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CRACKING THE CODE: UNRAVELING THE SHORTAGE IN U.S. LAW
ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONS.

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DEDICATION

To my two extraordinary daughters, Avalina Glover and Zarah Monika Dacius, whose love, resilience, and light have been a constant source of inspiration throughout this journey. To my unwavering pillar of strength, my mother, Monika Germain Dacius, whose boundless support, selfless sacrifices, and steadfast belief in my aspirations have propelled me forward in moments of doubt and triumph alike. Your encouragement and love are immeasurable and unparalleled.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

CRACKING THE CODE: UNRAVELING THE SHORTAGE IN U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONS.

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With increasing retirement rates and decreasing recruiting rates, the United States is facing a shortage in law enforcement. From a CBS report in November 2022, the police force is down three percent in 2021 from 2019 in the number of new police officer hirings according to a national survey earlier this year from the Police Executive Research Forum. The Police Executive Research Forum (2021) found that there were 23.6% more retirements among law enforcement in 2021 compared to 2019. There were also 42.7% more resignations among law enforcement in 2021 compared to 2019. In this forever-changing working industry, law enforcement organizations find it challenging to retain and hire talents. The challenge resides in implementing retention strategies while the employee turnover rate is still increasing. Consequently, organizations struggle to provide a sense of belonging to employees where they feel subject to the mercy of the employee's intent. This condition has a significant negative impact on costs related to training, recruiting, and work productivity. Even after investing in these retention

strategies, organizations still cannot remedy the factors leading to the “snap” (employee intention to leave or quit). Most importantly, they need to understand the factors brewing before the snap. The question to understand the police shortage becomes – What are the key factors impacting the police turnover intention in the United States?

This study found that career development significantly influences turnover intention both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. While professional growth can enhance job attitudes and reduce burnout, it may also increase the likelihood of departure as employees become more marketable. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were found to be key protective factors, significantly decreasing both turnover intention and burnout. These findings underscore the importance of integrated retention strategies that foster employee development while reinforcing organizational attachment and emotional well-being.

Keywords: law enforcement, employee turnover intention, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career development, work burnout, job embeddedness theory

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPHOTHESES FORMULATION	7
Employee Turnover Intention (TI)	7
Work Burnout (WB)	9
Career Development (CD)	11
Job Satisfaction (JS)	13
Organizational Commitment (OC)	15
Perceived Job Alternatives (PA)	18
Theoretical Foundation: Job Embeddedness	23
Hypotheses Development	27
III. RESEARCH MODEL AND CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS	34
IV. METHODOLOGY	38
Unit of Analysis	38
Sample Population	38
Research Instrument	39
Informed Pilot	39
Data Collection	40
Measures	40
Control Variables	42
V. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	43
Demographic Information	43
Cronbach's Alpha Analysis	44
Descriptive Statistics and Test of Normality	47
Sobel Test Results	56
VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	59
Implications	59
Theoretical contribution	59
Limitations	66
Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research	67
VII. REFERENCES	73
VIII. APPENDICES	83
IX. VITA	94

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 1. Variable Definitions	34
Table 2: Demographic – Main Study: Sample (N) = 305	43
Table 3: Cronbach’s Alpha Analysis	44
Table 4: Descriptive Statistics.....	47
Table 5: Test of Normality	48
Table 6: Correlation Table.....	48
Table 7: Hypothesis Outcome.....	53
Table 8: Sobel Test Results	57

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

C	Controls
CD	Career Development
DV	Dependent Variables
IV	Independent Variables
JS	Job Satisfaction
M	Mediator
N	Sample Size
OC	Organizational Commitment
PA	Perceived Job Alternatives
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TI	Employee Turnover Intention
WB	Work Burnout

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and demanding workforce, turnover intention within the police force has emerged as a significant challenge that threatens the very core of law enforcement agencies' commitment to their communities. The loss of talent within these agencies can disrupt productivity, erode organizational culture, tarnish the agency's brand, and deplete valuable resources (Hilal et al, 2024). Addressing turnover intention is critical; however, it is equally essential to understand the underlying factors that influence this phenomenon. The complex interplay of factors contributing to employees' intentions to leave positions in security protection and high-threat professions necessitates a deeper exploration to develop effective retention strategies.

Turnover intention, often described as the precursor to an employee's voluntary or involuntary departure, is a crucial element in understanding workforce dynamics. Organizations globally recognize their pivotal role in predicting actual employee shortages, thereby highlighting the need to investigate the complexities surrounding turnover intention (Hom et al, 2017). This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of turnover intention, investigate its root causes, examine its profound impacts on law enforcement, and ultimately recommend strategies that organizations can adopt to mitigate its adverse effects. By examining the multifaceted factors contributing to turnover intention, this study seeks to equip leaders and human resource professionals with valuable insights to build a cohesive and steadfast security workforce.

In the following sections, we will review the existing body of literature, drawing upon established research models and hypotheses. By synthesizing knowledge from numerous studies,

we will interpret the diverse factors that contribute to an employee's intention to leave their job. Additionally, we will explore the far-reaching consequences of turnover intention. This exploration will provide a solid foundation for understanding the broader implications of this issue and will help identify effective measures for reducing turnover rates.

As workforce and community challenges continue to evolve, it is imperative to remain informed and proactive in our approach to employee retention. Consequently, this paper will not only present current insights but also suggest future research directions, opening doors to unexplored avenues and advanced solutions. By keeping abreast of these challenges and addressing them head-on, organizations can ensure they remain competitive and capable of retaining top talent.

Research indicates that understanding turnover intention requires examining the factors influencing an employee's decision-making process. By gaining a deeper understanding of these factors, organizations can design targeted strategies that foster loyalty, job satisfaction, and professional growth. This study aims to contribute to the collective effort of building resilient organizations with unwavering commitment and a shared vision for a stable future in law enforcement.

The Work Institute released a retention report in 2019, which included interviews with over 250,000 employees and revealed that more than 37,000 employees quit their jobs. The research concluded that organizations are experiencing higher rates of employee turnover and need to prioritize employee retention. Employee retention, defined as an organization's ability to keep employees for a certain period to prevent turnovers and voluntary or involuntary departures, is most effective when organizations invest in their people and implement preventive measures (Work Institute, 2019). These measures range from hiring talent to providing incentives, whether

related to employee resources or organizational culture. Given the broad scope of retention, it can be viewed from an individual (employee) or organizational perspective. This research will focus on the employee's perspective, examining the avenues of intention to leave an organization voluntarily or involuntarily. Consequently, this will enhance the understanding of the costly challenges law enforcement faces regarding officer shortages and difficulties in recruiting and hiring officers.

By delving into these critical aspects of turnover intention, this paper aspires to offer a thorough understanding of the issue and practical recommendations for law enforcement agencies. Through this research, we aim to contribute to the broader conversation on employee retention, ultimately supporting the development of more resilient and effective law enforcement organizations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, employee turnover has become a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies. According to ABC News (April 2023), police departments across the country are experiencing a "vicious cycle" of retirements, resignations, and fewer hires. Policing experts note that this situation leaves communities with understaffed departments and potentially underqualified officers. A survey released on April 1 by the Police Executive Research Forum, which included 182 law enforcement agencies, indicated that while police departments are recruiting more officers compared to the 2020 decrease, they have seen 47% more resignations and 19% more retirements in 2022 compared to 2019.

The 2019 Retention Report by The Work Institute, based on various interviews, revealed that employees are quitting for multiple reasons. These include, but are not limited to, lack of

career development, work-life imbalance, poor relationships with management, inadequate compensation, employee well-being, limited position advancement, work burnout, and an unsatisfactory work environment. Some studies also indicate that job-perceived alternatives play a role in these decisions. These trends in employee turnover intention have made employee retention a critical and unsettling topic in many organizations. While organizations strive to attract top talent, they simultaneously face high employee turnover. Employee turnover significantly impacts an organization's productivity, delivery, and profit margins. It poses a costly and time-consuming challenge that hinders company growth and undermines trust in law enforcement's commitment to community protection. High turnover also tarnishes the agencies' reputation for recruitment and community building. Minimizing the employee turnover rate enhances the likelihood of achieving organizational objectives (Cruz, Sengco, & Gadin, 2022).

Workforce shortages are affecting multiple industries across the United States, with law enforcement being among the most significantly impacted. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), about 65% of law enforcement agencies report having too few candidates applying for officer positions, which makes recruitment increasingly difficult (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2024). This shortage has been driven by a combination of increased retirements, negative public perception, and fewer people interested in joining the profession.

Similarly, the healthcare industry is facing major staffing shortages. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that the United States could experience a shortage of more than 85,000 physicians by 2036, leading to longer wait times and reduced access to care (National Institute for Health Care Management [NIHCM], 2024). In addition, the manufacturing sector is projected to have a lack of approximately 1.9 million skilled workers by 2033 if the

current labor gaps are not addressed (Manufacturing Dive, 2024). These shortages threaten productivity and service quality across industries.

A common factor contributing to these shortages is the aging workforce. Many experienced workers from the Baby Boomer generation are retiring, and there are not enough younger individuals entering the workforce to replace them (Wikipedia, 2024). Law enforcement agencies have attempted to address this issue by loosening hiring requirements, such as allowing tattoos and facial hair, and by offering financial incentives. According to the IACP, about 75% of police departments have modified their recruitment policies in an effort to attract new applicants (IACP, 2024).

While the workforce shortage in law enforcement is critical, it mirrors trends seen in other essential industries such as healthcare and manufacturing. Each of these sectors faces unique challenges, but the underlying causes—aging workers, limited applicant pools, and evolving job expectations—are often shared. Addressing these shortages will require long-term strategies tailored to the needs of each field.

Law enforcement organizations that have lost touch with intimate protocols to adapt to national boundaries are prioritizing employee retention to achieve their visions and goals. Despite these efforts, law enforcement agencies continue to struggle with high employee turnover rates, resulting in officer shortages. Some argue that the desperation to retain employees leads to a sense of entitlement among staff, resulting in inferior performance, abuse of power, or career shifts. Regardless of the benefits offered to new hires or remaining officers, a sense of belonging within the organization remains elusive (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2024, November). One approach to understanding employee turnover intention is to examine the components of employee-related factors. This paper will explore five factors that influence

employee turnover intention: career development (CD), job satisfaction (JS), organizational commitment (OC), perceived job alternatives (PA), and work burnout (WB). While other factors also affect employee intention, this study will focus on these five factors within the context of law enforcement.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPHOTHESES FORMULATION

Employee Turnover Intention (TI)

Employee turnover remains a central concern for organizations across all sectors, particularly within high-stakes industries such as law enforcement, where the costs of losing skilled personnel are especially pronounced. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave their job or organization. This phenomenon disrupts organizational stability, reduces overall performance, and often imposes heavy financial and operational burdens.

Alkahtani (2015) identified both visible and invisible costs tied to turnover. Visible costs include recruitment, onboarding, security clearances, and relocation. However, the more damaging losses are often invisible, including loss of knowledge, diminished morale, informal training gaps, and decreased productivity. In law enforcement, these losses translate into weakened public safety, fractured community trust, and longer response times, challenges that are difficult to measure but deeply felt by the communities affected.

Turnover also produces a ripple effect within organizations. As Hay (2002) notes, witnessing coworkers resign may influence remaining employees to reconsider their own positions. This contagion effect can erode the cohesion of teams and intensify feelings of dissatisfaction or disengagement. Moreover, the World Bank (Long et al., 2012) observed that turnover is not just a problem for large corporations; small and medium-sized enterprises globally report turnover rates as high as 27%, indicating that the problem is systemic and widespread.

Recent literature continues to highlight the rising prevalence of turnover intention, especially in stressful occupations. Kim (2021) emphasized the role of work overload and emotional strain in fostering thoughts of quitting among public sector workers, especially in law enforcement. Officers experiencing intense pressure, lack of community appreciation, or traumatic work conditions are more likely to consider leaving their roles, even when they value the mission of their work. In addition, De Simone et al. (2022) found that when individuals lack role clarity or face conflicting demands, they become more vulnerable to occupational stress, which in turn increases their likelihood of turnover.

Jiang and Lavaysse (2019) conducted a meta-analysis showing that emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction are two of the most reliable predictors of turnover intention. When employees feel drained, unsupported, or undervalued, the psychological contract between them and their organization weakens, prompting them to seek employment elsewhere. These feelings are particularly pronounced in frontline workers, such as police officers, who regularly face high-pressure scenarios and limited recognition for their efforts.

Hom et al. (2022) further clarify that turnover intention is not always a sudden decision but often a psychological process triggered by cumulative dissatisfaction. Employees may begin to emotionally disengage long before they officially resign. This disengagement negatively affects job performance, team dynamics, and public perception in service-based fields like policing.

The COVID-19 pandemic also intensified turnover trends. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, voluntary resignations in public service roles rose significantly between 2020 and 2022, with many citing burnout, poor leadership, and lack of advancement as key drivers. Lambert, Qureshi, and Frank (2023) confirmed this in their study of correctional officers, noting

that dissatisfaction with management, insufficient support, and lack of career growth were consistent predictors of turnover intention in public safety professions.

In essence, employee turnover intention poses not only a financial and operational challenge but a threat to institutional knowledge and mission fulfillment. In sectors like law enforcement, where experience, continuity, and public rapport are critical, addressing the roots of turnover intention is vital for long-term organizational health and public trust.

Work Burnout (WB)

Work burnout is a critical factor contributing to employee turnover intention, particularly in high-demand and emotionally charged professions such as law enforcement. Burnout occurs when prolonged workplace stress leads to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, diminishing an employee's ability to perform effectively and reducing their desire to remain with their organization. Kim (2015) identifies three key dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion reflects a depletion of emotional and psychological energy, often resulting from constant interpersonal demands. This type of exhaustion has been strongly linked to increased thoughts of leaving an organization, especially when workers feel overwhelmed and unsupported (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2008; Wharton, 1999).

Depersonalization, another aspect of burnout, involves the development of cynical or indifferent attitudes toward clients, coworkers, or the job itself. This emotional detachment may serve as a coping mechanism for stress, but over time it fosters disengagement and contributes to a growing desire to exit the organization (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Meanwhile, reduced personal accomplishment refers to employees' perceptions of inefficacy and lack of success in

their roles, which erodes their confidence and further intensifies the wish to leave (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Together, these three dimensions form a powerful driver of turnover intention, particularly when they go unaddressed.

