



# Work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, and turnover intention: the role of job satisfaction

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined how flexible work arrangements and work-life balance were associated with turnover intention through the role of job satisfaction. A qualitative library research approach was employed to critically examine and synthesize purposively selected scholarly literature published primarily between 2017 and 2026. The analysis focused on recurring relationships, explanatory mechanisms, contextual conditions, and contrasting findings concerning flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. The findings indicated that flexible work arrangements could support employee retention when they provided meaningful work control and enabled employees to achieve sustainable work-life balance. Work-life balance was found to contribute to more favorable job evaluations, positioning job satisfaction as an important psychological pathway toward lower turnover intention. However, flexibility did not consistently produce positive outcomes because work intensification, blurred work-life boundaries, and work-family conflict could weaken its benefits and contribute to lower job satisfaction and stronger turnover intention. The study concluded that flexible work arrangements were most valuable for retention when organizational flexibility was accompanied by appropriate job design, manageable work demands, and conditions that enabled employees to experience genuine control and balance.



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## Introduction

The changing nature of work has made the relationship between employees' professional and personal lives an increasingly important organizational concern. Technological development, changing employee expectations, and the growing adoption of flexible work have enabled employees

to perform their jobs with greater flexibility regarding when and where work is conducted. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs), broadly referring to organizational arrangements that provide employees with discretion over working time and/or location, are therefore increasingly viewed as an important human resource management practice. The underlying assumption is that greater flexibility enables employees to coordinate work demands with family, social, and personal responsibilities more effectively. Research across different organizational and national contexts indicates that flexible work arrangements can provide employees with greater discretion over working time and location, although employees' perceptions and experiences of flexibility may vary according to organizational circumstances (Atiku et al., 2020; Wessels et al., 2019). However, flexibility does not necessarily produce positive employee outcomes. While it may increase autonomy and control, it may also intensify work, extend working time, and blur the boundaries between work and personal life (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009; Lippe & Lippényi, 2020; Choo et al., 2016). This tension creates an important organizational problem: under what conditions does flexible work actually support employees' work-life balance and reduce their intention to leave an organization? Addressing this question is increasingly important because employee turnover represents a substantial organizational challenge, while poorly designed flexibility policies may fail to address—and potentially exacerbate—the conditions that contribute to employees' withdrawal intentions.

Work-life balance (WLB) provides an important perspective for understanding this problem. Contemporary conceptualizations of WLB move beyond a simple allocation of time between work and non-work activities and emphasize employees' ability to manage multiple life roles in ways that produce satisfactory levels of involvement and well-being (Kelliher et al., 2018). Flexible work arrangements may support such balance by allowing employees to adjust work schedules or locations according to personal circumstances. Research examining the antecedents and consequences of WLB further indicates that balance is shaped by multiple work-related conditions and can influence important employee outcomes (Haar & Brougham, 2020; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2018). Similarly, research among teachers indicates that work-leisure conflict is an important dimension of work-life experiences that can affect work-related outcomes, highlighting the importance of how employees manage the relationship between work demands and non-work activities (Cho et al., 2023). However, the availability of flexibility does not automatically translate into an actual experience of balance. Research has shown that the consequences of flexible working are heterogeneous and depend on organizational context, job characteristics, managerial support, and employees' ability to exercise genuine control over their work (Choi, 2017; Chung & Lippe, 2020; Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Bellmann & Hübler (2020), for example, demonstrate that the relationships between working from home, job satisfaction, and work-life balance are not uniformly positive. Similarly, Dilmaghani (2020) shows that different forms of flexible working arrangements may produce different outcomes. These findings challenge the assumption that flexibility itself is sufficient to improve employee well-being and suggest that the critical issue is how employees experience and use flexibility within the organizational context.

This issue becomes particularly significant when employee turnover intention is considered. Turnover intention refers to an employee's inclination or intention to leave the organization and represents an important attitudinal indicator of potential employee withdrawal. Existing research indicates that work-life balance is associated with turnover intention, while job satisfaction appears to be an important mechanism connecting employees' work experiences with their intention to remain or leave. Adriano & Callaghan (2020) demonstrate the relevance of WLB and job satisfaction to employee retention, while Kakar et al. (2019) show that work-life balance practices may influence turnover intention through person-organization fit. Evidence from different national and occupational contexts also indicates that WLB is associated with job satisfaction and other employee outcomes (Göktaş et al., 2026; Tavassoli & Sunyer, 2018; 김미정 & 유형숙, 2017). In the Indonesian context, Sitorus et al. (2018), Prayogi et al. (2019), Herliana et al. (2021), and Kuancintami & Heryjanto (2023) similarly report meaningful relationships among WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. More recent studies further strengthen this relationship by positioning job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism between WLB and turnover intention (Yuliani & Ekhsan, 2024; Handayani et al., 2024; Jamalulel & Chang, 2025; Sumarjo et al., 2026).

