

# Introducing the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS): A cross-sectional validation in Italian employees and foundation for longitudinal research

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** Employee turnover represents a critical challenge for organizations, impacting productivity, costs, and workplace stability. Traditional measures of turnover intention typically assess its intensity but fail to capture its dynamic and multi-stage nature. The present study introduces and provides a preliminary validation of the Italian version of the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS), a new tool designed to capture the employees' position within the turnover decision-making process.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted using an online survey platform. Participants (N = 303 Italian employees) completed the OTIS, along with a traditional turnover intention measure and validated scales assessing job satisfaction, work engagement, and occupational stress. Reliability was assessed using the correction for attenuation formula for single-item measures, and construct validity was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Criterion validity was examined through correlational analyses. Ordinal logistic regression and path analysis were performed to explore the relationships among turnover intention and its antecedents, based on the Job Demands-Resources model.

**Results:** Findings demonstrated that the OTIS categories align with the expected progression of turnover intention. The scale exhibited good reliability and convergent validity, as evidenced by its correlation with the traditional turnover intention measure. Criterion validity was further supported by the associations between OTIS scores and known antecedents of turnover intention. Path analysis revealed that work engagement and occupational stress influenced turnover intention indirectly through their effects on job satisfaction.

**Discussion:** The OTIS provides a simple yet flexible approach to assessing turnover intention, improving upon traditional intensity-based measures. Its ability to capture the dynamic nature of turnover intention holds promise for both researchers and organizations seeking to understand and mitigate voluntary employee departures. A longitudinal study is ongoing to further evaluate its predictive validity.

**Take-home message:** The Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS) offers a new, simple approach to measuring turnover intention by capturing its multi-stage progression. This study provides initial validation, demonstrating its reliability and validity, and providing a foundation for a longitudinal validation study.

**Keywords:** Great resignation; occupational stress; ordinal scale; turnover intention; voluntary turnover; job satisfaction; work engagement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Voluntary turnover has long been a pressing issue for employers, posing challenges for organizations in retaining talent and maintaining operational efficiency. High rates of voluntary turnover disrupt operations, increase recruitment and training costs, and cause a decline in team cohesion and morale [1,2]. Unlike involuntary turnover, where employees are terminated by the organization, voluntary turnover represents an active choice by employees and thus requires specific strategies for prevention and management.

These challenges have become even more critical in the wake of "The Great Resignation," a period marked by record levels of voluntary employee turnover [3,4]. Employees are leaving their jobs in search of better opportunities, improved work-life balance, or more meaningful career paths [5]. This phenomenon has highlighted the urgency for organizations to understand and address the factors driving voluntary turnover. Turnover intention—the psychological inclination to leave a job—has been recognized as the most robust predictor of actual voluntary turnover behavior [6,7].

Organizational studies show that turnover has negative effects on different productivity-related outcomes [8]. Research shows that as turnover increases, the morale and performance of the remaining workforce decrease [1,9]. In addition to the direct effects on organizational outcomes, high turnover rates can also negatively impact an organization's reputation, making it more difficult to attract and retain top talent [10]. Furthermore, frequent turnover can disrupt team dynamics, leading to reduced productivity and lower employee engagement, which in turn can exacerbate the cycle of turnover [11]. As organizations strive to navigate these challenges, there is an urgent need for reliable and valid tools to assess and address turnover intention among employees. However, most existing tools focus solely on the intensity of turnover intention, failing to capture the dynamic decision-making process that leads to actual turnover. This study proposes and validates the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS), a novel tool designed to assess turnover intention by identifying the specific stage of the decision-making process.

### *The three-stage model of turnover intention*

The three-stage model of turnover intention, developed by Mobley and colleagues [12], represents a foundational framework for understanding how turnover intention develops and evolves over time. This model emphasizes the sequential nature of turnover intention and identifies three key stages in the process. The starting point of the model is job dissatisfaction, which is considered the primary antecedent of turnover intention. Dissatisfaction with one's role, work environment, or organizational conditions triggers the initial thought of leaving one's job. In the first stage, thinking of quitting, employees begin to consider thoughts of leaving the organization. This stage represents the initial psychological step in the turnover process, as individuals evaluate their dissatisfaction and consider whether remaining in their current role aligns with their personal and professional goals. If dissatisfaction persists, employees move to the second stage, intention to search, a more active phase where the employees begin to look for alternative job opportunities. This stage is influenced not only by the persistence of dissatisfaction but also by the perceived probability of finding an acceptable alternative. Indeed, employees are more likely to engage in job searching behaviors when they believe viable opportunities are available in the labor market. Finally, in the third stage, intention to quit or stay, employees make a concrete decision about whether to leave their

current position or remain with the organization, usually by weighing the costs and benefits of each option.

