



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

# Turnover in a private hospital: an analysis based on the exit interview

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# Master's Final Assignment

## Turnover in a private hospital: an analysis based on the exit interview

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# Resumo

O principal objetivo desta dissertação é descobrir e compreender as razões pelas quais os prestadores de serviços de saúde, em particular os trabalhadores de um hospital privado em Portugal, abandonam os seus postos de trabalho. Para tal, e para uma melhor compreensão da rotatividade e das suas razões, foram abordados numa primeira fase da revisão da literatura temas como a satisfação no trabalho e o compromisso organizacional.

Desta forma, foram analisadas 154 entrevistas de saída de uma fração do número total de trabalhadores que deixaram a organização em 2020 e 2021. A partir dos resultados obtidos, concluiu-se que os três principais motivos de saída foram o salário, a liderança e a localização geográfica, sendo os dois primeiros fatores organizacionais da satisfação no trabalho. Conclui-se também que o perfil desses ex-trabalhadores, na sua maioria, pertence a faixas etárias abaixo de 40 anos e que estão na empresa há 1 ano ou menos. Apesar de serem os fatores individuais da satisfação no trabalho que influenciam a rotatividade efetiva, conclui-se nesta investigação que eles não têm influência significativa sobre os motivos pelos quais os trabalhadores deixaram a organização. Os resultados são discutidos à luz da literatura.

Por fim, são apresentadas sugestões de práticas de gestão, especialmente do departamento de gestão de recursos humanos em organizações de serviços de saúde, particularmente neste hospital privado. Algumas limitações do estudo são expostas no final deste projeto.

**Palavras-chave:** Rotatividade , Rotatividade efetiva, Satisfação no Trabalho, Compromisso Organizacional, Entrevistas de saída

**Palavras:** 9804



# Abstract

The main objective of this dissertation is to discover and understand the reasons why health service providers, in particular employees of a private hospital in Portugal, leave their jobs. For this purpose, and for a better understanding of turnover and the reasons behind it, topics such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment were addressed in a first phase of the literature review.

To this end, 154 exit interviews of a portion of the workers who left the organization in 2020 and 2021 were analysed. From the results obtained, it was concluded that the three main reasons for leaving were salary, leadership, and geographic location, the first two being organizational factors of job satisfaction. It is also concluded that the profile of these ex-workers mostly belong to age groups below 40 years old and who had been in the company for 1 year or less. Although these are individual factors of job satisfaction that have an influence on effective turnover, it is concluded in this investigation that they do not have a significant influence on the reasons why workers leave their jobs. The results are discussed in the light of the literature.

At the end, suggestions are presented for management practices, especially the human resources management department in health service organizations, particularly in this private hospital. Further down the paper, some limitations of the study are exposed.

**Keywords:** Turnover, Effective Turnover, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Exit interviews

**Words:** 9804





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# Introduction

The significant and accelerated job market and workers transformations, as well as the intense talent's competition, have been pressuring organizations in recent years to implement tools to measure their performance in order to stay in the market and deal with strong competition. Therefore, companies are required to measure organization performance and contribute to the organization stability in today's competitive environment. Organizations tend to measure performance according to financial drivers, but nowadays, top leaders have tried to find new performance measurements such as human resources indicators, in order to gain competitive advantage over competitors (Gabcanova, 2012).

Employee voluntary turnover is a big concern for human resources management in businesses in general and, consequently, it denotes a huge fear for the healthcare sector. The harmful effects of the entry and exit of employees in organizations, undermines the effectiveness human resources management practices, which influence organizational turnover (Huselid, 1995). The turnover is a serious challenge nowadays all over the world and although there are already several different studies investigating it, this problem has not yet been diminished. The intention to leave is affected by many variables, such as job satisfaction, job stress, alternative work, organizational commitment, amongst others. Increasingly, companies must aim to provide a good working environment for employees to achieve a low turnover rate, to which end they must focus on all variables that intentionally or unintentionally affect employee turnover (Rizwan et al., 2014).

The growing concern with turnover comes at a time when managers realize that it is human capital that makes possible a greater competitive advantage amongst companies because “its people add value to its production processes and that its human capital is a unique resource, difficult to replicate and difficult to replace.” (Huselid et al., 1997). The author also states that strategic human resources management activities help a company ensure that human resources are not easily imitated, as due to the social complexity and ambiguity inherent in strategic human resources management practices. These include, team-based projects, training and long-term talent development, which competitors find difficult to copy (Huselid et al., 1997).

Therefore, in the same line of thought, the retention of their best talent, instead of looking for new employees, has become the organizations main concern, since intangible assets have become increasingly important because they are inimitable (Abassi & Hollman, 2000; Turulka & Bajgoric, 2018) cited in (Metelo, 2019). Today, more than ever, organizations are worried with the development and effectiveness of its retention policies, and several have been utilized as tools to collaborate in solving this phenomenon. In this sense, the exit interviews emerge as a human resources practice that aims to help professionals in obtaining information about the possible causes that lead the employee decision to leave the organization (Williamson et al., 2008).

As a result, this investigation seeks to study the reasons why employees leave their jobs and, where appropriate, improve work contexts through an understanding of the current reality, in order to prevent it in the future. This was proposed by my internship supervisor, since in Portugal there are few studies regarding this topic, and it is a very important issue for any company, in particular for companies such as hospitals that provide healthcare services and where the human factor is essential. Through the analysis of the exit interviews, it was possible to perceive those fifteen reasons which were pointed

out by the employees for their departure. In this study, the three main reasons were described and studied in greater depth, those being salary, leadership, and geographic location. On the other hand, the variables that seem to influence the exits are gender, age, and seniority. It was also carried out a cross-reference of data in SPSS in order to understand if these variables, as well as influencing turnover, also influence the reasons mentioned. The analysis of the results was always based on a review of the literature, in particular on topics such as job satisfaction and job commitment, for a better understanding of them.

The present study is structured as follows: First, the literature review where turnover was deeply studied, followed by the research on organizational commitment, job satisfaction and, at the end, the relationship between these three subjects. Also in this section, a conceptualization of exit interviews was performed. Then, a more superficial and descriptive analysis of the exit interviews data to which I had access to, was carried out to understand which methodology should be adopted in this study. Finally, a more detailed analysis of the results is presented, followed by its discussion.

# Theoretical Model

## Literature Review and Theoretical Model

Compared to other occupational groups, health professionals, especially nurses, tend to leave the profession at a much higher rate. For this reason, a greater understanding of the underlying factors for quitting, is essential for healthcare organizations to improve their human resources practices (van der Heijden et al., 2009).

Due to job satisfaction being one of the biggest reasons for turnover, it is important to study the relationship of these variables. According to Lambert et al., (2001), researchers believe that using measures of job satisfaction is an efficient way to predict employee turnover since high job satisfaction is associated with low employee turnover. In other words, if an employee is satisfied with financial rewards, material rewards, and psychological rewards, the probability of his intention to leave the company is lower than that of an employee who is not satisfied. Therefore, it can be said that in general, these two variables (turnover intention and job satisfaction) are negatively related. The inverse relationship established between them is fundamental for research on organizational behaviour (Medina, n.d.).

In the same sense, organizational culture can influence turnover since it acts as a system of social control and can influence employee attitudes and behaviour through the values and beliefs that operate in a company. This has a direct influence on the satisfaction and commitment of the team as well as on the turnover intention (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2010). According to Lambert et al. (2001) work environment is more important in shaping worker job satisfaction rather than demographic factors.

Human resources are the most important factors for the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization, and they cannot succeed without the effort and commitment of its employees. Employee satisfaction towards their jobs and commitment to their organizations are therefore key determinants of organizational effectiveness and are essential in retaining and attracting well-qualified workforce. These factors are especially important in professionalized and service-based organizations, such as hospitals, where long-term specialized training and retention strategies are very important, and so job dissatisfaction is a strong indicator of the intention to leave and high turnover. Employee commitment is also a key value in an organization, since the greater the commitment, the greater the satisfaction at work and consequently turnover is reduced. According to Mosadeghrad et al., (2008) job satisfaction and organizational commitment are, therefore, important indicators for managers, hence the need and relevance to investigate the apparently observed relationship between lower levels of satisfaction as well as commitment at work, and high turnover. For this, it is essential to understand the factors that influence an individual's decision to stay or leave an organization. A better understanding of the reasons why workers leave their organizations translates into better strategies when recruiting, promoting, and training future hospital employees, and even solving problems within the organization to avoid losing good manpower in the future.

