



Organizational Justice and Turnover Intention in Logistics Employees: A Social Exchange Theory Perspective with the Mediating Role of Burnout

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Abstract

Employee turnover remains a critical challenge in labor-intensive service industries such as logistics. Drawing on social exchange theory and the job demands–resources (JD–R) model, this study examines the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention, with occupational burnout as a mediating mechanism. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 428 logistics employees in China, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and bootstrapping techniques. The results indicate that organizational justice is negatively associated with both occupational burnout and turnover intention, while burnout is positively related to turnover intention. Furthermore, burnout partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention. This study contributes to the literature by clarifying the psychological mechanism linking fairness perceptions to employee withdrawal in high-demand service contexts. The findings highlight the importance

of enhancing organizational justice and reducing burnout to improve employee retention in logistics enterprises.

Keywords: organizational justice, occupational burnout, turnover intention, social exchange theory, JD–R model, logistics enterprises.

1 Introduction

Employee turnover has become an increasingly challenging issue for organizations operating in labor-intensive service industries. High turnover rates generate substantial costs related to recruitment, training, and operational disruption, while also undermining service quality and organizational stability. These challenges are particularly pronounced in the logistics sector, where employees frequently face physically demanding tasks, irregular working hours, tight delivery schedules, and persistent performance pressure. In such contexts, sustained workforce instability not only weakens organizational efficiency but also amplifies stress among remaining employees, creating a cycle that further exacerbates retention difficulties.

Citation

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Rather than focusing exclusively on actual turnover behavior, contemporary organizational research has increasingly emphasized turnover intention as a critical antecedent of employee departure. Turnover intention reflects employees' conscious consideration of leaving their current organization and has been shown to be a reliable predictor of subsequent turnover behavior [1, 2]. As an early signal of withdrawal, turnover intention provides organizations with an opportunity to identify potential retention risks before employees actually exit. Consequently, understanding the factors that shape turnover intention remains a central concern in human resource management and organizational behavior research.

Existing studies consistently suggest that employees' perceptions of fairness within the organization play a decisive role in shaping their attitudes toward staying or leaving. Organizational justice generally refers to employees' evaluations of fairness in outcome allocation, decision-making procedures, and interpersonal treatment [3, 4]. When employees perceive organizational practices as fair, they are more likely to develop positive work-related attitudes, including trust, commitment, and a willingness to maintain organizational membership. In contrast, perceptions of unfairness may generate dissatisfaction, emotional strain, and adverse health outcomes, as organizational justice has been identified as a key psychosocial predictor of employee well-being [5].

Empirical evidence across diverse organizational settings has documented a negative association between organizational justice and turnover intention [3, 6]. However, while the direct relationship between fairness perceptions and withdrawal intention has been well established, the psychological processes through which organizational justice translates into turnover intention remain less clearly articulated. In particular, limited attention has been given to employees' internal psychological states that may explain how organizational fairness influences withdrawal-related cognition, especially in high-pressure service environments such as logistics enterprises.

One psychological construct that may help clarify this relationship is occupational burnout. Burnout represents a state of chronic exhaustion resulting from sustained occupational demands, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment [7, 8]. Research in high-demand occupational contexts has further

demonstrated that burnout serves as a mediating mechanism linking adverse work conditions to employee turnover [9]. Employees experiencing burnout often report diminished motivation, weakened organizational attachment, and increased thoughts of leaving their jobs. Prior research has repeatedly identified burnout as a strong predictor of turnover intention [10, 11] across occupational groups, highlighting its importance in understanding employee withdrawal processes.

The interrelationships among organizational justice, burnout, and turnover intention can be explained through both social exchange theory and the job demands–resources (JD–R) model [12, 13]. From a social exchange perspective, fair treatment signals organizational support and respect, encouraging employees to reciprocate through continued participation and loyalty. Conversely, perceived injustice may be interpreted as a violation of the exchange relationship, leading to emotional depletion and disengagement. Similarly, the JD–R model conceptualizes organizational justice as a job resource that buffers the negative effects of job demands [12, 14]. When such resources are insufficient, employees are more likely to experience burnout, which subsequently increases their intention to leave.

