

## **Predicting Turnover Intention among Inbound Call Center Workers in the Philippines**

**Kim Audrey B. Ceblano, Bernardino C. Ofalia and Edward Jay M. Quinto\***

*School of Social Sciences and Education, Mapúa University, Intramuros, Manila,  
1002 Metro Manila, Philippines*

### **ABSTRACT**

The need to understand factors that predict turnover intention among call center workers is crucial and necessary to boost the performance, productivity and profitability of call centers. To identify the factors that initiate, sustain, and aggravate this behavior, the present study utilized a predictive design aimed at investigating turnover intention among call center agents within the call center industry in the Philippines. Self-report surveys were used to collect data drawn from 212 inbound call center agents in Metro Manila. Multiple regression was used to test whether job demands, job control, salary, burnout and social support predict turnover intention. The results indicated that three predictors accounted for 65% of the variance ( $R^2=0.43$ ,  $F(4,207) = 38.33$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The results of the regression indicated that job control ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), salary ( $\beta = -0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and burnout ( $\beta = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) predicted turnover intention. On the other hand, results for social support ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and job demands ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) were not significant. To examine whether other variables interacted with job demands and social support in predicting turnover intention, turnover intention scores were subjected in a three-way analysis of variance on two levels of job demands (high, low), two levels of social support (high, low), and two levels of job control (high, low). Main effect for job demands [ $F(1, 208)=14.744$ ,  $p=0.00$ ,  $\eta_p^2= 0.07$ ] was significant. The researchers discuss the practical implications and future research directions.

*Keywords:* turnover intention, call center agents, call center industry, job demands-resources model, social support

### **ARTICLE INFO**

*Article history:*

Received: 21 January 2018

Accepted: 27 August 2018

Published: 28 June 2019

*E-mail addresses:*

[kceblano@gmail.com](mailto:kceblano@gmail.com) (Kim Audrey B. Ceblano)

[bcofalia@mapua.edu.ph](mailto:bcofalia@mapua.edu.ph) (Bernardino C. Ofalia)

[ejmquinto@mapua.edu.ph](mailto:ejmquinto@mapua.edu.ph) (Edward Jay M. Quinto)

\* Corresponding author

## INTRODUCTION

Call centers have emerged as an organizational phenomenon, which has drawn increased research attention into the human element of the working environment. Despite being known as an efficient resource for organizations in handling customer relationship at a significantly lower cost, call center jobs are regarded as one of the most stressful careers across the globe which puts the employee at a high risk of strain because of the unique combination of emotional and psychological demands (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). Evidently, turnover continues to be one of the persistent problems in call center industries despite consistent global growth in numbers and therefore needs special attention (Sawyer et al., 2009).

Employee turnover intention can be disruptive for effective operational performance of knowledge-based industries like call centers due to the transfer of human capital; resulting in shortage of skillful workers and loss of business to competitors, and, above all, damage to the reputation of the company. The steady growth of turnover rates also entails high costing since companies make large investments on the recruitment, selection and training of new hires. Because of the important and serious implications of turnover, it has received substantial research attention from researchers who have focused on identifying and understanding its causes with particular emphasis on the human service industry.

A majority of existing studies on turnover intention have primarily focused on growth opportunities and fairness rewards

without considering the potential influence of emotional demands of the job and the role of psychosocial factors. To bridge the gap in the current literature, this paper explores the roots of intention to quit by expanding upon earlier conclusions and taking into account emotional demands as a determinant of turnover intention and the role of social support in buffering the influence of job-related variables on turnover intention.

This study contributes to human resource management research and occupational stress literature because it examines how interpersonal networks in a collectivistic culture can impact a worker's intention to quit. This study also adds to current understanding of turnover intention in the call center industry, where social support is perceived to be of primary importance among employees.

In this study, the researchers argue that interpersonal networks both inside and outside the organization, job demands, burnout and salary are related to the extent to which a call center employee harbors turnover intentions. Moreover, the researchers seek to replicate prior findings involving the call center working conditions by examining if job conditions in the call center setting are characterized by reduced control and decreased task complexity and skill variety, as has been revealed in previous studies.

The researchers envision that the findings may lead to improved understanding of the antecedents of turnover within the call center industry. Findings can guide the development of policies and procedures

that create better work environments that maximize opportunities for call center agent's buy-ins.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Development of Research Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model of Burnout is an alternative model of worker well-being that incorporates a wide range of working conditions into the analyses of organizations and employees (Demerouti et al., 2001). Even though every work setting may have specific predictor variables for well-being, these factors can generally be divided into two crucial dimensions: job demands and occupational resources.

Job demands are aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills. These are therefore linked to certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Job resources, on the other hand, are features of the job that facilitate positive outcomes ranging from, but not limited to achievement of goals, personal growth, learning and development.

The JD-R model suggests that job demands and occupational resources initiate two different psychological processes, which consequently determine organizational outcomes. When both job demands and resources are high, high strain and motivation are to be expected. When both are low, absence of strain and motivation is to be expected. This model provides plausible explanations as to why a worker may decide to leave a company.