## 1.1 Turnover

At the beginning of the 20th century, investigations of turnover emerged, following different methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). The literature attaches great importance regarding this topic since turnover has a great impact on productivity, efficiency and even on the organization's profits (Taylor & Cosenza, 1998).

The literature presents numerous different definitions of turnover. Therefore, turnover can be defined as the termination of the employment contract and the psychological contract of an employee with the organization where he works, which is a simple and clear view amongst the many by other authors a (Tett & Meyer, 1993). According to the authors, turnover can also be seen as the rotation or movement of the worker in the labour market, between companies, places and occupations, as well as between the states of employment and unemployment (Burgess, 1998). Turnover is also when the employee leaves a job or moves to another company on his own initiative, this is called voluntary turnover (Price & Mueller, 1981).

The authors to Aydogdu & Asikgil, (2011) distinguish between two similar but different concepts that can be confused, namely turnover intention and effective turnover. Turnover intention consists of the behavioural attitude of the intention to leave the company, while turnover must be understood as the real separation between the employee and the organization. In the same line, other authors claim the turnover intention is designated as the employee's willingness to leave the organization where he works, emphasizing that this intention precedes the turnover itself (Griffeth & Meglino, 1979; Mobley et al., 1978). Thus, several studies of voluntary turnover understand and use these turnover intentions as the main and most accurate indicator of effective turnover (Griffeth & Meglino, 1979; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Several variables, both internal and external to the individual, regulate the

relationship between turnover intention and the organization's effective turnover, an example of this is the labour market conditions and/or worker motivation (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006).

### 1.1.1. Turnover types

Turnover can be individual or collective. It is considered individual when only one employee leaves the organization while collective turnover occurs when two or more workers decide to leave the organization, based on emotional reasons, in a short period of time (Bartunek et al., 2008).

Turnover can also be voluntary or involuntary. The literature considers turnover to be voluntary when the employee leaves the organization of his own volition based on reasons of a social nature or life incidents, thus seeking changes in the nature of the work itself or personal satisfaction obtained with the new job (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). This type of turnover can be counteracted by the organization if the reasons behind the employee's exit are identified and, thus, by identifying these reasons the organization can anticipate and avoid future undesirable exits (Rossi, 2018). On the other hand, involuntary turnover does not come from the employee's own will and happens when the employee leaves the company for factors that the organization cannot control either, such as retirement or health problems (Price & Mueller, 1981).

The literature also distinguishes internal turnover from external turnover. Internal turnover, as the name implies, happens within the same organization, and concerns the transfer of an employee from one department to another internally, and external turnover occurs when an employee leaves one organization for another (Ruby, 2002).

The final distinction the literature makes is between dysfunctional and functional turnover (Dalton et al., 1982). Turnover is dysfunctional when there is a voluntary exit of employees that the company would rather retain for their

positive contributions to the company, commonly called talents, since the loss of these can threaten the effectiveness of the organization and translate into results in increased costs associated with turnover (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984). Despite the theory that all turnover is dysfunctional such as (Dalton et al., 1982; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980; Staw & Oldham, 1978), on the other hand, functional turnover, also defended by other authors, is defined as the voluntary exit of employees that the company prefers not to retain because of the negative opinion that the organization has about them (Dalton et al., 1982).

The research carried out in this context will focus on voluntary and external turnover, that is, when the employee leaves the organization on his own volition. This happens for methodological reasons, as the investigation is about a specific organization and the period of this is two years. It is also important to emphasize that this period of analysis was during the covid19.

### 1.1.2. Turnover Antecedents

Turnover is the result of a set of factors, some intrinsic to the employee and others related to the characteristics of the work itself and the perception of work alternatives external to the organization, which ultimately determine the individual decision of the employee to voluntarily leave the organization.

In the literature, some authors have identified possible antecedents of turnover. Pettman (1973) classified turnover factors into three groups. The first classified as external factors, such as the unemployment rate for example. The second classified into work-related factors, such as salary, performance, role clarity, task diversity, satisfaction with work, with bosses, with colleagues, and opportunities for development and promotion. The last group ranked on personal factors, such as age, gender, education, and number of dependents.



There are a variety of determinants of turnover that influence job satisfaction and the intention to remain in the organization, which consequently will influence the turnover, or in other words the worker's decision to leave the company (Price & Mueller, 1981). In the theory of the author, there are a variety of determinants of turnover that influence job satisfaction and the intention to remain in the organization, which consequently will influence the worker's decision to leave the company, the turnover. These determinants are promotion opportunities, routine work, participation, communication, integration, salary, distributive justice, professionalism, training, and responsibility. The study reveals that job satisfaction was the variable that had the greatest influence on turnover. Salary, being one of the factors that most influences job satisfaction, had a consistent and positive correlation, as better salary contributes to greater job satisfaction and, consequently, to the intention to remain in the company, and vice versa. Thus, they concluded that employees who are correctly rewarded for their efforts are less likely to have turnover.

For other authors, turnover is strongly related to the characteristics of the individual (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Out of these characteristics, age emerges as a strong variable in predicting turnover, with younger workers being more likely to leave their jobs than older colleagues (Manlove & Guzel, 1997). For Spector (1997), this condition, in which older workers are less likely to leave their jobs, is often attributed to the scarcity of alternatives or new job opportunities and to the benefits already acquired over the years in that company. Also, from the point of view of Chan Yin-Fah et al. (2010), the intention of turnover is lower the greater the age of the worker and the length of service in the organization, since the more years an employee has of experience and knowledge, automatically the better their professional

performance and job satisfaction, so older individuals are more committed to the organization.

Regarding the level of education, some authors concluded that the more educated employees are more likely to leave their current position in the company where they are currently, since these employees have more employment alternatives (Blankertz et al., 1997; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

In the theory of other authors, new employees are more likely to leave the company, with the main reason for turnover being poor socialization (Fisher, 1985). This is because the socialization strategies of new workers are related not only to the turnover itself but also to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and individual expectations (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). New employees are more likely to leave the organization when they see that their results are not in line with the expectations created, as they are dissatisfied with their work (Wanous et al., 1992).

In the literature, some work characteristics are also pointed out as being related to turnover, except for the theory of Mowday et al. (1979) in which no correlation is observed between the two variables. On the contrary, A .Laser (1980) and Mann et al. (2004) claim that turnover has positive correlations with job characteristics such as working hours, role conflicts and ambiguities, the task overload, the impossibility of reconciling work-family, the scarcity of training and lack of skills development opportunities. Griffeth & Meglino, (1979), Mobley et al. (1978) and Porter et al. (1973) also add factors inherent to the type of leadership.

Occupational stress is also strongly correlated with the employee's decision to leave an organization, since occupational stress is defined as the measure indicator to which the job functions are difficult for the employee to fulfil, that is, if the functions are difficult to perform, this causes stress to the employee and consequently his quit o (Chan Yin-Fah et al., 2010).

The literature also states that the level of individual turnover is generally influenced by labour market conditions. In the meta-analysis by Carsten & Specter (1987) the authors found that the correlations between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover tend to be higher when unemployment is lower, which means that when the unemployment rate is low, job dissatisfaction has a greater influence. in the turnover forecast. In the same line of thought Cotton & Tuttle (1986) concluded in their meta-analysis that voluntary turnover is strongly related to the perception of availability of employment alternatives.

### 1.1.3. Turnover Consequences

In the literature we see that turnover can generate several consequences for the organization. On one hand, the entire process of recruiting and selecting new employees is very expensive, such as ensuring the functions of the employee who left the company while the next one is not chosen to take his place (Staw, 1980 and M. Abbasi et al., 2008). On the other hand, the constant leave and entry of workers can negatively interfere with the work of those who remain in the company and affect the climate and job satisfaction (Lee & Mowday, 1987; Sheehan, 1993).

Pinkowitz (1997) cited in Li (2017) follows the theory that turnover has consequences for the organization and identifies three most common costs inherent to employee turnover. The first is separation cost, which includes costs incurred for exit interviews and administrative functions related to the termination. Replacement costs include the cost of attracting new candidates, admissions interviews, testing, moving expenses, pre-employment administrative expenses, medical examinations, acquisition and dissemination of information. Finally, there are training costs, which include the costs of training given to new employees of the company. The

author states that the costs associated with turnover can range from an estimated 25 to about 200 percent of annual compensation.

In turn, Dess & Shaw (2001) state that voluntary turnover has two types of consequences. The first is called the cost perspective, as it reflects on the costs of voluntary turnover, similar to the theory of Pinkowitz (1997). The second, the approach reflects on the cost-benefit, considering not only the costs of turnover but also bearing in mind the benefits that turnover can have, such as, for example, reductions in stagnation and the leave of low-performing employees.