Despite the strong theoretical relevance of these frameworks, empirical research that explicitly examines occupational burnout as a mediating mechanism between organizational justice and turnover intention remains limited, particularly within the logistics industry. Much of the existing literature has examined these constructs in isolation or within different occupational contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how fairness perceptions influence turnover intention through employees' psychological well-being in logistics enterprises.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the relationship between organizational justice and employee turnover intention in logistics enterprises and examines the mediating role of occupational burnout. Using survey data collected from logistics employees in China and applying structural equation modeling [15–17] techniques, this study aims to clarify the psychological pathway through which organizational justice influences turnover intention. By doing so, the research contributes to a more refined understanding of employee retention mechanisms in high-demand service environments and offers practical insights for improving workforce stability in

the logistics sector.

This study is primarily grounded in social exchange theory, which serves as the central theoretical lens for explaining how employees respond to organizational justice in the logistics workplace.

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Organizational Justice and Turnover Intention

In labor-intensive service settings, employees' decisions to remain with or leave an organization are often shaped more by their subjective perceptions than by objective working conditions alone. In logistics enterprises, employees frequently face high workloads, strict delivery schedules, and demanding performance expectations. Under such conditions, perceptions of fairness become particularly important in shaping how employees evaluate continued organizational membership.

Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of outcome allocation, the procedures used to reach decisions, and the quality of interpersonal treatment received from supervisors and the organization. These perceptions influence employees' interpretations of managerial actions and organizational policies. When fairness is perceived to be high, employees are more likely to view organizational arrangements as legitimate and balanced, reducing the psychological appeal of withdrawal. In contrast, perceived unfairness may undermine trust and weaken employees' emotional attachment to the organization, thereby increasing the likelihood of turnover intention.

From a relational perspective, fairness perceptions shape employees' expectations of reciprocity within the employment relationship. Fair organizational practices may signal recognition and respect, encouraging employees to maintain their involvement and commitment. Conversely, unfair treatment may prompt employees to reassess the value of continued participation and consider alternative employment options. This mechanism is particularly salient in logistics contexts, where perceived inequities in workload allocation, scheduling, or performance evaluation can quickly translate into dissatisfaction and withdrawal-related cognition.

Based on the above reasoning, organizational justice is expected to reduce employees' intentions to leave their organization.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Organizational justice is negatively related to employee turnover intention.

2.2 Organizational Justice and Occupational Burnout

Occupational burnout emerges when employees experience sustained psychological strain that exceeds their capacity for recovery. It is commonly manifested through emotional exhaustion, detachment from work, and a diminished sense of professional accomplishment. In high-demand work environments, burnout tends to develop gradually as employees' psychological resources are repeatedly depleted.

The job demands–resources (JD–R) model provides a useful framework for understanding how organizational justice may influence burnout. According to this model, job demands such as workload pressure and time constraints consume employees' energy, whereas job resources support coping and psychological resilience. Fair organizational practices can function as an important resource that reduces strain and stress reactions, as organizational justice has been empirically linked to stress reduction [18]. Transparent procedures and respectful interpersonal treatment may reduce frustration and uncertainty, thereby mitigating emotional exhaustion.

In contrast, perceptions of injustice may intensify stress responses by signaling inconsistency, lack of support, or disregard for employees' contributions. Such perceptions can accelerate the depletion of psychological resources and increase vulnerability to burnout. In logistics enterprises, where operational demands are often high and recovery opportunities may be limited, fairness perceptions may therefore play a particularly important role in protecting employees from chronic strain.

Accordingly, organizational justice is expected to be negatively associated with occupational burnout.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Organizational justice is negatively related to occupational burnout.

2.3 Occupational Burnout and Turnover Intention

Building on the preceding discussion, occupational burnout is widely recognized as an important psychological antecedent of withdrawal-related attitudes. When employees experience sustained emotional exhaustion and reduced coping capacity, they are more likely to view leaving the organization as a way to relieve strain. In labor-intensive industries

such as logistics, prolonged exposure to demanding work conditions may therefore make burnout a particularly salient predictor of turnover intention.

From a resource-based perspective, burnout reflects a state in which emotional and cognitive resources are substantially depleted. When employees perceive that continued effort is unlikely to restore balance or well-being, turnover intention may emerge as a form of self-protection. This process is especially pronounced in labor-intensive industries such as logistics, where sustained exposure to demanding work conditions may make burnout a powerful driver of withdrawal cognition.