Research continues to support the strong relationship between burnout and turnover across various professions and regions. Ozkan (2023) conducted a meta-analysis examining the effects of burnout on turnover intention in Asia, Oceania, and Africa, and found that employees experiencing high levels of burnout consistently reported stronger intentions to resign. The study emphasized that burnout symptoms such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization not only reduced job performance but also directly contributed to voluntary turnover.

In addition, De Simone, Planta, and Cicotto (2022) explored burnout among Italian law enforcement personnel and found that those facing high emotional demands and role ambiguity were more prone to turnover intention. Their findings reaffirm that when burnout is left unmanaged, it not only affects individual well-being but also leads to organizational instability due to personnel losses. Similarly, Kristanto and Prasetyo (2022) studied educators and found that the more burnout symptoms an employee exhibited, the stronger their desire to leave their current role. Their findings reinforce the universality of this issue across professions and underscore the importance of addressing burnout in organizational policies and retention strategies.

Organizations that fail to recognize the warning signs of burnout such as high workloads, lack of recovery time, and emotional disconnection risk losing skilled professionals. These common causes, if left unaddressed, prompt employees to reevaluate their commitment to the organization. Cruz, Sengco, and Gadin (2022) highlighted the importance of maintaining a high quality of work life to mitigate burnout and its related turnover intentions. When employees feel

valued, supported, and able to recover from stress, they are more likely to remain in their positions and remain productive.

Ultimately, work burnout is not just an individual health issue, it is a clear predictor of organizational turnover. The persistent nature of burnout, particularly in demanding roles like policing, makes it essential for organizations to prioritize burnout prevention and intervention strategies. Recognizing burnout symptoms early and creating supportive, balanced work environments can significantly reduce turnover intention and promote long-term workforce stability.

Career Development (CD)

Career development is a critical factor in influencing employee retention and minimizing turnover intention. When employees feel that their organization is invested in their long-term professional growth, they are more likely to remain committed and less likely to explore external opportunities. Conversely, when development needs are ignored or poorly addressed, employees may feel stagnant, undervalued, and ultimately driven to leave.

Alkahtani (2015) observed that some organizations hesitate to invest in employee development due to concerns that well-trained individuals may leave for competitors. However, this short-sighted view often leads to higher turnover, as employees who feel unsupported in their professional growth may disengage or seek employment elsewhere. Career development is more than a retention tactic—it is a strategic necessity. It signals to employees that the organization values their potential, which in turn fosters loyalty.

Chen, Chang, and Yeh (2004) conducted a study among R&D professionals in Taiwan and found that a gap between career development offerings and employees' career needs

significantly predicted turnover intention. Employees who perceived that their employers failed to meet their evolving career aspirations reported lower job satisfaction and a stronger desire to leave. This finding reinforces the notion that career needs are dynamic and must be continuously reassessed. Organizations that fail to adapt their career development programs risk alienating employees, especially those in specialized or highly skilled roles.

Research also shows that employees are more likely to remain with organizations that offer equitable promotion opportunities, access to professional training, and clear pathways for advancement. Alvi and Ahmed (1987) found that promotional opportunities are perceived by employees as indicators of organizational commitment, which reduces the likelihood of turnover. Similarly, Liu and Wang (2001) emphasized the importance of personal development initiatives, while Long, Fang, and Ling (2002) linked fair promotion practices and consistent training to stronger organizational loyalty.

Ng et al. (2006) highlighted the role of learning opportunities in reducing turnover. Their findings suggest that when employees are consistently challenged and encouraged to develop new skills, their engagement and organizational attachment deepen. Weng and Hu (2009) as well as Weng and McElroy (2012) extended this perspective by introducing the concept of organizational career growth, which includes skill development, meaningful promotions, and achieving career goals. These components, they argue, are strongly correlated with reduced turnover intentions because they reflect a mutual investment between the employee and the organization.

More recently, Mahapatro (2021) found that the absence of structured career development planning contributes to a rise in voluntary turnover, especially among younger employees. With generational shifts in the workforce, employees increasingly value roles that provide not only

financial compensation but also long-term growth and career fulfillment. Organizations that overlook this expectation may find themselves facing elevated turnover, especially in competitive or high-demand industries such as security and public safety.

The growing emphasis on career alignment also means that employees want their roles to reflect personal goals and values. When there is a disconnect between what employees aspire to and what their current roles offer, their psychological investment in the organization weakens. This disconnect not only affects performance but also increases the likelihood of turnover. To retain talent, especially in mission-critical fields, organizations must invest in comprehensive, flexible, and responsive career development strategies.

In summary, career development is a key determinant of employee turnover intention. Failing to provide growth opportunities, recognize individual aspirations, or support professional advancement can drive employees to seek fulfillment elsewhere. Conversely, when organizations actively cultivate career development, they build a committed and future-oriented workforce; one that is far more likely to stay.

Job Satisfaction (JS)

Job satisfaction is one of the most influential factors in determining whether an employee chooses to remain with or leave an organization. It has been historically defined in multiple ways, ranging from a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that contribute to a person's contentment with their job (Hoppock, 1935), to affective orientations individuals have toward their work roles (Vroom, 1964). More recent definitions describe job satisfaction as the extent to which employees feel positively about their jobs, including satisfaction with their roles, responsibilities, coworkers, supervisors, and compensation (Spector,

1997; Armstrong, 2006). It also reflects the degree to which individuals feel that their expectations are met and that their contributions are valued.

When employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to remain committed and less likely to contemplate resignation. Karsh, Booske, and Sainfort (2005) found a strong inverse relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention, noting that satisfied employees tend to be more engaged and resilient in the face of workplace challenges. In the same vein, Korunka et al. (2005) examined the IT workforce and discovered that employees who reported low job satisfaction were significantly more likely to express intentions to leave their positions. These findings highlight job satisfaction as a powerful predictor of retention, especially in professions that require consistent performance under pressure.

Within the security protection industry, job satisfaction takes on added importance due to the high-risk and emotionally taxing nature of the work. Officers who feel undervalued, underpaid, or unsupported may experience not only diminished morale but also a deeper questioning of their professional purpose. Gerhart (1990) and Mobley (1977) found consistent evidence that low job satisfaction among officers contributes directly to increased absenteeism and higher turnover rates. In an industry where workforce consistency is tied to public safety and operational effectiveness, even moderate turnover can create serious disruptions.

Harrell, Chewning, and Taylor (1986) investigated how role conflict can diminish job satisfaction, noting that when professionals feel a mismatch between organizational expectations and personal or ethical standards, their job satisfaction erodes. This misalignment, common in occupations with rigid structures such as law enforcement and security protection, can heighten stress and increase the desire to exit the profession.

Recent studies further emphasize the need to align employees' tasks and responsibilities with their personal values to enhance satisfaction and reduce attrition. Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) found that when workers perceive their roles as meaningful and aligned with their sense of identity or purpose, their overall job satisfaction improves, and their likelihood of leaving diminishes. This alignment fosters a sense of personal investment in one's work, which can serve as a protective factor against turnover, particularly in emotionally demanding fields.

Additionally, emerging evidence suggests that job satisfaction is influenced not just by compensation or tasks, but also by interpersonal dynamics in the workplace. A study by Karatepe and Karadas (2021) noted that employees who feel respected, recognized, and included by their peers and supervisors are more likely to feel satisfied and less inclined to leave their positions. This is especially relevant in law enforcement and security sectors, where camaraderie and mutual support are often critical to navigating high-pressure scenarios.

In conclusion, job satisfaction serves as both an emotional and practical anchor that discourages employee turnover. In high-threat professions such as law enforcement, ensuring that employees feel fulfilled, respected, and aligned with their work responsibilities is crucial to maintaining a stable and motivated workforce. Efforts to improve satisfaction through meaningful engagement, supportive leadership, and alignment with personal values can significantly reduce turnover intentions and foster long-term organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment (OC)

Organizational commitment plays a significant role in predicting employee turnover intention, particularly in demanding industries such as law enforcement and security. Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty an individual

feels toward their organization, which significantly influences their decision to remain employed or seek opportunities elsewhere. Numerous studies have established a negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention, suggesting that employees who are strongly committed to their organizations are less likely to consider leaving (Azeez et al., 2016; Gregor, 2011).

Meyer and Allen (1990) introduced a widely accepted conceptualization of organizational commitment, dividing it into three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment and identification with their organization. Employees who genuinely care about the organization and feel connected to its goals are more likely to remain loyal. Continuance commitment is based on an awareness of the costs associated with leaving, such as loss of benefits, job security, or professional networks. Normative commitment involves a sense of obligation to stay, often stemming from personal values, social expectations, or loyalty to coworkers. All three dimensions collectively influence an employee's decision-making process when contemplating whether to stay or resign.

Research consistently shows that employees with high organizational commitment are more resilient in the face of work-related challenges and are less likely to exhibit withdrawal behaviors. Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) confirmed that organizational commitment significantly reduces turnover intention, even among those who may not report high levels of job satisfaction. This highlights the strength of commitment as a retention factor, particularly in high-pressure environments where job satisfaction may fluctuate.

In professions such as security and law enforcement, where the psychological and emotional demands are high, organizational commitment acts as a stabilizing force. When

employees perceive that their organizations support their development, recognize their contributions, and treat them fairly, they are more likely to develop strong affective bonds, thereby lowering their intention to leave (Meyer, 2001). This bond is particularly important in maintaining workforce stability in mission-critical roles that rely on long-term institutional knowledge and community trust.

In addition, studies have examined the relationship between organizational commitment and other work attitudes. While some researchers, such as Koslowsky et al. (1991), suggest a high correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, they caution against interpreting this as a direct causal link. However, complementary research by Gregson (1992) supports the idea that increased job satisfaction often coincides with stronger organizational commitment, both of which are linked to reduced turnover intention (Li, 2019). Thus, while distinct, these constructs often interact in meaningful ways that shape an employee's desire to stay.

Albalawi et al. (2019) further explored how organizational commitment functions in complex work environments. Their findings reinforced the idea that organizational commitment is a powerful predictor of turnover intention. Employees who are committed tend to internalize the organization's mission, feel responsible for its outcomes, and exhibit greater resilience—even when facing external job opportunities or challenges within the workplace.

The influence of leadership on organizational commitment cannot be overlooked. Leaders who demonstrate fairness, transparency, and genuine concern for employee well-being tend to foster stronger emotional bonds between staff and the organization. When employees feel seen, valued, and heard by leadership, they are more inclined to remain committed, even during periods of stress or change (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Ultimately, organizational commitment is not merely about tenure or compliance—it reflects an employee’s deeper psychological and emotional connection to their work environment.

Strengthening this connection through supportive leadership, recognition, and shared values is essential for reducing turnover intention and fostering a stable, loyal, and high-performing workforce.

Perceived Job Alternatives (PA)

Perceived job alternatives refer to an employee’s belief in the availability of other suitable job opportunities outside their current organization. This perception plays a vital role in shaping turnover intention, especially when employees are dissatisfied with their current roles. The foundational work of March and Simon (1958) emphasized that turnover intention is influenced by both the desirability and ease of movement. Employees who believe that acceptable employment options are readily available are more likely to consider leaving their current positions, even if they are not actively seeking other opportunities.

Over time, the definition of perceived job alternatives has evolved to reflect both the quality and accessibility of external opportunities. Billings and Wemmerus (1983) defined it as the perceived probability of obtaining a desirable alternative job. Others, such as Farrell and Rusbult (1981), focused on the quality of alternatives, while Steers and Mowday emphasized the perceived availability of jobs in general. Regardless of the specific definition, a consistent finding in the literature is the strong link between perceived job alternatives and increased turnover intentions (Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Mobley, 1977; Price, 2001).

More recent studies have reinforced these early insights. Ramlawati et al. (2019) found that external job alternatives significantly affect turnover intention, both directly and indirectly through their influence on job satisfaction. Employees who believe they have better prospects elsewhere often experience a decline in their commitment to their current employer, especially if they are already facing challenges such as low morale, poor leadership, or lack of development opportunities. Treuren (2013), in a study of 591 white-collar workers, reported that employees with a high perception of job availability were more likely to express a desire to leave, regardless of actual job market conditions.

Interestingly, even when the number or quality of real alternatives is uncertain, the belief that better jobs exist elsewhere is enough to trigger resignation contemplation. Billings and Wemmerus (1983) argue that individuals may act on perceived alternatives without having full knowledge of their feasibility. This suggests that perception alone—regardless of market conditions—can be a powerful motivator for turnover. In this context, perception can be shaped by peer behavior, economic news, job offers received by colleagues, or personal assumptions about employability.

Albalawi et al. (2019) found that the perception of job alternatives is a significant predictor of turnover, particularly in environments where employees feel undervalued or underutilized. The existence of potential alternatives increases the cognitive availability of exit strategies, especially when dissatisfaction with the current role is present. This can create a mental comparison between the current job and hypothetical alternatives, often tipping the scales toward separation if the employee believes their skills are transferable or in high demand.

The rise of online job platforms and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn has further increased employees' awareness of external opportunities. According to Anuradha et al.

(2017), the digital job market has made perceived job alternatives more salient, even for passive job seekers. Employees who regularly receive recruitment messages or see job advertisements are more likely to become curious about other roles, gradually increasing their intention to leave, especially if they believe that other employers offer better compensation, work-life balance, or professional growth.

Additionally, Huang and Su (2016) highlighted that the influence of perceived job alternatives can also manifest indirectly. For instance, employees who believe that better opportunities are available may disengage from their current job, reduce effort, or express dissatisfaction, all of which may eventually lead to voluntary turnover. In such cases, the perception of external opportunities acts as a psychological escape route that affects behavior before a formal resignation even occurs.

Perceived job alternatives represent a key factor in turnover decision-making. Employees do not need to have received a concrete job offer to develop an intention to leave. The mere belief that better opportunities exist elsewhere can erode organizational loyalty, especially when combined with existing dissatisfaction or unmet expectations. As the job market becomes increasingly transparent and competitive, organizations must not only address internal factors that lead to dissatisfaction but also be mindful of how external perceptions shape employee behavior. A strong internal culture, clear career progression, and employee recognition can help counterbalance the lure of perceived alternatives.

Understanding employee turnover intention requires examining the multifaceted psychological, emotional, and environmental factors that influence an employee's decision to stay or leave an organization. Turnover intention, defined as the deliberate and conscious consideration of leaving one's job, is not triggered by a single factor but rather a combination of

internal job-related experiences and external perceptions (Alkahtani, 2015; Hom et al., 2022). In this study, five key constructs job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work burnout, perceived job alternatives, and career development are explored due to their strong theoretical and empirical linkage to turnover behavior across various industries, including high-risk sectors such as law enforcement and private security.