Following this last theory, some authors claim that some degree of turnover can have positive consequences both for the organization and for the employees Dalton et al., (1982) and Staw (1980), contrary to the traditional theory that turnover is always dysfunctional. Also Abelson & Baysinger (1984) consider that turnover can bring benefits, amongst them greater flexibility of personnel and reduction of income disparities amongst workers, which means that employees with very high salaries can be replaced by equally qualified workers, that bring new ideas to the organization, new knowledge, practices, and new experiences Griffeth et al. (2000), but with a lower salary.

## 1.2. Organizational Commitment:

Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's multidimensional psychological attachment to the organization they work for, which positively influences the retention of members in the organization. Meyer and Allen defined organizational commitment as "A psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationships with the organization and has implications for the decision to remain a member of the organization." (Meyer et al., 1993).

Meyer and Allen differentiated organizational commitment into three components: affective, continuity, and normative commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). The first has to do with the perceptions employees have about their emotional attachment to the organization. Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: a meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates, and consequences. Therefore, employees with high affective attachment to the organization see the company's goals as their own, so they have a strong motivation to contribute their best (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). According to Kate and Masako, cited in Mosadeghrad et al., (2008) individual factors such as personality, values orientation, education or age and organizational factors, such as believing that the employee's roles and work objectives are clearly defined and assisted with management support, can influence the level of affective commitment.

The continuance commitment concerns the cognitive bond between employees and their organizations due to the costs to oneself associated with leaving the organization (Meyer et al., 2002). This type of commitment is associated with the theory that individuals do not leave an organization if they lose their benefits, suffer salary cuts, incur job search expenses and risk becoming unemployed (Murray et al., 2015). The most important factors leading to continuity commitment are the accumulated time and effort that

employees have invested in an organization and the lack of new employment alternatives outside the organization. Employees will have a stronger commitment to continuing with their organizations when they perceive there are few job opportunities outside their organizations as they estimate the high costs of leaving their current organizations (Meyer et al., 1993). Finally, normative commitment is defined as the feelings that employees have of obligation to remain in their organization (Meyer et al., 2002). According to Kate and Masako (2002) cited in Mosadeghrad et al., (2008), commitment is when the employee, for reasons such as education or age or other related reasons, feels obliged to remain in the organization because he believes it is the moral and correct thing to do, that is, a feeling of a 'moral' obligation to remain in the organization, based on social or cultural norms, as he believes he must be loyal to his organization.

### 1.3. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as an attitude that employees have about their jobs and the organizations where they perform their jobs. Job satisfaction can also be defined as the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs (Spector, 1997). It is the affective reaction that is based on a comparison between the current and expected results of an employee to a job. Job satisfaction is usually perceived as a construction of employees' different feelings about a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the job. The intrinsic elements of job satisfaction are those that come from internal rewards, such as the work itself and opportunities for growth and personal fulfilment, while the extrinsic elements of job satisfaction are related to external rewards, such as satisfaction with remuneration and benefits, company policies and support, supervision, co-workers, job security and promotion opportunities (Misener, T. R., Haddock, K. S., Gleaton, J. U., & Ajamieh, A. R. A., 1996).

Job dissatisfaction can stem from a variety of causes, which can be both personal and organizational in nature. Regarding causes of a personal nature, the ones that stand out the most are demographic factors (such as age) and individual differences (such as education level and position held). In terms of organizational factors, the ones that stand out are the salary, the nature of the work and the supervisor's support (Keller & Semmer, 2013).

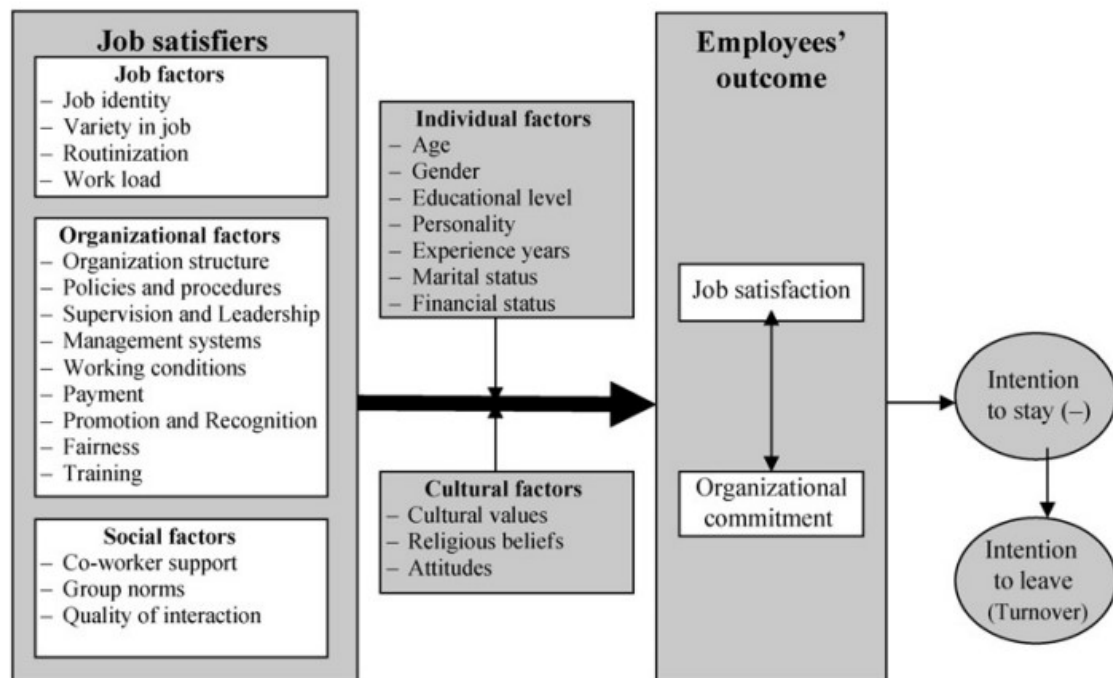


Figure 1. A study of the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention among hospital employees - Mosadeghrad A., Ferlie E., Rosenberg D.

## 1.4. Turnover, Commitment and Job Satisfaction

In the literature, some attention has been given to the relationship between the concept of organizational commitment and turnover. In this follow-up, the people who are most committed to their work and who are most concerned with achieving the company's goals are more likely to remain in the organization (Porter et al., 1974). Empirical evidence generally shows that there is a negative correlation between these two variables (Tett & Meyer, 1993). A study on organizational commitment and the turnover of nurses who have been working for more than a year follows this line (Werbel & Gould, 1984). However, this inverse relationship between commitment and turnover is stronger when employees are at the beginning of their careers, that is, employees up to 30 years of age (Cohen, 1991). For other authors, the correlations between organizational commitment and turnover are very low or none, and this can be explained by the fact that other variables moderate the relationship between commitment and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In fact, it is possible to verify that there are determinants that are negatively linked to turnover and simultaneously, positively associated with organizational commitment, such as age, seniority, salary, job satisfaction and the relationship with co-workers, for example (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Buchanan, 1974).

Regarding organizational commitment and job satisfaction, there is a consensus that these two variables are different and are positively correlated (Meyer et al., 1990; Porter et al., 1974). However, there is no agreement with the casual ordering of these two variables, that is, which influences which, as some authors claim that it is job satisfaction that affects organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac (1990) and Sikorska-Simmons (2005), while others argue that it is commitment that impacts job satisfaction (Sikorska-Simmons, 2005; Vandenberg & Lance, 1992). Despite this debate, there is more empirical evidence and more recent studies that support that job satisfaction influences



organizational commitment, this is, the more a worker is satisfied with his job, the greater his commitment to the organization and its goals (Findler et al., 2007; Landsman, 2008; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sikorska-Simmons, 2005).

As mentioned throughout the literature review, some authors claim that there is a negative correlation between job satisfaction and turnover. A few authors even argue that job satisfaction is one of the most important antecedents of turnover. Thus, employees most likely to quit their jobs are employees with a low level of job satisfaction and, on the other hand, employees with a high level of job satisfaction are the least likely to leave their jobs (Chan Yin-Fah et al., 2010; Mobley et al., 1978). In other words, when the level of job satisfaction is lower, turnover tends to increase, and when the level of job satisfaction is higher, turnover tends to decrease. In this follow-up, the more satisfied workers are with their work, with their bosses and with their salary, the less will they be willing to leave the company (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986).