Empirical research across occupational contexts consistently demonstrates a positive association between burnout and turnover intention. Employees who experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and disengagement are more likely to contemplate leaving their organization, underscoring burnout's central role in the turnover process.

Based on this reasoning, occupational burnout is expected to increase employee turnover intention. Building on these empirical findings and the theoretical reasoning presented above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Occupational burnout is positively related to employee turnover intention.

2.4 The Mediating Role of Occupational Burnout

Integrating social exchange theory and the JD-R model provides a stronger theoretical basis for understanding the mediating role of occupational burnout. From a social exchange perspective, organizational justice reflects the extent to which employees perceive fair treatment and organizational support. When employees experience fairness, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and sustained organizational involvement. Conversely, perceived injustice may signal a violation of the exchange relationship, leading to psychological strain and reduced motivation to maintain organizational membership.

At the same time, the JD-R model suggests that organizational justice functions as an important job resource that can alleviate the negative effects of job demands. In high-pressure environments such as logistics enterprises, insufficient resources combined with excessive demands are likely to result in burnout. As burnout intensifies, employees may adopt

withdrawal-oriented coping strategies, including the intention to leave the organization.

Therefore, organizational justice is expected to reduce turnover intention not only directly but also indirectly by mitigating employees' burnout. This dual mechanism highlights burnout as a critical psychological pathway linking fairness perceptions to withdrawal cognition.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Occupational burnout mediates the relationship between organizational justice and employee turnover intention.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among organizational justice, occupational burnout, and turnover intention in logistics enterprises. A survey approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to test theoretically derived relationships among latent constructs using employees' self-reported perceptions and experiences at a single point in time. The proposed model was grounded primarily in social exchange theory and further supported by the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. Although a cross-sectional design does not permit strong causal inference, it is suitable for examining the associations among organizational justice perceptions, employee psychological well-being, and withdrawal-related attitudes.

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

Data were collected from employees working in logistics enterprises in China through a structured questionnaire. To improve accessibility and participation, both online and paper-based survey formats were used. Given the operational characteristics of logistics firms and the absence of comprehensive employee sampling frames, convenience sampling was adopted.

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed. After incomplete responses and questionnaires showing apparent response bias were excluded, 428 valid responses were retained for analysis, resulting in an effective response rate of 85.6%. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test involving 30 logistics employees was conducted to assess item clarity and response appropriateness. Based on participant feedback, minor wording revisions were made to improve readability and reduce ambiguity.

The final sample included employees from different types of logistics enterprises and different regions of China. As shown in Table 1, 61.9% of respondents were male and 38.1% were female. The largest age group was 25-34 years (41.1%), followed by 35-44 years (29.7%). In terms of education, 43.9% held a bachelor's degree, while 29.9% had a junior college education. Regarding tenure, 38.3% had worked for 1-3 years and 27.8% for 4-6 years. Frontline employees accounted for 63.6% of the sample, supervisors for 22.4%, and managerial staff for 14.0%. Respondents were drawn from transportation firms (36.9%), delivery services firms (35.3%), and warehousing firms (27.8%), with regional representation from East China, North China, South China, Central China, and West China.

4 Measures

All constructs were measured using established scales with demonstrated psychometric adequacy in prior research. Unless otherwise specified, all items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

4.1 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice was measured using Colquitt's [19] organizational justice scale. The instrument assesses employees' fairness perceptions regarding outcome allocation, decision-making procedures, and interpersonal treatment. In the present study, organizational justice was modeled as an overall construct.

4.2 Occupational Burnout

Occupational burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey [8] (MBI-GS). Consistent with prior research in demanding work environments, the scale focused on employees' chronic work-related strain and burnout experiences.

4.3 Turnover Intention

Turnover intention was measured using four items based on the conceptual framework of Mobley et al. [2, 20]. The items captured employees' cognitive readiness and inclination to leave their current organization, including thoughts of quitting and active consideration of alternative employment opportunities.