While the model is sequential, it also acknowledges that employees may skip stages under certain circumstances. For instance, an employee who receives an unsolicited job offer might bypass the thinking of quitting and intention-to-search stages and move directly to the decision to quit. Similarly, an unexpected adverse event at work, such as a conflict with a supervisor or an organizational crisis, can propel an employee to the final stage, even without a backup plan, without going through the earlier stages [7,13]. These deviations highlight the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of the turnover intention process.

This model represented a critical step forward in turnover research, highlighting the complexity of the decision-making process leading to turnover. Subsequent studies have confirmed the model's relevance, demonstrating that understanding the progression through these stages is essential for predicting and potentially mitigating actual turnover behavior [14,15].

#### ***Antecedents of turnover intention***

Turnover intention is influenced by a range of individual, organizational, and contextual factors, with job satisfaction emerging as a primary determinant of employees' intent to stay or leave an organization [16,17]. Studies show that employees who experience higher levels of job satisfaction are less likely to develop turnover intention, while dissatisfaction significantly increases the likelihood of considering and pursuing alternative opportunities [18,19]. This relationship underscores the pivotal role of job satisfaction as a buffer against turnover. Dissatisfaction can arise from several sources, often rooted in mismatches between employee expectations and the realities of their roles. For example, employees who perceive their work as misaligned with their skills, values, or career aspirations may experience reduced satisfaction, prompting thoughts of leaving. Similarly, dissatisfaction often results from inadequate recognition or rewards, whether financial or symbolic, which can undermine motivation and organizational commitment. Poor relationships with supervisors or colleagues are another key driver, as negative interpersonal dynamics can create a toxic work environment that erodes job satisfaction. Moreover, job satisfaction interacts with other variables in shaping turnover intention. For example, employees with higher levels of intrinsic motivation or strong organizational commitment may be more resilient to temporary dissatisfaction, while those experiencing high levels of job stress or a lack of work-life balance may be more susceptible to turnover intentions, even when satisfaction is moderately high. These interactions highlight that while job satisfaction is a central antecedent, its influence is mediated and moderated by a constellation of other factors that also play a relevant role in shaping turnover intention.

Work engagement is another important antecedent of turnover intention. Engaged employees, characterized by high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work, are less likely to consider leaving their jobs [20]. Conversely, low engagement, often linked to a lack of rewards, poor organizational culture, or inadequate growth opportunities, increases turnover intention [21,22]. Negative relationships with coworkers and a misalignment between personal and organizational values further contribute to disengagement and turnover intention [23].

Work-related stress is a prominent antecedent, as it negatively affects employees' well-being and job satisfaction. Stressful working conditions, such as high job demands, can lead to low organizational commitment and a desire to leave [24-26]. While some studies suggest that work-related stressors have a direct effect on turnover intention [26-28], others emphasize their indirect influence through increased job dissatisfaction and reduced organizational commitment [25, 29, 30].

Organizational factors also significantly influence turnover intention. Herzberg's two-factor theory [31] highlights the role of motivational and hygiene factors in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Motivational factors, such as recognition, meaningful work, and opportunities for career advancement, enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention. In contrast, hygiene factors, such as poor working conditions, job insecurity, and unfair organizational practices, lead to dissatisfaction and an increased likelihood of turnover intention.

Understanding these antecedents is critical for organizations seeking to develop targeted strategies to identify at-risk employees, improve retention, and foster a supportive work environment.

