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Are Faculty Members Ready to Quit? Organizational Commitment among Faculty Members

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Are Faculty Members Ready to Quit? Organizational Commitment

Among Faculty Members

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PURPOSE

Discussion of “The Great Resignation” suggests that burnout may influence faculty members’ decisions to withdraw from their field (Daumiller et al., 2021; Klotz, 2021; Sheather, 2021). Still, much of the evidence for faculty burnout and turnover is anecdotal, and further investigation is necessary to determine the impact of burnout and other job demands on turnover intentions.

- In this study, we predicted that participants with higher levels of burnout would report higher levels of turnover intentions (i.e., reported likelihood of leaving their current position for another or retiring early).
- We also examined which job demands and demographics most influenced participants’ intent to turnover .

METHOD

- Pre-registered (<https://osf.io/yqx39/>)

Participants:

- 328 full time faculty responded to individual emails targeted using cluster randomized sampling or through social media posts in exchange for small donations to a charity of their choice. Sample size was adequate to detect $R^2 = .09$ and $r = .20$ at power = .95.
- 58% identified as female, 81% identified as White, 84% were from the U.S. (36 states plus DC), 64% were at public institutions, and about equal numbers held the rank of assistant, associate, and full professor.

Measures:

Burnout

- Oldenburg Burnout Inventory ($\alpha = .89$; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008) e.g., “I always find new and interesting aspects in my work” on a 4-point Likert scale
- The Burnout Measure- Short Version ($\alpha = .92$; Malach-Pines, 2005) e.g., “When you think about your work overall, how often do you feel the following? “Tired” on a 7-point Likert scale
- Single item assessing agreement with the statement: “I feel burnout” on a 5-point Likert scale

These measures were standardized and averaged to create an overall *burnout* measure ($\alpha = .90$)

- **Turnover Intentions** ($\alpha = .67$)

Author-generated; 3 items (e.g., “to what extent have you considered leaving your position in the past two years?”) on a 4-point Likert scale

- **Job Demands** ($\alpha = .83$)

Author-generated; 19 items; how much each of the following is a problem for you. e.g., “low pay” on a 5-point Likert scale

- **Job and Personal Resources** ($\alpha = .89$)

Author-generated; 19 items; How much each of the following is a resource for you? e.g., “good pay.” 5-point Likert scale

- **Demographics**

e.g., class modality, gender identity, faculty position

TAKEAWAY

Burnout may impact faculty’s decision to leave their current position and retire early.

To help retain faculty members, universities need to do more to facilitate faculty work/life balance and show respect and support to their faculty.

Figure 1. Turnover intentions by ranking

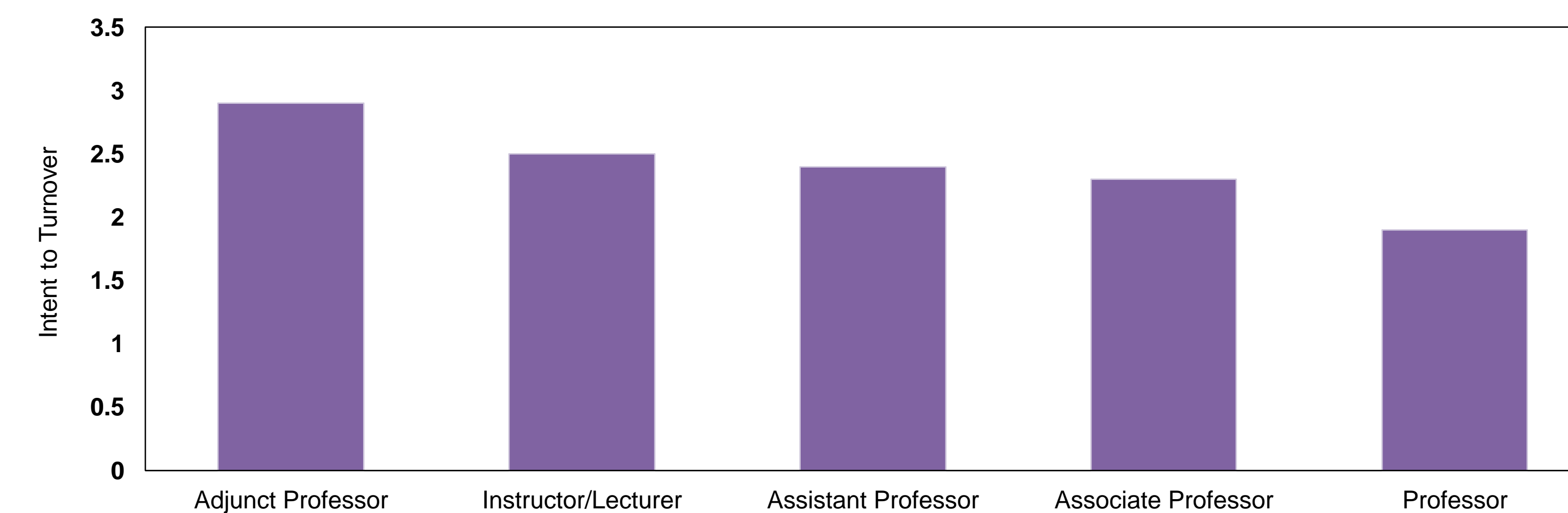


Table 1. Correlations between burnout and intent to turnover

Variable	M	SD	r
Leave for academic position	2.20	1.15	.418**
Leave for a non-academic position	2.30	1.15	.560**
Retire early	1.71	1.08	.301**

DISCUSSION

- Faculty burnout was associated with reported likelihood of leaving their position for another academic position, leaving their position for a non-academic position, and retiring early (see Table 1).
- Lack of work-life balance, low pay, and concerns about political discrimination predicted faculty’s reported likelihood of leaving their position for another academic or nonacademic position (see Table 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide adequate support to faculty members such as through mentoring programs and resources
- Encourage work-life balance by promoting flexible schedules, reducing workload, and providing opportunities for self care
- Foster a sense of purpose by reminding them of their positive impact

HOW MANY FACULTY ARE READY TO LEAVE?

40% considered leaving their current position for another academic position
39% considered leaving their current position for a non-academic position
22% considered retiring early

WHO IS MORE READY TO LEAVE?

Adjunct professors ($\eta^2 = .05$)
Those more impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic ($r = .247^{**}$)
Older people ($r = -.221^{**}$)

Things that didn’t seem to affect turnover intentions:

Teaching modality
Administrative responsibilities
Department type
Gender
Having a child at home
Racial identity

Table 2. Predictors of leaving current position

Job Demands (Adj $R^2 = .28$)	M	b
Lack of work-life balance	3.51	.35***
High service expectations	3.40	-.04
High teaching workload	3.37	-.09
Low pay	3.21	.16**
Low student motivation	3.19	-.03
Lack of respect/support from administrators	3.16	.11
High student demands	3.11	.08
Lack of recognition	2.80	<.01
Pressure to publish	2.76	-.05
Lack of respect/support from politicians	2.69	-.02
Lack of control over situation	2.46	.04
Lack of respect/support from students	2.46	-.01
Lack of respect/support from colleagues	2.43	.08
Lack of respect/support from the public	2.35	.09
Need to learn new tech	2.28	-.04
Concerns about DEI complaints	2.27	-.05
Concerns about identity discrimination	2.06	<.01
Concerns about political discrimination	2.00	.15*
DEI pressure in teaching	1.93	-.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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