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The Impact of Colleague Resignation on Remaining Employees' Intent to Leave:
From the Perspective of Social Comparison Theory

PAN Pengtao

Doctor of Management

Supervisors:
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I declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

Based on social comparison theory, this study explores the impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intention of remaining employees, and examines the moderating effects of surface similarity, relationship strength, and organizational commitment, as well as the mediating effects of episodic envy and perceived external job opportunities. A questionnaire survey method (both paper-based and online) was used to collect data from employees of over 30 enterprises from different industries and natures nationwide (sample enterprise selection criteria include instances of employee-initiated turnover events in the past year). A total of 756 valid questionnaires were obtained, and data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 to verify the research hypotheses.

The results of this study indicate that colleague upward mobility is significantly positively correlated with episodic envy among remaining employees, and episodic envy enhances employees' turnover intention through the mediating variable. Surface similarity plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between colleague upward mobility and envy emotions among remaining employees. Additionally, colleague upward mobility positively influences the perceived external job opportunities of remaining employees, which in turn positively influences turnover intention. Relationship strength plays a positive moderating role in this process, indicating that remaining employees with close relationships with departing colleagues are more influenced by colleague mobility in their perception of external opportunities. Finally, this study also reveals the negative moderating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between remaining employees' perceived external job opportunities and turnover intention.

This study not only provides a new theoretical perspective for understanding the mechanism of colleague turnover on the turnover intention of remaining employees but also makes important contributions to the theoretical development of human resource management and organizational behavior. At the same time, it also provides empirical evidence and decision support for organizations to reduce employee turnover and maintain HR stability.

Keywords: Upward mobility; episodic envy; perceived external job opportunities; organizational committement; turnover intention

JEL: M10, M12

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Resumo

Tendo por base a teoria da comparação social, este estudo explora o impacto da mobilidade na intenção de saída dos restantes trabalhadores e estuda os efeitos moderadores da similaridade superficial, força do relacionamento e comprometimento organizacional, bem como os efeitos mediadores do ciúme e das oportunidades de emprego (externo) percebidas. Foi utilizado um método de pesquisa por questionário (tanto em papel como online) para recolher dados de trabalhadores de mais de 30 empresas de diferentes setores na China (os critérios de seleção de empresas incluem casos de abandono voluntário iniciados no último ano). Um total de 756 questionários válidos foram obtidos e a análise de dados e verificação das hipóteses foi realizada com recurso ao SPSS 26.0 e AMOS 26.0.

Os resultados deste estudo indicam que a mobilidade dos colegas encontra-se significativa e positivamente correlacionada com o ciúme entre os funcionários que ficam no organização e que o ciúme aumenta a intenção de saída da empresa por intermédio de uma variável mediadora. A similaridade superficial desempenha um papel moderador positivo na relação entre a mobilidade e as emoções de ciúme entre os trabalhadores que ficam na empresa. Para além disso, a mobilidade dos trabalhadores influencia positivamente a percepção das oportunidades de emprego externo, que por sua vez influencia positivamente a intenção de abandono. A força do relacionamento desempenha um papel moderador positivo nesse processo, mostrando que os trabalhadores que permanecem na empresa e que apresentam níveis de relacionamento elevados com os colegas que abandonam são mais influenciados pela mobilidade dos colegas quando apresentam uma elevada percepção de oportunidades externas. Finalmente, este estudo revela também o efeito moderador negativo do comprometimento organizacional na relação entre as oportunidades de emprego externo percebidas pelos funcionários remanescentes e a intenção de saída da empresa.

Este trabalho não só fornece uma nova perspectiva teórica que permite entender as implicações do abandono da empresa na intenção de abandono dos colegas que permanecem na organização, mas também traz contribuições importantes para o desenvolvimento teórico da gestão de recursos humanos e comportamento organizacional. Ao mesmo tempo, fornece evidências empíricas e suporte à decisão para as organizações reduzirem o abandono voluntário dos trabalhadores e assegurar uma maior estabilidade nos recursos humanos.