### **Turnover intention measures**

Accurately measuring turnover intention is critical for predicting actual turnover. In the literature, turnover intention is often assessed using self-report scales, such as the Turnover Intention measure [32], and similar scales [33-35]. These measures focus on assessing the intensity of an employee's desire to leave their job, by asking employees to rate how strongly they feel about quitting their job. While this approach provides valuable information, it has limitations, particularly in its ability to capture their position within the decision-making process. This limitation is particularly relevant if we consider also the well-documented intention-behavior gap [36], which refers to the phenomenon where strong intentions do not always translate into corresponding actions. In the context of turnover, this gap means that employees might score high on turnover intention without actively searching for a new job, for example if they encounter barriers such as fear of the unknown, lack of viable job alternatives, or personal circumstances, while others with lower scores may already be interviewing for new roles, if they perceive an attractive opportunity or if their circumstances change suddenly. Therefore, simply measuring the intensity of turnover intention is not sufficient to fully understand an employee's likelihood of leaving.

A different approach to measuring turnover intention, which aims to capture its complexity, is the Expanded Multidimensional Turnover Intentions Scale (EMTIS) [37]. Unlike earlier measures that treat turnover intention as a unidimensional construct, the EMTIS conceptualizes it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Specifically, this scale evaluates five distinct aspects: subjective social status, organizational culture, personal orientation, expectations, and career growth. While this effort to expand the scope of measurement and address the limitations of previous tools is commendable, it results in the conflation of antecedents (such as job satisfaction and organizational culture) with the construct of turnover intention.

In other words, the total turnover intention score provided by the tool reflects a combination of a range of potential antecedents, rather than serving as a pure measure of turnover intention itself. This inclusion of construct-irrelevant characteristics, also known as criterion contamination [38], can obscure interpretive clarity and limit its utility as a focused tool for measuring turnover intention.

### **The development of the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale**

Existing measures of turnover intention conceptualize it as a singular, static construct, which limits their ability to provide actionable insights into where an employee stands in the turnover decision-making process. To address this limitation, we developed the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS), a new tool which, instead of trying to assess the intensity of the turnover intention, employs a straightforward ordinal approach to capture the employees' position within the turnover decision-making process. This novel approach could complement existing tools, with aim to improve the understanding and predictive accuracy of turnover intention assessment, thus allowing organizations to better target interventions and reduce turnover more effectively.

The OTIS (Table 1) prompts participants to select one of six ordered statements that best reflects their current mindset about their job (question "*The following statements pertain to your current situation regarding your job. Please select the one that you believe most accurately represents your present condition.*"). These six statements were developed to capture the progression through the three stages of the classic model by Mobley and colleagues [12].

**Table 1.** OTIS ordered categories and their correspondence to turnover intention stages.

OTIS		Corresponding stage (Mobley et al., 1978)
#	Category label	
0	At the moment, I don't think I should change my current job	Thinking of quitting
1	Sometimes, I think I should change my current job	

2	I am seriously starting to consider the possibility of looking for a new job	Intention to search
3	I am actively looking for a new job	
4	I have found new job opportunities and am seriously evaluating them	Intention to quit or stay
5	I am about to voluntarily leave my current job	

Note. The Italian OTIS categories are reported in Appendix A.

Specifically, the first two statements correspond to the first stage (thinking of quitting), ranging from the absence of any intention to quit (*"At the moment, I don't think I should change my current job"*) to the emergence of initial thoughts about leaving (*"Sometimes, I think I should change my current job"*). The third and fourth statements represent the second stage (intention to search), beginning with the formation of a clear intention to explore new opportunities (*"I am seriously starting to consider the possibility of looking for a new job"*) and advancing to active job-seeking behavior (*"I am actively looking for a new job"*). Finally, the last two statements reflect the third stage (intention to quit or stay), encompassing both the evaluation of alternative job opportunities (*"I have found new job opportunities and am seriously evaluating them"*) and the resolution to quit the current job (*"I am about to voluntarily leave my current job"*). The six categories ordered of the OTIS are assigned numerical values ranging from 0 to 5, with lower values indicating the absence or earliest stage of turnover intention and higher values representing more advanced stages, culminating in the decision to leave the organization.

It is important to note that while the six statements of the OTIS represent distinct and ordered stages in the turnover intention process, the time spent in each stage may vary widely. This variability can depend on factors such as individual personality traits, such as being more risk-averse or decisive, and job market conditions, such as the availability of opportunities in a specific industry or region.