Job satisfaction is therefore particularly important in explaining how flexibility and work-life balance may influence turnover intention. When flexible arrangements provide employees with meaningful control over their work, facilitate the management of personal responsibilities, and reduce conflict between work and non-work roles, employees may develop more positive evaluations of their jobs. Conversely, when flexibility increases work intensity or creates expectations of constant availability, its potential benefits may be undermined. Azar et al. (2018) demonstrate that the use of flexible work arrangements is connected to organizational outcomes through multiple pathways, highlighting the importance of employees' work experiences rather than treating flexibility as a direct determinant of organizational outcomes. Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui (2019) similarly identify work-life balance as a mechanism linking flexible working arrangements with job satisfaction. More directly, To & Wu (2025) demonstrate that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. This evidence suggests that job satisfaction should not be treated merely as an outcome variable but as a potential psychological mechanism through which employees interpret the consequences of organizational work arrangements.

Nevertheless, the existing literature presents an unresolved tension regarding the relationship between flexible work and employee retention. On the one hand, flexible work may increase autonomy, facilitate work-life integration, and improve job-related outcomes. Tsen et al. (2021) demonstrate that the relationship between flexible work arrangements and turnover intention depends partly on job independence, indicating that flexibility is more consequential when employees possess sufficient discretion in performing their work. On the other hand, flexible work may generate unintended consequences when increased autonomy is accompanied by greater work demands or inadequate boundaries. Evidence concerning flexible working arrangements indicates that flexibility may coexist with work-family conflict when employees face competing demands across work and family domains (Choo et al., 2016; Beigi et al. 2018). Similarly, perceived workload has been linked to employees' satisfaction with work-life balance and their intention to leave their occupation, suggesting that workload may weaken the positive consequences expected from flexibility (Holland et al., 2019). Research on work-leisure conflict further demonstrates that conflict between work and non-work activities can have implications for work-related outcomes (Cho et al., 2025). Haines et al. (2024) provide particularly important evidence by identifying contrasting pathways between flexible work arrangements and turnover intention, showing that flexibility can produce both favorable and unfavorable consequences through different mechanisms.

The present study addresses this gap by developing a qualitative conceptual synthesis of the relationship among flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Rather than examining these variables as isolated predictors, the study considers flexible work arrangements as an organizational mechanism, work-life balance as an employee experience, and job satisfaction as a psychological mechanism through which these experiences may influence turnover intention. The study is particularly concerned with the possibility that flexible work arrangements can generate divergent outcomes depending on whether flexibility produces genuine control and balance or instead contributes to work intensification and boundary blurring. This perspective extends existing research by integrating two streams of literature that have frequently been examined separately: research examining flexible work arrangements and research examining the work-life balance–job satisfaction–turnover intention relationship. The study is also relevant to the Indonesian context because existing Indonesian research has established the importance of WLB and job satisfaction in explaining turnover intention, but the role of flexible work arrangements as an upstream organizational mechanism has received comparatively less conceptual integration with these relationships (Sitorus et al., 2018; Putri, 2020; Prayogi et al., 2019; Jamalulel & Chang, 2025). Thus, the study seeks to move beyond the general proposition that flexible work reduces turnover and instead explain the conditions and mechanisms through which flexibility may contribute to employee retention.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to qualitatively synthesize existing theoretical and empirical literature to explain how flexible work arrangements and work-life balance are associated with turnover intention through the role of job satisfaction. The study employs a qualitative library research approach, using purposively selected scholarly literature to identify recurring concepts, relationships, contrasting findings, and explanatory mechanisms. The approach is intentionally

distinguished from a systematic literature review because the purpose is interpretive and conceptual rather than exhaustive or statistically aggregative. Through critical reading and thematic synthesis, the study seeks to develop an integrated explanation of the pathway from organizational flexibility to employee retention. The principal proposition emerging from this synthesis is that flexible work arrangements are most likely to support retention when they enable employees to achieve meaningful work-life balance and consequently experience greater job satisfaction; conversely, flexibility that increases work intensity or weakens work-life boundaries may undermine these benefits. The study therefore addresses the following research question: How do flexible work arrangements and work-life balance influence turnover intention through the role of job satisfaction? By answering this question, the study contributes to human resource management research by offering a more nuanced understanding of flexibility as a conditional organizational resource rather than an inherently positive employment practice, while also providing a conceptual basis for organizations seeking to design flexible work policies that support both employee well-being and retention.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design to examine and conceptually synthesize the relationships among flexible work arrangements (FWAs), work-life balance (WLB), job satisfaction, and turnover intention. A library research approach was selected because the research objective was to develop an interpretive understanding of existing theoretical arguments and empirical findings rather than to collect primary data from employees or statistically estimate relationships among variables. The unit of analysis was therefore not an individual employee or organization, but a scholarly publication addressing one or more of the four focal constructs. The study was deliberately designed as a qualitative literature-based inquiry rather than a systematic literature review, meta-analysis, or bibliometric study. Accordingly, the research did not seek to identify every publication available on the topic, calculate pooled effect sizes, or follow a predetermined systematic-review reporting protocol. Instead, it used purposive selection of literature to identify theoretically and empirically relevant studies capable of explaining the relationships among the focal constructs. The methodological logic was consistent with the interpretive nature of qualitative research, in which meaning, conceptual relationships, contextual differences, and recurring explanatory patterns are examined through critical engagement with textual evidence. The methodological scope was therefore directed toward conceptual explanation rather than statistical generalization.