Job satisfaction is one of the most consistently cited predictors of turnover intention. It encompasses an employee's emotional and psychological evaluation of their work environment, role, and relationships within the organization (Spector, 1997; Vroom, 1964). Research demonstrates that employees who experience high job satisfaction are less likely to consider leaving, as they find their work meaningful and aligned with personal values (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Karsh et al., 2005). Conversely, dissatisfaction can serve as an early warning sign of disengagement, ultimately increasing the likelihood of turnover.

Organizational commitment, the psychological attachment an employee has to their organization, further contributes to this retention narrative. Employees with strong emotional (affective), moral (normative), or cost-based (continuance) commitment are more resilient in the face of work-related stress and less likely to exhibit withdrawal behaviors (Meyer & Allen, 1990; Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). High commitment fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, which encourages employees to remain loyal, even under less-than-ideal circumstances. This makes it an especially valuable construct when assessing retention in law enforcement, where institutional loyalty and team cohesion are often essential.

Work burnout, on the other hand, captures the emotional and physical toll of prolonged workplace stress and directly undermines employee retention. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, all of

which contribute to detachment and a growing intention to leave (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Kim, 2015). Studies have shown that high levels of burnout are linked to increased absenteeism, low morale, and voluntary turnover, especially in high-pressure occupations where employees face significant psychological demands (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2019; Ozkan, 2023).

Perceived job alternatives add another important layer to this decision-making process. Even satisfied or moderately engaged employees may consider leaving if they believe better opportunities exist elsewhere. This perception—whether accurate or not—can lower retention, especially when combined with dissatisfaction or burnout (Mobley, 1977; Ramlawati et al., 2019). The ease of job searching through digital platforms and professional networks has made external opportunities more visible, increasing the psychological temptation to leave one's current role (Treuren, 2013; Anuradha et al., 2017). This makes perceived job alternatives a crucial factor to evaluate in modern turnover research.

Lastly, career development significantly shapes employee intention to stay. When organizations invest in professional growth, training, and promotional opportunities, employees perceive a future within the organization, which enhances commitment and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2004; Weng & McElroy, 2012). However, when there is a perceived gap between employees' career aspirations and available development programs, dissatisfaction rises, often leading to turnover (Alvi & Ahmed, 1987; Mahapatro, 2021). Career development is particularly important for retaining skilled professionals in specialized fields like law enforcement and private security, where career progression may not always be clearly defined.

Together, these five constructs provide a comprehensive view of the internal and external factors that drive turnover intention. Their relevance is well-established across decades of empirical research and offers a solid foundation for analyzing turnover in professions where

stability and commitment are essential. By exploring how job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work burnout, perceived job alternatives, and career development interact to influence turnover intention, this study aims to contribute meaningful insights that can inform workforce strategies, improve retention, and enhance organizational performance in critical industries.

Theoretical Foundation: Job Embeddedness

Job Embeddedness Theory, first conceptualized by Mitchell et al. (2001), provides an important framework for understanding why law enforcement officers remain in their positions amid growing concerns of police shortages across the United States. While much of the research on police turnover focuses on burnout, dissatisfaction, or external job opportunities, job embeddedness introduces a broader, more integrative perspective that includes social ties, perceived fit, and the sacrifices associated with leaving. In the context of law enforcement, where stability, community trust, and institutional knowledge are vital, this framework offers unique insights into retention.

One of the most critical dimensions of job embeddedness is "links," referring to the interpersonal connections officers develop within their departments and the communities they serve. Policing is inherently relational; officers build bonds with fellow officers, supervisors, and local residents. These ties can serve as anchors, increasing an officer's emotional investment in their role and discouraging turnover, even during times of high stress or public scrutiny. Research by Rasool et al. (2022) and Peltokorpi et al. (2023) supports that employees with stronger interpersonal and professional networks demonstrate significantly lower turnover intentions. When departments foster team cohesion, mentorship, and community involvement, they strengthen these links, thereby deepening officers' embeddedness.

The "fit" component of job embeddedness refers to how well officers perceive their personal values, professional identity, and career goals align with their roles and department culture. Officers who believe their work has purpose, who feel they are contributing meaningfully to public safety, and who experience alignment with the organization's mission are more likely to stay. This is particularly relevant as law enforcement agencies work to modernize and redefine their public image. A recent study by Dawley et al. (2021) found that fit is increasingly critical in younger officers' decisions to remain in the profession, particularly when their values align with a department's commitment to ethical policing and community outreach.

"Sacrifice" relates to what officers would lose if they chose to leave their position. In policing, this can be particularly pronounced as pensions, tenure-based benefits, specialized certifications, rank, and institutional familiarity all represent forms of investment that officers may be reluctant to abandon. Additionally, long-term relationships with the community and fellow officers may carry emotional weight, further discouraging exit. According to Lee et al. (2022), employees who perceive greater professional and social losses from leaving exhibit significantly stronger retention behaviors, even under difficult job conditions.

As law enforcement agencies grapple with persistent staffing shortages, applying job embeddedness theory can help identify strategic areas to reinforce retention. Rather than relying solely on financial incentives or reactive policy changes, departments can proactively build stronger social connections (links), promote value alignment (fit), and emphasize the personal and professional costs of departure (sacrifice). For instance, enhancing community engagement programs, offering tailored career development opportunities, and clearly communicating the long-term benefits of service can all deepen officers' embeddedness. Organizations that

emphasize internal promotions and create a sense of future within the department help employees feel more invested (Karatepe & Shahriari, 2021).

Job embeddedness is also particularly relevant given the current generational shifts in the workforce. Younger officers may place greater value on alignment with mission and purpose, while mid-career officers may be more influenced by accumulated sacrifices. Understanding these differences allows departments to tailor retention strategies more effectively across different tenure stages.

Job embeddedness offers a multidimensional explanation for why police officers remain with their agencies, even amidst high turnover pressures. By emphasizing relational, cultural, and investment-based factors, this theory provides a holistic framework that can guide both immediate and long-term retention strategies in policing. It encourages departments to look beyond surface-level incentives and address the deeper psychological and social roots of officer attachment, ultimately helping to stabilize the workforce and improve public safety outcomes. While job satisfaction remains a significant predictor of turnover intention, job embeddedness highlights that satisfaction alone does not fully explain employee retention (Jiang et al., 2012). The fit component aligns closely with job satisfaction, as officers who feel that their work matches their values, competencies, and long-term goals are more likely to stay. Enhancing fit through meaningful assignments, recognition, and a supportive work environment reinforces embeddedness and reduces the likelihood of attrition (Zhang, Fried, & Griffeth, 2012).

Organizational commitment—particularly affective and continuance commitment—can also be reinterpreted through the lens of links and sacrifice. Officers who develop strong interpersonal bonds within their departments and communities form emotional anchors that decrease their likelihood of leaving (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). Similarly, the perception of

high personal or professional costs associated with separation—such as loss of pension, seniority, or relationship strengthens the sacrifice dimension, further embedding them within the organization (Crossley et al., 2007).

Career development plays a crucial role in reinforcing both fit and links. When law enforcement professionals are provided with opportunities for growth, advancement, and skill-building, their alignment with organizational goals improves. This perceived alignment not only enhances commitment but also increases the perceived risk of losing accumulated benefits, knowledge, and standing—thus elevating embeddedness (Zhang et al., 2012).

Conversely, work burnout can erode embeddedness by damaging the sense of fit and diminishing the perceived sacrifice of leaving. Burnout reduces feelings of professional efficacy and emotional connection, weakening the psychological ties that bind officers to their roles. Addressing burnout with resources like counseling, manageable workloads, and wellness initiatives is essential to preserving embeddedness (Jiang et al., 2012).

Additionally, the perception of alternative job opportunities—while central to traditional turnover theories—is accounted for in job embeddedness through the sacrifice dimension. Even if external opportunities exist, officers may refrain from leaving if they believe the trade-offs are too costly (Mitchell et al., 2001; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006).

Job Embeddedness Theory is a strong framework for analyzing turnover intention in law enforcement, as it encompasses both internal organizational dynamics and external societal ties. By considering the influence of links, fit, and sacrifice, this theory offers a more nuanced approach than traditional models. Its application to law enforcement not only enhances our

understanding of officer retention but also guides the development of strategic initiatives to address turnover in high-threat professions.

Hypotheses Development

The proposed hypotheses in this study are anchored in Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), a comprehensive framework that broadens the understanding of employee retention beyond traditional predictors like job satisfaction or organizational commitment. This theory posits that employees remain in their roles not merely because they are content or loyal, but because they are embedded through a web of psychological, social, and structural ties that create inertia against leaving. These ties are captured through three interrelated dimensions: links (the formal and informal connections employees have with people and activities), fit (the perceived compatibility between the employee's values, goals, and the organization's culture), and sacrifice (the perceived costs—emotional, social, or material—of leaving the organization).

In the context of this research, career development, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work burnout are not treated as isolated constructs but as interactive elements that shape and reinforce an individual's embeddedness. Career development enhances perceived fit and investment, which can deepen commitment but also increase marketability. Job satisfaction reflects alignment and meaningful engagement, reinforcing emotional connections to the organization. Organizational commitment builds loyalty through affective bonds and shared values, while work burnout represents a threat to embeddedness by eroding psychological resources and straining connections. Together, these variables form a dynamic system through which employees evaluate their relationship with their job and ultimately decide whether to stay or leave. By situating these constructs within the embeddedness framework, this study captures

the multifaceted nature of employee retention, particularly within the high-demand and high-stakes environment of law enforcement.

Although career development is usually seen as a good thing because it helps employees grow and feel more motivated, it can also make them more likely to leave their jobs. This can happen when development gives employees more skills and confidence, making them more aware of other job opportunities outside their current workplace.

According to Job Embeddedness Theory, career development can help employees feel more connected to their job and organization. At the same time, it can also make them feel more confident that they can succeed somewhere else. For example, in law enforcement, officers who receive special training or new certifications may begin to explore jobs in private security, federal agencies, or other police departments that offer better pay or less stress. This creates a situation where career development can both help keep employees and encourage them to leave. In this study, it is believed that the opportunity to explore better options outside the organization has a stronger effect.

Therefore, the following is proposed:

H1: Career Development positively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.

Although career development is generally considered a positive organizational practice, it can sometimes lead to increased turnover intention. This is particularly true in cases where development enhances an employee's skillset, professional network, and marketability. According to Job Embeddedness Theory, while career development may strengthen internal fit, it can also widen perceived external fit, increasing awareness of better opportunities outside the organization. In law enforcement, officers who receive advanced training or achieve higher

credentials may feel empowered to explore alternative roles in private security, federal agencies, or other jurisdictions. Therefore, while career growth deepens expertise, it may simultaneously increase perceived mobility and the attractiveness of external job alternatives, leading to greater turnover intention.

H2: Career Development negatively relates to Work Burnout.

Career development opportunities help reduce burnout by aligning employees with roles that match their skills and interests, thereby enhancing the “fit” component of job embeddedness. Officers who are engaged in continuous learning, mentorship, and clear advancement pathways are more likely to feel competent, energized, and fulfilled in their roles. This professional growth reduces the emotional exhaustion and skepticism often associated with burnout. By investing in career progression, organizations can help officers avoid stagnation and maintain motivation, which is crucial in high-stress professions like law enforcement.

H3: Career Development positively relates to Job Satisfaction.

Employees who experience meaningful career development tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction. This relationship reflects the perceived alignment—or “fit”—between individual goals and organizational support. When officers believe their department is invested in their long-term success, it fosters a sense of value and motivation, strengthening their emotional connection to their role. Within the framework of job embeddedness, this increased satisfaction contributes to a stronger psychological anchor, decreasing the likelihood of disengagement or voluntary exit.

H4: Career Development positively relates to Organizational Commitment.

Organizational commitment is reinforced when employees perceive that their employer is invested in their growth and future within the organization. Career development promotes deeper “links” through mentorship, training programs, and leadership pipelines, and increases “sacrifice” by enhancing the benefits that would be forfeited if one were to leave. In law enforcement, officers with established careers, specialized certifications, or promotion tracks may feel a stronger emotional and institutional bond to their agency, resulting in heightened commitment and decreased intentions to separate.

H5: Job Satisfaction negatively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.

Job satisfaction plays a leading role in reducing turnover intention, as it strengthens both the emotional “fit” and the social “links” an employee has within the organization. Satisfied employees are more likely to view their work as meaningful and their work environment as supportive. In policing, where morale can be impacted by stress, public scrutiny, and organizational culture, high job satisfaction can serve as a protective factor against disengagement and resignation. Employees who are satisfied with their roles are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, even when external opportunities exist.

H6: Job Satisfaction negatively relates to Work Burnout.

High levels of job satisfaction are associated with reduced burnout because satisfied employees are more likely to feel competent, supported, and appreciated in their roles. When officers experience affirmation in their duties, their emotional resources are preserved, reducing exhaustion and detachment. This connection is critical in law enforcement, where unmanaged burnout can lead to serious operational risks. Satisfied employees are also more resilient in coping with job demands, which reinforces their embeddedness and lessens psychological strain.

H7: Organizational Commitment negatively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.

Organizational commitment, particularly affective and continuance commitment, is a powerful deterrent to employee turnover. Within the job embeddedness model, commitment reflects deep “links” to coworkers and the organization’s mission, as well as “sacrifice” due to the perceived loss associated with leaving. Officers who feel loyal to their department, bonded with their team, and aligned with the agency’s purpose are more likely to remain, even when challenged by stress or dissatisfaction. Commitment reinforces embeddedness by creating both emotional and practical barriers to exit.

H8: Organizational Commitment negatively relates to Work Burnout.

Employees with strong organizational commitment are less likely to experience burnout because they find personal meaning in their work and receive support from the relationships they have built. Commitment fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, which buffers the emotional toll of demanding roles. For law enforcement officers, who often face emotionally taxing situations, feeling supported and valued by their department can protect against the cynicism and exhaustion that characterize burnout.

H9a: Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Employee Turnover Intention.

Career development enhances job satisfaction by helping employees grow and progress in their careers. This satisfaction, in turn, reduces turnover intention. While career development may increase perceived marketability, the resulting job satisfaction acts as a mitigating factor, reinforcing an employee’s embeddedness and making them less inclined to leave. Thus, job

satisfaction partially explains how career development influences turnover intention, balancing the tension between internal loyalty and external opportunity.