4.4 Analytical Strategy

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0. The analysis proceeded in

several stages. First, preliminary screening was undertaken to examine the internal consistency of the scales and the descriptive distribution of the main variables. Second, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess bivariate associations among organizational justice, occupational burnout, and turnover intention. Third, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the measurement model, including convergent and discriminant validity. Fourth, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized direct relationships among the constructs. Finally, the mediating role of occupational burnout was examined using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The indirect effect was considered significant when the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval did not include zero.

To assess the potential influence of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. The result indicated that the first unrotated factor accounted for less than 40% of the total variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to pose a serious threat to the findings.

5 Results

5.1 Sample Characteristics

The study retained 428 valid questionnaires from the 500 distributed, yielding an effective response rate of 85.6%. The sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1. The respondents represented different demographic groups, job positions, logistics firm types, and regions in China, providing a heterogeneous sample for subsequent analysis.

5.2 Preliminary Analyses

Table 2 reports the internal consistency of the study variables. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.912 for organizational justice, 0.887 for occupational burnout, and 0.903 for turnover intention. The overall scale reliability was 0.934, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the key constructs. Organizational justice showed a mean score of 3.21 (SD = 0.64), indicating a moderate level of perceived fairness among logistics employees. Occupational burnout was comparatively higher (M = 3.47, SD = 0.71), while turnover intention was also at a moderate level (M = 3.18, SD = 0.78). The standard deviations suggested adequate variability across the three constructs.

The Pearson correlation matrix is shown in Table 4.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N = 428).

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	265	61.9
	Female	163	38.1
Age	Under 25	62	14.5
	25-34	176	41.1
	35-44	127	29.7
	45 and above	63	14.7
Education	High school or below	71	16.6
	Junior college	128	29.9
	Bachelor's degree	188	43.9
	Master's degree or above	41	9.6
Tenure	Less than 1 year	58	13.6
	1-3 years	164	38.3
	4-6 years	119	27.8
	More than 6 years	87	20.3
Job position	Frontline employee	272	63.6
	Supervisor	96	22.4
	Managerial staff	60	14.0
Firm type	Transportation	158	36.9
	Delivery services	151	35.3
	Warehousing	119	27.8
Region	East China	118	27.6
	North China	91	21.3
	South China	86	20.0
	Central China	78	18.2
	West China	55	12.9

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Results.

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Organizational Justice (OJ)	12	0.912
Occupational Burnout (BO)	9	0.887
Turnover Intention (TI)	4	0.903
Overall Scale	25	0.934

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N = 428).

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Organizational Justice (OJ)	3.21	0.64	1.42	4.83
Occupational Burnout (BO)	3.47	0.71	1.33	4.89
Turnover Intention (TI)	3.18	0.78	1.00	5.00

Organizational justice was negatively correlated with occupational burnout ($r = -0.521$, $p < .001$) and turnover intention ($r = -0.463$, $p < .001$). Occupational burnout was positively correlated with turnover intention ($r = 0.587$, $p < .001$). These bivariate relationships were in the expected directions and provided preliminary support for the proposed hypotheses.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix.

Variable	OJ	BO	TI
Organizational Justice (OJ)	1.000		
Occupational Burnout (BO)	-0.521***	1.000	
Turnover Intention (TI)	-0.463***	0.587***	1.000

Note. *** $p < 0.001$.

5.3 Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the adequacy of the three-factor measurement model. The results indicated that the measurement model achieved an acceptable fit to the data. As reported in Table 5, all standardized factor loadings were substantial, ranging from 0.68 to 0.86 for organizational justice, 0.65 to 0.84 for occupational burnout, and 0.79 to 0.88 for turnover intention. Composite reliability values ranged from 0.89 to 0.91, and all average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, supporting convergent validity.

Table 5. Measurement Model Results.

Construct	Standardized Loadings	CR	AVE
Organizational Justice (OJ)	0.68–0.86	0.91	0.56
Occupational Burnout (BO)	0.65–0.84	0.89	0.53
Turnover Intention (TI)	0.79–0.88	0.90	0.69

Discriminant validity was further examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion [21]. As shown in Table 6, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among organizational justice, occupational burnout, and turnover intention.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity.

Variable	OJ	BO	TI
Organizational Justice (OJ)	0.75		
Occupational Burnout (BO)	-0.52	0.73	
Turnover Intention (TI)	-0.46	0.59	0.83

Note. Diagonal values (in bold) represent the square root of AVE.