The population of sources consisted of scholarly publications addressing flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, job satisfaction, turnover intention, or relationships among these constructs. The sampling strategy was purposive rather than probabilistic because not all publications concerning flexible work or employee outcomes were equally relevant to the research question. Sources were considered eligible when they met at least one of the following substantive criteria: (1) examined flexible work arrangements and employee outcomes; (2) examined work-life balance and job satisfaction; (3) examined work-life balance and turnover intention; (4) examined job satisfaction and turnover intention; or (5) explicitly examined mediating, moderating, or contextual mechanisms connecting two or more of the focal constructs. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2017 and 2026 in order to emphasize contemporary evidence, while the study also retained Kelliher & Anderson (2009) because its discussion of work intensification provides a foundational explanation for the potentially paradoxical consequences of flexible working. The final literature pool comprised the 40 publications identified and supplied by the researcher. These sources included studies published in international and national academic journals and covered different occupational, organizational, geographical, and institutional contexts. The inclusion of studies from different contexts was intentional because the effects of flexible work arrangements may depend on organizational support, job characteristics, institutional environments, and employees' circumstances. Publications were excluded from the analytical synthesis when their substantive focus did not provide sufficient information to explain at least one of the focal relationships or when their discussion was only tangentially related to employee work-life experiences and turnover.

The literature collection and screening procedure was conducted in several sequential stages. First, the research question was translated into four analytical concepts: FWA, WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Second, the researcher examined the titles, abstracts, keywords, publication information, and stated research objectives of the identified sources to determine their relevance to the study. Third, potentially relevant publications were subjected to full-text reading, during which information concerning research objectives, theoretical perspectives, research contexts, variables, principal findings, mediating or moderating mechanisms, and conclusions was extracted manually. Fourth, the extracted information was organized into a literature matrix containing the author and year, research context, focal constructs, principal relationship examined, major findings, and relevance to the research question. Fifth, studies addressing similar relationships were compared to identify convergence, divergence, and contextual variation. This procedure was conducted throughout the literature analysis period and was repeated when an article contained findings that required clarification through examination of its methodology, theoretical framework, or reported conclusions. The process did not impose a predetermined minimum number of articles per construct because the purpose was not to achieve statistical representativeness. Instead, literature was retained when it made a substantive contribution to understanding the conceptual pathway connecting flexibility, balance, satisfaction, and turnover intention.

The principal research instrument was a structured literature-extraction matrix developed specifically for this study. The matrix functioned as an analytical instrument rather than a measurement scale and consisted of fields for bibliographic information, study context, theoretical focus, research design, focal variables, key findings, explanatory mechanisms, contradictory evidence, and relevance to the proposed conceptual pathway. During full-text analysis, statements and findings related to the four focal constructs were coded according to their substantive meaning rather than merely according to the terminology used by individual authors. For example, findings referring to autonomy, job independence, control over working time, or control over working location were considered relevant to the flexibility and control dimension of FWA. Similarly, findings referring to work-family conflict, work-life integration, balance satisfaction, or the ability to accommodate non-work responsibilities were examined as evidence concerning WLB. Job satisfaction was coded as an employee evaluative response to the work experience, whereas turnover intention was coded as an intention or inclination to leave an organization or occupation. This conceptual coding was necessary because the terminology and operationalization of the constructs varied across the selected studies. The analysis therefore emphasized conceptual equivalence rather than assuming that identical terminology represented identical theoretical meanings.

The analytical procedure consisted of qualitative thematic synthesis and interpretive comparison. The first analytical stage involved open coding of relevant statements and findings extracted from the literature. The second stage involved grouping related codes into broader analytical categories, including flexibility and autonomy, work-life balance, work-family conflict, job satisfaction, turnover intention, organizational support, job characteristics, work intensification, and boundary management. The third stage involved examining the relationships among these categories across the selected studies. Particular attention was given to whether flexible work arrangements were associated with positive outcomes through greater autonomy and balance or with negative outcomes through work intensification and boundary blurring. The fourth stage involved comparing studies that reported similar relationships as well as studies that produced contradictory or heterogeneous findings. The fifth stage involved developing an interpretive synthesis that positioned job satisfaction as a potential psychological mechanism linking employees' experiences of flexibility and balance with their turnover intentions. The resulting synthesis was represented conceptually as a flexibility–balance–satisfaction–retention pathway, while alternative pathways involving work intensification and work-family conflict were retained to avoid reducing the literature to a uniformly positive view of flexible work. No statistical significance tests, pooled estimates, effect-size calculations, or quantitative meta-analytic procedures were conducted because such procedures were inconsistent with the qualitative and interpretive purpose of the study.

