seen as floor requirements and not as main drivers for retention.

Originality/value: It is an integrated latent variable test of eleven antecedents of turnover intention for Gen Z employees in MNCs in India, where there is little quantitative literature.

Keywords: Generation Z; turnover intention; employee retention; promotional opportunities; role conflict; negative affectivity; multinational corporations; India

1. Introduction

One of the major challenges for multinational corporations (MNCs) in India is to keep young and skilled workers. The overall employee attrition rate in India in 2023 was 18.7 per cent, in 2024 17.7 per cent and in 2025 16.2 per cent, with approximately 75 per cent of all attritions reported as voluntary, which is higher than the one-half to two-thirds typically reported across the globe (Sharma, 2026). Generation Z (Gen Z) (1997 and later) is the biggest entry cohort into the Indian workforce and is the most mobile. Gen Z workers hold their position for an average of 1.1 years in their first five career years, while Millennials and older generations held onto their jobs for 1.8 years and 2.8 to 2.9 years, respectively; and 37 per cent of Indian Gen Z employees were looking to change their jobs within the next year (Debnath, 2025). The exits also reduce the return on investment for MNCs with strong campus hiring initiatives and training programs for early-career employees, and can create disruptions to teams and client relationships. Turnover can be understood as a psychological process of the employee in which they assess their job, weigh withdrawal cognitions and then develop an intention to leave before they actually quit (Mobley, 1977; Hom et al., 2017). Turnover intention is the most immediate and valid measure of actual turnover

(Griffeth et al., 2000; Rubenstein et al., 2018), making it a suitable measure of the early stages of withdrawal. Over the past few decades, several dispositional, organisational and work-related factors have been found to contribute to the development of turnover intention, such as negative affectivity, job involvement, job security, pay and benefits satisfaction, promotion opportunities, resource inadequacy, role stressors and social support (Price & Mueller, 1981; Griffeth et al., 2000). The present study is motivated by three limitations of this literature. Most studies consider one factor or set of factors separately, making it difficult to determine the relative importance of several competing factors and estimates may be biased upward because of omitted factors. Second, there is limited quantitative evidence for the today's Generation Z employees in Indian MNCs: A recent systematic review of 28 Gen Z retention studies revealed that majority of the studies conducted were from Indonesia and South-East Asia (Wei & Yazid, 2026); and Indian studies on young employees were mostly qualitative (Gosavi et al., 2025; Bisht et al., 2026). Thirdly, the majority of studies used nonvalidated instruments, the confirmatory factor analysis was not conducted and common method variance was not discussed. This study overcomes these limitations by simultaneously estimating the individual impact of eleven antecedents of turnover intention in a latent structural model with validated scales and a screened sample of 446 Gen Z employees from eleven sector groups and six metropolitan hubs in India, in the MNCs. This study overcomes these limitations by simultaneously estimating the individual impact of 11 antecedents of turnover intention in a latent structural model using validated scales and a screened sample of 446 Gen Z employees of MNCs from 11 sector groups and 6 metropolitan hubs in India. Job satisfaction and organisational commitment are the most proximal attitudinal antecedents of turnover intention (Tett & Meyer, 1993), and therefore each of these attitudinal antecedents' direct impact is independent of other attitudinal antecedents in the model in this context. The research question is: What are the specific employee, organizational and work-related characteristics which have direct impact on the turnover intention of Gen Z workers working with MNCs in India? The study has three contributions. It provides insight into the relative importance of the 11 antecedents, little studied in quantitative research; it demonstrates that several of the retention factors commonly targeted, such as pay and job security, do not have a unique impact on the intention to leave, once other conditions and attitudes are accounted for; and it reveals that conditions that are often seen as drivers of promotion, such as role conflict and negative affectivity, actually directly impact the intention to leave for Gen Z employees..