Existing literature reported that the competitive environment in the workplace results in discrepancy in terms of job demands

and job resources. High job demands require additional effort to achieve work goals and therefore, exhaust employees' mental and physical resources. This leads to the depletion of energy of employees, resulting in strain known as the health impairment process. This imbalance has an immediate effect on employee engagement, which guides worker attachment to work.

In contrast, job resources foster employee engagement and mitigate the negative effect of job demands. Research suggest that job resources particularly have motivational potential when job demands are high (Aziz, 2009). Importantly, several studies have shown that job resources may buffer the impact of job demands on stress-reactions (Aziz, 2009, Yusof & Noor, 2010).

In this study, the researchers incorporated emotional demands to adapt to human service work since research showed the relevance of examining both emotional and psychological demands for jobs within the human service role (De Jonge et al., 2000).

### The Call Center Industry

Worker turnover continues to be a big challenge in the call center industry. Previous research had indicated that withdrawal tendencies were visible in occupations that combined a significant interpersonal element with high levels of role or job stress.

### Turnover Intent

Price (1977) defined job turnover as the withdrawal of employee from the current position to seek for another job in another organization. It is a cognitive indication of

the behavioural decision to actually quit (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008). It was adopted based on the fact that actual turnover is most significantly influenced by the intentions (Armitage & Connor, 2001). It is also a coping strategy for workers to get away from their current work situation (Petriglieri, 2011). Measuring the relationship between employee turnover and its predictors is very challenging due to the privacy and confidentiality issues of company records and unavailability of the respondents who leaves the organization. Because of this, intention to quit is being employed for most of the literature as an alternate and reliable means to measure actual turnover.

A large volume of literature examining turnover has established a strong negative effect on organizational performance and high cost, which is associated to the recruitment and selection of new hires, training and development due to replacement of tenured employees with inexperienced ones and overtime payments to reduce staffing shortages (Alexandrov et al., 2007). Losing highly skilled employees are problematic to organizations since it may greatly affect performance operations such as service delivery.

Hidden costs may include low morale of the remaining workers since they are left to suffer with additional work load and mandatory overtime caused by increased turnover, thereby creating a gap in the worker's resources which further leads to absenteeism amongst the remaining workers. It makes them develop a negative attitude towards their company. This observation

is confirmed by a study by Sparrow (1996) who reported that hardworking employees were more likely to be negatively affected by the increased work generated by inflated turnover.

### **Burnout**

A certain level of stimulation (i.e. job demands) is beneficial, but higher levels of job demands may turn into a stressor and subsequently lead to burnout. Hochschild (1983) claimed that burnout was one of the potential outcomes in performing emotional labor. It is a general term for chronic stress in the helping profession that describes how work environment alters a worker's true feelings about themselves and their job (Schwab, 1983).

Burnout is a risk factor in call centers since it has been recognized to be particularly prevailing in job conditions where constant human interaction is required in the job role (Milner et al., 2007). De Croon et al. (2004) suggested that feelings of burnout and frustration at work resulted to high likelihood of turnover and absenteeism. Certainly, in service-oriented positions, particularly call center jobs, both absenteeism and employee withdrawal are incredibly high (Dollard et al. 2003).

### **Job Demands and Job Control**

Whilst there are limited research available concerning call centers, supporting evidence on critical psychosocial risk factors that underlies employee turnover are growing. Stress has been identified as the main reason

behind such negative occupational outcomes as high turnover and absenteeism in the call center industry (James, 1998).

Call center jobs are regarded as one of the most stressful careers across the globe, which put the employee on a high risk of strain because of a unique combination of emotional and psychological demands (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003).

Although call center workers do not show visible facial and bodily gestures, they are required to perform emotional labor by managing their tone of voice, controlling their emotions and empathizing with difficult customers to successfully carry out their work role and maintain the organizational standard of quality service that is in accordance with the service-oriented value that the customer is always right (Lewig & Dollard, 2003).

Front line jobs just like that in a call center setting often feature Taylorism, which focuses on strict division of labor. The use of standardized information and script for effective and efficient service delivery frequently leads to a work environment with reduced job autonomy, and poor levels of job scope and employee discretion (Hutchinson et al., 2000).

Inbound jobs particularly create a work environment with reduced complexity, poor variability, and limited control since call duration was imposed (Isic et al., 1999). They reported that high levels of repetitiveness was one of the most frequently cited reasons for turnover among call center workers.

Excessive job demand from the management often results in stress, which is detrimental to employee welfare, has also been considered as an antecedent to high rates of employees' intention to quit and subsequently actual turnover (Karatepe et al., 2012; Yusof & Noor, 2010).

A study in the German context by Isic et al. (1999) which involved 250 call center agents from 14 different call centers revealed that call center agents reported greater psychosomatic complaints and poorer work situations relating to task variety and complexity and reduced job control controlling for gender, age and educational attainment.

Deery et al. (2002) suggested that monotony in the day-to-day task and the partly reduced autonomy of employees due to use of call flows and frequent usage of script, which was worsened by a lack of career growth, would definitely lead to the conclusion of quitting the job (Taylor & Bain, 1999).