Several procedures were used to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the analysis. First, conceptual definitions were established before the detailed synthesis was conducted so that the same analytical criteria could be applied across studies. Second, the interpretation of each major

relationship was checked against multiple publications rather than being based on a single empirical finding. Third, contradictory evidence was deliberately retained rather than excluded when it challenged the emerging conceptual explanation. This was particularly important because the literature indicates that FWA may produce both beneficial and detrimental outcomes depending on organizational and job conditions (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009; Haines et al., 2024). Fourth, contextual information such as managerial support, job independence, organizational environment, and institutional conditions was considered when comparing apparently inconsistent findings (Choi, 2017; Tsen et al., 2021; Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Fifth, the researcher maintained a distinction between findings directly reported by the selected studies and interpretations generated through the present synthesis. These procedures were intended to improve analytical transparency and reduce the risk of selectively interpreting literature in support of a predetermined conclusion. The central assumption underlying the analysis was that relationships reported across different studies could be meaningfully compared at the conceptual level when their constructs represented substantially similar theoretical phenomena, while differences in measurement, context, and research design were retained as potential explanations for divergent findings.

The methodology has several inherent limitations that define the scope of the findings. Because the study uses purposive library research rather than systematic literature review procedures, the literature pool cannot be interpreted as an exhaustive representation of all studies published on flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. The analysis is also dependent on the conceptual clarity and methodological quality of the selected publications, and differences in their samples, measurement instruments, organizational settings, and analytical techniques may contribute to heterogeneous findings. Furthermore, because no primary employee data were collected, the study cannot establish causal relationships among the focal constructs or determine the magnitude of their effects. The proposed flexibility–balance–satisfaction–retention pathway should therefore be interpreted as a theoretically grounded conceptual synthesis rather than as an empirically validated causal model. These limitations are consistent with the purpose of qualitative library research, which is to generate an integrated explanation from existing knowledge rather than to provide population-level statistical estimates. Nevertheless, the methodological procedure provides sufficient transparency regarding source selection, data extraction, conceptual coding, comparative analysis, and synthesis to enable other researchers to reproduce the analytical process using the same literature pool and criteria. The resulting methodology therefore provides a structured basis for examining how flexible work arrangements may influence employee retention through work-life balance and job satisfaction while preserving the complexity and contextual variation identified in the existing literature.

## Results and Discussions

The qualitative synthesis of the selected literature identified four interconnected findings that explain the relationship between flexible work arrangements (FWAs), work-life balance (WLB), job satisfaction, and turnover intention. First, FWAs function as an organizational resource that can provide employees with greater control over when and where work is performed. Second, the availability of flexibility does not automatically produce work-life balance because its consequences depend on job characteristics, managerial support, organizational context, and the extent to which employees can exercise genuine control over their work. Third, work-life balance is consistently connected with job satisfaction, suggesting that employees' evaluations of their jobs are partly shaped by their ability to reconcile work and non-work responsibilities. Fourth, job satisfaction emerges as an important psychological mechanism connecting work-life balance and flexible working experiences with turnover intention. At the same time, the literature reveals a countervailing pathway in which flexibility may increase work intensification, work-family conflict, or boundary blurring and consequently weaken the expected positive effects of flexibility. These findings provide an answer to the research question by indicating that the relationship between flexibility and turnover intention is not adequately explained by a simple direct-effect model. Rather, the literature supports a conditional and multidimensional pathway in which organizational flexibility influences

employees' experiences of balance, those experiences shape job satisfaction, and job satisfaction contributes to employees' intentions to remain in or leave their organizations.

**Table 1** Qualitative Synthesis of the Relationships among Flexible Work Arrangements, Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention

| Analytical relationship                                                  | Main finding from the literature                                                                                                                                                  | Interpretive implication                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Flexible work arrangements → Work-life balance                           | Flexibility can facilitate the coordination of work and personal responsibilities, but the effect varies according to organizational and job conditions                           | Flexibility is a potential resource rather than an automatic source of balance                            |
| Flexible work arrangements → Job satisfaction                            | Flexible working is generally associated with more favorable job attitudes, although the strength and direction of the relationship vary across forms of flexibility and contexts | Employees respond to the quality and usability of flexibility rather than its formal availability alone   |
| Work-life balance → Job satisfaction                                     | Better balance is generally associated with more favorable evaluations of work                                                                                                    | WLB represents an important experiential pathway through which work conditions influence job attitudes    |
| Work-life balance → Turnover intention                                   | Better WLB is generally associated with lower turnover intention                                                                                                                  | Employees experiencing sustainable work-life integration are less likely to develop withdrawal intentions |
| Job satisfaction → Turnover intention                                    | Higher job satisfaction is consistently associated with lower turnover intention                                                                                                  | Job satisfaction represents an important psychological mechanism in employee retention                    |
| Flexible work arrangements → Turnover intention                          | The relationship is heterogeneous and can operate through both positive and negative pathways                                                                                     | Flexibility should not be assumed to directly reduce turnover intention                                   |
| Flexible work arrangements → WLB → Job satisfaction → Turnover intention | The literature supports an integrated conceptual pathway, although the strength of individual relationships varies across contexts                                                | Retention benefits are more likely when flexibility produces genuine balance and satisfaction             |

Note. Table 1 presents the authors' qualitative synthesis of the selected literature. It does not represent a statistical meta-analysis or pooled effect estimate.