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Theoretical framework

The study is based on three complementary perspectives. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model holds that job resources start a motivational process that builds attachment, while job demands start a health-impairment process that leads to strain and withdrawal (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017). Job resources, as defined in this study, are those factors that facilitate the performance of a job and are generally linked to increased turnover intention (Podsakoff et al., 2007), including job security, pay, benefits, promotional opportunities and resource adequacy and social support. Job resources as defined in this study include job security, pay, benefits, promotional opportunities and resource adequacy and social support. Job resources, as defined in this study, include job security, pay, benefits, promotional opportunities and resource adequacy and social support. Conservation of Resources theory further suggests that when resources are lost, an employee might depart in order to preserve the remaining resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Theories of social exchange and organisational support are used to explain why good treatment leads to a feeling of obligation to return the favour in the form of loyalty (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In addition, attitudinal models of turnover place job satisfaction and commitment in between job conditions and turnover intention (Mobley, 1977; Price & Mueller, 1981), and studies on negative affectivity indicate that stable dispositions are important factors in explaining withdrawal (Watson & Clark, 1984; Thoresen et al., 2003). There are generational differences in work attitudes, but they are relatively small and partially due to age and career stage (Costanza et al., 2012; Twenge, 2010). The study does not, therefore, assume that Gen Z is different in terms of the factors that drive their reactions; it is rather a test of how these existing antecedents affect Gen Z and how strong they are in the Indian MNC context. Rewards, growth and well-being are particularly pertinent for Gen Z employees, who are known for expecting quick feedback and clear career paths, flexibility and supportive managers (Schroth, 2019), and Indian Gen Z

employees report that they are more likely to feel compelled to work extra time or overtime due to financial pressure, to frequently experience stress, and to strongly prefer learning on-the-job (Deloitte, 2025).

2.2 Employee characteristics

Negative affectivity is an enduring disposition toward experiencing negative emotions such as distress, nervousness, guilt and hostility (Watson & Clark, 1984). The evidence 41% summarized in the meta-analysis is consistent with the findings from earlier studies that indicate that higher scores on trait negative affect are correlated with lower levels of job satisfaction and job commitment (Thoresen et al., 2003) and with increased withdrawal intentions (Jasiński & Derbis, 2022; Baquero et al., 2025). Given the above, it is safe to assume that dispositional distress is relevant for Indian Gen Z employees, as one-third of them report feeling stressed or anxious most of the time, let alone all the time (Deloitte, 2025).

H1: Negative affectivity is positively related to the turnover intention of Gen Z employees.

Job involvement is the extent to which a worker identifies himself/herself with the current job (Kanungo, 1982). Employees with higher job involvement tend to perceive their work as a part of who they are and are less likely to look for other jobs; meta-analytic evidence indicates that job involvement is related to increased satisfaction and commitment and decreased intention to leave the firm (Brown, 1996).

H2: Job involvement is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.3 Organisational characteristics

Job security is the perception of job stability and job continuity (Hellgren et al., 1999). The negative impact of job insecurity on job attitudes and job well-being is reported (Sverke et al., 2002), while job security is reported to negatively affect turnover intention, in some cases through job satisfaction (Atiq & Usmani, 2023; Marane & Asaad, 2025). According to Deloitte's 2025 report, the top societal worry among the Indian Gen Z is unemployment.

H3: Job security is negatively related to turnover intention.

Satisfaction with compensation is measured on two different dimensions, namely, pay satisfaction and benefits satisfaction (Heneman & Schwab, 1985). Satisfaction with pay is inversely correlated with turnover intention (Williams et al., 2006) and satisfaction with benefits is perceived a sign of organisation care, influencing positively perceived support, and inversely with turnover intention (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Jolly et al., 2021). Deloitte (2025) states that over 50% of the Indian Gen Z workers experience living pay cheque to pay cheque. According to Deloitte (2025), more than 50% of Indian Gen Z workers live pay cheque to pay cheque.

H4: Pay satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intention.

H5: Benefits satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intention.