H9b: Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Work Burnout.

Career development not only improves skillsets but also boosts morale and motivation. When employees feel satisfied with their growth, they are less likely to experience the emotional fatigue associated with burnout. Satisfaction increases engagement, which replenishes emotional resources. Therefore, job satisfaction acts as a pathway through which career development helps reduce burnout, reinforcing the importance of meaningful work and skill alignment.

H10a: Organizational Commitment partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Employee Turnover Intention.

Career development fosters loyalty by signaling organizational support and investment. As employees grow, their emotional attachment to the organization strengthens. This increased commitment, in turn, decreases their likelihood of leaving. Organizational commitment, therefore, partially mediates the relationship between development and turnover, as employees who are committed may remain despite being highly marketable or exposed to external opportunities.

H10b: Organizational Commitment partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Work Burnout.

When employees feel supported through career development, they are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility and attachment to their organization. This commitment strengthens their resolve to cope with workplace challenges and reduces vulnerability to burnout.

As such, organizational commitment functions as a mediator between development and burnout by reinforcing the psychological investment and emotional resilience that buffer against stress.

RESEARCH MODEL AND CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS

Figure 1. Research Model

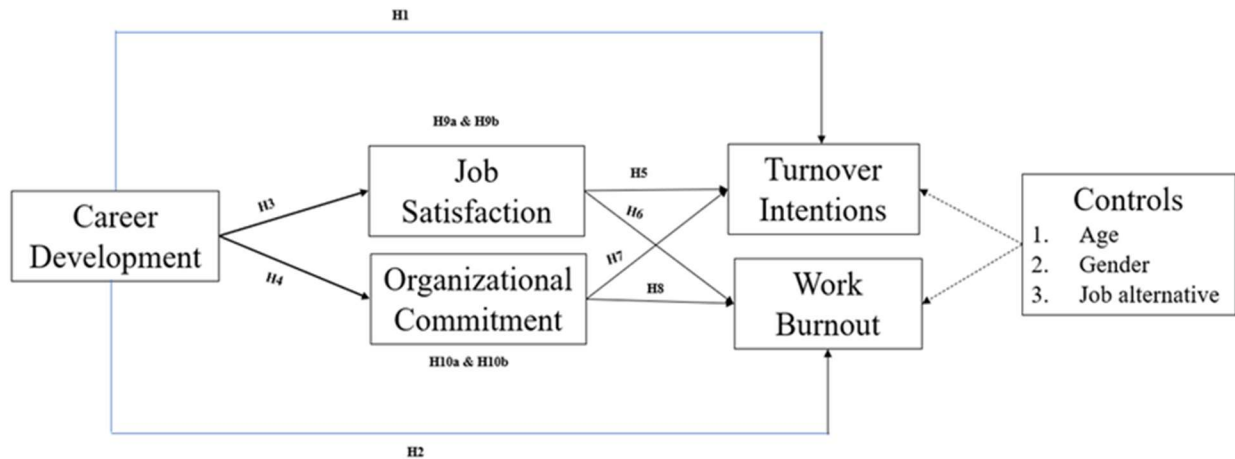


Table 1. Variable Definitions

Variables	Definition
IV. Career Development (CD)	The process of learning and improving your skills so that you can do your job better and progress to better jobs Citation: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/career-development
M. Job Satisfaction (JS)	A pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Citation: Locke, E. A. (1969). What is job satisfaction? <i>Organizational behavior and human performance</i> , 4(4), 309-336.
M. Organization Commitment (OC)	The strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Citation: Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (2001). <i>Organizational commitment. Personnel psychology and human resource management: A reader for students and practitioners</i> , 289-342.

Variables	Definition
DV. Employee Turnover Intention (ETI)	An employee's personal estimated probability that he or she has a deliberate intent to leave the organization permanently in near future. It is considered as employees who are considering and thinking to quit a job. Citation: Long, C. S., Thean, L. Y., Ismail, W. K. W., & Jusoh, A. (2012). Leadership styles and employees' turnover intention: Exploratory study of academic staff in a Malaysian College. <i>World Applied Sciences Journal</i> , 19(4), 575-581.
DV. Work Burnout (WB)	a syndrome characterized by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization of clients (DP), and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (PA). Citation: Rupert, P. A., Miller, A. O., & Dorociak, K. E. (2015). Preventing burnout: What does the research tell us? <i>Professional Psychology: Research and Practice</i> , 46(3), 168.
C. Perceived Job Alternatives (PA)	Workers' beliefs that they can find a comparable job in another organization. Citation: Thatcher, J. B., Stepina, L. P., & Boyle, R. J. (2002). Turnover of information technology workers: Examining empirically the influence of attitudes, job characteristics, and external markets. <i>Journal of Management Information Systems</i> , 19(3), 231-261.

The conceptual model illustrated in this study examines the complex relationships between career development, job attitudes, and work outcomes through the lens of Job Embeddedness Theory. At the core of the model is the proposition that career development plays a pivotal role in influencing employees' intentions to stay or leave their organization, as well as their susceptibility to work burnout. Interestingly, career development is hypothesized to have both positive and negative downstream effects. On the one hand, it may increase employee turnover intention (H1) by making employees more marketable and aware of external job opportunities. On the other hand, it is expected to reduce work burnout (H2) by providing employees with renewed motivation, skill alignment, and a sense of personal growth—all of which contribute to emotional well-being.

Beyond its direct effects, career development is also hypothesized to influence two critical job attitudes: job satisfaction (H3) and organizational commitment (H4). Employees who perceive their organization as supportive of their professional growth are more likely to experience fulfillment in their work and feel a deeper sense of loyalty and attachment to the organization. These positive attitudes, in turn, are crucial determinants of work outcomes. As hypothesized in H5 and H6, job satisfaction is negatively associated with both turnover intention and burnout. Satisfied employees are more embedded within their organizations and experience greater alignment with their roles, which buffers them against emotional strain and the desire to leave.

Similarly, organizational commitment is predicted to negatively relate to both turnover intention (H7) and burnout (H8). Employees who feel a strong emotional and normative bond with their organization perceive greater sacrifices in leaving and are more likely to stay engaged, even in the face of workplace challenges. The model also incorporates mediating effects, recognizing that the relationship between career development and negative work outcomes is not entirely direct. H9a and H9b posit that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between career development and both turnover intention and burnout. This implies that developmental opportunities enhance satisfaction, which in turn reduces the likelihood of negative outcomes.

Likewise, H10a and H10b suggest that organizational commitment serves as a mediator, highlighting the role of emotional and psychological investment in translating career development into better retention and emotional resilience. In both mediating pathways, the theory of embeddedness is evident: as employees become more satisfied and committed, they

deepen their links, perceive better fit, and recognize more significant sacrifices associated with leaving—thus increasing their embeddedness.

Lastly, the model controls age, gender, and perceived job alternatives, which may moderate or influence these relationships. For example, younger employees might value career growth differently than older colleagues, and individuals with high perceptions of job alternatives may be more likely to act on turnover intentions, even when satisfied or committed. By including these variables, the model ensures a more accurate understanding of how career development and embeddedness interact to shape employee behavior.

In summary, the model reflects a nuanced and integrative approach to understanding turnover and burnout. It demonstrates that employee retention and well-being are not just influenced by singular factors but are shaped by an ecosystem of development, attitudes, perceptions, and personal contexts. By framing these relationships within Job Embeddedness Theory, the model offers a powerful tool for understanding how to retain and support employees in demanding professional environments.

METHODOLOGY

The measures are adapted from well-studied constructs in literature that have established reliability and validity. The measurement instrument will be created within Qualtrics for administering the survey and is designed to take approximately 30 minutes. The survey was managed using CloudResearch, an online participant recruitment and data collection platform. An informed pilot will be conducted with 4-5 Doctorate of Business Administration candidates at FIU for the purpose of ensuring the questions are clear and understandable and the measurement instrument will be further refined. The analysis of the measurement instrument will be done using SPSS software for Exploratory Factor Analysis where validity and reliability will be established. Hypothesis testing will be done using Smart PLS and the Sobel Test will be used to confirm potential mediation.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the research project was restricted to participants within the United States in Law enforcement careers. The objective of this research was to establish a correlation between the impacting factors (independent variables and their respective impacts on employee turnover in law enforcement). The scope of this study involved law enforcement personnel who have the intention to quit or explored the current working conditions of law enforcement personnel.

Sample Population

The population of interest was individuals who worked in security roles (law enforcement, corrections officers, personal security, etc.), who reside in the United States and are of and over the age of 18. The sample consisted of 305 subjects. Recruitment was done on

CloudResearch, and the participants were compensation of \$5 will be provided for their participation. The qualifying questions ensured that the subjects were United States residents and are currently worked in the security industry. The survey was open for 2 weeks, or until 305 subjects have responded, whichever comes first.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a quantitative internet-based survey, which was developed and administered through the Qualtrics platform. This survey was thoughtfully designed to assess diverse dimensions of the participant's comprehension of the problem in question. To understand and analyze the variables in the model, a comprehensive literature review was performed. This research adapted a Likert scale from previous studies and research that seem effective. Some questions were paraphrased based on the subject matter for clarity. These measures have been designed to ensure efficacy in gathering valuable data for the study. Also, an attention question was added to the survey to ensure that participants were thoroughly reading and responding to the questions.

Informed Pilot

Before engaging the primary pilot for this study, an informed pilot was conducted to ensure technical reliability and established face, content, and variable validity of the survey instrument. The informed pilot participants were provided with the survey instrument, along with comprehensive information about the research, theoretical research model, a detailed explanation of the primary pilot, and a checklist to guide their evaluation of the survey instrument (please refer to Appendix I). The informed pilot was published, and data was collected from members of law enforcement agencies. These participants consisted of five law enforcement personnel from different agencies around the United States and cohort members. Throughout the informed pilot,

the participants carefully assessed the technicality of the survey instrument and provided valuable feedback concerning the questions in a one-on-one meeting. Based on their feedback, minor changes were made to the questionnaire.

Data Collection

After the informed Pilot was published to the participants, corrections and modifications were made for clarification and thoroughness of the questionnaire. After the questionnaire was finalized, the internet-based survey was published with a total of 305 participants on CloudResearch. Participants were asked to answer the questions within 30 minutes, however, the survey on average is between 5 to 7 minutes depending on the reading speed. The data gathered from this survey was subjected to thorough analysis to achieve accurate measurements of the variables under investigation.

Measures

Job Satisfaction (JS):

Job satisfaction was assessed using 20 items that measured employees' perceptions of various job aspects such as task variety, autonomy, supervision, coworker relationships, pay, and advancement opportunities (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (short-form 1977)). The mean scores ranged from 2.48 to 4.42, indicating generally favorable levels of satisfaction, particularly with steady employment ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.74$) and opportunities to use abilities ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.797$). The internal consistency of the scale was high, with Cronbach's Alpha values around 0.88 to 0.89, suggesting that the items reliably measured the same underlying construct of job satisfaction.

Organizational Commitment (OC):

Organizational commitment was measured using 15 items, including both standard and reverse-coded statements reflecting employees' loyalty and emotional attachment to their organization (Porter et al (1974)). Most positively worded items had low means, reflecting strong agreement (e.g., OC6: "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization," $M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.406$), while reverse-coded items had higher means. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.85 to 0.87, indicating good internal reliability, meaning that the scale consistently captured commitment-related sentiments across respondents.

Career Development (CD):

Career development support was evaluated through nine items assessing organizational efforts to enhance employee growth through training, education, and professional development (Berman and West (1999)). Responses showed generally positive perceptions, with means ranging from 3.32 to 3.9. For instance, seeking advice from colleagues ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.946$) and support for continuing education ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.115$) were rated favorably. The Cronbach's Alpha values for this construct were consistently above 0.89, indicating excellent reliability and consistency in measuring organizational support for career advancement.

Turnover Intention (TI):

Turnover intention was assessed through three items evaluating the degree to which participants were considering leaving their jobs (Michaels and Spector (1982)). The mean scores were low, ranging from 1.64 to 1.81, indicating that most respondents did not strongly intend to leave their positions. The Cronbach's Alpha for the turnover intention scale was approximately 0.73, indicating acceptable internal consistency, suitable for a short scale and adequate for capturing the construct of intention to leave.

Work Burnout (WB):

Work burnout was evaluated using eight items that examined emotional exhaustion, job-related frustration, and stress (Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey (MBI-GS)). The item means ranged from 1.55 to 1.88, suggesting mild to moderate burnout levels. The item “When it comes to work, I feel like I am simply finished” had the highest mean ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.327$), pointing to end-of-day fatigue. The Cronbach’s Alpha values ranged from 0.83 to 0.87, demonstrating strong internal reliability, indicating that the items consistently measured symptoms of burnout.

Perceived Alternatives (PA):

Perceived job alternatives were measured with four items addressing how easily respondents felt they could find another job (Michaels and Spector (1982), Mushtaq et al. (2014)). Mean scores ranged from 1.45 to 1.76, with the highest being “I could easily find a better job than the one I have now” ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.427$), suggesting a moderate belief in job mobility. The Cronbach’s Alpha was approximately 0.76, which indicates acceptable internal consistency, sufficient for evaluating perceived external job opportunities.

Control Variables

Age, gender, and perceived job alternatives are included as control variables in the model. These factors have been shown to influence embeddedness dimensions such as fit, links, and sacrifice. For example, younger employees may prioritize alignment and mobility, while perceived availability of external jobs can weaken commitment, even when internal satisfaction is high (Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Treuren, 2013).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The survey was made available to participants on October 27th, 2024 and remained open until December 21st, 2024. A total of 334 individuals initially responded to the survey. Upon reviewing the raw data, 20 responses were removed due to being completed in under 180 seconds (3 minutes), indicating a lack of thoughtful engagement. Additionally, any unanswered questions that resulted in blank responses were excluded from the dataset. Participants who failed to respond correctly to the attention check question were also removed to ensure data quality. After this data cleaning process, the final sample size consisted of 305 participants.