## 1.5. Exit Interviews

After the bibliographic research on turnover, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and the relationship between these three variables, it is essential to understand the real reasons why employees left their jobs in 2020 and 2021. For this process, exit interviews were adopted with some employees randomly. Following this line of thought, I found essential a brief contextualization concerning this topic.

Over the years, in the current job market, organizations have been increasingly concerned about understanding why their employees leave and what they can do to predict and avoid such situations (Gioia & Catalano, 2011; Maertz et al., 2022). Voluntary turnover is usually the final expression of job dissatisfaction, so its monitoring and analysis becomes essential and can be done through exit interviews (Johns & Gorrick, 2016; Maertz et al., 2022). Certain authors consider exit interviews to be a powerful tool in the analysis of turnover (Mok & Luk, 1995).

An exit interview is a dialogue between the worker who is in the process of leaving and a representative of the organization, which may vary in structure and formality, with the purpose of obtaining information about the worker's experience and the reasons why he wants to leave the organization (Williamson et al., 2008). Exit interviews are conceptualized in a similar way to the previous one, but also add that the information obtained in the exit interview is intended to allow the organization to strengthen its ability to retain qualified employees (Givens-Skeaton & Ford, 2018). As previously mentioned, exit interviews, not only help retain employees, but also allow an understanding of the respective motivations behind the employees' decision to leave (Williams, Harris & Parker 2008).

In the literature, it is argued that exit interviews can be a two-way process, since being a meeting with departing employees, in an exit interview the

employers can also express their feelings (Knouse et al., 1996). Williamson et al. (2008) questions the gains of this process, stating that the benefits are more obvious to the employer than to the employee.

Although many companies over the years have adopted exit interviews as a method to understand the possible causes of turnover, on the other hand, some scholars question the effectiveness of this process. The lack of initiative by human resource management regarding the data collected is one of the reasons why it is claimed that the usefulness of exit interviews may be dubious (Johns & Gorrick, 2016). In the same line of thought, Gioia and Catalano (2011) argue that when an organization questions its employees about possible problems that need to be changed, it must subsequently act on them, and adds that the lack of action on what the employees pointed out as being problems can result in dissatisfaction with the work and even an increase in turnover (Gioia & Catalano, 2011). Another reason for this statement is the fact that the answers may not be honest on behalf of the employee who left the company, omitting the true causes of his departure, for reasons such as the possibility of returning to work in the organization in the future or the concern of possible repercussions on colleagues who remain in the company or even possible work references from the management (Johns & Gorrick, 2016).

In an exit interview, be it formal or informal, and whatever the structure, it is extremely important to have trust and respect in the employment relationship. For this to happen, it is necessary to create a comfortable atmosphere for both parties in order to obtain insights into the opinion of employees, work processes and the organization, so that the conversation is meaningful, and the data is valuable (Williamson et al., 2008). Many workers in the exit process are willing to openly express their feelings. If the interviewer holds a formal interview in which the employee feels assured that nothing he says will be used against him, the employee will tend to be more open and sincere (Smith &

Kerr, 1953). Schachter (2005) explains that the questions must be open-ended, the interview must be conducted by someone other than the direct supervisor of the interviewed employee, and ideally by a human resources person. The same author argues that the human resources person naturally has more experience in creating an adequate and comfortable atmosphere for the exit interview and will be perceived as “neutral” by the employees, and since he has techniques that allow him to understand defensive speeches or behaviours. From these interviews, answers are obtained that reveal the possible real causes that impact turnover, and therefore the company becomes able to evaluate and act on the various organizational aspects in order to increase the retention rate (Givens-Skeaton & Ford, 2018). Furthermore, during this conversation the organization can have access to information about possible problems occurring in the organization (Johns & Gorrick, 2016), which it would not otherwise have and thus allows it to alert the organization's management in advance, avoiding later litigation expenses with employees. discontent and therefore prevent them from defaming the company (Kusserow, 2016).

## 2. Methodological Framework

After introducing the various themes in the literature review for a better understanding of this study, in this chapter I will characterize the purpose of the investigation and the methodological options that guide it.

The term methodology ranges from the description, analysis of procedures and specific techniques for collecting and studying data, to their potential, as well as the assumptions underlying their application. The method is "the way to a certain end" (Gil, 1999:27). The methodology starts with the formulation of the initial questions and goes to the reliable conclusions, in other words, it is the critical organization of research practices.

In short, based on the assumption that the selection of the methodological option must be adapted to the problem to be studied, the nature of the phenomena, the research objective, the outlined objectives and the human team and other elements that may arise in the field of investigation (Hill et al., 2005; Pereira & Poupa, 2018). In this chapter I will describe my choice of methodological planning necessary for the development of the research.

## 2.1. Object of study and characterization of the organization

The study objective of this investigation is on health professionals of a private hospital group that has several units spread around Portuguese territory, currently constituted by approximately 5900 employees of which around 80% are female. The company will not be identified in the present investigation due to confidentiality purposes, however throughout my internship, the organizations Human Resources Management department provided me total availability to access the necessary information to carry out this study. This includes reports of the exit interviews which made this analysis possible.

This 100% Portuguese private hospital is over 70 years old and is a leader in providing quality healthcare in Portugal. This organization develops its activity through 18 units spread across mainland Portugal, those being 9 hospitals, 8 clinics and 1 institute.

## 2.2. Method

To carry out any investigation, it is important to make methodological decisions in order to follow a path in the investigation and consequently to achieve the objectives. The definition of research questions becomes fundamental as they give us guidance for the rest of the investigation (Bryman, 2011). Therefore, in order to have consistency between the objective and the object of study of this investigation, I defined the following starting question: "What are the reasons why health professionals leave their companies?".

### 2.2.1. Research objectives

Fortin et al. (2006) refer that the objective of the investigation must be explicit, communicating the key variables of the study, indicating the population to which it is addressed and the actions that define the direction of the investigation. In the current study, I defined the following objectives:

General objective:

- Identify the reasons for why health professionals leave this private hospital.

Specific objectives:

- Characterize the exit profiles.
- Characterize the reasons for departure mentioned by professionals in the exit interviews.
- Understand if there are statistically significant differences between reasons nominated and if gender, age or seniority influences these reasons.

### 2.2.2. Data collection

In the literature we can find different data collection techniques, and in this study the technique used was document analysis and collection made through a convenience sample. Different authors over time have defined document analysis, but its central aspects have remained in recent decades. This technique is defined as a process that ranges from the selection, processing and interpretation of existing information in documents, with the aim of attributing meaning to this information (Carmo & Malheiro Ferreira, 2008). In other words, in this research process it is important that the researcher adds value and shares it with the scientific community so that in the future others can do the same. Document analysis is used to meet three information needs of users, which are: knowing what other researchers have done on a topic; knowing specific segments of information contained in each document and knowing the totality of relevant information on a particular topic (Vickery, 1970). Quivy and

Campenhoudt (1992) refer that the author makes a "collection of pre-existing data", in order to study them or to find useful information for other case studies, through newspapers, reports, studies, amongst others (Quivy e Campenhoudt 1992). The documents that will be analysed in this investigation are the reports of exit interviews carried out with employees of a private hospital.

As I mentioned earlier, in this study the convenience sample was used, which belongs to the non-probabilistic sampling category. This category is characterized by using random forms of selection, which makes it impossible to apply statistical calculations (Oliveira 2001). In this study, the reports of the exit interviews that have already been carried out will be analysed, that is, they were given to me for analysis, so the sample is characterized by convenience. This sampling category is normally used when we are not aware of the size of the universe and individuals are selected by subjective criteria (Gil, 1999), being at risk of little statistical rigor, since the researcher studies elements to which he has access, assuming that they may represent the universe (Lwanga e Lemeshow, 1991). It is more appropriate to use this type of sample in exploratory research (Oliveira, 2001), being used in the form of justification and based on the creation of hypotheses or in conclusive studies when the researcher assumes the risk of the imprecision of the results presented (Churchill e Lacobucci, 1998). The main advantage of the convenience sample is the fact that it is obtained in a simple and fast way, and offers valuable information for carrying out the study with little distance between the information obtained through these individuals and the total universe. The main disadvantage, as mentioned above, is the lack of representation, which makes the researcher take risks in reaching conclusions. Thus, when a convenience sample is chosen, a description of how the sample was obtained



should accompany the results so that it is possible for the reader to assess the credibility he can attribute to the results (Kinnear e Taylor, 1979).