5.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized direct relationships among the study variables. The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit to the data: $\chi^2(274) = 498.67$, $\chi^2/\text{df} =$

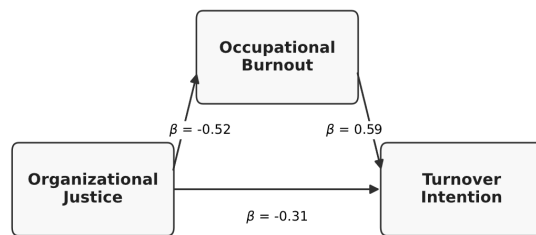


Figure 1. Structural Model of Organizational Justice, Occupational Burnout, and Turnover Intention.

1.82, CFI = .951, TLI = .945, RMSEA = .044 [90% CI: .037, .050], SRMR = .058, meeting the recommended thresholds for model fit. The structural model explained 27.0% of the variance in occupational burnout ($R^2 = .270$) and 51.8% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .518$). Figure 1 presents the tested model, and the standardized path coefficients are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Structural Path Coefficients and Bootstrapping Results for Mediation Analysis.

Path	Effect	Standardized Estimate	SE	95% CI
OJ → BO	Direct	−0.52***	.041	[−0.60, −0.44]
BO → TI	Direct	0.59***	.044	[0.50, 0.67]
OJ → TI	Direct	−0.31***	.048	[−0.41, −0.22]
OJ → BO → TI	Indirect	−0.31***	.032	[−0.39, −0.24]
Total Effect		−0.62***	.044	[−0.71, −0.54]

Note. OJ = Organizational Justice; BO = Occupational Burnout; TI = Turnover Intention. SE = Standard Error. Direct effects are based on structural equation modeling; indirect and total effects are based on bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The total effect is the sum of the direct and indirect effects. *** $p < 0.001$.

Organizational justice had a significant negative association with turnover intention ($\beta = -0.31$, SE = .048, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−0.41, −0.22]), supporting H1. Organizational justice also had a significant negative association with occupational burnout ($\beta = -0.52$, SE = .041, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−0.60, −0.44]), supporting H2. In addition, occupational burnout had a significant positive association with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.59$, SE = .044, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.50, 0.67]), supporting H3.

Taken together, these results indicate that higher perceived organizational justice was associated with lower occupational burnout and lower turnover intention, whereas higher occupational burnout was associated with stronger turnover intention among logistics employees.

5.5 Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of occupational burnout in the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention was examined using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. As shown in Table 7, the indirect effect of organizational justice on turnover intention through occupational burnout was significant ($\beta = -0.31$, 95% CI [−0.39, −0.24]), because the confidence interval did not include zero.

At the same time, the direct effect of organizational justice on turnover intention remained significant after occupational burnout was included in the model ($\beta = -0.31$, 95% CI [−0.41, −0.22]). This pattern indicates partial mediation and supports H4. The total effect of organizational justice on turnover intention was -0.62 (95% CI [−0.71, −0.54]), suggesting that organizational justice influenced turnover intention through both a direct pathway and an indirect pathway via occupational burnout.

5.6 Summary of Findings

Overall, the empirical findings supported all four hypotheses. Organizational justice was negatively associated with turnover intention and occupational burnout, while occupational burnout was positively associated with turnover intention. In addition, occupational burnout partially mediated the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention, indicating that burnout functions as an important psychological mechanism linking fairness perceptions to withdrawal-related cognition in logistics enterprises.

The above findings provide empirical support for the proposed model. The following section discusses these results in relation to existing theory and prior studies and highlights their theoretical and practical implications.

6 Discussion

This study examined the relationships among organizational justice, occupational burnout, and turnover intention in logistics enterprises, with particular attention to the mediating role of occupational burnout. By integrating social exchange theory and the job demands–resources (JD–R) model, the findings provide a more comprehensive explanation of how fairness perceptions are associated with employees' psychological experiences and turnover-related attitudes in a high-demand service context [12–14]. Overall, the results indicate that

organizational justice is negatively associated with both turnover intention and occupational burnout, whereas occupational burnout is positively associated with turnover intention. In addition, occupational burnout partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention. These findings extend prior research by clarifying an important psychological mechanism linking fairness perceptions to employee withdrawal-related cognition in logistics enterprises.