To test the OTIS face validity [39] and ensure that its six statements were intuitively ordered in the intended sequence, we conducted a pilot study to evaluate whether laypeople naturally perceive and arrange these statements in the same progression. Ten participants (five females and five males, all employed in various sectors) were presented with the six statements in a randomized order and asked to rank them based on their perceived level of turnover intention, from the least to the most advanced stage. All participants arranged the statements in the exact sequence established by our theoretical framework. This outcome supports the scale's face validity and confirms that the hypothesized ordinal structure of the scale aligns with how individuals spontaneously conceptualize the progression of turnover intention, providing therefore a foundation for a deeper validation study of this new measure.

### Objectives

This study represents the baseline of a 12-month longitudinal research aimed at evaluating the predictive validity of the OTIS concerning actual employee turnover. The primary objective of the present study is to validate the OTIS by examining its construct and criterion validity through correlations with established measure of turnover intention, the Turnover Intention measure [32] and other measures of related constructs. A second objective is to explore the utility of the OTIS in the research context, testing a path analysis model examining the antecedents of turnover intention grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [40]. According to the JD-R framework, job demands (e.g., workload) contribute to occupational stress, whereas job resources (e.g., social support) promote motivation, fostering work engagement and enhancing employees' ability to cope with job demands. Based on this framework, our model proposes that occupational stress and work engagement influence job satisfaction, which, in turn, affects turnover intention.

## METHODS

### Participants and procedure

Participants in the study included 303 employees from various sectors, recruited and compensated through Prolific®, an online survey platform. The sample size was determined based

on an expected attrition rate of approximately 25% in the longitudinal follow-ups, with the aim of retaining a final sample of 150 participants at the last assessment. Inclusion criteria were as follows: being at least 18 years old, currently employed, residing in Italy, and having Italian as their primary language. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Trieste, Italy (Minutes No. 2, dated February 26, 2024), and was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. Written informed consent, which emphasized the confidentiality of the data and the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time, was provided on the first page of the questionnaire, where participants were asked to click "I consent" to proceed with the study. Data was collected between April 12, 2024, and April 15, 2024. Participants will be contacted again in six and twelve months and asked to complete the same questionnaire to evaluate the predictive validity of the OTIS longitudinally.

### **Measures**

Other than the OTIS, the questionnaire comprised the validated psychometric tools described below, and a set of demographic and work-related questions (age, gender, years of job experience, and type of employment).

*Turnover Intention.* The Turnover Intention measure (TI) [32] is a three-item measure of intensity of turnover intention, based on Mobley and colleagues' definition [7, 12], with responses on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"). The total score is derived by averaging the individual item responses, with higher scores indicating stronger turnover intention. Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .89.

*Job Satisfaction.* The "Satisfaction with Work" Scale (SwWS) [41] is a measure of general job satisfaction, modelled after the popular Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener and colleagues [42]. The scale is composed of five items, with answers on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1, "strongly disagree" to 7, "strongly agree"), which are summed to calculate the job satisfaction total score, higher scores indicate higher satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .91.

*Work Engagement.* To assess work engagement, we used the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) [43], which is composed of nine items with answers on a 7-point Likert frequency scale (from 0, "never" to 6, "always"). Individual scores are averaged to calculate the work engagement total score, higher scores indicate stronger engagement. Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .95.

*Work-related stress.* The Perceived Occupational Stress scale (POS) [44] was used for measures the level of stress experienced at work. The four items of the scale are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"). The total score is calculated by averaging the individual item responses, with higher scores reflecting a higher level of occupational stress. Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .87.

### **Data analysis**

First, we conducted standard descriptive analyses on the OTIS (frequencies) and the other measures (means and standard deviations). Correlation analyses (Spearman's rho) and ordinal logistic regression were conducted to examine the relationships between OTIS and the other scales. A p-value of < .05 was used as the threshold for statistical significance. The reliability of the OTIS was estimated using the correction for attenuation formula, which accounts for measurement error in single-item measures [45]. Following this approach, we used the TI as the multi-item reference measure of the same construct, assuming a construct correlation of .90 [45]. The construct validity of the OTIS was evaluated using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach for validating single-item measures [46]. This method assesses whether the single-item measure adequately represents the underlying construct by modeling it alongside a validated multi-item measure of the same construct, in this case the TI. Factor loadings of 0.45 to 0.54 are considered fair, from 0.55 to 0.62 good, from 0.63 to 0.70 very good, and of 0.71 and greater excellent [46].