This investigation was carried out through a mixed data treatment: descriptive quantity and qualitative. The first concerns the analysis of qualitative data, through frequency tables and pivot tables in Excel, and running, in SPSS, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test, the Kruskal Wallis test and the T-test, that I will explain later on in greater detail, to relate the number of reports made in relation to departures and the respective percentage, the percentage of departures by sex, age group and seniority. The second was utilized in the categorization of responses to understand the most mentioned reason throughout the analysis of the reports why employees leave the organization, such as the analysis of the main reason they attribute to their departure and other suggestions. For this analysis, it was necessary to transform the employees' discourse regarding the reasons they mentioned for their departure, categorizing uniformly according to what the discourse had in common with each other, so that the analysis of the data from these exit reports could result in data that can be interpreted. In this way, whenever a new reason appeared, it was added to the list of uniform categories, which resulted in this final list of 15 reasons mentioned for employees leaving:

- Workplace environment
- Physical and/or psychological fatigue
- Workload
- Boss/Supervisor
- New project challenge
- Demotivation in the job
- Balance between personal and professional life
- Working hours

- Geographic location
- Insufficient means to perform my duties
- Family reasons
- Career opportunity
- Service
- Salary
- Contractual agreement

The quantitative method used the measurement of variables and obtaining numerical results that can be generalized, assuming that human phenomena are predictable and controllable and aims to explain, predict and establish cause-effect relationships between variables (Fortin et al., 2006).

On the other hand, qualitative investigations aim to discover, explore, describe various phenomena from the participants' point of view and interpret the phenomena in their natural environment. Thus, the present study will be analysed within its context in order to make sense, that is, the reasons for employees leaving a private hospital must be analysed within the context of the health services sector.

### 3. Results analysis

At this stage of the study, after the theoretical framework, methodological decision and data collection, the analysis performed, and the respective conclusions can be presented. In this way, the sample will be firstly characterized in terms of sex, age group, type of contract and seniority. Subsequently, there will be a reflection on the reasons why employees point to their departure.

#### 3.1. Sample characterization

Regarding the sample used in this investigation, the human resources management department allowed me to analyse 154 exit interviews made to health professionals who left in 2020 and 2021, in a total universe of 1246. These interviews are not mandatory, and, for this reason, they were not carried out to all the workers who left the organization. Once this happens, and after using a sampling calculator, I concluded that the sample is not statistically representative, because for a population size of 1246, for a 90% confidence level, with a 5% error margin, the sample would have to be at least 224 to be considered representative, being this a limitation of the study. Anyway, and this being the only sample I had available, I decided to make and present the analysis of the data and the respective conclusions, although they may be biased or at the risk of not representing the total universe.

### 3.2. Exit profile characterization

First of all, it is important to present the data that this private hospital provided me regarding turnover. As we can see in the table below, the turnover rate for each year was approximately 20%.

*Table 1. Turnover rate*

| <b>Indicator</b>   | <b>2020</b>  | <b>2021</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Employees          | 5668         | 5984        |
| Voluntary leavings | 531          | 715         |
| Turnover Rate (%)  | <b>20,3%</b> | <b>20%</b>  |

The sample is made up of 73% women and 27% men, which is not surprising since about 80% of the workers in this hospital are female, a common occurrence in the health industry. I categorized males as 0 and females as 1 for data analysis. A characterization by age groups was carried out, and we could see that 44% of the interviewees are between the age group of 31 to 40 years old, followed by the age group between 21 and 30 years old, constituting 34% of the sample. Age groups were coded from 1 to 5 in ascending order of age for data analysis purposes. Regarding seniority in the company, the sample is mainly characterized by people who had been in the company for 1 year or less, representing 55% of the sample. Seniority was also coded for the purposes of data analysis from 1 to 5, respectively in ascending order of the employee's seniority.

|           |   | Value Label | N   |
|-----------|---|-------------|-----|
| Age Group | 1 | <21         | 3   |
|           | 2 | 21-31       | 54  |
|           | 3 | 31-40       | 65  |
|           | 4 | 41-50       | 24  |
|           | 5 | >51         | 8   |
| Seniority | 1 | <=1         | 85  |
|           | 2 | 2 - 5       | 48  |
|           | 3 | 6 - 10      | 10  |
|           | 4 | 11 - 15     | 9   |
|           | 5 | >15         | 2   |
| Gender    | 0 | Male        | 42  |
|           | 1 | Female      | 112 |

*Table 2. Variables categorization - SPSS*

### 3.3. Health professionals leaving reasons

As previously mentioned in this study, a characterization of the reasons why workers leave organizations was previously performed.

In the first question, respondents had to mention the reasons that led them to leave the hospital. As more than one could be mentioned, I had to make a frequency table to understand which are the most frequently mentioned reasons. As we can see, salary is the reason more mentioned by employees as one of the reasons for their departure. Next comes the working schedule and in third place the physical and psychological fatigue. These reasons may or may not be the main reason for leaving, here we just know that these are some of the most mentioned reasons for leaving, placing a 1 under the reasons presented by the collaborators and a 0 under the reasons that they do not indicate.

These were the results:

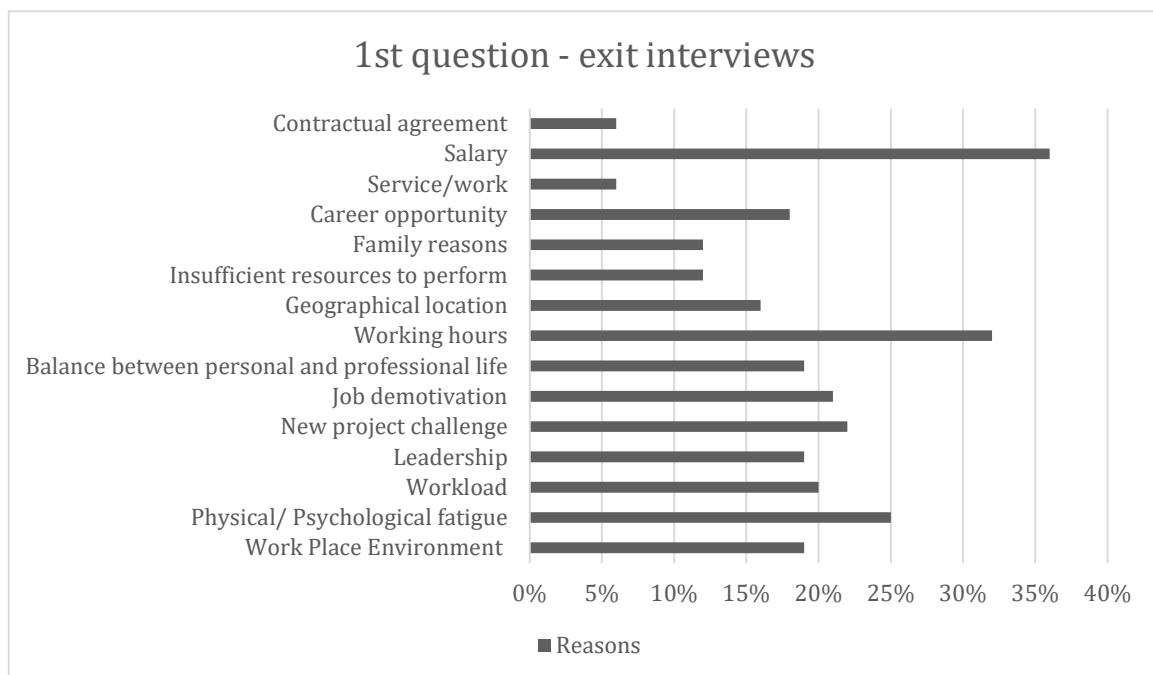


Figure 2. Reasons why health professionals left the private hospital

In the second interview question, employees had to indicate which was the main reason for leaving. As we can see below, 16% mentioned salary as the main reason for their departure, then 11% specified leadership and another 10% refer to geographical location as the main reason.