### Flexible Work Arrangements as a Conditional Organizational Resource

The first major finding is that flexible work arrangements should be understood as a conditional organizational resource rather than an inherently beneficial employment practice. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that flexibility can provide employees with greater control over working time and location, but the consequences of that control depend on the conditions under which flexibility is implemented. Azar et al. (2018) demonstrate that the use of flexible work arrangements is connected with several organizational outcomes through interconnected pathways rather than through a single direct relationship. Tsen et al. (2021) similarly show that the relationship between FWA and turnover intention depends on job independence, indicating that employees' ability to exercise discretion is important for translating flexibility into favorable outcomes. This finding is theoretically important because it shifts attention from the existence of an FWA policy to the actual degree of control experienced by employees.

The most recent evidence strengthens this interpretation. Harrop et al. (2025), based on a meta-analysis of 113 studies involving 88,618 participants, found that FWAs were associated with beneficial outcomes including job satisfaction, job autonomy, life satisfaction, and improved work-

family interface. Their analysis also found that the combination of flexibility in both time and location was more favorably associated with several employee outcomes than either form alone. These findings provide broad evidence that flexibility can constitute a meaningful work resource. However, the meta-analytic evidence should not be interpreted as establishing that every FWA policy will improve employee outcomes. Rather, it demonstrates that the overall pattern is favorable while leaving substantial room for contextual variation.

This interpretation is consistent with Choi (2017), who emphasizes institutional and managerial support in determining how flexible work arrangements function in practice. Formal availability does not necessarily mean that employees feel comfortable using the arrangements. A policy may exist on paper while employees remain concerned about managerial perceptions, career consequences, workload expectations, or organizational norms. Consequently, the practical value of FWA depends partly on whether employees perceive flexibility as legitimate, accessible, and compatible with performance expectations.

The implication is that organizations should distinguish between formal flexibility and experienced flexibility. Formal flexibility concerns whether an organization offers an arrangement, whereas experienced flexibility concerns whether employees can actually use it without disproportionate costs. Avgoustaki & Cañibano (2025) reinforce this distinction by differentiating formal FWAs from informal flexibility arrangements and examining their implications for employee well-being. This distinction is particularly important for understanding why organizations with apparently similar FWA policies may obtain substantially different employee outcomes.

### **Work-Life Balance as the Experiential Pathway**

The second major finding is that work-life balance represents the principal experiential pathway through which flexible work arrangements may generate employee benefits. Flexibility becomes meaningful when employees can use it to coordinate competing demands across work and non-work domains. Kelliher et al. (2018) argue that WLB should be conceptualized in a manner appropriate to contemporary working life because the boundaries between work and life are increasingly fluid. From this perspective, the objective of flexible work should not simply be to provide temporal or spatial freedom, but to enable employees to manage multiple life roles more sustainably.

The literature indicates, however, that flexibility can either support or undermine this objective. Lippe & Lippényi (2020) demonstrate the importance of organizational context in understanding working from home and work-family conflict. Similarly, Bjärntoft et al. (2020) identify occupational and individual determinants of WLB among employees with flexible work arrangements. These findings indicate that employees do not experience flexibility in identical ways. The same arrangement may be highly beneficial for an employee whose work is relatively independent and whose organization supports boundary management, while producing limited benefit for another employee whose workload remains high and whose availability is expected outside conventional working hours.

The qualitative metasynthesis by Beigi et al. (2018) is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict can coexist. Flexibility can help employees accommodate family demands, but it may also allow work to expand into family time. This finding is consistent with Kelliher and Anderson (2009), who identify work intensification as an important potential consequence of flexible working. Thus, flexibility should not be equated automatically with balance.

This distinction provides an important explanation for heterogeneous findings across the literature. When flexibility operates as an employee resource, it may increase control and facilitate role coordination. When it operates as an implicit expectation for employees to remain available, it may reduce rather than improve balance. Chung (2024) further indicates that the association between flexible working arrangements and work-to-family conflict is shaped by national family-policy contexts. Therefore, the WLB consequences of flexibility are embedded within broader organizational and institutional environments rather than determined exclusively by the existence of a flexible work policy.

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### **The Role of Job Satisfaction**

The third major finding is that job satisfaction provides an important psychological mechanism connecting employees' experiences of work-life balance with their intention to remain or leave. The literature does not merely suggest that WLB and turnover intention are directly related; it increasingly indicates that employees interpret their work-life experiences and incorporate those experiences into their overall evaluation of the job.

Adriano and Callaghan (2020) identify the relationship among WLB, job satisfaction, and retention, while Sitorus et al. (2018) demonstrate relationships among WLB, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The Indonesian studies by Prayogi et al. (2019), Herliana et al. (2021), Kuancintami and Heryjanto (2023), Yuliani & Ekhsan (2024), and Handayani et al. (2024) further support the importance of job satisfaction within this relationship. Across these studies, the consistent conceptual pattern is that favorable experiences of work-life balance tend to coincide with more favorable evaluations of work, while dissatisfaction with the employment experience is associated with stronger withdrawal intentions.