Demographic Information

Table 2: Demographic – Main Study: Sample (N) = 305

Gender			
Category	Statistics	Value	Percentile %
	Sample = N	305	
	Mean	1.49	
	Standard Deviation	0.52	
	1 (Male)	160	52.5%
	2 (Female)	142	46.6%
	3 (Non-binary)	3	1.0%
Age			
Category	Statistics	Value	Percentile %
	Sample = N	305	
	Mean	3.97	
	Standard Deviation	1.045	
	Minimum	2	
	Maximum	7	
	2 (18-24)	11	3.6%
	3 (25-34)	104	34.1%
	4 (35-44)	104	34.1%
	5 (45-54)	60	19.7%
	6 (55-65)	22	7.2%
	7 (65+)	4	1.3%

In the current study, demographic data (Table 2) were collected from 305 participants, with no missing values for either gender or age. The gender distribution showed a nearly balanced representation: 52.5% (n = 160) of participants identified as male, 46.6% (n = 142) as female, and 1% (n = 3) selected for non-binary gender. The mean gender value was 1.49 (SD = 0.520), suggesting a slight predominance of male respondents. Regarding age, the participants represented a range of age categories. The mean age score was 3.97 (SD = 1.045), with coded values ranging from 2 to 7. The age ranges were 1 = under 18, 2 = 18 - 24 years old, 3 = 25 – 34 years old, 4 = 35 – 44 years old, 5 = 45 – 54 years old, 6 = 55 – 65 years old and 7 = 65 plus. The largest age groups were those coded as 3 and 4, each comprising 34.1% of the sample (n = 104), followed by group 5 with 19.7% (n = 60). Participants coded as 6 represented 7.2% (n = 22), while groups 2 and 7 were the smallest, accounting for 3.6% (n = 11) and 1.3% (n = 4), respectively. This distribution reflects a sample largely composed of individuals in early to mid-adulthood, with smaller proportions from both the youngest and oldest age brackets.

Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Career Development	0.913	0.925	0.929	0.592
Employee Turnover Intention	0.776	0.795	0.869	0.69
Job Satisfaction	0.896	0.916	0.909	0.348
Organizational Commitment	0.87	0.888	0.894	0.385
Work Burnout	0.866	0.901	0.895	0.53
Perceived Job Alternatives	0.836	1.258	0.838	0.571

Note: Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency reliability among the indicators for each construct (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In this study, all constructs exceeded this threshold, suggesting that the measurement items consistently reflect their underlying latent variables.

Table 3 shows the results from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), focusing on reliability and validity testing for each construct. This analysis helps confirm that the survey items used to measure each variable are consistent and represent the concept they are intended to measure. The table includes four key values for each construct:

1. **Cronbach's Alpha** – This measures internal consistency. A value above 0.70 is generally acceptable.
2. **Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c)** – These two values also measure internal consistency. Both should ideally be above 0.70.
3. **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** – This measures how much of the variance in the survey items is explained by the underlying factor. A value of 0.50 or higher indicates good convergent validity.

In table 3, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c), and average variance extracted (AVE), as recommended in the structural equation modeling literature (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2009). Cronbach's alpha values across all constructs exceeded the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Specifically, Career Development ($\alpha = 0.913$), Job Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.896$), Organizational Commitment ($\alpha = 0.870$), and Work Burnout ($\alpha = 0.866$) demonstrated high levels of reliability, while Employee Turnover Intention ($\alpha = 0.776$) and Perceived Job

Alternatives ($\alpha = 0.836$) also met acceptable standards. These findings suggest that the measurement items within each construct consistently reflect their respective latent variables.

Composite reliability was evaluated using both ρ_a and ρ_c , with all constructs exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), thereby reinforcing the reliability of the latent constructs. Career Development ($\rho_c = 0.929$), Job Satisfaction ($\rho_c = 0.909$), and Work Burnout ($\rho_c = 0.895$) were particularly strong. However, the ρ_a value for Perceived Job Alternatives ($\rho_a = 1.258$) was unusually high, exceeding the upper boundary typically observed in literature. This may be an indication of item redundancy, multicollinearity, or a potential model misspecification (Hair et al., 2019; Raykov, 2004). Such values merit closer examination of the individual indicator loadings and inter-item correlations for potential refinement.

Convergent validity was assessed through average variance extracted (AVE), with the threshold set at 0.50 or higher to confirm that constructs explain more than half the variance of their indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Career Development (AVE = 0.592), Employee Turnover Intention (AVE = 0.690), Work Burnout (AVE = 0.530), and Perceived Job Alternatives (AVE = 0.571) demonstrated acceptable levels of convergent validity. However, Job Satisfaction (AVE = 0.348) and Organizational Commitment (AVE = 0.385) failed to meet the recommended threshold, indicating that the majority of variance in these constructs may be due to measurement error rather than shared variance among indicators. These results suggest a need to review and possibly revise the measurement items for these constructs by removing underperforming indicators or reassessing construct dimensionality.

The measurement model demonstrates strong internal consistency reliability across all constructs and robust composite reliability. However, the insufficient AVE scores for Job

Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment highlight areas for improvement in convergent validity. Addressing these concerns through targeted indicator refinement will strengthen the construct validity of the overall model.

Descriptive Statistics and Test of Normality

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	Skewness Std. Error	Kurtosis	Kurtosis Std. Error
Job Satisfaction (JS)	305	74.6951	11.33036	-1.014	0.14	2.82	0.278
Organizational Commitment	305	38.3869	4.02474	0.646	0.14	-0.658	0.278
Career Development	305	32.4787	7.117	-0.811	0.14	0.731	0.278
Employee Turnover Intention	305	5.118	1.12061	-0.856	0.14	-0.788	0.278
Work Bournout	305	13.4656	2.63572	-0.659	0.14	-1.015	0.278
Perceived Job Alternatives	305	6.3279	1.57615	-0.279	0.14	-1.511	0.278

Table 4 shows the average scores and how the responses were spread out (standard deviation) for each main variable in the study, based on 305 participants. Job Satisfaction had the highest average score ($M = 74.70$), and the responses were more to the high side, meaning most people were satisfied with their jobs. It also had a sharp peak in the distribution (high kurtosis), showing many responses were close to the average. Organizational Commitment had a moderate average score ($M = 38.39$), and the responses leaned slightly to the lower side, suggesting some employees felt less committed. Career Development had a positive average ($M = 32.48$), with most responses again leaning to the high end, showing participants felt their organizations supported their growth. Employee Turnover Intention had a low average ($M = 5.12$), which means most people were not thinking about quitting their jobs. Work Burnout also had a low average score ($M = 13.47$), suggesting that most employees did not feel very burned out. Perceived Job Alternatives had the lowest average ($M = 6.33$), indicating that participants felt they had limited other job options. The skewness and kurtosis values help confirm that most of

the responses were not perfectly normally distributed but leaned more toward positive or low-stress outcomes.

Table 5: Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.083	305	<.001	0.95	305	<.001
Organizational Commitment	0.15	305	<.001	0.921	305	<.001
Career Development	0.119	305	<.001	0.946	305	<.001
Employee Turnover Intention	0.332	305	<.001	0.741	305	<.001
Work Bournout	0.208	305	<.001	0.84	305	<.001
Perceived Job Alternatives	0.226	305	<.001	0.824	305	<.001

Note: Skewness and kurtosis values were assessed to evaluate the normality of the data distribution. Values near zero for skewness and excess

kurtosis (kurtosis – 3) indicate approximate normality.

The mean and standard deviation for each variable were calculated using descriptive statistics. Table 5 presents the results for all aggregated variables, including Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Career Development, Employee Turnover Intention, Work Burnout, and Perceived Job Alternatives. In addition to these descriptive measures, a normality test was conducted to assess how the data were distributed. To perform appropriate statistical analyses, a normal distribution of the data is often assumed (Simsek & Gurler, 2019). Both the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were applied to evaluate the normality of each variable's distribution. The results of both tests revealed statistically significant values ($p < .001$) for all variables, indicating that the data for each variable significantly deviated from a normal distribution. These findings suggest that the sample data are not normally distributed and thus may require non-parametric or adjusted statistical methods.

Table 6: Correlation Table

	Age	Career Development	Employee Turnover Intention	Gender	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment	Perceived Job Alternatives	Work Burnout
Age		0.145	0.179	0.017	0.137	0.097	0.117	0.063
Career Development	0.145		0.294*	0.054	0.678*	0.608*	0.137	0.358*
Employee Turnover Intention	0.179	0.294*		0.028	0.530*	0.685*	0.193	0.628*
Gender	0.017	0.054	0.028		0.095	0.124	0.155	0.185
Job Satisfaction	0.137	0.678*	0.530*	0.095		0.714*	0.170	0.576*
Organizational Commitment	0.097	0.608*	0.685*	0.124	0.714*		0.196	0.600*
Perceived Job Alternatives	0.117	0.137	0.193	0.155	0.170	0.196		0.097
Work Burnout	0.063	0.358*	0.628*	0.185	0.576*	0.600*	0.097	

Note: significance is defined at the $p < .05$ level. Presumed statistically significant correlations will be indicated using an asterisk (*) next to values above .20, as these are often considered moderate correlations and typically significant in medium-to-large samples. The use of $p < .05$ as a standard threshold for statistical significance is widely accepted and was formalized in social science research as early as Fisher (1925). It remains the conventional cutoff in most behavioral and psychological research.

Table 6 shows the correlation between the constructs. The correlation matrix presented provides insight into the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables, including demographic controls (age and gender) and the main constructs such as career development, employee turnover intention, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived job alternatives, and work burnout.

Career development is positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .678$), organizational commitment ($r = .608$), and work burnout ($r = .358$), indicating that individuals who experience stronger career growth opportunities are more satisfied and committed to their organizations, but also potentially exposed to higher emotional demands. It is also moderately correlated with employee turnover intention ($r = .294$), supporting the idea that greater career development can increase perceived marketability and mobility.

Job satisfaction shows strong positive correlations with organizational commitment ($r = .714$), further emphasizing that employees who are more content with their jobs tend to express higher loyalty to the organization. It also relates negatively (as expected directionally) with employee turnover intention ($r = .530$) and work burnout ($r = .576$), suggesting that higher satisfaction is associated with a reduced desire to leave and lower emotional exhaustion.

Organizational commitment is also strongly related to employee turnover intention ($r = .685$) and work burnout ($r = .600$), indicating that more committed employees are less likely to want to leave and may cope better with stress.

Perceived job alternatives displays smaller, though notable, correlations with several variables, including organizational commitment ($r = .196$) and job satisfaction ($r = .170$), but these may not be statistically significant without p-values. Its modest correlation with turnover intention ($r = .193$) aligns with existing theory suggesting that perceived external opportunities can influence the likelihood of leaving an organization.

Among the control variables, age shows small, positive correlations with career development ($r = .145$), turnover intention ($r = .179$), and job satisfaction ($r = .137$), though these are likely not statistically significant. Gender has minimal correlations across the board, with the highest being with work burnout ($r = .185$), which suggests that gender may have a limited direct relationship with the core constructs in this model.

In summary, the correlation matrix supports the hypothesized relationships within the job embeddedness framework. Key constructs such as career development, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment are strongly interconnected and exhibit meaningful associations with

both turnover intention and work burnout, thereby validating their inclusion in the conceptual model.