摘要

本文基于社会比较理论，探讨了同事离职向上流动对留任员工离职意愿的影响，并考察了表层相似性、关系强度和组织承诺的调节作用以及情景妒忌和感知外部工作机会的中介作用。采用问卷调查法（现场纸质和网络在线方式），收集了全国 30 余家不同行业、性质的企业员工数据（样本企业选取标准为近一年存在员工主动离职事件）。共获得有效问卷 756 份，利用 SPSS 26.0 和 AMOS 26.0 进行数据分析，以验证研究假设。

本研究结果显示，同事离职向上流动与留任员工的情景妒忌存在显著正相关，情景妒忌通过中介变量增强了员工的离职意向。表层相似性在同事离职向上流动与留任员工妒忌情绪之间起到了正向调节作用。此外，同事离职向上流动正向影响了留任员工对外部工作机会的感知，这种感知又正向影响离职意向。关系强度在此过程中起到了正向调节作用，表明与离职同事关系密切的留任员工对外部机会的感知更受同事流动的影响。最后，本研究还揭示了组织承诺对留任员工感知外部工作机会与离职意图之间关系的负向调节作用。

本研究不仅为理解同事离职对留任员工离职意向的影响机制提供了新的理论视角，而且对人力资源管理和组织行为学的理论发展具有重要贡献。同时也为组织减少员工流失、维护人力资源稳定性提供了实证依据和决策支持。

关键词：向上流动；情景妒忌；感知外部工作机会；组织承诺；离职意愿
JEL: M10, M12

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List of Acronyms

CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
PECO	Perceived Externel Job Opportunities
PICO	Perceived Internal Job Opportunities

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

1.1.1 Real-word context

In the era of booming knowledge economy, the formation of a globalized market has become an irreversible trend. Faced with an increasingly fierce international competitive environment, the quality of human capital undoubtedly becomes the key to core competitiveness if enterprises want to maintain a sustainable and steady development trend. In contemporary enterprise management practices, building and maintaining a stable talent team is widely regarded as a valuable asset for enterprises. Such a team not only plays a positive role in maintaining the competitive advantage of enterprises and achieving high performance (Takeuchi et al., 2009), but also is a key force driving the continuous growth and innovation of enterprises. However, enterprises still face the reality of employee turnover challenges in practice, that is, employees choose to leave their current positions and organizations based on personal career development or other factors. This turnover phenomenon may bring a series of negative consequences for enterprises. For example, increased recruitment and training costs, loss of valuable experience and expertise, and decreased morale and productivity of remaining employees (Mesha, 2023).

Employee distractions and energy dispersion before leaving undoubtedly affect their job performance. In addition, the departure process itself is quite cumbersome, leading to increased workload for the human resources department. The impact of high turnover rates on corporate performance and profitability is direct (Mesha, 2023), and it is detrimental to the formation of corporate culture, thereby reducing the company's competitiveness in the industry. If the phenomenon of voluntary turnover of employees is on the rise, it may impose significant financial burdens on corporate operations, as confirmed in previous studies (Mohr et al., 2012). Furthermore, such personnel changes not only have a negative impact on the work efficiency of the team but also, in extreme cases, may threaten the overall strategic development and future prospects of the company (Dess & Shaw, 2001). The estimated turnover costs for individual employees range from thousands of dollars to double their personal salary, depending on factors such as industry, job content, availability of

replacements, and others (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000).

From a management perspective, attracting and retaining high-quality employees is particularly important in the current environment. In addition to its impact on the company, resigning is also a major transition for individuals. They need to invest a lot of effort in finding new jobs and adapting to new environments. Giving up familiar paths and interpersonal relationships is also a stressful process (Holtom et al., 2008).