The recent study by To and Wu (2025) provides particularly direct evidence for this interpretation. Their study explicitly examined job satisfaction as a mediator between work-life balance and turnover intention and found support for the mediating role of job satisfaction. This evidence strengthens the argument that job satisfaction should not be treated simply as another independent predictor of turnover intention. Instead, it may represent a mechanism through which employees convert experiences of balance or imbalance into an overall assessment of their employment relationship.

The significance of this finding lies in its explanation of why organizational flexibility may have different consequences for different employees. If flexibility enables employees to satisfy personal responsibilities without compromising their work role, it may improve their overall evaluation of the job. If flexibility increases workload, creates uncertainty, or removes temporal boundaries, the same policy may produce dissatisfaction. Therefore, the relevant question for organizations is not merely whether employees are flexible, but whether the flexibility contributes to an employment experience that employees perceive as satisfactory and sustainable.

### **Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention: From Experience to Withdrawal Cognition**

The fourth major finding concerns the transition from employee experience to turnover intention. The reviewed literature indicates that job satisfaction is consistently positioned as an important correlate or explanatory mechanism of turnover intention. This relationship is particularly meaningful within the present conceptual framework because it connects organizational practices with an employee's potential decision to leave.

When employees perceive their jobs as satisfying, they have fewer reasons to psychologically withdraw from the employment relationship. Conversely, when dissatisfaction accumulates, employees may begin to consider alternative employment opportunities. This does not mean that job satisfaction mechanically determines actual turnover. Rather, satisfaction represents one component of the broader cognitive process through which employees evaluate whether remaining in the organization is desirable.

The Indonesian evidence is especially useful for demonstrating the relevance of this pathway. Putri (2020) examined WLB, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among Indonesian millennials, while Jamalulel & Chang (2025) examined the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between WLB, career development, and turnover intention among Indonesian Generation Z employees. These studies suggest that employee retention cannot be adequately understood without considering how younger employees evaluate the compatibility between employment and broader life expectations.

Sumarjo et al. (2026) provide further recent evidence by examining job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between WLB and turnover intentions. Taken together, these findings suggest that job satisfaction represents a meaningful bridge between employees' experiences of their working conditions and their withdrawal intentions. This does not imply that job satisfaction is the only mechanism involved. Organizational commitment, person-organization fit, workload, career development, and other factors may also contribute to turnover intention (Kakar et al., 2019;

Jamalulel & Chang, 2025). However, the consistency of the satisfaction pathway across the reviewed literature supports its central position in the conceptual framework developed by this study.

### The Paradox of Flexibility: A Positive and Negative Pathway

A central interpretive finding of this study is that flexible work arrangements can generate two theoretically distinct pathways, positive and negative pathway.

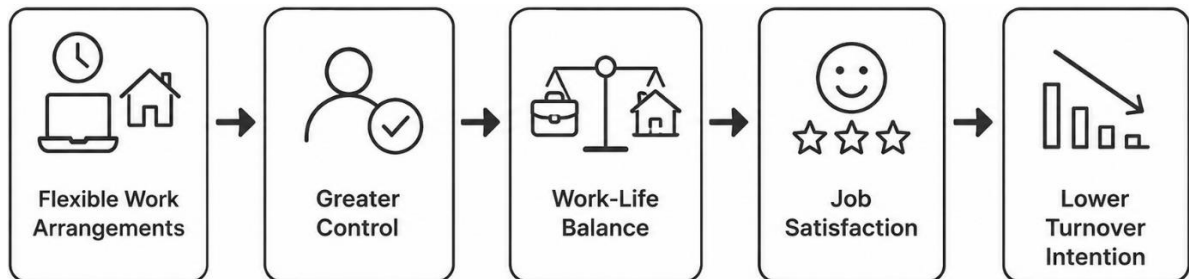


Figure 1. positive pathway

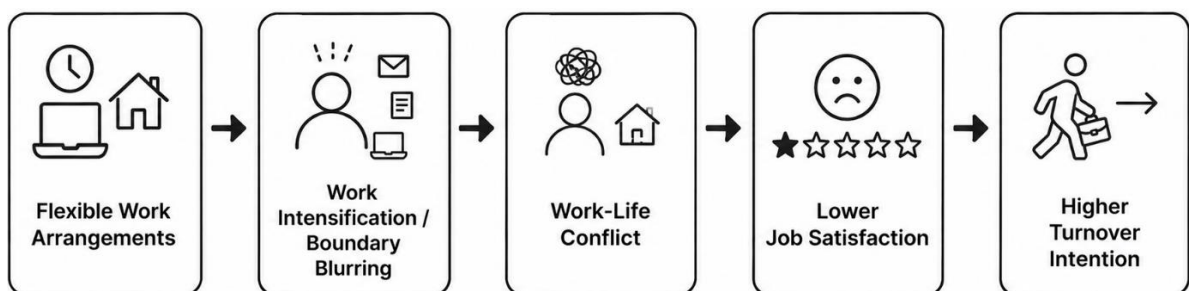


Figure 2. negative pathway

These pathways help reconcile apparently inconsistent findings in the literature. Haines et al. (2024) provide particularly important evidence for this interpretation by explicitly examining contrasting pathways between flexible work arrangements and turnover intentions. Their study used multilevel structural equation modeling and examined flextime, telecommuting, and overall flexibility, demonstrating that flexibility may influence turnover intention through different subprocesses.