### **Social Support**

Social support has been found to be a catalyst of sustaining specific psychological behaviors. The extant literature found social support to promote intention to donate blood (Jaafar et al., 2016) and to empower informal caregiving professionals (Aun & Mohd, 2016). In call centers, the case may not be very different. Call center industries have been seen as an exceptional workplace for social relationships despite their remote job nature. Call center agents belong to teams

which does not only operate to increase job efficiency but also serves as a great venue for workers to share knowledge and create groups for socializing during leisure time.

It is assumed that social support affects attitudinal outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction) and work-related outcomes (e.g. worker engagement, organizational commitment and turnover intentions) because it provides help and reduces uncertainty, anxiety and stress when workers are faced with problems and crises.

In occupational settings such as the service industry, where interaction can be intense, workers are likely to find support from their colleagues and the social setting in order to develop a feeling of control over their work. Perceived support, the thinking that help is available if needed, is believed to buffer against stress, by reducing the intensity to which work situations are perceived as threatening and by further increasing the use of effective coping strategies, which in turn reduces distress (Holahan et al., 1995).

Social support by supervisors and colleagues helps workers to appreciate their own value and competencies and enables them to cope with upcoming demands and difficult situations. This helps workers to maintain their motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The extended model argues that the most adverse consequence of highly demanding jobs on health and well-being was presumed to be more likely to jobs with reduced occupational control and poor social support.

## **Salary**

Salary is of obvious importance in the workplace in terms of satisfying an employee's economic needs. The company's reward system is a strategic tool for organizations to drive positive organizational outcomes; that is to align the interest of workers and management to motivate performance behaviors (Awang et al., 2013; Aziz, 2009; Lawler, 1971, 1990; Milkovich & Newman, 2008), making it critical for workers to feel satisfied with the salary.

Folger and Konovsky (1989) pointed out that salary level significantly affected an employee's organizational commitment, which in turn, had a significant effect on turnover intention. Levine (1993) indicated that employees with relatively higher salaries were less likely to quit, and their organizational commitment level was higher. Rosse and Miller (cited in Janssen et al. 1999) found that dissatisfaction with work-related aspects like salary, career growth and job content were particularly associated with increased turnover intention.

## **Statement of the Problem and Hypothesis**

One of the biggest challenges faced by call centers nowadays is the management of employee turnover. This research aims to examine the predictive power of the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R), and the role of social support on turnover intention among call center workers. This study seeks to address this question: 1. Does social support, job demands, salary, job



control and burnout predict turnover intent? The researchers hypothesize that highly demanding jobs, with low decision latitude, inadequate compensation, high levels of burnout, and minimal social support predict greater turnover intention.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The study used a predictive research design to evaluate underlying theories and causal links between the factors that contributed to turnover intention among inbound call center workers. This research design was found to be appropriate since the purpose was to test whether social support, job demands, salary, job control and burnout influence turnover intention.

### Participants and Sampling

Babakus et al. (1999) suggested that it was relevant to identify inbound agents from outbound workers since they might experience higher levels of work-related stress due to more repetitive tasks and poor autonomy. Given this, survey data were drawn from 212 inbound call center agents based in Metro Manila who were recruited from the largest call center company in the Philippines.

These workers handle incoming customer calls and are responsible for analyzing customer problems regarding credit card bills, reservations, technical support and other company products and services. Quota sampling technique was employed to collect the data. In this study,

respondents were predominantly females (63.68%) combined with males (36.32%), coming from customer service (58.02%), sales (28.30%), technical support (8.96%) and others (4.72%).

### Measures

Quantitative data were collected through online survey instrument. The survey instrument contained four sections namely sections A, B, C, and D which comprised job demands-resources questions, pay satisfaction questions, burnout questions and turnover intention questions respectively.

**Iso-Strain Scale.** The researchers developed an Iso-Strain Scale used to measure job demands, job control and social support. The test takers were asked to rate how much each of the items is true for them about their job role. Each items were rated on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 'not at all true' (1) to 'very true' (5). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were acceptable for the global score ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ). Cronbach's alpha for the three constructs were 0.79 for job control, 0.72 for job demands and 0.90 for social support.

Job demands, consisting of 10 items, was measured by two types of job-related aspects: quantitative demands and emotional demands. Job demands (e.g. "My job requires frequent overtime") were the environmental stressors, including the pacing of work, time pressures and difficult unexpected work tasks, while emotional demands (e.g. "I display emotions I don't really feel for work") were operationalized

in terms of emotional labor or the extent to which a worker has to display particular emotions in accordance with job requirement and the worker's exposure to emotionally demanding situations.

Job control was measured by 10 items focused on two aspects: skill discretion (e.g. "I do the same tasks every day") and decision authority (e.g. "I can freely use personal judgment at work"). It was operationalized as worker's execution of tasks and the degree to which he can exert potential control or influence over the task.

Social support was assessed using 17 items and included emotional and instrumental support provided to the worker by his co-workers (e.g. "I get to share meaningful conversations once in a while with my workmates"), supervisor (e.g. "My supervisor provides regular feedback of my performance") and family (e.g. "My family has been there for me whenever I feel down because of work").

**Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).** Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. It adopted a Likert-type scale ranging from 'never' (0) to 'daily' (6). It included a total of 22 items representing emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items), and reduced personal accomplishment (8 items). Cronbach's alpha for the three dimensions are as follows: 0.88 for emotional exhaustion, 0.78 for depersonalization and 0.81 for personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

**Pay Satisfaction Scale.** The Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ) developed by Heneman III and Schwab (1985) was adapted to measure salary satisfaction. It adopted a Likert-type scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). It included a total of 12 items representing pay level and pay raises with the reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) = .89.

**Turnover Intent Scale (TIS).** This study utilized a self-report questionnaire to measure turnover intention since previous literature suggested that it is the best predictor of actual turnover (Houkes et al., 2001). Greater scores on the turnover intention scale would indicate higher intention to quit current employer. Turnover intention was assessed using the 15-item questionnaire of Jacobs and Roodt (2008) which demonstrated a reliability of Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.91. To improve the reliability of responses, turnover intention was measured after the suggested timeframe of six-month period (Muliawan et al., 2009) after being hired for the position.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the variables studied was involved descriptive and inferential statistics. The researchers performed multiple linear regression analysis to determine if job demands, job control, salary, burnout, and social support predict turnover intention.

To test the hypothesis, an online survey was conducted, from which the researchers drew conclusions via descriptive and inferential statistics. Data from the survey



was analyzed through multiple correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and three-way ANOVA. Before analysis, data were carefully scrutinized through data screening, and missing values were treated using the mean scores.

## RESULTS

### Job Demands, Job Control, Salary, Social Support and Burnout as Predictors of Turnover Intention

Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The independent variables (social support, job demands, job control, salary and burnout) were regressed to the dependent variable (turnover intentions).

Table 1 summarizes the results of the regression analysis. The results indicated that the predictors explain 65% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.43$ ,  $F(4, 207) = 38.33$ ,

Table 1  
*Regression for social support, job demands, job control, salary, burnout and turnover intention*

Regression Statistics				
Multiple R				0.65
R Square				0.43
Adjusted R Square				0.41
Standard Error				0.82
Observations				212
	Beta	B	T	p-level
SS	0.05	0.09	0.74	0.46
JD	0.35	-0.12	-0.93	0.06
JC	0.16	0.23	2.05	0.04*
Salary	-0.16	-0.19	-2.57	0.01*
Burnout	0.66	0.8	9.06	0.00*

Note: \* $p < 0.05$

$p < 0.01$ ). Findings indicate that job control ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), salary ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and burnout ( $\beta = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) predicted turnover intention. On the other hand, social support ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and job demands ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) do not show significance as predictors at 0.05 level.

### Examining the Interaction Effect of Job Demands-Control-Support Model

To examine if another variable interacts with the insignificant predictor variables (job demands and social support) in determining turnover intention, turnover scores were subjected to a three-way analysis of variance having two levels of job demands (high, low), two levels of social support (high, low) and two levels of job control (high, low).

Main effect was analyzed first to determine if job demands, social support, and job control are associated with the outcome variable, turnover intention.

Table 2 shows that the main effect for job demands [ $F(1, 208) = 14.744$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.07$ ] was significant. On the other hand, main effect for social support [ $F(1, 208) = 0.97044$ ,  $p = 0.33$ ] and job control towards turnover intention was found to be insignificant [ $F(1, 208) = 3.2361$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ].

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between job demands and turnover intention, showing that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Turnover intention was higher among respondents who had high job demands whereas, low turnover intention was observed among respondents who had low job demands. Table 3 shows the results for the interaction

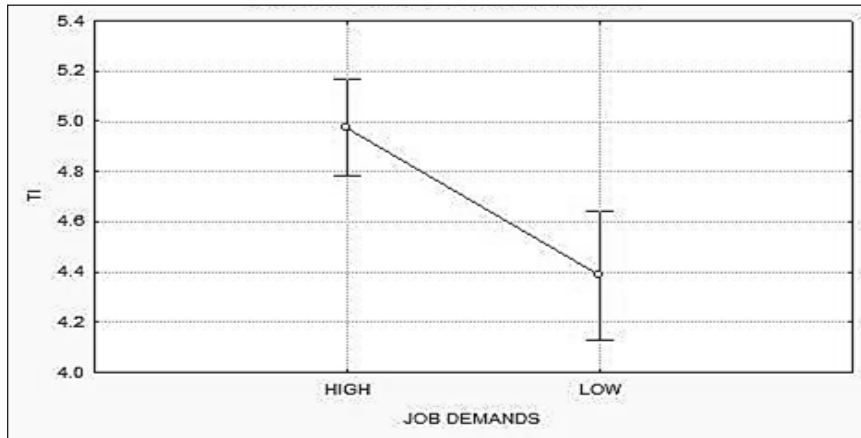


Figure 1. Relationship between job demands and turnover intent

Table 2  
Results for the main effects of the predictor variables to the outcome variable

	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
Intercept	3120.79	1.00	3120.79	2968.75	0.00	0.93
SS	1.02	1.00	1.02	0.97	0.33	0.00
JD	15.50	1.00	15.50	14.74	0.00*	0.07
JC	3.40	1.00	3.40	3.24	0.07	0.02
Error	218.65	208.00	1.05			