Figure 2: Structural Model - Smart PLS Output

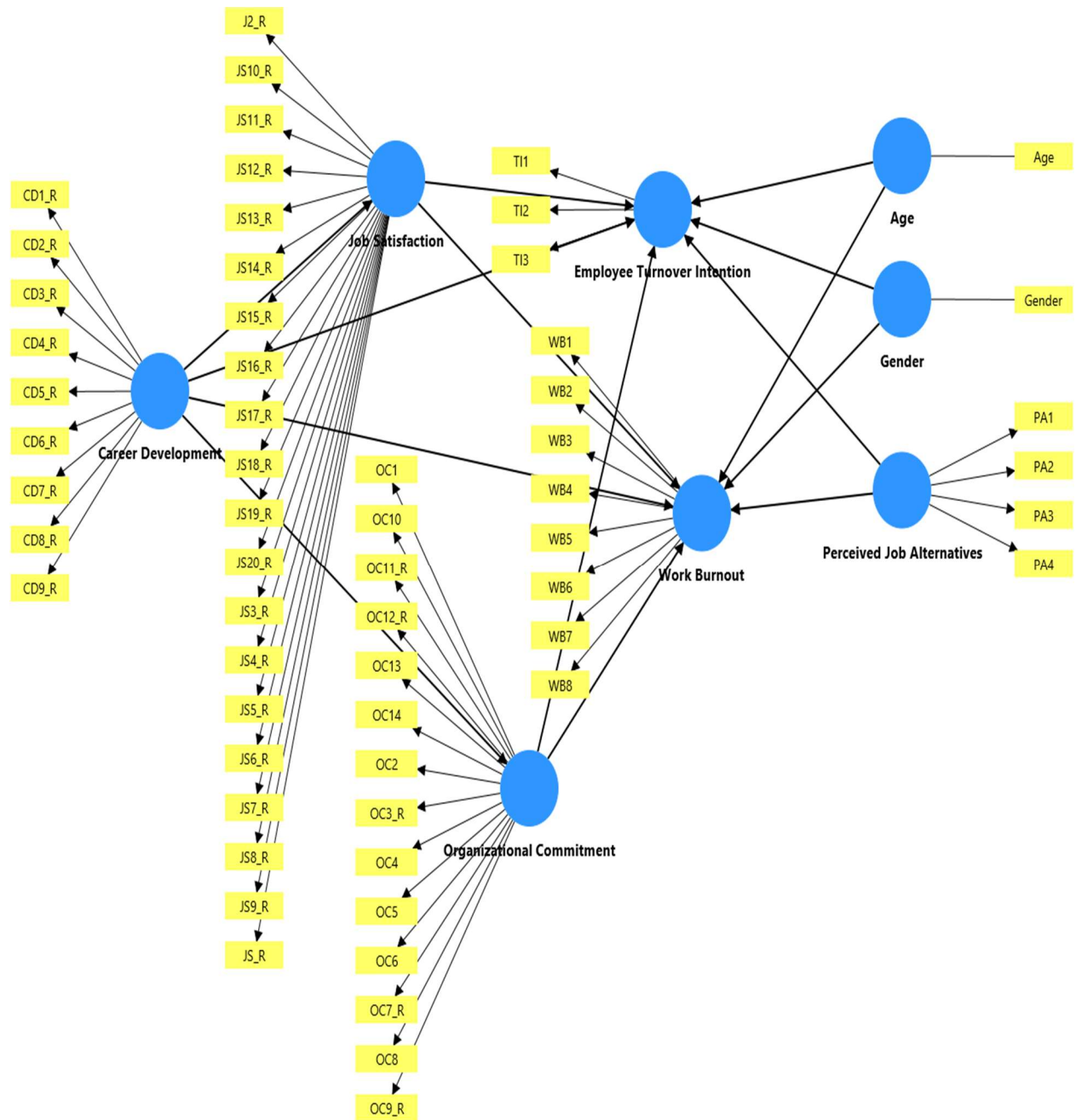


Table 7: Hypothesis Outcome

	Hypothesis	Path Relationships	p values	Outcome Supported?
H1	Career Development positively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.	Career Development -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.018	Yes
H2	Career Development negatively relates to Work Burnout.	Career Development -> Work Burnout	0.074	No
H3	Career Development positively relates to Job Satisfaction.	Career Development -> Job Satisfaction	0	Yes
H4	Career Development positively relates to Organizational Commitment.	Career Development -> Organizational Commitment	0	Yes
H5	Job Satisfaction negatively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.	Job Satisfaction -> Employee Turnover Intention	0	Yes
H6	Job Satisfaction negatively relates to Work Burnout.	Job Satisfaction -> Work Burnout	0	Yes
H7	Organizational Commitment negatively relates to Employee Turnover Intention.	Organizational Commitment -> Employee Turnover Intention	0	Yes
H8	Organizational Commitment negatively relates to Work Burnout.	Organizational Commitment -> Work Burnout	0	Yes
H9a	Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Employee Turnover Intention.	Career Development -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Turnover Intention	0	Yes
H9b	Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Work Burnout.	Career Development -> Job Satisfaction -> Work Burnout	0	Yes
H10a	Organizational Commitment partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Employee Turnover Intention.	Career Development -> Organizational Commitment -> Employee Turnover Intention	0	Yes
H10b	Organizational Commitment partially mediates the relationship between Career Development and Work Burnout.	Career Development -> Organizational Commitment -> Work Burnout	0	Yes
Controls		Age -> Employee Turnover Intention	0	Yes
Controls		Age -> Work Burnout	0.735	
Controls		Gender -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.614	
Controls		Gender -> Work Burnout	0.016	
Controls		Perceived Job Alternatives -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.011	
Controls		Perceived Job Alternatives -> Work Burnout	0.295	

Table 7 shows the results of the structural model testing which provide strong empirical support for the proposed relationships, demonstrating that all twelve primary hypotheses (H1 through H10b) were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. These findings affirm the multidimensional role of career development in influencing both job attitudes and outcomes. Specifically, career development significantly increased employee turnover intention (H1, $p =$

0.000), which supports previous research suggesting that professionally developed employees often become more attractive in the external labor market and more aware of outside opportunities (Alkahtani, 2015; Chen et al., 2004). On the other hand, career development was significantly not associated with a reduction in work burnout (H2, $p = 0.074$), contradicting with prior literature emphasizing the energizing and engagement-enhancing effects of learning and advancement opportunities (Ng et al., 2006; Weng & McElroy, 2012).

Career development also showed strong positive relationships with both job satisfaction (H3, $p = 0.000$) and organizational commitment (H4, $p = 0.000$), consistent with studies indicating that when employees perceive support for their growth, they are more likely to feel fulfilled and emotionally connected to their organization (Foong-ming, 2008; Meyer & Allen, 2001). These attitudinal variables were also key predictors of work outcomes. Job satisfaction was negatively associated with both turnover intention (H5, $p = 0.000$) and burnout (H6, $p = 0.000$), echoing the findings of Judge et al. (2001) and Kim (2015), who noted that satisfied employees are less likely to quit and are more resilient to emotional strain.

Similarly, organizational commitment was negatively linked to employee turnover intention (H7, $p = 0.000$) and burnout (H8, $p = 0.000$), affirming previous studies that have long emphasized commitment's buffering effect against stress and withdrawal behaviors (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011; Meyer, 2001). These findings reinforce the embeddedness perspective, suggesting that when employees are emotionally anchored to their organization and aligned with its values, they are less likely to experience detachment or emotional exhaustion (Mitchell et al., 2001).

The mediation analyses further confirmed the central role of job attitudes in the model. Job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between career development and both employee turnover intention (H9a, $p = 0.000$) and burnout (H9b, $p = 0.000$), while organizational

commitment similarly mediated the relationship between career development and these outcomes (H10a and H10b, $p = 0.000$). These results suggest that while career development may directly affect turnover and burnout, a substantial portion of its impact is transmitted through how it shapes employees' psychological experiences at work. This supports the theoretical underpinning of Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which emphasizes that turnover behavior is not merely a reaction to dissatisfaction but a function of multiple attitudinal and relational forces.

The inclusion of control variables such as age, gender, and perceived job alternatives added nuance to the model by accounting for demographic and contextual influences. Age was significantly associated with employee turnover intention ($p = 0.000$), suggesting that younger employees may be more likely to consider leaving their organizations, a finding consistent with studies noting generational differences in career expectations and job mobility (Long et al., 2012; Mahapatro, 2021). Gender was significantly related to work burnout ($p = 0.016$), reflecting prior research that suggests differences in how men and women experience and report occupational stress (Maslach et al., 2001). Additionally, perceived job alternatives significantly predicted turnover intention ($p = 0.011$), in line with studies by Mobley (1977) and Griffeth and Hom (1988), who emphasized that the perceived ease of movement increases the likelihood of resignation.

Conversely, several control paths were not significant: age was not significantly related to burnout ($p = 0.735$), gender was not linked to turnover intention ($p = 0.614$), and perceived job alternatives did not predict burnout ($p = 0.295$). These findings suggest that while individual differences and perceptions of external opportunity play a role in turnover, their influence is more nuanced compared to the consistent predictive strength of career development, job satisfaction, and commitment.

Sobel Test Results

The Sobel test was conducted to determine whether the indirect effects of career development on employee turnover intention and work burnout through the mediator's job satisfaction and organizational commitment were statistically significant. The Sobel test evaluates the strength of a mediation effect by testing whether the product of the two regression paths (a and b) is significantly different from zero.

Sobel Test Formula:

$$Z = \frac{a \times b}{\sqrt{(b^2 \times SE_a^2) + (a^2 \times SE_b^2)}}$$

Where:

a = coefficient from the independent variable to the mediator

b = coefficient from the mediator to the dependent variable

SE_a = standard error of a

SE_b = standard error of b

The coefficients and standard errors were extracted from the SmartPLS bootstrapping output.

Table 8: Sobel Test Results

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Sobel Z-Value	Significance
H9a	Career Development → Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intention	-3.744	Significant (p < .001)
H9b	Career Development → Job Satisfaction → Work Burnout	-5.549	Significant (p < .001)
H10a	Career Development → Org. Commitment → Turnover Intention	-6.786	Significant (p < .001)
H10b	Career Development → Org. Commitment → Work Burnout	-4.987	Significant (p < .001)

(Detailed calculation of Sobel test is provided in the Appendices.)

To evaluate the significance of the indirect effects of career development on employee turnover intention and work burnout, Sobel tests were conducted for each mediation pathway using job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mediators. The Sobel test assesses whether a mediator significantly transmits the effect of an independent variable to a dependent variable, based on the product of the coefficients for the two paths (a and b) and their associated standard errors. According to MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets (2002), a Sobel Z-value greater than ± 1.96 indicates statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level.

The results in table 8 indicated that all four mediation hypotheses were statistically significant. Specifically, job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between career development and employee turnover intention ($Z = -3.744$), and between career development and work burnout ($Z = -5.549$). These findings suggest that employees who perceive

opportunities for career development are more likely to experience increased job satisfaction, which in turn reduces their intention to leave and lowers burnout.

Similarly, organizational commitment also significantly mediated the relationship between career development and employee turnover intention ($Z = -6.786$), as well as between career development and work burnout ($Z = -4.987$). This means that when employees feel their career development needs are supported, their emotional attachment to the organization strengthens, which lowers their likelihood of burnout and turnover.

All Z-values exceeded the ± 1.96 threshold, confirming that the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. These findings underscore the importance of addressing not just the structural availability of career development programs, but also their capacity to foster positive emotional and attitudinal outcomes that anchor employees within the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001; MacKinnon et al., 2002).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Implications

The findings of this study hold essential theoretical, practical, and policy implications for organizational leadership, human resource management, and workforce sustainability; particularly in high-threat professions such as law enforcement and private security. First, the support for all hypothesized relationships reinforces the relevance of Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001) as a comprehensive framework for understanding employee retention and well-being. The theory's core dimensions: fit, links, and sacrifice are reflected in the way career development impacts turnover intention and burnout through key attitudinal mechanisms like job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

However, several important limitations must be acknowledged. One of the most notable findings was the positive relationship between career development and turnover intention. While this supports the theoretical idea that development may raise perceived market value and awareness of outside opportunities, it also highlights a limitation in understanding the specific types of career development activities that lead to retention versus those that encourage departure. Because the survey did not differentiate between formal promotions, lateral training, or external certifications, the results are limited in identifying which aspects of development are more likely to increase turnover. Future studies should examine different categories of career development to provide more precise guidance to HR leaders.

In addition, while career development was associated with reduced burnout and higher job satisfaction and commitment, the constructs of job satisfaction and organizational commitment showed AVE values below the accepted threshold (0.348 and 0.385, respectively). This suggests that although the scales had strong internal consistency, the items may not have fully captured the underlying concepts. As these variables served as mediators in the study, the limitation in convergent validity weakens the strength of those mediation claims. Future research should refine these measures, possibly through item reduction or revalidation, to ensure they accurately represent the constructs being tested.

The sacrifice dimension of Job Embeddedness Theory, while central to the framework, was not explored in as much depth in the discussion. The theory emphasizes that employees assess what they would give up if they left their job, including benefits, relationships, tenure, organizational knowledge, and community standing. In the context of law enforcement, these sacrifices may be particularly significant pension systems, specialized training investments, retirement plans, and public service recognition often build over time. However, the study results indicate that even with these sacrifices in place, officers still report high turnover intention when presented with strong external opportunities. This reveals a limitation in how “sacrifice” was measured or perceived and calls for future research to explore whether officers truly value these sacrifices or feel they are no longer enough to outweigh burnout, safety risks, or family strain. Including qualitative data could help uncover whether the perceived sacrifice is emotional, financial, or symbolic.

Another limitation lies in the cross-sectional design of the study. Because data were collected at one point in time, it is difficult to draw conclusions about cause and effect. For example, although career development was linked to reduced burnout, it is unclear whether development led to lower burnout, or whether less-burned-out employees were more likely to pursue development. A longitudinal study would better clarify these causal relationships and allow researchers to observe how changes in development opportunities influence emotional outcomes and turnover intention over time.

Lastly, the study showed that age, gender, and perceived job alternatives were statistically significant control variables, yet the analysis did not explore how these demographics might interact with the main variables. This limits the generalizability of the findings. For instance, younger officers may respond more strongly to development opportunities but may also be more mobile and open to outside jobs. Likewise, gender differences in burnout were not examined, even though they may influence how embedded women and men feel in high-threat professions. Future research should explore subgroup differences using interaction or multi-group analysis to offer more tailored strategies for retention.

In summary, the study's results support Job Embeddedness Theory and provide valuable insights for improving employee retention in law enforcement. At the same time, limitations related to measurement validity, construct depth, cross-sectional design, and demographic generalizability should be addressed in future research. By acknowledging these constraints and refining methodological approaches, future studies can build a more complete picture of how to retain skilled personnel in high-stress and high-risk occupations.

Theoretical contribution

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the application of Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001) in understanding employee turnover intention and work burnout in the law enforcement sector, a profession characterized by high risk, emotional labor, and increasing personnel shortages. The theory posits that employees remain in their jobs not just because of job satisfaction or lack of alternatives, but because they are embedded in their roles through three key dimensions: fit, links, and sacrifice. This multidimensional framework offers a more nuanced explanation of employee retention, especially in environments where traditional motivators such as compensation or training may not be sufficient (Mitchell et al., 2001; Holtom et al., 2008).

This study demonstrated that career development, while not directly reducing burnout (H2, $p = 0.074$), significantly influenced job satisfaction (H3) and organizational commitment (H4), both of which played crucial roles in lowering employee turnover intention (H5, H7) and work burnout (H6, H8). These results align with previous findings in the literature. For example, Weng and Hu (2009) noted that when employees perceive alignment between their personal goals and organizational development opportunities, they are more likely to stay, reinforcing the “fit” component of embeddedness. Similarly, Meyer and Allen (2001) argued that organizational commitment; emotional attachment to the organization functions as a stabilizing force, particularly when external alternatives are present.

The Sobel test results confirmed that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment significantly mediated the relationship between career development and both employee turnover intention and work burnout (H9a, H9b, H10a, H10b). This suggests that the value of career development lies not only in its structural availability but in its ability to enhance

psychological attachment, sense of purpose, and perceived investment—components directly tied to “fit” and “sacrifice.” As noted by Crossley et al. (2007), embeddedness is most powerful when employees perceive that leaving the organization would result in personal or professional loss.

Furthermore, organizational commitment exhibited the strongest predictive power in this study, supporting the idea that officers with deep emotional and normative ties to their agencies are less likely to disengage or burn out. This supports earlier work by Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011), who found that high levels of affective commitment significantly reduced turnover intentions, even when job satisfaction was only moderate. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2012) emphasized that embeddedness through organizational culture and internal relationships reduces withdrawal behaviors by reinforcing an employee’s sense of belonging and purpose.

This research also confirms that external perceived job alternatives (a control variable) were significantly related to turnover intention ($p = 0.011$), echoing Griffeth and Hom’s (1988) assertion that the perception not just the presence of job alternatives can erode embeddedness. However, this factor did not significantly affect burnout, suggesting that internal psychological resources (like satisfaction and commitment) may serve as better predictors of emotional exhaustion than external opportunity structures.

In summary, the Job Embeddedness framework offers a comprehensive lens through which to view the complex interplay of emotional, relational, and contextual factors influencing officer retention. By validating the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and highlighting the partial influence of career development, this study contributes to the growing evidence that embeddedness plays a vital role in workforce stability in high-stress public service sectors.

This study further contributes to the growing body of research on employee retention by applying Job Embeddedness Theory to the context of law enforcement, a field currently facing a critical shortage of qualified professionals. By examining factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career development, burnout, and turnover intention, the study offers important insights into what keeps law enforcement officers engaged and, what pushes them to leave. The findings show that job satisfaction and organizational commitment play a strong role in reducing burnout and turnover intention, highlighting the importance of emotional and psychological connections to the job and the organization.