The topic of resignation has long been of interest to researchers. Since 1981, there has been a large amount of research on this topic. These studies aim to deepen understanding of the reasons, effects, and coping strategies of employee resignations. Although there are many studies on resignations, research on the social impact of resignation behavior remains relatively scarce. Considering that job transitions typically involve a high degree of risk and uncertainty (Steel, 2002), employees often pay attention to the situations of others when assessing whether to seek new employment opportunities. Colleague relationships, as important social relationships in the workplace, have a significant impact on individuals' job satisfaction and resignation behavior. Furthermore, resignations can influence each other, as one employee's tendency to resign may be influenced by whether other employees are also resigning or inclined to resign (Felps et al., 2009). The turnover contagion theory suggests that an employee's inclination to resign is to some extent influenced by whether other employees are also resigning or inclined to resign (Felps et al., 2009). The turnover contagion theory describes a process in which employees compare themselves and their attitudes to others to determine whether they should leave. In other words, an individual's inclination to resign is influenced by the prominence of others' resignation attitudes and actual resignation behavior (Rubenstein et al., 2018).

In the current prevailing context of boundaryless career concepts (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), organizational structures are undergoing significant transformations towards boundarylessness and flattening, bringing unprecedented flexibility to employee career development. In this environment, employee turnover is no longer seen as a forced action but increasingly as a deliberate and thoughtful decision. Moreover, the phenomenon of collective turnover, where two or more employees make proactive decisions to leave the organization based on personal career planning and development considerations within a similar time frame (Bartunek et al., 2008), is becoming more common in the business world. It is worth noting that the phenomenon of collective employee turnover is increasingly common and its potential disruptive impact on daily business operations may far exceed that of individual employee turnover. In recent years, many companies have suffered severe setbacks due to

collective turnover, challenging their operational stability and long-term development. For example, in 2019, multiple project team members of Lake Electric Company collectively resigned; in June 2020, "more than 90 people resigned collectively from the Institute of Nuclear Safety Technology of the Hefei Institute of Physical Science of the Chinese Academy of Sciences", and this large-scale personnel turnover not only affected the scientific research field but also drew national attention. In May 2022, nearly 40 medical experts from Zhengzhou Seventh People's Hospital and Fuwai Huazhong Cardiovascular Hospital collectively transferred to the First Affiliated Hospital of Zhengzhou University, causing significant disruption to the original hospital's work and affecting patient interests to a certain extent. These collective turnover events reveal a significant phenomenon: the departure of colleagues is likely to become a triggering factor for employees' own resignation decisions. In interpersonal interactions, employees' reactions and perceptions of colleagues' departure events have a significant impact on their own turnover intentions (W. Huang et al., 2022). Therefore, managers should empathize with employees and thoroughly analyze the formation process of turnover intentions, understand the underlying mechanisms behind them, and then develop more targeted and effective control strategies to effectively address turnover risks and maintain organizational stability and development.

In light of the current reality, this study revisits the decision-makers and exploring the process by which the departure of colleagues influences the resignation decisions of remaining employees. Despite the abundance of research on employee turnover, studies focusing on the social impact of colleague departures and the mechanisms of turnover contagion remain relatively scarce. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap and provide valuable insights and recommendations for business managers and policymakers.

1.1.2 Theoretical background

In the current era of intense talent competition, "retaining talent" has become an important topic in enterprise human resource management. Employee turnover not only signifies the loss of company resources but may also trigger a chain reaction, resulting in further loss of other outstanding employees. When the employee turnover rate in a company is too high, it may lead to a decrease in morale and enthusiasm among remaining employees, increased costs, decreased productivity, and poor organizational performance, while also increasing company expenses (Mobley et al., 1979). Due to the ubiquity and significance of this phenomenon, employee turnover has become a focal point of both corporate management

practices and academic research. In recent years, with increasing attention to organizational human resource stability and employee well-being, turnover issues have garnered widespread attention from industry experts and scholars. They are dedicated to exploring the causes, processes, and impacts of turnover on organizations in order to provide insights and solutions for corporate management. As one of the important research topics in the field of management (Griffeth et al., 2000), research on turnover is of significant importance for the stable development of enterprises and talent retention.

Academic discussions on employee turnover primarily focus on two main dimensions: the analysis of the turnover process and the assessment of its consequences (Mowday et al., 1981). Turnover process research aims to decipher the various factors influencing employee turnover decisions and their underlying mechanisms of interaction, with the goal of revealing the motives and processes behind turnover behavior.