The perceived availability and equity of promotion (Spector, 1985) are reflected in promotional opportunities. Promotion is an integral part of causal models of turnover (Price & Mueller, 1981), and organisational support for development has only a negative relationship to turnover if employees believe that the organisation provides opportunities for career advancement (Kraimer et al., 2011). Promotions provide a sign to early career employees that the organisation provides a pathway for growth; lack of promotion is one of the most commonly reported reasons for leaving by Gen Z (Debnath, 2025).

H6: Promotional opportunities are negatively related to turnover intention.

Resource adequacy is having the tools, information, equipment and support required to do the job. According to the JD-R model, providing sufficient resources can help employees cope with demands and ultimately lead to better engagement, while insufficient resources can cause strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and work resources have been found to be associated with reduced turnover intentions (Heilala et al., 2024).

H7: Resource adequacy is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.4 Work-related variables

Role ambiguity occurs when an employee has insufficient information about role expectations and demands; role conflict occurs when he or she receives conflicting demands from multiple role senders (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970). Both are related to low satisfaction and commitment, and also act as hindrance demands (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), and both are hindrance demands (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Role conflict is found from the recent studies to contribute to turnover intention by emotional exhaustion and work stress (Asfahani, 2022; Rizal et al., 2025). Frequently, early career workers in matrix and hybrid organizations, who are likely to receive orders from multiple managers, are particularly vulnerable.

H8: Role ambiguity is positively related to turnover intention.

H9: Role conflict is positively related to turnover intention.

Supervisor support refers to the extent to which one's supervisor values one's contributions and cares about one's well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Supervisors serve as agents of the organisation, so when they support the staff, this is generalised to the organisation, which in turn increases retention (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The correlation between supervisor support and work attitude is higher than the coworker support (Ng & Sorensen, 2008), and a meta-analysis also shows that it has a negative correlation with turnover intention (Astuti & Helmi, 2021). The supervisor support is positively associated with intention to stay in the context of IT employees in India (Mutsuddi & Sinha, 2023), and abusive supervision is positively related to intention to quit in the case of employees of MNCs (Pradhan et al., 2020). Instrumental and emotional support from colleagues also has a positive correlation with increased satisfaction, commitment, and decreased intention to quit (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Kmiecik, 2022).

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H10: Supervisor support is negatively related to turnover intention.

H11: Coworker support is negatively related to turnover intention.

3. Method

3.1 Population, sample and procedure

The target population consisted of at least 18 year old full time working Gen Z (born in 1997 or later) in the Indian context of MNCs having an employment tenure of at least 3 months. An MNC was defined as an Indian registered company with activities in other countries or a foreign-headquartered company with activities in India. Due to the lack of a sampling frame, a structured multi-stage non-probability design was used: six MNC hubs (Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad and Chennai) and six sector groups were selected purposively and monitored for sector coverage each week to ensure that no sector had a predominant presence; a soft quota of at least 35 per cent women per sector was applied; contacts within HR department, learning & development department, LinkedIn, alumni networks of management and engineering institutions, and limited referrals (maximum 3 per respondent) were used to recruit respondents. Questions were automatically screened using the eligibility criteria. The minimum of 384 for a large population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), recommendations for the number of observations that are required for structural models of this complexity (Hair et al., 2019) of 300 – 500 observations, and an a priori power analysis indicating 80 per cent power to detect a small-to-medium effect ($f^2 = 0.05$) with eleven predictors were all used to justify the sample size of 450. About three months of data was gathered via a secure online platform. A total of 446 questionnaires were returned (99.1 per cent of 450), and all met the inclusion criteria and completed the 2 embedded attention checks. No multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distance, $p < .001$) and no missing item values. The mean age of respondents was 24.5 years ($SD = 2.3$; range 19 to 29). 55.8 per cent of the sample identified as male, 40.4 per cent as female, and 3.8 per cent as non-binary or didn't specify their gender. Half of them had a bachelor's degree (50.2 per cent) with 65.0 per cent at entry or associate level, and 39.0 per cent a master's degree or MBA. Tenure with current employer was brief (42.2 per cent had worked less than one year; mean 19.2 months) and 47.1 per cent had one or more previous jobs at other

companies. Fully on-site (29.1 per cent) and fully remote work (18.6 per cent) were least common, with hybrid working being most common (52.2 per cent). The sector and location composition is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Sector and location composition of the sample (N = 446)