Furthermore, we employed path analysis, using the weighted least squares estimation method with robust standard errors [47, 48], to evaluate the fit of a model of the relationships among turnover intention as measured by the OTIS and its antecedents. The following fit indices were considered:

RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), SRMR (standardized root mean square residual), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). Values lower than .06 for RMSEA, lower than .08 for SRMR, and higher than .95 for CFI and TLI indicate an adequate fit to the data [49]. All analyses were conducted using Jamovi software with the Semlj module.

## RESULTS

Demographic and work-related data of the study sample are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographic and work-related characteristics of the study sample.

Variable	n (%) / Mean (SD)
GENDER	
Female	130 (43.2%)
Male	171 (56.8%)
AGE (years, range 18-66)	34.3 (9.90)
YEARS OF JOB EXPERIENCE	
0-1	66 (21.9%)
2-5	133(44.0%)
6-10	53 (17.5%)
11-20	30 (9.9%)
21-30	15 (5.0%)
>30	5 (1.7%)
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	
Part-time	75 (24.9%)
Full-time	226 (75.1%)

The descriptive statistics and Spearman correlations among the OTIS and the other variables included in the study are reported in Table 3. All correlations were statistically significant, and the OTIS displayed a strong correlation with the TI measure and moderately high with the other measures. The scale reliability, calculated employing the method for single-item measures based on the correction for attenuation formula [45], resulted to be .75. The construct validity of the OTIS was assessed using the CFA method [46], which yielded a standardized factor loading of  $\beta = .82$  ( $p < .001$ ), indicating an excellent construct validity.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and Spearman correlations among the measures of interest.

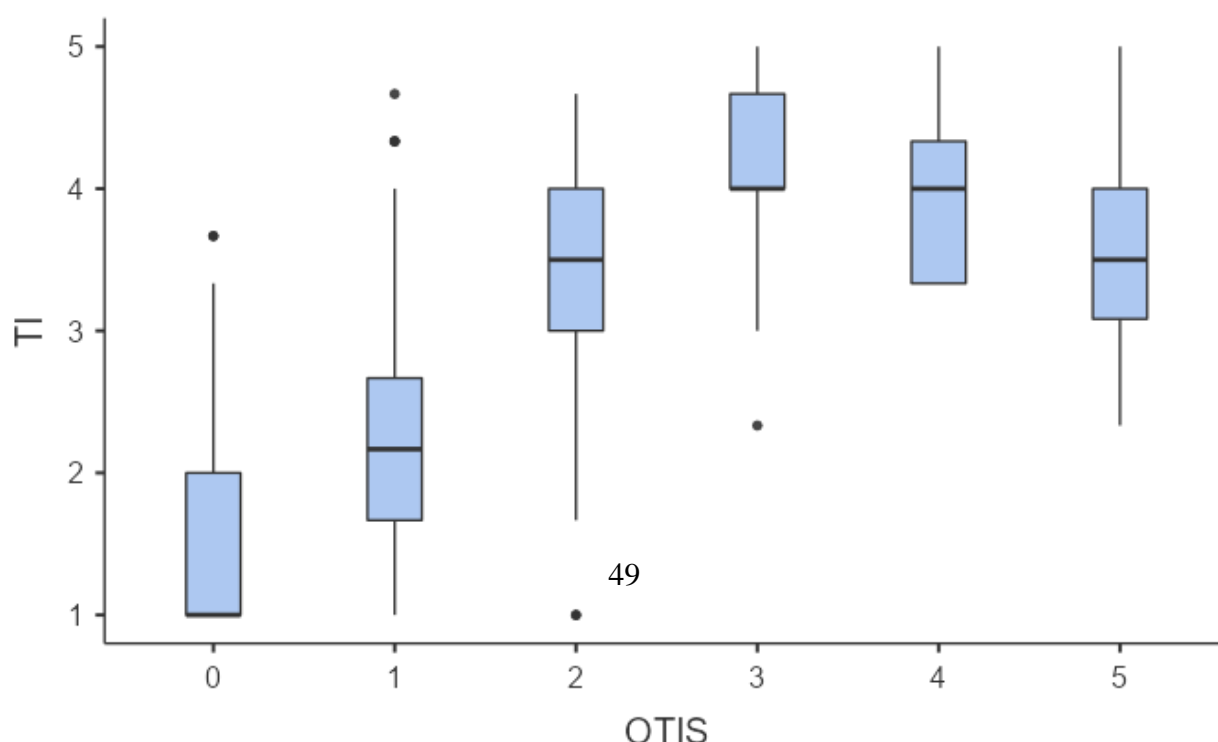
Variable	Min/Max	Mean (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	Correlations			
					OTIS	TI	SwWS	UWES-9
OTIS	0/5	-	1.11	0.83	-	-	-	-
TI	1/5	2.69 (0.92)	0.54	-0.87	.74***	-	-	-
SwWS	1/7	1.51 (0.45)	-0.51	-0.15	-.54***	-.65***	-	-
UWES-9	1/7	3.32 (1.40)	-0.43	-0.53	-.46***	-.58***	.80***	-
POS	1/5	1.30 (0.69)	0.42	-0.60	.34***	.46***	-.39***	-.34***