For instance, recent research results suggest that the main reasons for employees voluntarily leaving the workplace are no longer limited to material reasons alone; rather, non-material reasons play a more significant role, including job involvement, interpersonal relationships, lack of self-development opportunities, incongruence with company culture and values, and dissatisfaction with managers (Kuzior et al., 2022). On the other hand, turnover impact research focuses on the ripple effects of turnover behavior on other organizational elements and individual psychological aspects (Hale Jr et al., 2016).

Although there is a considerable body of literature in the field of antecedents of turnover, covering multiple dimensions such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee self-esteem, and job search behavior (Chan et al., 2016; Ferguson et al., 2016; Mauno et al., 2015; Shin & Sohn, 2015), studies that treat turnover events themselves as dependent variables to predict and analyze their impact on other outcome variables are still relatively scarce. It is worth noting that in recent years, academia has begun to regard turnover events as important dependent variables to explore their predictive role on other outcome variables, with organizational costs being a particularly notable research area (Maertz Jr & Griffeth, 2004).

In existing research, Felps et al. (2009) delve into the potential impact of colleagues' job embeddedness and job search behavior on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, offering a new perspective to the turnover research field. Additionally, Pfeffer (1991) emphasized the importance of social structural factors, particularly colleagues with whom employees directly interact at work, in individual turnover decisions, although this area of research did not receive sufficient attention for some time. In recent years, with deeper

research, scholars have begun to reexamine and focus on the psychological and behavioral effects of colleague turnover on remaining employees (Bartunek et al., 2008; Felps et al., 2009). Chinese scholars have also actively explored this area, providing a localized perspective and evidence for understanding the impact of colleague turnover on remaining employees (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2014; Z. Y. Wang et al., 2016).

Research on the impact of colleague turnover on remaining employees by foreign scholars is relatively scarce, but existing studies mainly focus on three aspects: remaining employees' work attitudes, emotional reactions, and job outcomes (Ng & Feldman, 2014).

When exploring the factors influencing remaining employees' work attitudes, the study by Krackhardt and Porter (1985) stands out as a representative work. Based on the theory of personal-friend-work triad balance, they conducted an in-depth analysis of the embeddedness of turnover behavior in social structures. They argued that the balance between the number of remaining employees and departing employees in the internal social network of a company significantly affects individuals' work attitudes. Through rigorous empirical testing, they concluded that remaining employees tend to attribute colleagues' departures to job dissatisfaction. Additionally, they found that after turnover events, remaining employees with closer relationships to the departing colleagues were more likely to exhibit increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This study provides important theoretical support and empirical evidence for understanding the impact of colleague turnover on remaining employees' work attitudes.

In exploring the factors influencing remaining employees' emotional reactions, Sheehan (1995) provides profound insights. His research indicates a close association between remaining employees' emotional reactions and the reasons for colleagues' departure. Specifically, when colleagues' departure reasons are not directly related to work, remaining employees often exhibit feelings of regret, possibly due to sadness or loss over the departure of their colleagues. However, when departure reasons are due to job dissatisfaction, the emotional reactions of remaining employees become more complex, as they may feel happy for their colleagues' liberation, reflecting resonance or understanding with the work environment or conditions. His study enriches our understanding of remaining employees' emotional reactions and provides important theoretical references and empirical support for subsequent research.

When exploring the factors influencing remaining employees' job outcomes, foreign scholars mainly focus on changes in job performance and turnover intentions or behaviors. In this regard, Sheehan (1995) primarily studied the impact of colleague turnover on the job

performance of remaining employees. Through empirical testing, the results showed that when remaining employees attributed colleagues' departures to "job dissatisfaction," their job performance was often significantly lower compared to situations where departures were attributed to other personal reasons such as "illness." This indicates that the reasons for colleague turnover significantly affect the job performance of remaining employees.

Furthermore, in studies concerning turnover intentions or behaviors, Krackhardt and Porter (1986) conducted a longitudinal survey of employees in three fast-food chain restaurants and found that successive turnover behaviors of employees are not isolated incidents but rather exhibit a cumulative effect among remaining employees with high similarity. This may lead to a snowball effect of turnover phenomena within the organization gradually expanding. These research findings provide important theoretical basis and empirical support for understanding the job reactions of remaining employees in the context of colleague turnover. For example, Krausz et al. (1999) found through regression analysis that turnover intention is a key factor in predicting turnover behavior, with positive evaluations having no significant impact on turnover intentions. Conversely, negative evaluations are influenced by factors such as social relationships and length of service. Therefore, the research conclusions suggest that, after a colleague turnover, individual turnover intentions become the dominant factor, while positive evaluations have no significant impact on turnover intentions.