Sector group	n (%)	Location hub	n (%)
IT and IT-enabled services	161 (36.1)	Bengaluru	105 (23.5)
Banking, financial services and insurance	78 (17.5)	Hyderabad	79 (17.7)
Consulting and professional services	65 (14.6)	Pune	79 (17.7)
FMCG and retail	54 (12.1)	Delhi-NCR	63 (14.1)
Manufacturing and engineering	54 (12.1)	Mumbai	63 (14.1)
Pharmaceuticals and healthcare	34 (7.6)	Chennai	57 (12.8)

3.2 Measures

Negatively worded items were reverse-scored prior to analysis and all constructs were assessed using scales on five-point response formats (Table 2). The questionnaire was pretested with 50 respondents and discussed with three experts. The PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) was used to measure negative affectivity, job involvement was measured with the ten items scale of Kanungo (1982), job security was measured with three items reverse-scored from Hellgren et al. (1999), pay and benefits satisfaction were measured with the pay-level and benefits subscale of the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ) (Heneman & Schwab, 1985), promotional opportunities measured with the promotion facet of the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1985), resource adequacy measured with four items from the researcher's preliminary instrument, role ambiguity measured with the role ambiguity scale of Rizzo et al. (1970), role conflict measured with the role conflict scale of Rizzo et al. (1970), supervisor support measured with adapted items from Eisenberger et al. (2002), co-worker support measured with adapted items from Caplan et al. (1975), job satisfaction measured with the three item scale of Cammann et al. (1979), organisational commitment measured Control variables included were gender, age, tenure, work arrangement and sector.

Table 2. Measures, reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Source	Items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Negative affectivity	Watson et al. (1988)	10	.697–.784	.925	.926	.555
Job involvement	Kanungo (1982)	10	.678–.827	.930	.930	.575
Job security	Hellgren et al. (1999)	3	.715–.793	.803	.803	.577
Pay satisfaction	Heneman & Schwab (1985)	4	.696–.765	.833	.833	.556
Benefits satisfaction	Heneman & Schwab (1985)	4	.709–.790	.834	.835	.558
Promotional opportunities	Spector (1985)	4	.725–.776	.836	.836	.560
Resource adequacy	Adapted	4	.716–.831	.848	.851	.587

Construct	Source	Items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Role ambiguity	Rizzo et al. (1970)	6	.661–.741	.859	.860	.506
Role conflict	Rizzo et al. (1970)	8	.669–.821	.917	.918	.584
Supervisor support	Eisenberger et al. (2002)	4	.685–.803	.830	.831	.553
Coworker support	Caplan et al. (1975)	4	.703–.784	.840	.841	.569
Job satisfaction	Cammann et al. (1979)	3	.778–.832	.844	.846	.646
Organisational commitment	Allen & Meyer (1990)	8	.670–.818	.911	.910	.563
Turnover intention	Bothma & Roodt (2013)	6	.719–.832	.903	.904	.611

Note: Standardised loadings from the fourteen-factor CFA; all significant at $p < .001$. α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

3.3 Common method variance

To enhance self-report as a response method, several procedural remedies were incorporated into the questionnaire (Podsakoff et al., 2003): items were reverse-scored, items had a different affective response format used in the turnover intention scale, the turnover intention scale was located in a separate final block of the questionnaire, and anonymity was maintained and no identifying information was collected. Three statistical checks also were conducted, as described below.