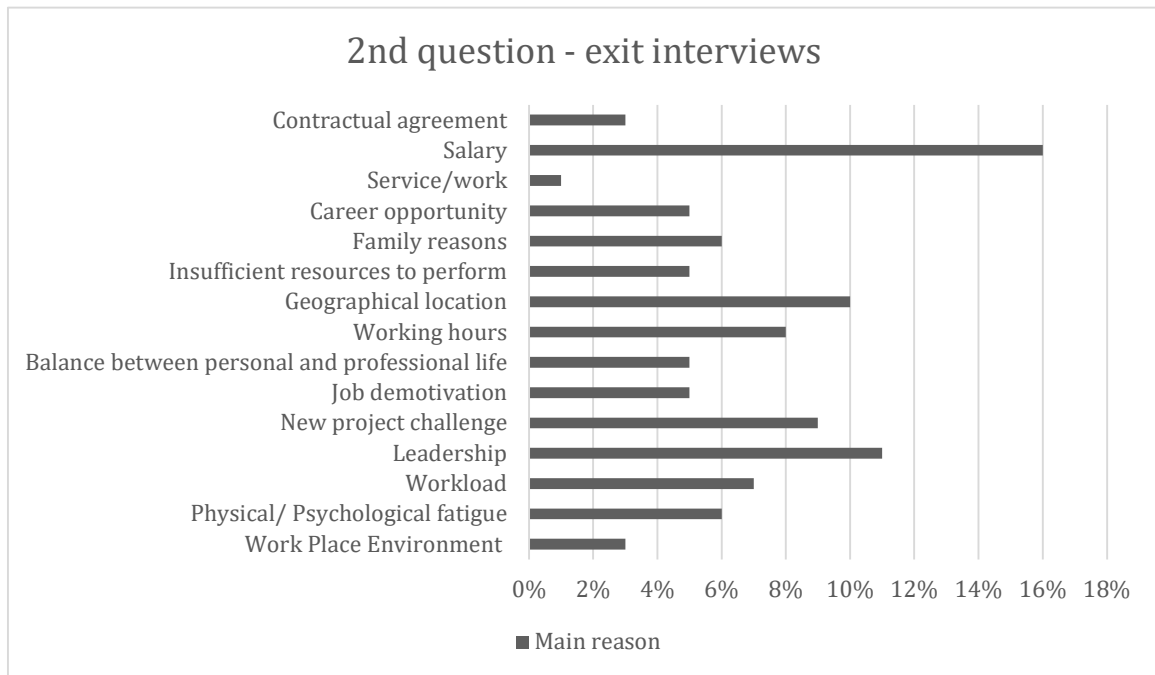


Figure 3. Main reason why health professionals left the private hospital

### 3.4. Statistical procedure and data analysis

After a more superficial analysis, I used the SPSS program to draw more statistical conclusions.

Firstly, I resorted to a Shapiro-Wilk normality test to see if the sample followed a normal distribution or not. If  $H_0=p>0.05$ , the scores are normal distributed; If  $H_1=p<0.05$ , the scores are not normal distributed. The normality of all main reasons scores was assessed. In this study, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the scores were not normally distributed,  $W(154)=.931$ ,  $p=<.001$ . For the sample to be normal, the significance would have to be greater than 0.05, since this does not happen, the sample does not follow a normal distribution, because  $p<0.05$ , so  $H_0$  is rejected.

|             | Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup> |     |       | Shapiro-Wilk |     |       |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----|-------|--------------|-----|-------|
|             | Statistic                       | df  | Sig.  | Statistic    | df  | Sig.  |
| MainReasons | .131                            | 154 | <.001 | .931         | 154 | <.001 |

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*Table 3. Test of Normality - Shapiro-Wilk - SPSS*

As the sample is not normal, I cannot apply the ANOVA test. In this case I had to use a similar one, namely the Kruskal Wallis that is a non-parametric test. This test is used to see if there is an effect of the variable on the chosen reasons. I define age group and seniority to be the factor variables in order to understand if it has effects in the three main reasons why employees left the company (salary, leadership and geographic location). If  $H_0=p>0.05$  there is no effect of the variable but if  $H_1=p<0.05$  there is an effect of the variable.

A Kruskal-Wallis test showed that employee age group significantly affects the leadership choice to leave the company,  $H(4)=10.21$ ,  $p=.037$ . In contrast, a Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that age group significantly does not affect the leaving of the organization for salary nor geographic reasons,  $H(4)=1.20$ ,  $p=.878$  and  $H(4)=1.89$ ,  $p=.757$

### Kruskal-Wallis Test

| Test Statistics <sup>a,b</sup> |        |            |                     |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------|---------------------|
|                                | Salary | Leadership | Geographic location |
| Kruskal-Wallis                 | 1.202  | 10.215     | 1.886               |
| H                              |        |            |                     |
| df                             | 4      | 4          | 4                   |
| Asymp. Sig.                    | .878   | .037       | .757                |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age Group

*Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis test - SPSS*

So, as it can be observed in the table below the null hypothesis is the distribution of Salary/Leadership/Geographic location is the same across categories of age groups. Following the analysis made above, for leadership the null hypothesis must be rejected since the distribution of leadership is not the same across categories of age groups.

### Nonparametric Tests

#### Hypothesis Test Summary

|   | Null Hypothesis   | Test                                    | Sig. <sup>a,b</sup> | Decision                    |
|---|---|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | The distribution of Salary is the same across categories of Age Group.              | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .878                | Retain the null hypothesis. |
| 2 | The distribution of Leadership is the same across categories of Age Group.          | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .037                | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 3 | The distribution of Geographic Location is the same across categories of Age Group. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .757                | Retain the null hypothesis. |

a. The significance level is .050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

*Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis test - SPSS*



As the null hypothesis was rejected for leadership, since the distribution is not the same across categories of age group, I resort to a post-hoc to make comparisons between age group categories. It can be seen in the last column of the table below which groups the distribution is not the same, the groups that the adjust significance is less than 1.000. In age groups in which the distribution is not the same, it is detected that all have in common the age group of >50 years. This means that there will be a discrepancy in the relative number of people over 50 who left the organization due to leadership reasons rather than in other age groups.

**Pairwise Comparisons of Age Group**

| Sample 1-Sample 2 | Test Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Test Statistic | Sig. | Adj. Sig. <sup>a</sup> |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------|------|------------------------|
| <21-21-31         | -2.852         | 13.982     | -.204               | .838 | 1.000                  |
| <21-31-40         | -8.292         | 13.919     | -.596               | .551 | 1.000                  |
| <21-41-50         | -12.833        | 14.434     | -.889               | .374 | 1.000                  |
| <21->51           | -28.875        | 15.958     | -1.809              | .070 | .704                   |
| 21-31-31-40       | -5.440         | 4.340      | -1.254              | .210 | 1.000                  |
| 21-31-41-50       | -9.981         | 5.783      | -1.726              | .084 | .843                   |
| 21-31->51         | -26.023        | 8.930      | -2.914              | .004 | .036                   |
| 31-40-41-50       | -4.541         | 5.630      | -.807               | .420 | 1.000                  |
| 31-40->51         | -20.583        | 8.832      | -2.331              | .020 | .198                   |
| 41-50->51         | -16.042        | 9.623      | -1.667              | .096 | .955                   |

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.

Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .050.

a. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Table 6. Post-hoc test - SPSS

Regarding Seniority, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that employee seniority significantly does not affect the leadership nor salary or geographic reasons,  $H(4)=3.21$ ,  $p=.524$ ,  $H(4)=4.72$ ,  $p=.318$  and  $H(4)=6.72$ ,  $p=0.152$ .

**Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>**

|                | Salary | Leadership | Geographic location |
|----------------|--------|------------|---------------------|
| Kruskal-Wallis | 3.206  | 4.716      | 6.715               |
| H              |        |            |                     |
| df             | 4      | 4          | 4                   |
| Asymp. Sig.    | .524   | .318       | .152                |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Seniority

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis test - SPSS

At this point, it can be concluded that the distribution of salary, leadership and geographic location is the same across seniority groups, so the null hypothesis is retained as shown in the table below. In this case it is not necessary to resort a post-hoc test to pairwise comparisons.

### Nonparametric Tests

| Hypothesis Test Summary |   |   |                     |                             |
|-------------------------|---|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
|                         | Null Hypothesis   | Test                                    | Sig. <sup>a,b</sup> | Decision                    |
| 1                       | The distribution of Salary is the same across categories of Seniority.              | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .524                | Retain the null hypothesis. |
| 2                       | The distribution of Leadership is the same across categories of Seniority.          | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .318                | Retain the null hypothesis. |
| 3                       | The distribution of Geographic Location is the same across categories of Seniority. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .152                | Retain the null hypothesis. |

a. The significance level is .050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

*Table 8. Kruskal-Wallis test - SPSS*

Concerning gender, it is necessary to resort a T-test, a test that compares two groups, because gender is a two-group variable.

In the column sig., shown in figure 12, Levene's test checks whether the data is homogeneous. The null hypothesis happens when the variances are homogeneous,  $p > 0.05$ ; if the variances are not homogeneous,  $p < 0.05$  and  $H_0$  is rejected. This is important, to know which data from which of the rows to analyse. In the t-test column, compare means, so if  $p > 0.05$  means that the mean of the "male" group is equal to that of the "female" group and the null hypothesis is maintained; if  $p < 0.05$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected because it signifies that the mean of the "male" group is not equal to the mean of the "female" group.