Note. OTIS = Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale; TI = Turnover Intention measure; SwWS = Satisfaction with Work Scale; UWES-9 = Utrecht Work Engagement Scale; POS = Perceived Occupational Stress. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

To further validate the ordinal progression of the OTIS categories, we examined their relationship with scores on the TI measure. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean TI scores across the six OTIS categories. The results demonstrated a clear and significant upward trend in TI scores as participants progressed through the OTIS categories, reflecting increasing levels of turnover intention ( $F_{(5, 297)} = 87.4, p < .001$ ).

Figure 1 presents a box plot of the TI scores for each OTIS category. As expected, TI scores show a stepwise increase from category 0 ("At the moment, I don't think I should change my current job") to category 5 ("I am about to voluntarily leave my current job"). However, the distribution of TI scores also reveals important insights into the discrepancy between intention and action. Specifically, some individuals in lower OTIS categories (e.g., Category 0 or 1) report high TI scores, indicating strong intentions to leave but no progress toward acting on those intentions. On the other hand, some individuals in higher OTIS categories exhibit low TI scores, possibly reflecting situations where external circumstances (e.g., relocation to another city or country, organizational downsizing, or the current job becoming unviable) are driving their decision to leave despite weak personal intentions to do so.

**Figure 1.** Box plot representing the distribution of the TI scores for each OTIS category.

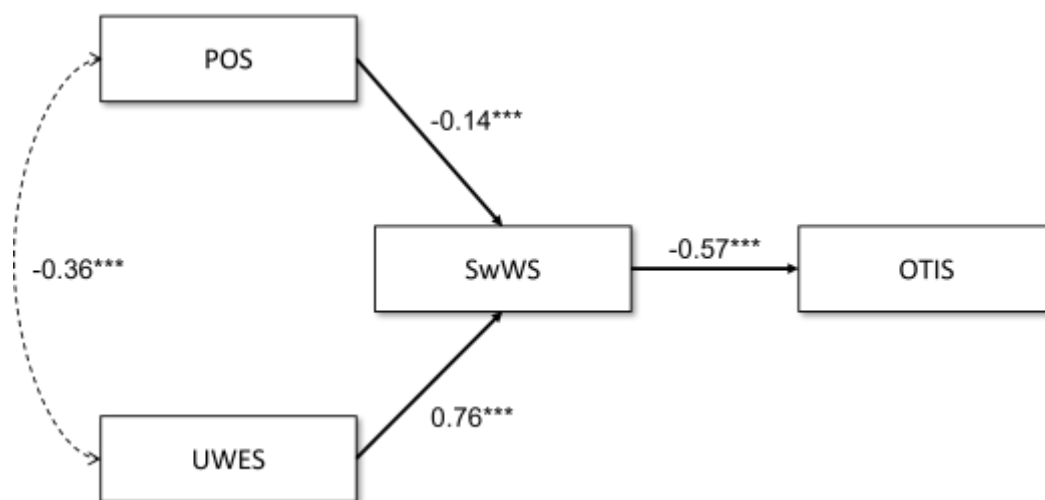




*Note.* Each box represents the interquartile range (IQR), with the horizontal line inside the box indicating the median TI score for that category. The whiskers extend to 1.5 times the IQR, and dots outside this range represent outliers.