3.4 Analysis

The analyses were conducted in R and followed a two-step approach, first by testing the measurement model, and second by estimating the structural model (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023): lavaan, semTools and psych packages (Rosseel, 2012; Jorgensen et al., 2022; Revelle, 2024). Despite skewness scores from -0.35 to 0.48 and scores of kurtosis from -0.72 to -0.16 , models nevertheless were estimated using robust maximum likelihood (MLM) with Satorra–Bentler scaled statistics. Fit was evaluated with robust CFI and TLI (≥ 0.95 good), RMSEA (≤ 0.06 good) and SRMR (≤ 0.08) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratios (HTMT < 0.85) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al. 2015) were used to assess the discriminant validity. In the structural model, the eleven antecedents, the two attitudinal variables and the two control variables were regressed on turnover intention; job satisfaction was regressed on job involvement and supervisor support; and organisational commitment was regressed on job involvement and coworker support, with the latter two models using correlated residuals. The standardised path was significant at $p < .05$ in the hypothesized direction and this was considered to give support to the hypothesis. Three robustness checks re-estimated the model without controls, without outliers and with composite scores.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics and correlations

Means, standard deviations and correlations are reported in Table 3. Coworker support ($M = 3.71$), job satisfaction ($M = 3.45$), supervisor support ($M = 3.44$), job involvement ($M = 3.42$) and job security ($M = 3.41$) were rated most positively. The mean of all positively framed constructs ($M = 2.82$) was found to be lowest in the category of promotional opportunities: 16.6 per cent of the respondents rated them favourably (composite above 3.5) and 33.0 per cent clearly unfavourably (below 2.5). The second lowest ($M = 2.95$) was pay satisfaction. Turnover intention was significant ($M = 3.17$): 30.9 per cent of the respondents rated above 3.5; 38.6 per cent often or always thought about quitting their current job; and 40.1 per cent found themselves likely to consider a new job at the same salary level. The direction of all the correlations with turnover intention were in the expected directions

with the highest being for job satisfaction ($r = -.57$), organisational commitment ($r = -.55$) and promotional opportunities ($r = -.38$).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 NA	2.29	0.72													
2 JI	3.42	0.76	-.08												
3 JSEC	3.41	0.82	-.03	.27											
4 PAY	2.95	0.78	-.12	.19	.19										
5 BEN	3.21	0.79	.00	.24	.21	.32									
6 PRO	2.82	0.81	-.06	.21	.23	.33	.22								
7 RES	3.15	0.79	-.08	.19	.13	.16	.21	.23							
8 RA	2.63	0.72	.25	-.07	-.10	-.06	-.05	-.07	-.13						
9 RC	2.73	0.76	.22	-.01	-.06	-.03	-.01	-.06	-.12	.38					
10 SS	3.44	0.76	-.04	.30	.19	.11	.26	.17	.32	-.33	-.16				
11 CS	3.71	0.75	-.11	.26	.22	.20	.20	.25	.24	-.21	-.10	.36			
12 JS	3.45	0.84	-.22	.21	.29	.36	.33	.36	.29	-.27	-.25	.42	.36		
13 OC	3.17	0.75	-.10	.38	.18	.25	.23	.32	.24	-.18	-.15	.38	.25	.60	
14 TI	3.17	0.81	.24	-.25	-.15	-.30	-.25	-.38	-.24	.24	.25	-.31	-.30	-.57	-.55

Note: N = 446. Composite scores (item means), 1–5 scale. $|r| \geq .10$ significant at $p < .05$; $|r| \geq .13$ at $p < .01$; $|r| \geq .16$ at $p < .001$. NA = negative affectivity, JI = job involvement, JSEC = job security, PAY = pay satisfaction, BEN = benefits satisfaction, PRO = promotion opportunities, RES = resource adequacy, RA = role ambiguity, RC = role conflict, SS = supervisor support, CS = coworker support, JS = job satisfaction, OC = organisational commitment, TI = turnover intention.

.One-way analyses of variance showed no significant differences in turnover intention by work arrangement ($F = 0.92$, $p = .398$), sector ($F = 0.44$, $p = .819$), gender ($F = 0.29$, $p = .832$), job level ($F = 1.95$, $p = .144$), city ($F = 1.11$, $p = .355$), education ($F = 1.10$, $p = .348$) or living arrangement ($F = 0.53$, $p = .591$). This was a weak negative correlation with tenure ($r = -.13$, $p = .005$) for turnover intention.