Regarding salary, I will analyse the second line because equal variance is not assumed, so the t-test for equal means showed that ( $t(64.32)=1,193$ ,  $p=.237$ ), that is, the mean of the male group is equal to the mean of the female group. However, t-test group statistics table (figure 11) show that, on average, employees in the “male” group present salary as a reason for leaving the organization more than the “female” group. Leadership has to be analysed through the first line since equal variance is assumed in Leven's test, so ( $t(152)=.967$ ,  $p=.335$ ), that is, the average of the genders are equal for this variable. As happened with salary, in the t-test group statistics table it can be observed that, on average, the “male” group also points out leadership as a reason for leaving more than the “female” group. In geographic location also equal variance is assumed, so ( $t(152)= -.055$ ,  $p=.956$ ), this means that the average for the location reason of the two groups are equal and the t-test group table statistics shows that, on average, the “male” group and the “female” group equally mention geographic location as a reason for leaving.

### T-Test

#### Group Statistics

|                     | Gender | N   | Mean | Std.      | Std. Error |
|---------------------|--------|-----|------|-----------|------------|
|                     |        |     |      | Deviation | Mean       |
| Salary              | Male   | 42  | .26  | .445      | .069       |
|                     | Female | 112 | .17  | .377      | .036       |
| Leadership          | Male   | 42  | .14  | .354      | .055       |
|                     | Female | 112 | .09  | .286      | .027       |
| Geographic location | Male   | 42  | .10  | .297      | .046       |
|                     | Female | 112 | .10  | .299      | .028       |

Table 9. Group statistics - T-test - gender - SPSS

|                     |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                          |             |                 |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                     |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Significance One-Sided p | Two-Sided p | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Salary              | Equal variances assumed     | 5.853                                   | .017 | 1.286                        | 152    | .100                     | .200        | .092            | .072                  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 1.193                        | 64.320 | .119                     | .237        | .092            | .077                  |
| Leadership          | Equal variances assumed     | 3.584                                   | .060 | .967                         | 152    | .168                     | .335        | .054            | .055                  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | .878                         | 62.198 | .192                     | .383        | .054            | .061                  |
| Geographic Location | Equal variances assumed     | .012                                    | .912 | -.055                        | 152    | .478                     | .956        | -.003           | .054                  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -.055                        | 74.097 | .478                     | .956        | -.003           | .054                  |

Table 10. . T-test - gender - SPSS

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Theoretical implications

The present study explores the reasons for effective turnover, that is, the reasons given by employees for their departure. There is limited data in Portugal on Turnover in the health professions, but it is known that it is an industry with high turnover rates (Martins et al., 2003). The same authors state that little is known about the reasons why health professionals quitting their jobs.

In the literature, it is observed that turnover is associated with Job satisfaction as well as with organizational commitment. According to Price & Mueller (1981) and Keller & Semmer (2013) job satisfaction is the variable that most influences turnover, and since salary is one of the organizational factors that most influences job satisfaction, it will consequently be one of the factors that will most influence the departure of a collaborator. In other words, if an employee feels they are being paid inadequately, they will have a lower rate of job satisfaction and a greater likelihood of wanting to leave the company. This is observable in the present study since the reason for leaving employees most often mentioned in the interview, whether in the first question “1. Please indicate the main reason/s for departure.” or in the second “2. Of all the reasons mentioned, which one weighed the most in your decision?”, it was actually the salary with 16% indicating it as being the main reason for departure as it can be observed in the figure 3. Leadership is another organizational factor and, according to other authors, that most influences worker satisfaction is leadership (Porter et al. 1973); (Keller & Semmer, 2013). In the present study, it is possible to verify that the second main reason for the departure of employees is leadership, with 11%. Also, a very recent study, that used exit interviews as a

resource to understand why employees leave their companies, the reasons mentioned are: the pay, and management problems (Maertz et al., 2022).

For other authors, such as Cotton & Tuttle (1986), turnover is strongly related to individual characteristics. According to the author, age appears as a variable strongly related to turnover, as younger workers leave companies more than older ones. In the present study, it is also verified that the age group has an impact on turnover, since 34% of workers who left their jobs are between 21 and 30 years old and 44% between 31 and 40 years old. Seniority also emerges as a strong antecedent of turnover. Chan Yin-Fah et al. (2010) states that the turnover is lower, the higher the employee's seniority. This author explains that seniority is associated with more years of experience, which leads to better professional performance and automatically to greater job satisfaction, so these workers are more committed to the organization. This is in line with the theory by Murray et al., (2015) that continuance commitment is associated with workers not leaving their company, since older workers are usually better paid, and because they do not want to lose the time and effort they invested in the organization. In this study, this is also verified, since 55% of the employees who left the company were in the company for 1 year or less and 31% were in the company between 2 and 5 years. It is actually observed that the greater the seniority of an employee, the lower the turnover, and as it can be noticed in the table 2, only 5% of employees, of the sample of this study, left their company with more than 10 years of seniority. All this is in line with the theory of Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972 that age, seniority and job satisfaction are negatively associated with turnover, but positively associated with organizational commitment. That is, the more age, seniority and job satisfaction (higher salary and better leadership, for example) the lower the turnover and the higher the organizational commitment. These conclusions may not represent the total universe since, on the one hand, the sample is not representative as I mentioned

earlier, and on the other hand, the exit interview was not structured in such a way that commitment could be tested.

It was known from the literature that personal factors such as age, seniority and gender influence turnover, but in this study, I tried to understand if these also influence the reasons why employees leave the organization. Then, It was possible to verify in table 4 and 5 that the age group affects the exits for reasons of leadership, but it did not affect the exits for reasons of salary or geographic location. This means that departures for reasons of salary or location are transversal to all ages. On the other hand, departures for leadership reasons were more pointed out by employees over 50 than by other age groups. In terms of seniority, there are no major discrepancies, which means that departures for reasons of salary, leadership and location were pointed out by people of all levels of seniority. Regarding gender, it was found that men, on average, leave organizations more because of salary than women, although this is not very significant. The same is true of leadership. On the other hand, in terms of geographical location, there are no differences, which means that both men and women, on average, leave equally because of this reason.

## 4.2. Recommendations

One of the main objectives of managers is to retain talent, that is, their best employees, as they are the only company resources that become difficult for competitors to imitate (Huselid et al., 1997). For this, they need to reduce turnover rates, because with such high turnover rates, it is likely that a lot of talent will be wasted and will constitute a competitive advantage for the competitors that keep them. In order to reduce turnover rates and all the costs associated with this process, managers have been increasingly concerned about understanding why their employees leave the company and what they can do to predict and avoid this situation (Gioia & Catalano, 2011). Some authors

consider exit interviews to be a powerful tool in the analysis of turnover (Mok & Luk, 1995). Managers must first outline what information they want to obtain in order to better structure the interview and after having useful data to analyse. Subsequently, it is essential that managers act on the exit interviews, that is, that they analyse them and do something to change what is wrong, because if this does not happen, they are just wasting time and money on the interviews. In addition, if after exit interviews managers do nothing to change what the employees who left point out as problems, this will generate more job dissatisfaction for the employees who stay and even an increase in turnover (Gioia & Catalano, 2011).

Therefore, in this specific case study it is necessary for managers to review the salary compensations, as it is the main reason for leaving and pointed out for all age groups, gender and seniority groups. It would also be important for managers to make anonymous questionnaires to understand what are the problems that exist in relation to managers, since this topic was the second most mentioned as the main reason for employees to leave, for all seniority groups, but in particular by employees over 50 years old. It would also be important to review human resources management action strategies for these ages, creating leadership policies tailored to these groups. Regarding geographic location, the only way to reduce departures for this reason is at the time of recruitment. Since it has already been realized that the fact that the employee's area of residence is far from the units of this hospital becomes an obstacle, managers should keep in mind when recruiting and selecting people with residences closer to the unit. For the other reasons for leaving, it is also necessary to understand if there is anything the organization can do to somehow minimize these effects.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the importance on why managers must be increasingly concerned with their employees' job satisfaction, and how this satisfaction can affect commitment and, consequently, the organization's turnover. The analysis of exit interviews was essential for the discovery of the reasons why workers left the organization, making it possible for managers to act on existing problems in the company in order to avoid possible talent losses in the future. This investigation approaches theoretical knowledge, to better understand the phenomena in the light of the literature.

It is concluded, therefore, that the salary is the main reason for employee departure, which is mentioned by all age groups, all seniority groups and by both genders. Leadership is the second main reason, pointed out more, on average, by employees over 50 years old. The third reason was geographic location, which was also mentioned, on average, by all groups.