Importantly, while career development is typically considered a retention strategy, its direct relationship with turnover intention and burnout was not as strong as expected. However, Sobel test results confirmed that career development has a significant indirect effect on both outcomes through its influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For example, job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between career development and both turnover intention ($Z = -3.744$) and burnout ($Z = -5.549$), while organizational commitment also served as a significant mediator for the same outcomes ($Z = -6.786$ for turnover intention, $Z = -4.987$ for burnout). These results reinforce that while development alone may not prevent officers from leaving, its power lies in how it shapes employees' emotional experiences, specifically how it boosts satisfaction and deepens commitment. This highlights the embeddedness concept of "fit," where alignment between personal growth and role relevance helps build stronger psychological ties to the organization.

By focusing on the “fit,” “links,” and “sacrifice” components of Job Embeddedness Theory, this study provides a new lens for understanding the challenges of keeping officers in the profession, especially during a time when public safety roles are under immense pressure.

Based on the study findings, several recommendations can be made to help law enforcement agencies reduce turnover intention and burnout among officers. First, since job satisfaction significantly reduces turnover intention, departments should focus on improving day-to-day work experience. This can include providing supportive leadership, recognizing officers' efforts, ensuring fair and manageable workloads, and offering more autonomy within the law in how duties are conducted. These efforts can help officers feel a stronger fit with their roles and increase their satisfaction, making them less likely to leave.

In addition, fostering organizational commitment should be a priority. The findings showed that when officers feel emotionally connected to their organization, they are less likely to experience burnout. This was further supported by the mediation results, which showed organizational commitment as a key bridge between career development and positive work outcomes. To build this connection, agencies should invest in positive work culture, open communication, and shared values that align with officers' beliefs and motivations. Small efforts to make officers feel valued and involved in the agency's goals can build stronger commitment and emotional ties.

While career development did not show a strong direct impact on reducing turnover or burnout, the indirect effects via satisfaction and commitment emphasize its continued relevance. Agencies should rethink how they design and promote professional development opportunities. Rather than simply offering generic training programs, departments should ensure that these

opportunities are meaningful, personalized, and clearly tied to advancement and recognition. Officers are more likely to stay when they see a future within the organization.

Mental health support is also essential. Since burnout remains a concern, departments should invest in wellness programs, mental health counseling, stress management training, and flexible scheduling where possible. Officers who feel emotionally supported are more likely to stay engaged and committed to their work.

Finally, it is important to recognize that retention is not one-size-fits-all. The data showed that younger officers and those who believe they have better job alternatives are more likely to leave. Therefore, agencies should tailor retention strategies to meet the needs of different age groups and career stages. Strengthening peer relationships, mentorship programs, and community engagement can also help build strong workplace bonds known as “links” in Job Embeddedness Theory which make it harder for employees to detach from the organization. By taking these steps, law enforcement agencies can address the root causes of turnover and burnout, ultimately improving officer retention and easing the current shortage.

Limitations

While this study intended to examine turnover intention among professionals in high-threat security roles including law enforcement, corrections, and private security the sample was primarily composed of individuals working in police departments and law enforcement-related positions. Although the recruitment process targeted a broader security workforce, including corrections officers and personal security personnel, the resulting sample may not fully represent the experiences of professionals in other high-threat sectors such as emergency services or

private security. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the findings beyond the context of law enforcement.

Additionally, some limitations emerged in the measurement model. Specifically, the constructs for Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment demonstrated acceptable reliability based on Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values but did not meet the minimum threshold for Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with scores of 0.348 and 0.385 respectively. These low AVE values suggest that the items may not have captured the constructs with sufficient precision, raising concerns about convergent validity. Since both constructs played key mediating roles in the study, these measurement limitations may reduce the strength or interpretability of the observed mediation effects. Future research should consider revising the measurement scales, possibly through item reduction or revalidation, to improve construct clarity and statistical validity.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

This study set out to investigate the key factors influencing employee turnover intention in the United States law enforcement sector, a field currently facing unprecedented workforce shortages. Guided by Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), the research explored the interrelationships among career development, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work burnout, and employee turnover intention, while also considering the influence of control variables such as age, gender, and perceived job alternatives. The findings offer valuable insight into the psychological, emotional, and developmental dimensions that anchor employees to their organization or compel them to leave.

All primary hypotheses were supported, underscoring the significance of each variable in the turnover equation except for career development relationship to work burnout. Career development, while often viewed solely as a retention strategy, was shown to have a dual effect. On one hand, it enhanced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced work burnout—positive signs of workforce engagement. On the other hand, it also increased employee turnover intention, likely because it equips employees with greater skills and mobility, making them more attractive in a competitive labor market. These findings challenge simplistic assumptions about the protective power of development and underscore the need for retention strategies that are both developmental and strategically binding.

Moreover, job satisfaction and organizational commitment emerged as critical buffers against turnover and burnout, confirming their foundational roles in employee well-being and decision-making. Their significant mediating effects also affirm that employees' emotional and attitudinal responses to organizational practices are central to understanding why they stay or leave. These constructs operationalize the "fit" and "links" components of job embeddedness and help to explain how deeper psychological bonds reduce the perceived desirability of movement.

The study also highlighted the partial influence of demographic and contextual controls. For instance, age and perceived job alternatives were significantly related to turnover intention, and gender influenced burnout, suggesting that personal factors and perceived external opportunities continue to shape work behavior in complex ways. However, these controls did not diminish the explanatory power of the main constructs, reinforcing the robustness of the proposed model.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research expands the application of Job Embeddedness Theory to high-risk, high-stakes professions like policing. It demonstrates that retention is not

merely the result of satisfaction or organizational loyalty, but the outcome of how employees perceive their fit within the organization, the connections they have formed, and the sacrifices associated with leaving. Practically, the findings urge law enforcement leaders and HR professionals to rethink traditional retention approaches. Investing in career development must be paired with clear internal mobility, recognition programs, and culture-building initiatives that reinforce long-term attachment. Failing to do so may result in development programs unintentionally increasing attrition by boosting external employability without strengthening internal commitment.

The findings from this study open several important avenues for future research. Given the unexpected result that career development was positively associated with turnover intention, future studies should explore this paradox more deeply. While career development was traditionally considered a retention strategy, the results suggest it may also empower employees to seek better external opportunities. Researchers should examine the types and formats of career development such as lateral versus promotional growth, internal mentoring versus external certifications to determine which forms are most likely to support retention rather than drive attrition. Additionally, future work could explore how perceived internal mobility influences the relationship between development and turnover intention, possibly serving as a moderator.

The study's results also highlighted the strong mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, especially in explaining how career development influences both burnout and turnover intention. However, measurement limitations related to the low AVE values for these two constructs call for further validation. Future research should refine the measurement instruments for job satisfaction and organizational commitment, possibly through confirmatory factor analysis or scale revision. Testing improved instruments in other high-threat

professions such as corrections, emergency medical services, or firefighting could also expand the generalizability of these findings.

Given the partial mediation effects and the complexity of emotional responses in high-stress roles, future studies should also consider exploring moderated mediation models. For instance, factors such as leadership style, organizational justice, or perceived organizational support may influence how satisfaction and commitment mediate the effects of development and burnout. These additional layers would help clarify the mechanisms through which embeddedness operates and how it varies under different organizational conditions.

The current study employed a cross-sectional design, limiting its ability to assess causal direction. For example, while development was associated with lower burnout, it remains unclear whether development reduces burnout or if less-burned-out employees are more likely to pursue development opportunities. To address this, future research should adopt longitudinal methods that track employees over time, allowing scholars to observe how changes in job attitudes, development experiences, and burnout levels evolve and interact to influence turnover decisions.

The influence of control variables such as age, gender, and perceived job alternatives also suggests important directions for future work. While these factors were statistically significant, this study did not explore them beyond their role as controls. Future research should conduct subgroup or multigroup analysis to examine how different populations experience burnout, satisfaction, commitment, and development. For example, younger officers may be more responsive to certain types of training, while female officers may face unique stressors or relational dynamics within male-dominated environments. Understanding these subgroup differences can help agencies develop more personalized retention strategies.

Additionally, the sacrifice dimension of Job Embeddedness Theory deserves further exploration. This study acknowledged sacrifice conceptually, but did not deeply investigate how officers interpret the potential losses associated with leaving. Future studies could use qualitative interviews or focus groups to uncover whether officers view these sacrifices as financial, emotional, or symbolic. For instance, pension benefits or career tenure may seem less valuable when work stress is overwhelming or when family safety is at stake. Understanding how sacrifice is perceived can help refine the theory and develop policies that make those sacrifices more meaningful and visible.

Finally, while this study focused primarily on U.S.-based law enforcement personnel, future research should aim for broader geographic and institutional diversity. Expanding the sample to include rural departments, federal agencies, or international police forces would provide comparative insights into how turnover intention manifests across different structural and cultural contexts. Further research can also apply this framework to non-law enforcement high-threat professions, such as corrections, emergency responders, or even military personnel, to test the transferability of the model and broaden its application.

In summary, this study contributes to our understanding of turnover intention in law enforcement, but it also raises several new questions. Future research should deepen the exploration of development paradoxes, improve the validity of emotional and attitudinal measures, explore subgroup differences, and apply longitudinal and qualitative approaches. These efforts will help uncover more precise and practical strategies for improving retention and well-being in high-risk occupations.

To conclude, addressing the law enforcement workforce shortage requires more than improving recruitment numbers; it demands a deeper understanding of what drives officers to

stay. By acknowledging the psychological precursors to turnover intention and investing in strategies that deepen embeddedness, law enforcement agencies can foster a healthier, more committed, and more resilient workforce. Future research should continue to refine these pathways, explore longitudinal outcomes, and investigate embeddedness strategies across diverse public safety contexts. Future research should consider longitudinal methods, broader geographic sampling, and qualitative interviews to capture the deeper, real-world complexities behind the growing police workforce crisis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

No of Qest.		Question Abbreviation						
Job Satisfaction (JS)			On my present job, I like...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Adapted) Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (short-form 1977)								
	1	JS1	Being able to keep busy all the time	1	2	3	4	5
	2	JS2	The chance to work alone on the job	1	2	3	4	5
	3	JS3	The chance to do different things from time to time	1	2	3	4	5
	4	JS4	The chance to be "somebody" in the community	1	2	3	4	5
	5	JS5	The way my boss handles his/her workers	1	2	3	4	5
	6	JS6	The competence of my supervisor in making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
	7	JS7	Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience	1	2	3	4	5
	8	JS8	The way my job provides for steady employment	1	2	3	4	5
	9	JS9	The chance to do things for other people .	1	2	3	4	5
	10	JS10	The chance to tell people what to do	1	2	3	4	5
	11	JS11	The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	1	2	3	4	5
	12	JS12	The way company policies are put into practice	1	2	3	4	5
	13	JS13	My pay and the amount of work I do	1	2	3	4	5
	14	JS14	The chances for advancement on this job	1	2	3	4	5
	15	JS15	The freedom to use my own judgment	1	2	3	4	5
	16	JS16	The chance to try my own methods of doing the job	1	2	3	4	5
	17	JS17	The working conditions	1	2	3	4	5
	18	JS18	The way my co-workers get along with each other	1	2	3	4	5
	19	JS19	The praise I get for doing a good job	1	2	3	4	5
	20	JS20	The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational Commitment (OC)				Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Adapted) Porter et al (1974)								
	21	OC1	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	1	2	3	4	5
	22	OC2	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	1	2	3	4	5
	23	OC3	I feel very little loyalty to this organization. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5
	24	OC4	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	25	OC5	I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	1	2	3	4	5
	26	OC6	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	27	OC7	I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work were similar. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5
	28	OC8	This organization really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance.	1	2	3	4	5
	29	OC9	It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5
	30	OC10	I am extremely glad I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	1	2	3	4	5
	31	OC11	There's not much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5
	32	OC12	Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5
	33	OC13	I really care about the fate of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
	34	OC14	For me, this is the best of all organizations for which to work.	1	2	3	4	5
	35	OC15	Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part. (Reverse)	1	2	3	4	5

No of Qest.	Question Abbreviation						
Career Development (CD)		My organization....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Adapted) Berman and West (1999)							
	39 CD1	Provides support for employees to stay on the top of their field	1	2	3	4	5
	40 CD2	Provides opportunities to improve managerial knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
	41 CD3	Provides support to employees to continue with their education	1	2	3	4	5
	42 CD4	Provides support for employees to attend annual meetings or conferences to improve technical knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
	43 CD5	Encourages seeking advice from colleagues in my professional network	1	2	3	4	5
	44 CD6	Encourages our use of professional and technical journals	1	2	3	4	5
	45 CD7	Provides support for employees to participate in professional development seminars	1	2	3	4	5
	46 CD8	Provides support for employees to attend management courses	1	2	3	4	5
	47 CD9	Provides support for employees to attend technical, non-management courses	1	2	3	4	5
Employee Turnover Intention (TI)			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Adaped) Michaels and Spector (1982)							
	61 TI1	I often seriously consider leaving my current job.	1	2	3	4	5
	62 TI2	I intend to quit my current job.	1	2	3	4	5
	63 TI3	I have started to look for other jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
Work Burnout (WB)			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Adapted) Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS)							
	48 WB1	I feel emotionally drained from my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	49 WB2	I feel exhausted by the end of the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
	50 WB3	I feel overtired when you wake up in the morning and have to experience another day on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
	51 WB4	Working with people of diverse nature all day is actually a tension for me.	1	2	3	4	5
	52 WB5	I feel burned out due to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	53 WB6	I feel frustrated by my job.	1	2	3	4	5
	54 WB7	Working directly with people puts too much tension on me.	1	2	3	4	5
	55 WB8	When it comes to work, I feel like I am simply finished.	1	2	3	4	5

CONTROL VARIABLES										
No of Qest.	Question Abbreviation									
Perceived Job Alternatives (PA)			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
(Adapted) Michaels and Spector (1982), Mushtaq et al. (2014)										
	57 PA1	It would be easy to find acceptable alternative employment.	1	2	3	4	5			
	58 PA2	There are many available jobs similar to mine	1	2	3	4	5			
	59 PA3	I know of several job alternatives that I could apply for	1	2	3	4	5			
	60 PA4	I could easily find a better job than the one I have now	1	2	3	4	5			
Demographics		What/Who/Where is								
					Non-Binary/ Third Gender	Prefer not to Say				
	Gender	What is your Gender?	Male	Female						
	Age	How Old are you?	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	

Appendix B: Informational Letter



INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Recommendations for the Security Protection industry/high-threat professions in the United States?