4.2 Measurement model

The fourteen-factor CFA with all 78 items fitted the data very well: scaled $\chi^2 = 3,130.39$, $df = 2,834$ ($\chi^2/df = 1.10$), robust CFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.983, RMSEA = 0.015 (90% CI 0.011 to 0.019) and SRMR = 0.034. No item was deleted as all the standardised loadings were significant (0.661–0.832). Table 2 shows Cronbach's α between 0.803 and 0.930 and composite reliability between 0.506 and 0.646, which indicated reliability, and AVE between 0.506 and 0.646, which indicated convergent validity. The square root of the AVE for all constructs was higher than their correlation scores with other constructs and the highest was 0.679 between job satisfaction and organisational

commitment, which is still well below the threshold of 0.85. The two and a half most distinct components of pay and benefits satisfaction were clearly separate (latent $r = .381$; HTMT = 0.374).

4.3 Common method bias and multicollinearity

Only 18.5 per cent of item variance was accounted for by the first unrotated factor in Harman's single-factor test, which was still less than 50 per cent. A single-factor model fitted very poorly (CFI = 0.315; RMSEA = 0.098; SRMR = 0.127) and significantly worse than the fourteen-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 8,609.97$, $df = 91$, $p < .001$). The highest full-collinearity VIF was 2.26, which was lower than the limit of 3.3 (Kock, 2015). The variance inflation factors on the eleven antecedents were between 1.12 and 1.43. Common method variance and multicollinearity are thus likely to have had little impact on the results.

4.4 Hypothesis tests

The structural model fitted the data well: scaled $\chi^2 = 4,141.70$, $df = 3,622$ ($\chi^2/df = 1.14$), robust CFI = 0.972, TLI = 0.970, RMSEA = 0.018 (90% CI 0.015 to 0.020) and SRMR = 0.058. It accounted for 47.9 per cent of the variance in intention to turn over. The direct effects are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Direct effects on turnover intention

Hypothesis	Path	Expected	β	SE	z	p	Result
H1	Negative affectivity $\rightarrow$ TI	+	0.120	0.044	2.74	.006	Supported
H2	Job involvement $\rightarrow$ TI	–	–0.021	0.050	–0.42	.673	Not supported
H3	Job security $\rightarrow$ TI	–	0.079	0.046	1.72	.085	Not supported
H4	Pay satisfaction $\rightarrow$ TI	–	–0.060	0.053	–1.13	.258	Not supported
H5	Benefits satisfaction $\rightarrow$ TI	–	–0.059	0.056	–1.05	.292	Not supported
H6	Promotional opportunities $\rightarrow$ TI	–	–0.172	0.052	–3.31	< .001	Supported
H7	Resource adequacy $\rightarrow$ TI	–	0.000	0.044	0.00	.997	Not supported
H8	Role ambiguity $\rightarrow$ TI	+	0.037	0.052	0.71	.476	Not supported
H9	Role conflict $\rightarrow$ TI	+	0.108	0.046	2.33	.020	Supported
H10	Supervisor support $\rightarrow$ TI	–	0.002	0.072	0.02	.982	Not supported
H11	Coworker support $\rightarrow$ TI	–	–0.061	0.050	–1.22	.221	Not supported
	Job satisfaction $\rightarrow$ TI		–0.275	0.067	–4.10	< .001	
	Organisational commitment $\rightarrow$ TI		–0.321	0.064	–5.03	< .001	

Note: Standardised coefficients for the latent structural model estimated in MLM, with gender, age, tenure, work arrangement and sector (all non-significant) controlled. TI = turnover intention. R^2 (TI) = 0.479.