In the field of management studies, some scholars have adopted a social comparison perspective to explore the effects of colleague turnover on the attitudes and behaviors of remaining employees. For instance, Brockner and Kim (1993) analyzed how colleague turnover affects the job satisfaction of remaining employees from a social comparison perspective. In international research literature, scholars mainly focus on examining the impact of colleague turnover on the work attitudes and emotions of remaining employees, with less emphasis on the effects on turnover intentions or actual behaviors (X. Li & Xu, 2009; X. Zhou & Ma, 2008). This research trend indicates that while existing studies have provided insights into the direct psychological effects of colleague turnover, a more comprehensive exploration is needed on how it further influences the long-term career decisions of remaining employees.

In China, there is relatively less research on the impact of colleague turnover on the turnover intentions of incumbent employees. Studies in this area have mainly been conducted from perspectives such as turnover attribution (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2014), perceived job opportunities (P. L. Huang & Tian, 2006), surface similarity (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2016), and

social comparison (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2016). However, these studies generally suffer from issues such as small sample sizes, limited sample diversity in terms of region and industry, and lack of representativeness. For example, Z. Y. Wang et al. (2016) found from the perspective of social comparison theory that colleague turnover events have a positive impact on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, but the explanatory power of the intermediate mechanisms through which colleague turnover events affect the turnover intentions of remaining employees is not sufficiently comprehensive.

Although the academic community has conducted extensive research on employee turnover issues, there is still a lack of in-depth empirical exploration into the mechanisms through which colleague turnover affects the turnover intentions of remaining employees. Current theoretical discussions mainly remain at a superficial level and have not revealed the intermediary factors within this causal mechanism. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill this research gap by thoroughly investigating the impact of colleague turnover on the turnover intentions of remaining employees through empirical research methods.

Based on social comparison theory, this thesis introduces episodic envy and perceived external job opportunities as mediating variables, while also considering moderating variables such as surface similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, and organizational commitment. With this research design, this study aims to reveal the mechanisms through which colleague turnover affects the turnover intentions of remaining employees and to enhance existing theoretical models. This study is not only significant for turnover theory but also provides a new research perspective for social comparison theory and social influence theory. By delving into the phenomenon of employee turnover and its influencing factors, this research will provide valuable theoretical support and practical guidance for the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management. However, due to the complexity and dynamics of the research, these findings require further study and validation to continually improve and deepen our understanding of turnover phenomena.

1.2 Research problem and questions

In the current social context, voluntary turnover among employees is common, especially when colleagues choose to leave for better career opportunities. This behavior significantly affects the psychological state and behavioral tendencies of remaining employees. For instance, research by W. Huang et al. (2022) indicates that when colleagues leave for better job opportunities, it positively influences the perceived employability of remaining employees

and their intentions to leave. Moreover, the study found that the similarity of work between remaining employees and departing colleagues moderates this relationship, indicating a stronger relationship between upward mobility and perceived employability when work similarity is high. Although previous studies have examined this phenomenon from various perspectives such as attribution, perceived job opportunities, surface similarity, and social comparison, they suffer from limitations such as small sample sizes, limited representativeness, and insufficient theoretical frameworks. Therefore, a systematic and in-depth analysis in this area is necessary.

Building upon the literature review of previous studies, this research aims to address the following questions:

1. Do episodic envy and perceived external job opportunities mediate the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and the turnover intentions of remaining employees?

2. Does the surface similarity between remaining employees and departing colleagues moderate the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and episodic envy of remaining employees?

3. Does conscientiousness of remaining employees moderate the relationship between episodic envy and their turnover intentions?

4. Does the relationship strength between remaining employees and departing colleagues moderate the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and the perceived external job opportunities of remaining employees?