6.1 Organizational Justice and Turnover Intention

The findings indicate that organizational justice plays a meaningful role in shaping employees' turnover intention. This result is consistent with earlier studies suggesting that employees' fairness perceptions are closely related to whether they intend to remain with or leave their organization [3, 6]. When employees perceive outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal treatment as fair, they are less likely to develop withdrawal-related attitudes and more likely to maintain a positive employment relationship. In labor-intensive logistics settings, where workload allocation, scheduling arrangements, and performance monitoring are often highly salient, fairness perceptions may become especially influential in employees' judgments about whether continued organizational membership is worthwhile.

From the perspective of social exchange theory, fair treatment signals respect, support, and recognition from the organization, which encourages employees to reciprocate with more positive attitudes and a stronger willingness to remain [6]. By contrast, perceived injustice may undermine trust and create a sense of imbalance in the exchange relationship, thereby making turnover intention more psychologically acceptable. In this sense, the present findings reinforce the view that organizational justice is not merely a formal management issue but also a key relational factor influencing employee retention-related attitudes.

6.2 Organizational Justice as a Resource in Reducing Burnout

The results further show that organizational justice is negatively associated with occupational burnout. This finding suggests that fairness functions not only as a relational signal but also as an important contextual resource that may help employees cope with demanding work conditions. In logistics enterprises, employees frequently operate under

strong time pressure, heavy workloads, and limited recovery opportunities. Under such conditions, transparent procedures, equitable treatment, and respectful communication may reduce frustration, uncertainty, and emotional strain, thereby lowering the likelihood of burnout.

This interpretation is consistent with the JD-R model, which conceptualizes job resources as factors that help employees manage job demands and reduce stress-related outcomes [12–14]. Prior research has likewise suggested that organizational justice can alleviate stress reactions and support employee well-being [5, 18]. Conversely, perceived injustice may intensify strain by increasing ambiguity, undermining perceived control, and signaling insufficient support. The present findings therefore extend the literature by highlighting the protective role of fairness in reducing burnout in a labor-intensive service environment.

6.3 Burnout as a Precursor to Turnover Intention

The findings also indicate that occupational burnout is positively associated with turnover intention. This result is consistent with prior research showing that burnout is an important psychological antecedent of employee withdrawal-related attitudes [10, 11]. Employees experiencing prolonged emotional exhaustion, detachment from work, and reduced coping capacity are more likely to reassess the desirability of remaining in their current organization and to view leaving as a way to relieve strain. In high-pressure work settings such as logistics enterprises, this process may be particularly pronounced.

From a resource-based perspective, burnout reflects a condition in which employees' emotional and cognitive resources have been substantially depleted [13, 14]. Under such conditions, turnover intention may emerge as a self-protective response through which employees attempt to preserve their remaining psychological resources. This interpretation helps explain why burnout is so closely linked to withdrawal-related cognition and underscores the importance of employee well-being in understanding retention problems in demanding organizational contexts.

6.4 The Mediating Role of Occupational Burnout

A key contribution of this study is the finding that occupational burnout partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention. This result suggests that fairness perceptions are associated with turnover intention not

only directly but also indirectly through employees' burnout experiences. In other words, organizational justice appears to influence employees' intention to stay or leave partly because it is associated with lower levels of chronic work-related strain. This provides a more refined explanation of how organizational context translates into turnover-related cognition in logistics enterprises.

The finding of partial rather than full mediation is theoretically meaningful. It indicates that although occupational burnout is an important explanatory pathway, it is unlikely to be the only mechanism through which organizational justice is associated with turnover intention. This interpretation is consistent with prior research indicating that fairness perceptions are also related to constructs such as trust, commitment, and positive work attitudes [3, 6]. Accordingly, burnout should be understood as one important mediating mechanism within a broader set of psychological processes linking justice perceptions to employee withdrawal. The present findings therefore contribute to the literature by emphasizing a process-based explanation while also leaving room for additional mediators to be explored in future research.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical implications. First, it extends the literature on organizational justice and turnover intention by examining these relationships in the logistics industry, a high-demand service context in which retention challenges are especially salient. Although prior studies have established a negative association between organizational justice and turnover intention [3, 6], less attention has been paid to how this relationship operates through employees' psychological well-being in logistics enterprises.