The positive pathway is consistent with evidence indicating that flexibility can enhance autonomy, facilitate work-family coordination, and improve job-related attitudes. Harrop et al. (2025) found positive associations between FWAs and job satisfaction, autonomy, life satisfaction, and work-family outcomes. The negative pathway, by contrast, is consistent with the work-intensification argument developed by Kelliher and Anderson (2009) and the evidence concerning work-family conflict reported by Beigi et al. (2018).

This dual-pathway interpretation represents an important contribution of the present synthesis. It suggests that disagreements within the literature may not necessarily reflect inconsistent evidence about the same phenomenon. Instead, different studies may be observing different mechanisms operating under different organizational conditions. A flexible work arrangement that gives employees genuine control can function as a resource, whereas flexibility accompanied by excessive workload or implicit availability expectations can become an additional demand.

### Why the Integrated Pathway Matters

The integrated findings indicate that the relationship between FWA and turnover intention should be conceptualized as a process rather than a simple association. Organizations provide flexibility, employees experience and use that flexibility within specific work conditions, and those experiences influence perceptions of balance and job satisfaction. These psychological evaluations then contribute to employees' intentions regarding organizational membership.

This interpretation advances the literature in three ways. First, it integrates organizational design and employee psychological experience. FWA represents an organizational practice, WLB represents an employee experience, and job satisfaction represents an evaluative psychological response.

Turnover intention represents the resulting withdrawal cognition. Second, the model explains why formal FWA availability may produce different outcomes across organizations. Third, it incorporates both positive and negative mechanisms rather than assuming that flexibility is inherently beneficial.

The findings also provide a more nuanced interpretation of the recent meta-analytic evidence. Harrop et al. (2025) found that FWAs were generally associated with beneficial employee outcomes and that combined flextime and flexplace were more favorably related to job satisfaction, work-life balance, and turnover intention than individual forms of flexibility. However, the present synthesis emphasizes that such overall associations should not be interpreted as evidence that flexibility is universally beneficial. The heterogeneity documented across the literature indicates that implementation conditions remain important.

### **Implications for Human Resource Management**

The findings have several implications for human resource management. First, organizations should design flexible work arrangements around employee control rather than flexibility as a symbolic policy. Providing employees with nominal access to flexible working without allowing meaningful discretion may have limited value. Second, organizations should ensure that flexible working is accompanied by manageable workloads and clear expectations regarding working hours. This is particularly important because flexibility can otherwise become a mechanism through which work expands into personal time.

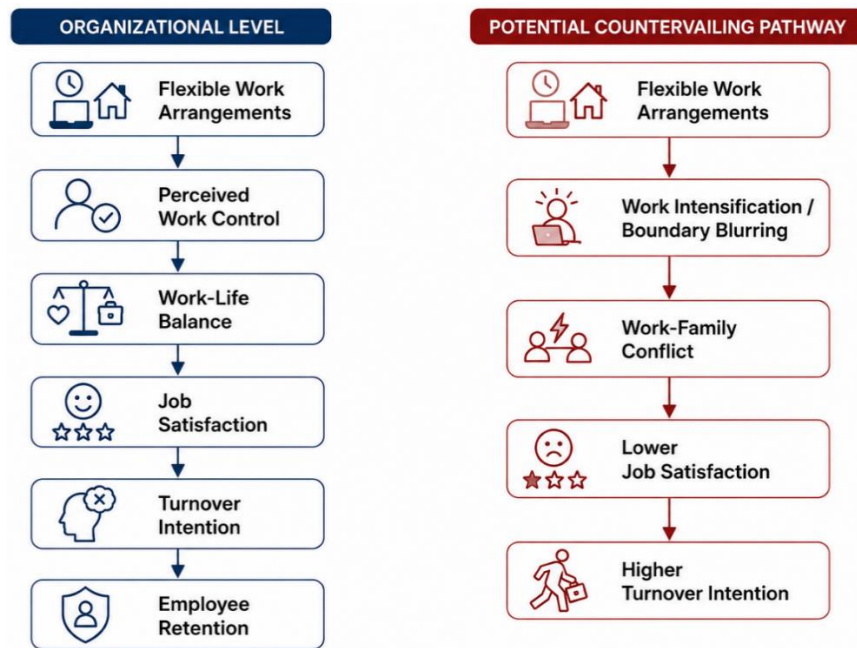
Third, managerial support should be treated as a central implementation condition. Choi (2017) and Dulk et al. (2017) demonstrate the importance of institutional and managerial support for work-life arrangements. Evidence from Chile and Colombia further indicates that different forms of organizational support are relevant to employees' work-life balance, suggesting that organizational conditions can shape how employees experience and benefit from work-life arrangements (Idrovo & Bosch, 2019). Employees are more likely to benefit from flexibility when organizational leaders communicate that using flexible arrangements is legitimate and does not represent a lack of commitment.