These conclusions must be read taking into account the limitations of this study. As in all investigations and scientific studies, there are constraints or limitations during the process, and it is important to reflect on them and whether or not they can interfere with the results. In this study, one of the limitations identified was the limited access to turnover information in Portugal, what makes difficult to compare this results with other health services organization. Another limitation is the fact that the exit interviews were not structured based on a theoretical model, which makes it difficult to extract useful and in-depth information from the existing ones. However, the main limitation of this study is related to the size of the sample. Exit interviews are not mandatory, therefore it makes it impossible to access to all the reasons for employee voluntary turnover during 2020 and 2021, or at least access a considerable amount of exit interviews that would allow achieving a representative sample, which did not happen in this investigation.



Despite the limitations, this work identifies some practice implications. Accordingly, I suggest that management takes into account the results to develop new strategies for human resources management. On one hand, to review salary policies, on the other hand to act in management, in particular creating different leadership policies for each age group, and finally improving the selection and recruitment part, taking into account the geographical location of the candidates.

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# Attachments

|  | Shapiro-Wilk |     |       |
|--|--------------|-----|-------|
|  | Statistic    | df  | Sig.  |
| Work Place Environment                         | .169         | 154 | <.001 |
| Physical Psychological fatigue                 | .248         | 154 | <.001 |
| Workload                                       | .310         | 154 | <.001 |
| Leadership                                     | .350         | 154 | <.001 |
| New Project Challenge                          | .324         | 154 | <.001 |
| Job Demotivation                               | .211         | 154 | <.001 |
| Balance between Personal and Professional Life | .230         | 154 | <.001 |
| Working Schedule                               | .280         | 154 | <.001 |
| Geographic Location                            | .337         | 154 | <.001 |
| Insufficients Resources to Perform             | .211         | 154 | <.001 |
| Family Reasons                                 | .248         | 154 | <.001 |
| Career Opportunity                             | .230         | 154 | <.001 |
| Service/Work                                   | .090         | 154 | <.001 |
| Salary   | .484         | 154 | <.001 |
| Contractual Agreement                          | .169         | 154 | <.001 |

## NPar Tests

| Descriptive Statistics |     |      |                |         |         |      |                                 |      |
|------------------------|-----|------|----------------|---------|---------|------|---------------------------------|------|
|                        | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | 25th | Percentiles<br>50th<br>(Median) | 75th |
| Salary                 | 154 | .19  | .397           | 0       | 1       | .00  | .00                             | .00  |
| Leadership             | 154 | .10  | .306           | 0       | 1       | .00  | .00                             | .00  |
| Geographic location    | 154 | .10  | .297           | 0       | 1       | .00  | .00                             | .00  |
| Age Group              | 154 | 2.87 | .883           | 1       | 5       | 2.00 | 3.00                            | 3.00 |

## Kruskal-Wallis Test

| Ranks               |           |     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|
|                     | Age Group | N   | Mean Rank |
| Salary              | <21       | 3   | 62.50     |
|                     | 21-31     | 54  | 76.76     |
|                     | 31-40     | 65  | 79.08     |
|                     | 41-50     | 24  | 75.33     |
|                     | >51       | 8   | 81.75     |
|                     | Total     | 154 |           |
| Leadership          | <21       | 3   | 69.50     |
|                     | 21-31     | 54  | 72.35     |
|                     | 31-40     | 65  | 77.79     |
|                     | 41-50     | 24  | 82.33     |
|                     | >51       | 8   | 98.38     |
|                     | Total     | 154 |           |
| Geographic location | <21       | 3   | 70.00     |
|                     | 21-31     | 54  | 79.98     |
|                     | 31-40     | 65  | 77.11     |
|                     | 41-50     | 24  | 76.42     |
|                     | >51       | 8   | 70.00     |
|                     | Total     | 154 |           |

### Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>

|                  | Salary | Leadership | Geographic location |
|------------------|--------|------------|---------------------|
| Kruskal-Wallis H | 1.202  | 10.215     | 1.886               |
| df               | 4      | 4          | 4                   |
| Asymp. Sig.      | .878   | .037       | .757                |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age Group

### NPar Tests

#### Descriptive Statistics

|                        | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | Percentiles |               |      |
|------------------------|-----|------|----------------|---------|---------|-------------|---------------|------|
|                        |     |      |                |         |         | 25th        | 50th (Median) | 75th |
| Vencimento             | 154 | .19  | .397           | 0       | 1       | .00         | .00           | .00  |
| Chefia                 | 154 | .10  | .306           | 0       | 1       | .00         | .00           | .00  |
| Localização geográfica | 154 | .10  | .297           | 0       | 1       | .00         | .00           | .00  |
| Seniority              | 154 | 1.67 | .929           | 1       | 5       | 1.00        | 1.00          | 2.00 |

## Kruskal-Wallis Test

| Ranks                  |           |     |           |
|------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|
|                        | Seniority | N   | Mean Rank |
| Vencimento             | <=1       | 85  | 75.18     |
|                        | 2-5       | 48  | 81.75     |
|                        | 6-10      | 10  | 70.20     |
|                        | 11-15     | 9   | 79.61     |
|                        | >15       | 2   | 101.00    |
|                        | Total     | 154 |           |
| Chefia                 | <=1       | 85  | 78.56     |
|                        | 2-5       | 48  | 72.71     |
|                        | 6-10      | 10  | 84.90     |
|                        | 11-15     | 9   | 86.61     |
|                        | >15       | 2   | 69.50     |
|                        | Total     | 154 |           |
| Localização geográfica | <=1       | 85  | 74.53     |
|                        | 2-5       | 48  | 79.63     |
|                        | 6-10      | 10  | 93.10     |
|                        | 11-15     | 9   | 78.56     |
|                        | >15       | 2   | 70.00     |
|                        | Total     | 154 |           |

| Test Statistics <sup>a,b</sup> |            |        |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------|------------------------|
|                                | Vencimento | Chefia | Localização geográfica |
| Kruskal-Wallis H               | 3.206      | 4.716  | 6.715                  |
| df                             | 4          | 4      | 4                      |
| Asymp. Sig.                    | .524       | .318   | .152                   |

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Seniority

## T-Test

### Group Statistics

|                     | Gender | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|--------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Salary              | Male   | 42  | .26  | .445           | .069            |
|                     | Female | 112 | .17  | .377           | .036            |
| Leadership          | Male   | 42  | .14  | .354           | .055            |
|                     | Female | 112 | .09  | .286           | .027            |
| Geographic Location | Male   | 42  | .10  | .297           | .046            |
|                     | Female | 112 | .10  | .299           | .028            |

### Independent Samples Test

|                     |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |              |             |                 |                       |   |       |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
|                     |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Significance |             | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |       |
|                     |                             |   |      |                              |        | One-Sided p  | Two-Sided p |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper |
| Salary              | Equal variances assumed     | 5.853                                   | .017 | 1.286                        | 152    | .100         | .200        | .092            | .072                  | -.049                                     | .234  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 1.193                        | 64.320 | .119         | .237        | .092            | .077                  | -.062                                     | .247  |
| Leadership          | Equal variances assumed     | 3.584                                   | .060 | .967                         | 152    | .168         | .335        | .054            | .055                  | -.056                                     | .163  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | .878                         | 62.198 | .192         | .383        | .054            | .061                  | -.068                                     | .175  |
| Geographic Location | Equal variances assumed     | .012                                    | .912 | -.055                        | 152    | .478         | .956        | -.003           | .054                  | -.110                                     | .104  |
|                     | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -.055                        | 74.097 | .478         | .956        | -.003           | .054                  | -.110                                     | .104  |

### Independent Samples Effect Sizes

|                     |                    | Standardizer <sup>a</sup> | Point Estimate | 95% Confidence Interval |       |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
|                     |                    |                           |                | Lower                   | Upper |
| Salary              | Cohen's d          | .396                      | .233           | -.123                   | .588  |
|                     | Hedges' correction | .398                      | .232           | -.123                   | .585  |
|                     | Glass's delta      | .377                      | .245           | -.112                   | .600  |
| Leadership          | Cohen's d          | .306                      | .175           | -.180                   | .530  |
|                     | Hedges' correction | .308                      | .174           | -.180                   | .527  |
|                     | Glass's delta      | .286                      | .187           | -.169                   | .542  |
| Geographic Location | Cohen's d          | .298                      | -.010          | -.365                   | .345  |
|                     | Hedges' correction | .300                      | -.010          | -.363                   | .343  |
|                     | Glass's delta      | .299                      | -.010          | -.365                   | .345  |

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.  
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.  
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.  
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