An ordinal logistic regression analysis was conducted to test the effectiveness of the three antecedents of turnover intention (job satisfaction, occupational stress, and work-related stress) in predicting OTIS scores, after controlling for age, gender, years of job experience, and type of employment. First, data were checked for multicollinearity, with all VIF values below 4, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Results revealed that only job satisfaction ( $b = -.89$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and perceived occupational stress ( $b = .33$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant predictors of higher stages of turnover intention ( $\chi^2_{(7)} = 118$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Specifically, an increase in job satisfaction was associated with a decrease in the odds of being in higher OTIS categories ( $OR = 0.41$ ,  $95\% CI = 0.30-0.56$ ), while an increase in perceived stress at work corresponded to increased odds of being in higher OTIS categories ( $OR = 1.39$ ,  $95\% CI = 1.09-1.78$ ). Unexpectedly, work engagement did not show a significant association with OTIS scores. We hypothesized that work engagement could have an indirect effect, which is not captured when all constructs are entered concurrently in a regression analysis. Therefore, we conducted a path analysis based on the Job Demands-Resources Model [39], proposing that the effects of work engagement and occupational stress on turnover intention are mediated by job satisfaction (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Path analysis showing the relationship between turnover intention and its antecedents.



*Note.* Paths represent standardized regression coefficients (solid lines) and covariances (dotted line). OTIS = Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale; SwWS = Satisfaction with Work Scale; UWES-9 = Utrecht Work Engagement Scale; POS = Perceived Occupational Stress. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The model explained approximately one-third of the variance in the OTIS scores ( $R^2 = .33$ ) and demonstrated adequate overall fit ( $RMSEA = .065$ ,  $95\% CI = .000-.146$ ;  $SRMR = .023$ ;  $CFI = .98$ ;  $TLI = .96$ ). All direct paths were significant (all  $ps < .001$ ), as were the indirect effects of work engagement ( $\beta = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and occupational stress ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on turnover intention through job satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

The present study introduces and provides a preliminary validation of the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS), a new tool designed to assess turnover intention by identifying the stage of the turnover decision-making process, following the three-stage model developed by Mobley and

colleagues [12]. Unlike traditional measures that assess the intensity of turnover intention, such as the Turnover Intention measure [32] and the Intent to Turnover scale [35], the OTIS provides an ordinal categorization that better reflects the dynamic nature of employees' thought processes regarding leaving their jobs.

The use of a single-item measure may raise concerns regarding reliability and validity. However, recent literature has increasingly recognized the appropriateness of single-item measures in psychological research, particularly when the construct is clearly defined and unidimensional [39, 46, 50], as is the case with turnover intention. Moreover, methods for estimating the reliability and validity of single-item measures have been developed [39, 45, 46]. In line with this perspective, the OTIS was designed to provide an efficient yet valid assessment of turnover intention stages while minimizing survey fatigue and the potential for criterion contamination [46] associated with lengthy scales. The present findings offer preliminary support for its validity. Specifically, the six ordered categories of the OTIS align with the intuitive progression of employees' intention to leave their jobs (face validity). The scale showed acceptable reliability, estimated using the correction for attenuation formula method for single-item measures [45], excellent construct validity, assessed using the CFA method [46], and strong convergent validity, as indicated by its high correlation with the traditional Turnover Intention measure [32]. Moreover, the distribution of Turnover Intention measure scores within the OTIS categories highlighted an intention-action gap, where some employees with high turnover intention scores remained in early OTIS stages, while others in later stages of the process reported lower turnover intention scores. This result highlights the complexity of turnover behaviors and suggests that traditional turnover intention intensity measures may not fully predict actual employees' behavior regarding departure.

Results also further supported the criterion validity of the OTIS, as showed by its correlation with a set of variables known in literature as antecedents of turnover intention (job satisfaction, work engagement, and occupational stress). An ordinal logistic regression was conducted to further explore the role of these antecedents in predicting OTIS scores. After controlling for demographic and job characteristics, job satisfaction and occupational stress resulted significant predictors of turnover intention. Higher job satisfaction was associated with lower odds of progressing through the stages of turnover intention, while increased occupational stress corresponded to higher odds of considering and acting upon thoughts of leaving. Interestingly, work engagement did not emerge as a direct predictor in the ordinal regression model. However, path analysis revealed that both work engagement and occupational stress influence turnover intention indirectly through their effects on job satisfaction, in line with the Job Demands-Resources Model [40] and previous studies that have highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction [29,30,51].