Second, by identifying occupational burnout as a mediating mechanism, the study moves beyond a simple direct-effect model and contributes to a more process-oriented understanding of turnover intention. Earlier research has recognized burnout as a key predictor of withdrawal-related outcomes [10, 11], but fewer studies have explicitly positioned burnout as the mechanism through which organizational justice is associated with turnover intention in this industry context.

Third, the study contributes theoretically by integrating social exchange theory and the JD-R

model. Social exchange theory helps explain why fair treatment strengthens employees' willingness to maintain organizational membership [22], while the JD-R model explains how fairness can function as a job resource that reduces burnout [12–14]. Together, these perspectives provide a more comprehensive explanation of employee withdrawal by capturing both relational and resource-based processes.

6.6 Practical Implications

The findings also provide several practical implications for managers and practitioners in logistics enterprises. First, organizations should strengthen organizational justice through transparent decision-making, equitable workload allocation, consistent performance evaluation standards, and respectful interpersonal treatment. Because fairness perceptions are associated with lower turnover intention both directly and indirectly, justice-related management practices may represent an effective approach to improving employee retention.

Second, managers should pay greater attention to occupational burnout as an early warning signal of potential turnover. As turnover intention has been widely recognized as an important antecedent of actual turnover behavior [1, 2], reducing burnout may help organizations intervene before employee departure actually occurs. Measures such as workload adjustments, recovery opportunities, supportive supervision, and fairer scheduling practices may help alleviate burnout and reduce withdrawal-related cognition. In labor-intensive service environments such as logistics, retention strategies are likely to be more effective when they address both fairness perceptions and employee well-being simultaneously.

7 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw strong causal inferences regarding the relationships among organizational justice, occupational burnout, and turnover intention. Although the proposed relationships are theoretically grounded and the empirical results are consistent with the hypothesized model, future studies could adopt longitudinal, time-lagged, or multi-wave designs to better examine how fairness perceptions, burnout, and turnover intention evolve over time.

Second, all variables were measured using self-reported survey data. Although procedural

precautions were taken and common method bias was statistically assessed, the use of a single source may still raise concerns regarding common method variance and perceptual inflation. Future research could strengthen methodological rigor by incorporating multiple data sources, such as supervisor evaluations, objective workload indicators, or organizational records of actual turnover behavior. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships examined in the present study.

Third, this study focused on logistics enterprises in China, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or cultural contexts. Work conditions, fairness expectations, and stress experiences may vary substantially across sectors and regions. Future studies could therefore test the proposed model in other occupational settings or conduct cross-cultural comparisons to examine whether the observed relationships remain stable under different institutional and cultural conditions.

Fourth, occupational burnout was examined as the only mediating mechanism in the present study. Although the findings indicate that burnout is an important explanatory pathway, other psychological variables may also help explain the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention. For example, organizational commitment, trust, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support may serve as additional mediators or moderators. Future research could develop more comprehensive models to explore these possibilities and provide a more complete account of employee withdrawal processes.

Finally, organizational justice was treated as an overall construct rather than being separated into distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions. Although this approach is appropriate for the current study's broad theoretical model, future research could examine the distinct effects of different justice dimensions to identify which aspects of fairness are most influential in reducing burnout and turnover intention in high-demand service environments. Such work would provide more fine-grained insights for both theory development and managerial practice.

8 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention among employees in logistics enterprises and tested the mediating role of occupational burnout from a social exchange theory perspective, complemented

by the job demands–resources (JD–R) model. The findings indicate that organizational justice is negatively associated with both occupational burnout and turnover intention, while occupational burnout is positively associated with turnover intention. The results further show that occupational burnout partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention. Overall, this study contributes to the literature by clarifying an important psychological mechanism through which fairness perceptions are linked to employee turnover-related attitudes in a high-demand service context. The findings suggest that organizational justice and occupational burnout are significant antecedents of turnover intention, and that managerial attention to fairness practices and burnout prevention is likely to contribute to improved employee retention in logistics enterprises.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Kuala Lumpur University of Science and Technology. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study prior to participation. Completion and return of the questionnaire was considered as implied consent to participate. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were treated as anonymous and confidential.

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