Note: \*p<0.05

Table 3  
Interaction of job demands, job control and social support towards turnover intention

Variables	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
	2578.47	1.00	2578.47	2687.73	0.00	0.93
SS	2.48	1.00	2.48	2.59	0.11	0.01
JD	2.03	1.00	2.03	2.11	0.15	0.01
JC	6.06	1.00	6.06	6.32	0.01*	0.03
SS*JD	7.02	1.00	7.02	7.32	0.01*	0.03
SS*JC	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.98	0.00
JD*JC	6.24	1.00	6.24	6.50	0.01*	0.03
SS*JD*JC	0.43	1.00	0.43	0.45	0.50	0.00
Error	195.71	204.00	0.96			

Note: \*p<0.05

effects of job demands, job control and social support towards turnover intention.

The interaction effect for job demands and social support [Current effect: [F(1, 204)=7.3226, p=0.01], along with the joint

effect of job demands and job control was shown to be significant, [F(1, 204)=6.50, p=0.01,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$ ].

Figure 2 suggests that individuals with high autonomy and low level of job demands

reported reduced turnover intention. On the other hand, combination of high and low demands with reduced control resulted in high turnover. Contrary to prediction, workers in highly demanding jobs scored high on turnover intention despite increased in job control.

Figure 3 shows the interaction between social support and job demands, indicating that respondents who had high and low level

of job demands combined with reduced social support were associated with greater turnover intention. Meanwhile, respondents who had low job demands and increased social support were associated with low intentions to quit. Surprisingly, respondents with increased job demands, despite having high social support reported high turnover intention.

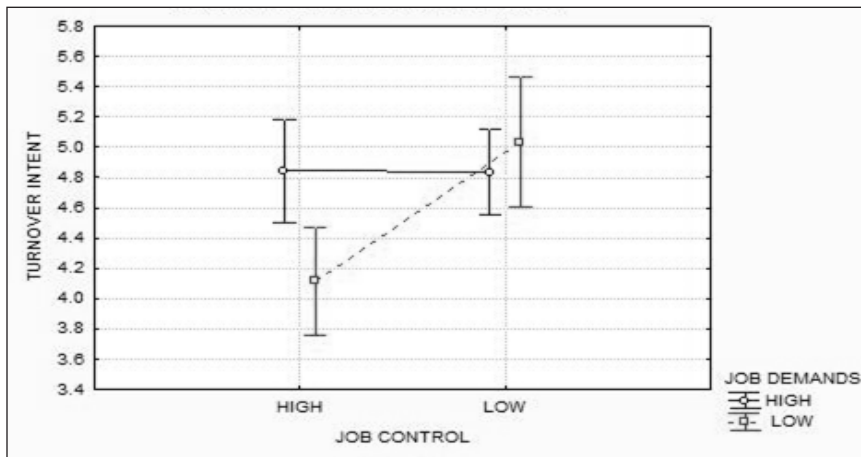


Figure 2. Interaction between job control and job demands towards turnover intent

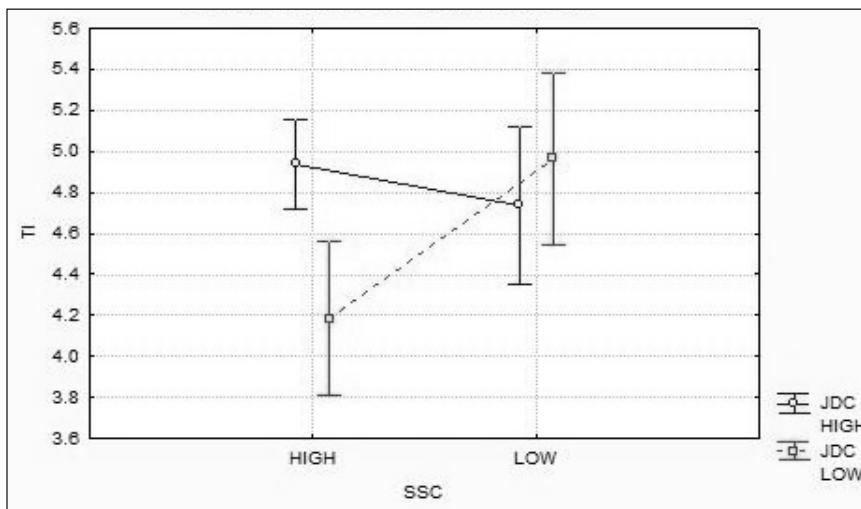


Figure 3. Interaction between social support and job demands towards turnover intent

## DISCUSSION

Employee turnover intention can be disruptive for effective operational performance of knowledge-based industries like call centers. Since then, studies sought to uncover and resolve this problem. The present study examined whether social support, job demands, job control, salary and burnout predict turnover intentions among inbound call center workers by employing the Job-Demands-Resources model as theoretical background, an extended model of Job-Demands-Support model.