While the OTIS naturally follows the turnover intention model proposed by Mobley and colleagues [12], it is also compatible with other models, such as the one developed by Griffeth and colleagues [55] and the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover [13]. The former recognizes that a set of proximal antecedents, including intent to search, general job search, preparatory job search, active job search, and perceived alternatives, makes up for turnover intention. The latter suggests that employees may leave their jobs not only due to dissatisfaction but also in response to unexpected events or "shocks", such as organizational restructuring, personal life changes, or unsolicited job offers, that prompt them to reconsider their employment. These models indicate that turnover intention can develop either gradually or in response to external triggers. Accordingly, the OTIS does not assume a strict, step-by-step progression but allows for nonlinear movement, meaning employees may skip stages due to external triggers. This flexibility makes OTIS a potentially more dynamic tool than traditional turnover measures, as it is agnostic to the underlying cause of turnover intention, whether driven by dissatisfaction, perceived alternatives, or external shocks.

Our findings support the validity of the OTIS, demonstrating that it effectively captures different stages of turnover intention and aligns well with established theoretical models. However, this study has some limitations. First, the sample was drawn from an online survey platform, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, we did not collect information about

the types of jobs participants were employed in, which limits our ability to account for potential contextual factors influencing turnover intention. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the data prevents causal inferences, particularly regarding the relationships between turnover intention and its antecedents. Nevertheless, this study represents the first step in a longitudinal investigation aimed at evaluating the predictive validity of the OTIS. Participants will be surveyed again in six and twelve months to assess whether their progression through the OTIS categories effectively predicts actual turnover behaviors. This longitudinal approach will allow for a deeper examination of the scale's utility in predicting voluntary turnover over time.

## CONCLUSIONS

The OTIS is a promising new tool which follows a simple yet structured approach for assessing turnover intention as a dynamic and multi-stage process. By distinguishing between different stages of turnover intention, the OTIS enhances our ability to understand and predict employee departures more accurately than traditional measures based solely on turnover intention intensity, which treat turnover intention as a singular, static construct, thus limiting their ability to provide insights into an employee's position within this process. To address these limitations, the OTIS focuses on identifying the specific stage of turnover intention (thinking of quitting, intention to search, intention to quit/stay) while maintaining simplicity and precision.

By providing a more detailed understanding of the turnover intention process, the OTIS aims to enhance the predictive accuracy of existing tools and offer organizations actionable insights into employee retention. As turnover remains a significant challenge in today's workforce [53], the OTIS offers several practical applications for both researchers and organizations seeking to manage and reduce turnover rates. For researchers, the OTIS can help identify specific antecedents and patterns associated with each stage, thereby improving the predictive accuracy of model of turnover. Moreover, it could serve as a diagnostic tool, enabling organizations to proactively address turnover issues before they result in actual departures. By recognizing employees at risk of leaving before they reach the final decision-making stage, organizations can implement targeted interventions to enhance job satisfaction and employee well-being, and ultimately improve retention strategies, leading to more effective human resource management and organizational planning.

Further research is needed to confirm its predictive validity and generalizability, with a longitudinal study already in progress. However, its preliminary validation suggests that it could be a valuable addition to the toolkit for researching and managing employee retention.

The present study introduces and provides a preliminary validation of the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale (OTIS), a new tool designed to assess turnover intention by identifying the stage of the turnover decision-making process, following the three-stage model developed by Mobley and colleagues [12]. Unlike traditional measures that assess the intensity of turnover intention, the OTIS provides an ordinal categorization that better reflects the dynamic nature of employees' thought processes regarding leaving their jobs.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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## Appendix A. Italian version of the Ordinal Turnover Intention Scale.

Le seguenti affermazioni riguardano la sua attuale situazione lavorativa. Scegli quella che secondo lei rappresenta più fedelmente la sua condizione attuale.

Al momento non penso che dovrei cambiare il mio attuale lavoro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ogni tanto penso che dovrei cambiare il mio attuale lavoro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inizio seriamente a considerare la possibilità di cercare un nuovo lavoro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sto cercando attivamente un nuovo lavoro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ho trovato delle nuove opportunità lavorative e le sto valutando seriamente	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sto per lasciare volontariamente il mio attuale lavoro	<input type="checkbox"/>

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