5. Does the organizational commitment of remaining employees moderate the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and their turnover intentions?

Through in-depth research on the above issues, this study hopes to more comprehensively reveal the mechanisms by which colleagues' upward mobility affects the psychology and intention to leave of remaining employees, as well as the roles played by different variables in this process. This will not only contribute to enriching existing theoretical frameworks but also enable organizations to provide more precise management strategies and preventive measures, effectively mitigating the potential negative impacts of employees' voluntary departure.

1.3 Research objectives

In today's era of globalization and the knowledge economy, companies face increasingly

fierce international competition, and human capital has become a key element of core competitive advantage. However, voluntary employee turnover is a frequent occurrence, leading not only to increased costs and reduced efficiency for companies but also potentially triggering a chain reaction that affects organizational stability and long-term development. In recent years, incidents of mass resignations have further highlighted the complexity and severity of turnover issues. Although there is substantial research on the causes and consequences of employee turnover, studies on the social influence mechanisms of colleagues' departures on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, especially the phenomenon of turnover contagion, are still relatively scarce.

This study aims to explore the mechanisms through which upward movement in colleague turnover affects the turnover intentions of remaining employees. Specifically, this research is based on social comparison theory and incorporates episodic envy and perceived external job opportunities as mediating variables. It also considers moderating variables such as surface-level similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, and organizational commitment, thereby constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework. Through empirical research, this study reveals how colleague turnover upward movement influences the turnover intentions of remaining employees from both emotional and cognitive perspectives, thereby enriching the applications of social comparison theory and social influence theory. This provides a new theoretical perspective for organizational behavior and human resource management fields.

Additionally, this research offers valuable references for business managers and policymakers, helping them to devise more targeted and effective employee retention strategies to effectively address turnover risks and maintain organizational stability and development. This approach not only tackles the immediate issues of turnover but also contributes to the broader discourse on employee engagement and organizational culture, thereby supporting the sustainability of businesses in dynamic and competitive environments.

1.4 Research significance

1.4.1 Theoretical significance

This study holds significant theoretical implications. Firstly, from the perspective of social comparison theory, through an in-depth exploration of the theme "the impact of colleagues' upward mobility on the intention to leave among remaining employees," it validates some

conclusions of existing theories and enhances the explanatory power of existing research in this area. Secondly, this research expands the application scope of social comparison theory and social influence theory and innovates in the internal cognitive processes and psychological mechanisms of social comparison theory. This is specifically reflected in several aspects:

Firstly, this study is an exploration of the cognitive processes and psychological mechanisms inherent in social comparison. Since Festinger (1954) first proposed the concept of social comparison, the academic community has generally focused on exploring the external behaviors and phenomena of social comparison, such as reference group selection and influence. Nevertheless, the in-depth analysis of the internal cognitive mechanisms and psychological processes of social comparison remains limited. This area of research has not been fully developed, and future researchers need to further explore and elucidate how social comparison internally influences individuals' cognition and emotional responses. In exploring "how colleagues' upward mobility affects the intention of remaining employees to leave," this study introduces the dual mediating variables of "episodic envy" from an emotional perspective and "perceived external job opportunities" from a cognitive perspective, simultaneously exploring the internal cognitive processes and psychological mechanisms of social comparison within a research theoretical framework, thus contributing to the innovation of research.

Secondly, In exploring the factors influencing employee turnover intention, the research conducted by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) has expanded our understanding of episodic envy and its role in the turnover process. Their findings revealed that the similarity in surface characteristics between departing colleagues and remaining employees, particularly in terms of career advancement or development, could significantly positively influence the turnover intention of remaining employees by triggering episodic envy. Specifically, when remaining employees perceive a high degree of surface similarity with departing colleagues, they may experience stronger feelings of episodic envy. The intensification of this emotion may consequently enhance employees' considerations towards turnover. Moreover, if employees attribute their colleagues' departure to external factors, it may exacerbate the link between surface similarity and episodic envy, further driving employees' turnover decisions. This research not only provides a new theoretical perspective for understanding the psychological mechanisms that remaining employees face when confronted with colleagues' departure scenarios but also offers strategic insights for organizations in managing talent turnover. This thesis selects upward mobility of departing colleagues as a sub-variable to explore the

mediating role of episodic envy and the moderating effects of surface similarity and conscientiousness among remaining employees. However, departing from the perspective of remaining employees' emotional responses, investigating the mediating mechanism of episodic envy in the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and turnover intention of remaining employees, while considering surface similarity with departing colleagues and the conscientiousness among remaining employees as moderating factors, reflects the innovation of this thesis.