Finally, organizations should recognize that flexibility should be tailored to job characteristics. Tsen et al. (2021) demonstrate the relevance of job independence, while Harrop et al. (2025) show that different forms of flexibility may have different consequences. Consequently, a uniform FWA policy may not be equally appropriate for all occupational groups.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is the development of a flexibility–balance–satisfaction–retention pathway. Existing literature has established relationships between individual pairs of constructs, but the present synthesis connects them into an integrated explanatory sequence. FWA is conceptualized as the organizational input, WLB as the experiential mechanism, job satisfaction as the psychological evaluation, and turnover intention as the withdrawal outcome.

The model does not claim that this is the only pathway linking the constructs. Rather, it provides a parsimonious framework for interpreting why flexibility may produce different retention outcomes. The framework accommodates alternative mechanisms, including work intensification, work-family conflict, managerial support, job independence, organizational commitment, and person-organization fit. This makes the model more consistent with the heterogeneous evidence identified in the literature than a simple direct-effect assumption. The conceptual model can be represented as follows:



**Figure 3.** Conceptual Synthesis of the Flexibility–Balance–Satisfaction–Retention Pathway

Note. Figure 3 represents the authors' conceptual synthesis of the selected literature. The model is not a statistically tested causal model.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The findings should be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of qualitative library research. The study does not provide primary empirical evidence and therefore cannot establish the causal magnitude of the relationships proposed in the conceptual pathway. In addition, the purposive selection of literature means that the findings should not be interpreted as an exhaustive statistical representation of the entire FWA literature. Differences in research design, occupational context, national setting, measurement, and definitions of flexibility may also explain some of the variation observed across studies.

Nevertheless, these limitations generate several productive directions for future research. First, the proposed flexibility–balance–satisfaction–retention pathway should be tested empirically using longitudinal designs to establish temporal ordering among the constructs. Second, future studies should distinguish flextime, flexplace, and combined flexibility rather than treating FWA as a single homogeneous construct. This recommendation is particularly supported by Harrop et al. (2025), whose findings indicate that different forms of flexibility are associated with different patterns of employee outcomes. Third, future research should examine boundary conditions such as job independence, managerial support, organizational culture, workload, and national institutional context. Fourth, research in Indonesia could investigate whether the pathway identified in this study operates similarly across generations, industries, occupational groups, and levels of job autonomy.

Overall, the findings answer the central research question by indicating that flexible work arrangements influence turnover intention primarily through a set of interconnected employee experiences rather than through a uniformly direct effect. Flexibility can support retention when it provides meaningful control, facilitates work-life balance, and contributes to job satisfaction. However, when flexibility is accompanied by work intensification, boundary blurring, or inadequate organizational support, the same practice may weaken balance and satisfaction and consequently contribute to stronger turnover intention. The significance of this conclusion lies not in claiming that flexible work is universally effective, but in identifying the conditions under which flexibility is more likely to function as a genuine employee resource. The study therefore advances the discussion from the question of whether organizations should provide flexible work toward the more consequential question of how flexible work should be designed and supported so that employees can convert flexibility into sustainable work-life balance and satisfying employment experiences.

## Conclusions

This study concludes that the relationship between flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention is best understood as a conditional process rather than as a simple direct relationship. The qualitative synthesis indicates that flexible work arrangements can strengthen employee retention when they provide meaningful control over work and enable employees to manage work and non-work responsibilities more effectively. Greater control can facilitate work-life balance, while a more sustainable balance can contribute to more favorable evaluations of the job and, consequently, lower turnover intention. However, flexibility does not inherently produce these outcomes. When flexible work is accompanied by work intensification, blurred boundaries, excessive availability expectations, or work-family conflict, its potential benefits may be weakened and may instead contribute to lower job satisfaction and stronger turnover intention. The central contribution of this study is therefore the development of a flexibility–balance–satisfaction–retention perspective, which positions flexible work arrangements as an organizational resource, work-life balance as an experiential pathway, and job satisfaction as an important psychological mechanism connecting work arrangements with employee withdrawal intentions. This perspective extends existing knowledge by reconciling the positive and negative consequences of flexible working within a single conceptual explanation rather than treating contradictory findings as evidence of an inconsistent relationship. For human resource management, the implication is that the effectiveness of flexible work should be evaluated not by policy availability alone but by whether employees experience greater control, sustainable work-life balance, and job satisfaction. The study consequently highlights that flexible work becomes strategically valuable for employee retention when organizational flexibility is supported by appropriate job design, manageable work demands, and conditions that allow employees to use flexibility without extending work indefinitely into their personal lives. Future empirical research should test this conceptual pathway across different occupational and organizational contexts, particularly through longitudinal designs that can clarify how changes in flexibility, work-life balance, and job satisfaction shape turnover intention over time.

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