Three hypotheses were confirmed. The antecedents that had the strongest direct impact were promotional opportunities, which decreased turnover intention, H6: $\beta = -0.172$, $p < .001$. Negative affectivity (H1: $\beta = 0.120$, $p = .006$) and role conflict (H9: $\beta = 0.108$, $p = .020$) increased turnover intention. The results showed that job involvement, job security, pay satisfaction, benefits satisfaction, resource adequacy, job ambiguity, supervisor

support, and coworker support had no significant direct effects and thus were not supported (H2, H3, H4, H5, H7, H8, H10 and H11). The job security estimate was positive and not significant, although its bivariate correlation with turnover intention was negative ($r = -.15$), which is a common pattern of suppression: The latent level correlation of job security and job satisfaction is .35, thus there is little unique variance when controlling for job satisfaction. Job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.275$) and organisational commitment ($\beta = -0.321$) showed the strongest overall predictor of the turnover intention. None of the control variables was significant.

4.5 Robustness checks

To check the robustness of the main model, three alternative models are compared with the main model in table 5. Since no multivariate outliers were identified, the model with the outliers is the same as the main model. In all three specified's it was the same three who were significant and the coefficients were very similar with none other being significant. Conclusions are thus not dependent on the specification of the latent variables, nor to the control variables.

Table 5. Robustness checks: standardised direct effects on turnover intention

Antecedent	Main model	Without controls	Without outliers	Composite scores
Negative affectivity	0.120*	0.126*	0.120*	0.110*
Job involvement	-0.021	-0.029	-0.021	-0.021
Job security	0.079	0.077	0.079	0.061
Pay satisfaction	-0.060	-0.064	-0.060	-0.055
Benefits satisfaction	-0.059	-0.052	-0.059	-0.051
Promotional opportunities	-0.172*	-0.177*	-0.172*	-0.154*
Resource adequacy	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.013
Role ambiguity	0.037	0.038	0.037	0.033
Role conflict	0.108*	0.107*	0.108*	0.101*
Supervisor support	0.002	0.008	0.002	-0.016
Coworker support	-0.061	-0.070	-0.061	-0.058

Note: * $p < .05$.

5. Discussion

This study asked which characteristics have a unique effect on the turnover intention of Gen Z employees in Indian MNCs. Once eleven antecedents and the two attitudinal variables were modelled together, three conditions acted directly on the intention to leave: the prospect of advancement, the presence of conflicting role demands and the employee's emotional disposition. Many conditions that are routinely treated as retention levers did not have a unique effect.

5.1 Promotion as the decisive organisational resource

Promotional opportunities were both the weakest-rated aspect of work and the strongest direct predictor of turnover intention. More than four-fifths of respondents (83.4 per cent) did not rate their promotion prospects favourably. For early-career employees, promotion signals that the organisation sees a growth path for them; its

absence suggests that growth must be sought elsewhere. This interpretation is consistent with social exchange theory, in which developmental investments create reciprocal obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), with evidence that development support reduces turnover only when career opportunities are visible (Kraimer et al., 2011), and with survey evidence that lack of progression is the second most cited reason for job change among Gen Z after pay (Debnath, 2025). That the effect of promotion was direct rather than absorbed by satisfaction or commitment suggests that young employees compare internal and external opportunities in a somewhat transactional way.

5.2 Pay, benefits, security and resources: necessary but not distinctive

Pay satisfaction, benefits satisfaction, job security and resource adequacy were all negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = -.15$ to $-.30$) but had no unique effect in the integrated model. Their correlations with job satisfaction ($r = .29$ to $.36$) suggest that their influence is largely captured by satisfaction and by promotion. This does not mean that pay and security are unimportant; rather, within the range of conditions reported by these respondents, they do not distinguish employees who intend to stay from those who intend to leave once other factors are considered, which is the pattern Herzberg et al. (1959) described for hygiene factors. Because pay and benefits were measured with distinct subscales and were empirically distinct ($HTMT = 0.37$), the null results are unlikely to reflect measurement overlap. The finding agrees with evidence that compensation and security do not by themselves secure the retention of young employees in the absence of development and support (Marane & Asaad, 2025; Wei & Yazid, 2026).