### **Regression of Social Support, Job Demands, Job Control, Salary and Burnout to Turnover Intention**

Results revealed that salary, job control and burnout predict turnover intention among inbound call center workers. Indeed, salary affected worker's attitude and behavior towards job as posited by Folger and Konovsky (1989) who explained that salary significantly affected the worker's organizational commitment, thereby, influencing turnover intention. Nowadays, the common trend in the call center industry among agents is to leave their jobs, and transfer to another company for better pay. Levine (1993) also affirmed the findings that employees with relatively greater pay were less likely to quit, and their organizational commitment level was higher. Rosse and Miller (cited in Janssen et al. 1999) found that dissatisfaction with job related aspects like salary, career growth and job content were associated with increased turnover intention.

Existing literature have confirmed that call center jobs are regarded as one of the most stressful jobs across the globe because of a unique combination of emotional and psychological demands (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). They are repeatedly exposed to work overload; and although they may not need to show visible facial and bodily gestures, they are required to perform emotional labor by controlling their emotions, managing their tone of voice, and empathizing with difficult customers to successfully carry out their work role and maintain the organizational standard of quality service that is in accordance with the service-oriented value that customer is always right (Lewig & Dollard, 2003).

Hochschild (1983) claimed that burnout was one of the potential outcomes in performing emotional labor. De Croon et al. (2004) suggested that feelings of burnout and frustration at work results in high likelihood of turnover and absenteeism. Certainly, in service-oriented positions particularly call center jobs, both absenteeism and employee withdrawal are incredibly high (Dollard et al., 2003).

Existing literature also demonstrated that job autonomy leads to positive employee attitudinal outcomes (Parker & Wall, 1998). Job control is the degree to which the job provides substantial discretion over various job aspects. Inbound jobs particularly create a work environment with reduced complexity, poor variability, and limited control since call duration was imposed (Isic et al., 1999). Lack of job autonomy puts upward pressure to anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout resulting to reduced

organization commitment. This means that if a worker is given less freedom to complete a task according to his preferred method, the emotional exhaustion tends to be higher, thus, results to calling it a quits among call center workers.

### **The Job Demand-Control Model and the Job Demand-Control-Support Model**

The Job Demand-Control model postulated that high job demands combined with reduced job control produced job strain. Karasek's (1979) model hypothesized that the most unfavorable consequence of occupational strain were present on highly demanding jobs with limited work control. Known as the strain hypothesis, job control prevents or buffers the negative outcome of overwhelming work demands on well-being.

With the realization that occupational social support may facilitate achievement of work goals and may assist in the coping of job demands, the model was further enriched by Johnson and Hall (1988) with the inclusion of social resource dimension. The buffer hypothesis model argued that the highest risk of poor health and wellbeing were expected on highly demanding jobs with low social support.

### **Interaction Effects between Job Demands and Social Support**

As shown in the results of the multiple regression, highly demanding job conditions did not by itself gave rise to turnover intention unless put together with minimal

social relations which can then trigger off intent to quit as revealed by the results of the analysis of variance.

The findings demonstrated that social support and job demands interact to affect turnover intention and the strength of their association is more powerful for individuals with minimal social support available (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Three of the interactions found were in the expected direction - high turnover was brought about by low social support combined with either high or low job demands and low turnover ensued from increased social support with minimal job demands.

In the current study, results affirmed that social support buffer hypothesis for combinations of reduced job demands and both levels of social support, thereby, confirming that the absence of social support greatly affects work demands in predicting turnover intention. Results suggested that social support has different effects on high and low levels of job demands.

The fourth combination, however, was found to be contrary to predictions. Results from the sample of inbound call center workers described a situation in which favorable social support intensified turnover intention, particularly when the job demands are high.

Surprisingly, instead of protecting individuals from the strains, social support actually strengthened these strains. This conclusion seemed to conform Beehr's (1985) belief of reverse buffering, in which high levels of social support may lead to a positive relationship between job stressors and individual strains.

Reverse buffering suggested that social support may not act to buffer the effects of job stressors on individuals. It argued that social support received may not mitigate the negative impact of job stressors, but may even worsen these harmful consequences on individuals.

Moreover, it was pointed by Kaufmann and Beehr (1986) that the content of the supportive communication might play a significant part in identifying the nature of the buffering effects. They argued that, although positive supportive communications might reduce strain, communication of a negative nature might operate to intensify strain. For example, communication from colleagues may persuade the individual that things are as bad as or even worse than they seem since support providers validates the authenticity of the stressed employee's bad feelings towards the discriminating organization, thereby, increasing the negative feelings of the worker (LaRocco et al., 1980).

As reported, social support may be advantageous to a worker, but this may not hold true at all times. In some cases, it played a damaging role to individual well-being depending on its appropriateness. Findings suggest specific conditions under which each kind of effect is likely to be observed.

### **Interaction Effects between Job Demands and Job Control**

The results of the multiple regression analysis also revealed that job demands alone cannot predict turnover intention. Previous studies established that job demands are not

necessarily negative but eventually may turn to be an occupational stressor particularly when completing work demands require an individual to apply high effort which exhausts employees' mental and physical resources (Bakker et al., 2003). This in turn, leads to the reduction of energy of the worker which guides attitudinal outcome. This is in line with previous literature arguing that too much challenge caused by increased job demands may transform stressor to burnout particularly if combined by reduced job autonomy (Demerouti et al., 2001).