Hello, my name is Samantha Dacius. You have been chosen randomly to be in a research study about the Security Protection industry/high-threat professions in the United States. This study aims to find the factors impacting the Security Protection industry/high-threat professions in the United States and suggest recommendations to remedy the shortage. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 300 subjects' people in this research study. Participation in this study will take 30 minutes of your time. If you agree to be in the study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Reading a set of questions with "Disagree" or "Agree".
2. At the end of the survey, you will enter your random unique number for compensation for your time.

There are no foreseeable risks or benefits to you for participating in this. There are no known physical, psychological, or emotional risks associated with participation in this study beyond the possible mild discomfort associated with answering survey questions. This study is expected to benefit society by providing resources to reduce the protection shortage.

You will be compensated \$5. to answer the survey questionnaire. If you have questions while taking part, please stop me and ask.

You will remain anonymous.

If you have questions for the researcher conducting this study, you may contact Samantha Dacius at sdaci001@fiu.edu.

If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix C: Adult Consent Form

Law Enforcement Shortage

SUMMARY INFORMATION

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to identify factors contributing to Law Enforcement Shortages in the United States of America.
- **Procedures:** If you choose to participate, you will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions regarding assumed factors of Law Enforcement Shortage.
- **Duration:** This will take about 10 minutes
- **Risks:** There is no risk or discomfort from this research.
- **Benefits:** Contributing to the Law enforcement shortage research.
- **Alternatives:** There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
- **Participation:** Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please carefully read the entire document before agreeing to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify factors contributing to Law Enforcement Shortages in the United States of America.

NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 300 people in this research study.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation will involve 10 minutes.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:

1. Thoroughly read the questions and answer the questions to the best of your abilities.
2. Once you have completed the survey, you will provide your participant number for reimbursement.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks to participating in this survey.

BENEFITS

The study has the following possible benefits to you: Contributing to the Law enforcement shortage research.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by an authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential.

A description of this clinical trial will be available on <http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov>, as required by US Law. This website will not include information that can identify you. At most, the website will include a summary of the results. You can search this website at any time.

COMPENSATION & COSTS

You will receive a payment of \$3 for your participation in the survey upon completion of the survey.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that he/she feels it is in the best interest.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact

Samantha Dacius

Cellular: 781-708-3798

Email: sdaci001@fiu.edu

IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. By clicking on the “consent to participate” button below I am providing my informed consent.

lick to write the question text

Appendix D: Items Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha

Item Code	Construct - Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation
	On my present job, I like...							
JS1	Being able to keep busy all the time	71.02	120.437	0.345	0.272	0.894	3.67	0.934
JS2	The chance to work alone on the job	70.65	122.492	0.271	0.261	0.895	4.05	0.857
JS3	The chance to do different things from time to time	70.55	118.478	0.524	0.445	0.889	4.14	0.81
JS4	The chance to be "somebody" in the community	71.16	117.69	0.43	0.321	0.892	3.53	1.032
JS5	The way my boss handles his/her workers	71.07	112.864	0.594	0.702	0.887	3.63	1.128
JS6	The competence of my supervisor in making decisions	71.06	112.421	0.611	0.685	0.886	3.64	1.133
JS7	Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience	70.5	120.152	0.437	0.351	0.891	4.2	0.792
JS8	The way my job provides for steady employment	70.28	120.18	0.472	0.378	0.891	4.42	0.74
JS9	The chance to do things for other people	70.61	119.943	0.442	0.346	0.891	4.09	0.804
JS10	The chance to tell people what to do	72.21	121.846	0.23	0.161	0.898	2.48	1.064
JS11	The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	70.58	117.073	0.619	0.54	0.887	4.11	0.797
JS12	The way company policies are put into practice	71.42	114.185	0.612	0.466	0.886	3.28	1.008
JS13	My pay and the amount of work I do	71.18	114.71	0.51	0.472	0.89	3.51	1.133
JS14	The chances for advancement on this job	71.5	112.731	0.537	0.44	0.889	3.19	1.238
JS15	The freedom to use my own judgment	70.82	114.844	0.645	0.614	0.886	3.87	0.918
JS16	The chance to try my own methods of doing the job	70.93	116.021	0.553	0.55	0.888	3.77	0.961
JS17	The working conditions	70.75	114.104	0.639	0.484	0.886	3.95	0.975
JS18	The way my co-workers get along with each other	70.82	116.418	0.495	0.348	0.89	3.88	1.022
JS19	The praise I get for doing a good job	71.28	112.042	0.633	0.562	0.885	3.42	1.124
JS20	The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	70.83	111.471	0.76	0.644	0.882	3.87	0.993
OC1	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	37.07	14.577	0.394		0.869	1.32	0.466
OC2	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	36.96	13.689	0.618		0.857	1.43	0.495
OC3 R	I feel very little loyalty to this organization. (Reverse)	34.05	14.235	0.485		0.864	4.34	0.475
OC4	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	36.7	14.857	0.316		0.872	1.69	0.463
OC5	I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	37.12	13.991	0.611		0.858	1.26	0.441
OC6	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	37.18	13.931	0.695		0.855	1.21	0.406
OC7 R	I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work were similar. (Reverse)	33.68	14.878	0.318		0.872	4.71	0.454
OC8	This organization really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance.	36.97	13.627	0.638		0.856	1.42	0.494
OC9 R	It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization. (Reverse)	34.07	14.626	0.381		0.869	4.31	0.465
OC10	I am extremely glad I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	37.21	14.318	0.6		0.86	1.18	0.382
OC11 R	There's not much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely. (Reverse)	34.08	13.895	0.606		0.858	4.31	0.463
OC12 R	Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees. (Reverse)	34.08	14.044	0.558		0.861	4.31	0.464
OC13	I really care about the fate of this organization.	37.11	13.869	0.639		0.857	1.28	0.447
OC14	For me, this is the best of all organizations for which to work.	36.85	13.804	0.578		0.86	1.53	0.5
OC15 R	Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part. (Reverse)	34.3	15.274	0.372		0.869	4.09	0.289
		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Mean	Std. Deviation
CD1	Provides support for employees to stay on the top of their field	28.79	40.487	0.76	0.693	0.898	3.69	0.956
CD2	Provides opportunities to improve managerial knowledge	28.81	40.321	0.77	0.678	0.897	3.67	0.962
CD3	Provides support to employees to continue with their education	28.89	41.145	0.578	0.409	0.911	3.59	1.115
CD4	Provides support for employees to attend annual meetings or conferences to improve technical knowledge	28.81	39.979	0.718	0.574	0.9	3.67	1.053
CD5	Encourages seeking advice from colleagues in my professional network	28.58	42.33	0.604	0.436	0.908	3.9	0.946
CD6	Encourages our use of professional and technical journals	29.15	40.473	0.629	0.419	0.907	3.32	1.116
CD7	Provides support for employees to participate in professional development seminars	28.87	39.617	0.781	0.672	0.896	3.61	1.017
CD8	Provides support for employees to attend management courses	29	39.566	0.728	0.61	0.9	3.48	1.082
CD9	Provides support for employees to attend technical, non-management courses	28.93	40.239	0.717	0.591	0.9	3.54	1.029
TI1	I often seriously consider leaving my current job.	3.45	0.551	0.69	0.477	0.599	1.67	0.471
TI2	I intend to quit my current job.	3.31	0.72	0.571	0.352	0.741	1.81	0.393
TI3	I have started to look for other jobs.	3.48	0.592	0.583	0.36	0.728	1.64	0.481
WB1	I feel emotionally drained from my work.	11.8	5.172	0.72	0.581	0.843	1.66	0.474
WB2	I feel exhausted by the end of the workday.	11.87	5.434	0.554	0.35	0.863	1.59	0.492
WB3	I feel overtired when you wake up in the morning and have to experience another day on the job.	11.7	5.848	0.446	0.322	0.872	1.76	0.425
WB4	Working with people of diverse nature all day is actually a tension for me.	11.73	5.179	0.785	0.719	0.837	1.74	0.441
WB5	I feel burned out due to my work.	11.79	5.055	0.793	0.748	0.835	1.68	0.469
WB6	I feel frustrated by my job.	11.91	5.153	0.684	0.527	0.848	1.55	0.498
WB7	Working directly with people puts too much tension on me.	11.87	5.215	0.665	0.486	0.85	1.6	0.491
WB8	When it comes to work, I feel like I am simply finished.	11.59	6.283	0.34	0.249	0.879	1.88	0.327
PA1	It would be easy to find acceptable alternative employment.	4.73	1.39	0.738	0.549	0.764	1.6	0.491
PA2	There are many available jobs similar to mine	4.81	1.376	0.73	0.562	0.768	1.51	0.501
PA3	I know of several job alternatives that I could apply for	4.88	1.425	0.681	0.5	0.791	1.45	0.499
PA4	I could easily find a better job than the one I have now	4.57	1.7	0.54	0.316	0.847	1.76	0.427

Appendix E: Sobel Test Calculations for Mediation Hypotheses

The Sobel test was conducted to determine whether the indirect effects of career development on employee turnover intention and work burnout through the mediator's job satisfaction and organizational commitment were statistically significant. The Sobel test evaluates the strength of a mediation effect by testing whether the product of the two regression paths (a and b) is significantly different from zero.

Sobel Test Formula:

$$Z = \frac{a \times b}{\sqrt{(b^2 \times SE_a^2) + (a^2 \times SE_b^2)}}$$

Where:

- a = coefficient from the independent variable to the mediator
- b = coefficient from the mediator to the dependent variable
- SE_a = standard error of a
- SE_b = standard error of b

The coefficients and standard errors were extracted from the **SmartPLS bootstrapping output**.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Career Development -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.064	0.066	0.027	2.36	0.018
Career Development -> Job Satisfaction	0.646	0.649	0.038	17.206	0
Career Development -> Organizational Commitment	0.253	0.254	0.019	13.342	0
Career Development -> Work Burnout	0.049	0.05	0.027	1.79	0.074
Gender -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.01	0.011	0.02	0.504	0.614
Gender -> Work Burnout	-0.056	-0.056	0.023	2.418	0.016
Job Satisfaction -> Employee Turnover Intention	-0.119	-0.119	0.031	3.892	0
Job Satisfaction -> Work Burnout	-0.182	-0.184	0.031	5.853	0
Organizational Commitment -> Employee Turnover Intention	-0.489	-0.494	0.062	7.919	0
Organizational Commitment -> Work Burnout	-0.355	-0.356	0.066	5.378	0
Age -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.076	0.076	0.02	3.799	0
Age -> Work Burnout	0.008	0.007	0.023	0.338	0.735
Gender -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.01	0.011	0.02	0.504	0.614
Gender -> Work Burnout	-0.056	-0.056	0.023	2.418	0.016
Perceived Job Alternatives -> Employee Turnover Intention	0.143	0.138	0.056	2.549	0.011
Perceived Job Alternatives -> Work Burnout	0.053	0.055	0.051	1.048	0.295

H9a: Career Development → Job Satisfaction → Employee Turnover Intention

$$a = 0.646$$

$$SE_a = 0.038$$

$$b = -0.119$$

$$SE_b = 0.031$$

$$Z = (0.646 \times -0.119) / \sqrt{((-0.119^2 \times 0.038^2) + (0.646^2 \times 0.031^2))}$$

$$= -3.744$$

Interpretation: Significant mediation at $p < .001$

H9b: Career Development → Job Satisfaction → Work Burnout

$$a = 0.646$$

$$SE_a = 0.038$$

$$b = -0.182$$

$$SE_b = 0.031$$

$$Z = (0.646 \times -0.182) / \sqrt{((-0.182^2 \times 0.038^2) + (0.646^2 \times 0.031^2))}$$

$$= -5.549$$

Interpretation: Significant mediation at $p < .001$

H10a: Career Development → Organizational Commitment → Employee Turnover Intention

$$a = 0.253$$

$$SE_a = 0.019$$

$$b = -0.489$$

$$SE_b = 0.062$$

$$Z = (0.253 \times -0.489) / \sqrt{((-0.489^2 \times 0.019^2) + (0.253^2 \times 0.062^2))}$$
$$= -6.786$$

Interpretation: Significant mediation at $p < .001$

H10b: Career Development \rightarrow Organizational Commitment \rightarrow Work Burnout

$$a = 0.253$$

$$SE_a = 0.019$$

$$b = -0.355$$

$$SE_b = 0.066$$

$$Z = (0.253 \times -0.355) / \sqrt{((-0.355^2 \times 0.019^2) + (0.253^2 \times 0.066^2))}$$
$$= -4.987$$

Interpretation: Significant mediation at $p < .001$

VITA

SAMANTHA BERLINE DACIUS

05/2012 – Current	SAZ Consulting LLC – <i>United States</i> Business Administration and Project Management Consultant
08/2022 – 08/2025	Florida International University – <i>Miami, FL</i> Doctor of Business Administration Dissertation: CRACKING THE CODE: UNRAVELING THE SHORTAGE IN U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONS.
04/2024	Scrum Master Certification
09/2019 – 04/2022	JS Protection Security LLC - Fort <i>Lauderdale, FL</i> Event Manager/ Office Administrator/ HR Recruiter
09/2020 – 06/2021	Christian Life Center – <i>Fort Lauderdale, FL</i> School of Discipleship
03/2011 – 02/2024	Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. Project Controls Professional III (01/2018-02/2024) <i>Boston MA,</i> <i>Providence RI, Fort Lauderdale FL</i> Project Controls Engineer II (09/2012 – 12/2017) <i>Boston, MA</i> Executing Administrator (03/2011 – 09/2013) <i>Boston, MA</i>
04/2007 - 06/2012	Haley & Aldrich, Inc - <i>Burlington, MA</i> Senior Project Accountant (10/2010 – 06/2012) Project Accountant (04/2007 – 10/2010)
08/2007 – 05/2008	Northeastern University - <i>Boston, MA</i> <i>Master of Science in Leadership</i>
07/2006 – 04/2007	Kelly Services - <i>Boston, MA</i> Sr. Administrative and Clerical Associate
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09/2001 – 05/2005	Regis College – <i>Weston, MA</i> Bachelor of Arts in Biology