5.3 Negative affectivity and role conflict

Negative affectivity increased turnover intention in every specification and over and above job satisfaction and commitment, consistent with meta-analytic evidence (Thoresen et al., 2003) and recent studies linking negative affect and psychological distress to intentions to quit (Jasiński & Derbis, 2022; Baquero et al., 2025). Anxious employees may be more sensitive to threats and more inclined to see leaving as a way of avoiding them. The practical implication is not to screen out such applicants, which would be ethically questionable, but to provide well-being support, predictable processes and clear communication; cognitive job crafting may also weaken the link between negative affect and turnover intention (Hommelhoff et al., 2021).

Role conflict also had a direct effect, consistent with meta-analytic and recent evidence (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Asfahani, 2022; Rizal et al., 2025). Incompatible demands from different people are a hindrance demand that early-career employees, who have little discretion to resolve them, may escape by leaving. Role ambiguity, in contrast, had no unique effect. Its strong negative correlation with supervisor support ($r = -.33$) suggests that supportive supervisors clarify roles, so that the effect of ambiguity is absorbed by supervisor support and job satisfaction (De Clercq & Pereira, 2025).

5.4 Social support and job involvement

Supervisor support, coworker support and job involvement were each correlated with turnover intention but had no direct effect. For supervisor support and job involvement this reflects their strong effects on job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which are examined in a companion paper; their influence on turnover intention is transmitted through these attitudes rather than exerted directly. Coworker support was the most positively rated aspect of work, and a ceiling effect, in which most respondents experienced supportive colleagues, may leave little variance to distinguish leavers from stayers.

5.5 Theoretical implications

The results have three implications for theory. First, they show the value of integrated models: of eleven antecedents that are each supported in the literature, only three retained a unique direct effect, which suggests that single-antecedent studies may overstate the importance of individual factors. Second, the pattern supports the dual-process logic of the JD-R model: hindrance demands (role conflict) and personal vulnerability (negative affectivity) act directly on withdrawal, while most job resources act through attitudes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Third, the absence of differences by sector, city, work arrangement and gender suggests that Gen Z turnover

intention in Indian MNCs is explained by perceptions of work rather than by demographic or contextual categories.

5.6 Practical implications

For HR managers in Indian MNCs, the first priority is to make promotion criteria and career paths visible and credible, for example through published criteria, internal job marketplaces, regular career conversations and skill-based progression for early-career staff. The second is to reduce role conflict by giving young employees a single point of priority-setting and clear escalation routes for conflicting requests, and by reviewing workloads in matrix and project structures. The third is to provide well-being support, including employee assistance programmes and manager training in recognising stress. Pay and benefits should be competitive and clearly communicated, but the evidence does not support relying on them as the main retention instrument for Gen Z.

5.7 Limitations and future research

The study has several limitations. Its cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference, and some relationships may be reciprocal. All variables were self-reported; although procedural and statistical checks suggest that common method variance is not a serious concern, it cannot be excluded entirely. The non-probability sample covers six sector groups and six metropolitan hubs, so the results may not generalise to tier-2 cities or other sectors, and pharmaceuticals and healthcare formed the smallest group (7.6 per cent). The outcome is turnover intention rather than actual turnover. Future research should link attitudes to actual exits over 12 to 24 months, combine surveys with HR records of promotion and turnover, compare Gen Z with Millennials in the same organisations, and test moderators such as family responsibilities and migration status.

6. Conclusion

Gen Z employees of Indian MNCs report substantial turnover intention: nearly one in three is clearly inclined to leave. When the commonly studied antecedents are examined together, the conditions that act directly on this intention are promotion prospects, role conflict and negative affectivity. Pay, benefits, job security and resources are correlated with retention but are not distinctive once other conditions and attitudes are considered. For MNCs, retaining Gen Z is therefore less a matter of paying more than of showing young employees a credible path to grow, protecting them from conflicting demands and supporting their well-being.

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