### **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study among inbound call center workers in the Philippines showed that job control, salary and burnout predicted turnover intention. It can be inferred that the high likelihood of turnover intention among inbound call center workers can be attributed to uncompetitive salary, increased feelings of burnout and poor job control.

The study revealed that highly demanding job conditions itself did not inflate turnover intention unless put together with minimal social relations which can then trigger off the decision. As reported, social support may be advantageous to a worker, but this may not hold true at all times. In some cases, it played a damaging role to individual well-being depending on its appropriateness.

Furthermore, the study found that job demands are not necessarily negative but eventually may turn to occupational



stressors, affecting intent to quit among workers, if combined with poor job control. Combination of increased job demands, and lack of job autonomy put upward pressure to turnover intention among inbound call center workers. This means that giving inbound call center workers less freedom to complete a highly demanding task according to their preferred method is likely to inflate their intent to quit the job.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Practical Implications**

Critical assessment of the current study has practical value as it helps the call center industry understand what particular factors initiate, sustain and aggravate turnover intention among call center workers.

Interventions may primarily be directed at the work situation or the coping capacity of employees to reduce burnout. Job demands can be addressed at an organizational level through group meetings that foster the search for more efficient and effective methods of working to improve skills and performance.

Workplace practices should be aimed at eliminating, reducing, or transforming stressors through work redesign; that is, by improving skill content and task variation and increasing employee involvement in decision-making. The management can reduce the use of scripts, give employees more control over their schedules and break times, and involve employees in the design and review of performance targets.

Moreover, the management should increase the practices of performance-reward system in the future to inculcate performance culture and promote a more supportive climate. The company could also establish an internal promotion policy for job enrichment to facilitate challenging and interesting work.

### **Academic Implications**

Studies of the “matches” between workers needs and support received and the negative effects of social relationships and of support giving. Research efforts should also focus on the various types of positive and negative social interactions and how these may vary across age-groups. Future studies should refine theoretical models that guide how different sources of support can be matched with particular stressors and strains.

Personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, tenure) should be further explored. This may provide meaningful perspectives of how individual similarities and differences affect turnover intention.

Other research designs should be used to collect data and describe the patterns of change and the direction and magnitude of causal relationships between variables of interest. Future studies may employ an explanatory sequential mixed-method design that will analyze and integrate data on two levels, first using quantitative method followed by qualitative approach to gain a better understanding and fully capture the work elements in call center agent’s decision to leave their job.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to express their gratitude to the blind reviewers whose criticisms and suggestions vastly improved this paper's conceptual soundness. The authors also wish to thank Dr. Jonathan V. Macayan, Dean of Mapúa University's School of Social Sciences and Education, for his invaluable assistance in the quantitative analysis of data and, importantly, his thought-provoking comments on the initial draft that allowed the authors to proceed with greater theoretical clarity. Heartfelt thanks also go to Prof. Jasmine Nadja J. Pinugu, for the moral support on this project and her helpful insights on the paper. Finally, the authors thank every call center worker who participated in this study, without whose generous provision of time and effort, this work would not have been possible.

## REFERENCES

- Alexandrov, A., Babakus, E., & Yavas, U. (2007). The effects of perceived management concern for frontline employees and customers on turnover intentions moderating role of employment status. *Journal of Service Research*, 9(4), 356-371.
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 471-499.
- Aun, N, S. M., & Mohd, R. H. (2016). Informal caregiving: Empowering social support programs by employers. *Akademika*, 86(1), 3-9.
- Awang, A. H., Ibrahim, I., Hussain, M. Y., Ramli, Z., & Lyndon, N. (2013). Quality and job performance of community college graduates: Urban Employers Assessment. *Akademika*, 83(1), 65-76.
- Aziz, S. F. A. (2009). Relationship of quality of work life with tendency for turnover: A study among workers at Celestica factory, Johor Bahru. *Akademika*, 76, 105-119.
- Babakus, E., Cravens, D.-W., Johnston, M., & Moncrief, W. C. (1999). The role of emotional exhaustion in sales force attitude and behavior relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences*, 27(1), 58-70.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22, 309-328.
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Shaufeli, W. B. (2003). Dual processes at work in a call center: An application of the job demands-resources model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 12(4), 393-417.
- Beehr, T. A. (1985). The role of social support in coping with organizational stress. In T. A. Beehr & R. S. Bhagat (Eds.), *Human stress and cognition in organizations*. New York, USA: John Wiley and Sons.
- De Croon, E. M., Sluiter, J. K., Blonk, R. W. B., Broersen, J. P. J., & Frings-Dresen, M. H. W. (2004). Stressful work, psychological job strain, and turnover: A 2-year prospective cohort study of truck drivers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 442-454.
- Deery, S., Iverson, R., & Walsh, J. (2002). Work relationships in telephone call centres: Understanding emotional exhaustion and employee withdrawal. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(4), 471-496.
- De Jonge, J., Dollard, M. F., Dormann, C., Le Blanc, P. M., & Houtman, I. L. (2000). The demand-control model: Specific demands, specific

- control, and well-defined groups. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 7(4), 269-287.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands–resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 499-512.
- Dollard M. F., Dormann, C., Boyd, C. M., Winefield, H. R., & Winefield, A. H. (2003). Unique aspects of stress in human service work. *Australian Psychologist*, 38(2), 84-91. doi:10.1080/0005060310001707087
- Heneman III, H. G., & Schwab, D. P. (1985). Pay satisfaction: Its multi-dimensional nature and measurement. *International Journal of Psychology*, 20, 129-141.
- Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, USA: University of California Press.
- Holahan, C. J., Valentiner, D. P., & Moos, R. H. (1995). Parental support, coping strategies, and psychological adjustment: An integrative model with late adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24(6), 633-648.
- Holdsworth, L., & Cartwright, S. (2003). Empowerment, stress and satisfaction: An exploratory study of a Call center. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 24(3), 131-140.
- Houkes, I., Janssen, P. P. M., de Jonge, J., & Nijhuis, F. J. N. (2001). Specific relationships between work characteristics and intrinsic work motivation, burnout and turnover intention: A multi-sample analysis. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(1), 1-23. doi: 10.1080/13594320042000007
- Hutchinson, S., Purcell, J., & Kinnie, N. (2000). The challenge of the call centre. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 8(5), 4-7.
- Isic, A., Dormann, C., & Zapf, D. (1999). Belastungen und ressourcen an call center arbeitsplätzen [Job stressors and resources among call center employees]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeitswissenschaft*, 53, 202-208.
- Jaafar, J. R., Chong, S. T., Desa, A., Alavi, K., & Kam, W. S. (2016). Patterns of social support and the intention to donate blood among blood donors. *Akademika*, 86(1), 43-53.
- Jacobs, E., & Roodt, G. (2008). Organisational culture of hospitals to predict turnover intentions of professional nurses. *Health SA Gesondheid*, 13(1), 63-78.
- James, D. (1998). Stress takes its toll at call centers. *Business Review Weekly*, 20, 87-89.
- Janssen, P. P. M., De Jonge, J., & Bakker, A. B. (1999). Specific determinants of intrinsic work motivation, burnout and turnover intentions: A study among nurses. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 29, 1360-1369.
- Johnson, J. V., & Hall, E. M. (1988). Job strain, work place social support, and cardiovascular disease: A cross-sectional study of a random sample of the Swedish working population. *American Journal of Public Health*, 78(10), 1336-1342.
- Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 285-308.
- Karasek, R. A., & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work: Stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life*. New York, USA: Basic Books.
- Karatepe, O. M., Babakus, E., & Yavas, Y. (2012). Affectivity and organizational politics and antecedents of burnout among frontline hotel employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31, 66-75.
- Kaufmann, G. M., & Beehr, T. A. (1986). Interactions between job stressors and social support: Some counterintuitive results. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 522-526. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.71.3.522

- LaRocco, J. M., House, J. S., & French, J. R. P. (1980). Social support, occupational stress, and health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *21*, 202-218.
- Lawler, E. E. (1971). Compensating the new life-style-workers. *Personnel*, *48*, 19-25.
- Lawler, E. E. (1990). Achieving competitiveness by creating new organization cultures and structures. In D. B. Fishman & C. Cherniss (Eds.), *The human side of corporate competitiveness* (pp. 69-101). Newbury Park, USA: Sage.
- Lewig, K. A., & Dollard, M. F. (2003). Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call center workers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *12*, 366-392.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1986). *Maslach burnout inventory manual* (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, USA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Milkovich, G. T., & Newman, J. M. (2008). *Compensation* (9th ed.). New York, USA: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.
- Milner, K., Fisher, J., & Latif, J. (2007). Perceptions of electronic performance monitoring and burnout in a South African call center. *Ergonomics SA*, *19*(2), 31-41.
- Muliawan, A. D., Green, P. F., & Robb, D. A. (2009). The turnover intentions of information systems auditors. *International Journal of Accounting Information Systems*, *10*(3), 117-136. doi: 10.1016/j.accinf.2009.03.001.
- Parker, S. K., & Wall, T. D. (1998). *Job and work design: Organizing work to promote well-being and effectiveness*. Thousand Oaks, USA: Sage.
- Petriglieri, G. (2011). Identity workspaces for leadership development. In S. Snook, N. Nohria, & R. Khurana (Eds.), *The handbook for teaching leadership*. Thousand Oaks, USA: SAGE.
- Price, J. L. (1977). *The study of turnover*. Ames, USA: Iowa State University Press.
- Sawyerr, O. O., Srinivas, S., & Wang, S. (2009). Call center employee personality factors and service performance. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *23*(5), 301-317.
- Schwab, R. L. (1983). Teacher burnout: Moving beyond psychobabble. *Theory into Practice*, *22*(1), 21-27.
- Sparrow, P. R. (1996). Transitions in the psychological contract: Some evidence from the banking sector. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *6*(4), 75-92.
- Taylor, P., & Bain, P. (1999). 'An assembly line in the head': Work and employee relations in the call center. *Industrial Relations Journal*, *30*(2), 101-117.
- Yusof, Z. M., & Noor, N. M. (2010). Conflict and role ambiguity among information technology personnel in army services in Malaysia. *Akademika*, *78*, 59-66.