Thirdly, the study by Brockner and Kim (1993) revealed the impact of the new job status of departing colleagues on the comparison tendencies of remaining employees and further pointed out a significant negative correlation between this comparison tendency and the job satisfaction of remaining employees. Specifically, their research found that when departing colleagues obtained better job opportunities, such as entering higher-reputed companies, being promoted to higher positions, or receiving more lucrative salaries, remaining employees often experienced stronger comparison tendencies, leading to a decrease in their job satisfaction. This finding emphasizes the potential negative impact of social comparison of job opportunities obtained by departing colleagues on the job attitudes of remaining employees after a colleague's departure.

This thesis selects upward mobility of departing colleagues as a sub-variable to explore the mediating role of cognitive perspective "perceived external job opportunities" and the moderating effects of relationship strength and organizational commitment between remaining employees and departing colleagues. Additionally, considering the relationship strength between remaining employees and departing colleagues as a moderating factor is an attempt, reflecting the innovation of this research.

1.4.2 Practical significance

The practical significance of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of challenges commonly faced by contemporary businesses: Does the departure of colleagues trigger the departure decisions of other employees? How does this departure behavior affect the resignation intentions of remaining employees? How can companies mitigate the impact of colleague departures on the resignation intentions of remaining employees? And how can they effectively retain key talent? This study aims to systematically address these questions and provide evidence-based strategic recommendations for human resource managers and business decision-makers.

Firstly, existing research indicates that the departure behavior of colleagues may serve as a crucial factor triggering the departure decisions of other employees (W. Huang et al., 2022). Building upon the findings of previous studies, this research further delves into the process mechanisms and relevant influencing factors of how colleague departures and upward mobility influence the resignation intentions of remaining employees. Through this study, business managers can examine organizational interpersonal dynamics and the complex employee reactions triggered by departure events from an employee perspective. Companies can implement psychological support and career development interventions for remaining employees during critical periods, such as timely career counseling and incentive measures (including but not limited to salary adjustments), to reduce their resignation intentions and thereby maintain organizational stability and long-term development.

Secondly, existing research suggests that colleague departures and upward mobility have a positive impact on the resignation intentions of remaining employees through scenario envy, with the relationship between colleague departures and upward mobility and scenario envy being positively moderated by external attributions (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2015). Furthermore, Mishra's (2009) study indicates a negative correlation between the trait of conscientiousness in the Big Five personality traits and feelings of envy. Building on this, the present study substitutes the external attribution variable with the surface similarity between remaining employees and departing colleagues. Additionally, it introduces conscientiousness as a moderating variable between scenario envy and resignation intentions, thereby exploring the mechanism of departure influence. This helps business managers better understand the relevant factors influencing departure and provide support for retaining excellent talents. For example, companies should prioritize psychological counseling and development for employees, focus more on employees' mental health and career management, and establish a people-oriented corporate culture. By guiding remaining employees to engage in positive comparisons and alleviating scenario envy caused by inappropriate comparisons, companies can reduce the impact of scenario envy on employees' resignation intentions. Simultaneously, they should pay particular attention to individuals who are highly similar to departing employees and prone to experiencing envy, especially key elite talent, and strengthen employee loyalty to the company.

Thirdly, the study conducted by W. Huang et al. (2022) indicates that when colleagues depart to pursue better job opportunities, it positively influences the perceived employability of remaining employees, thereby reducing their intentions to leave. Furthermore, the research finds that the similarity in job roles between remaining employees and departing colleagues

acts as a moderating variable; when job similarity is high, the relationship between colleague departures and the perceived employability of remaining employees strengthens. Building upon this foundation, the present study substitutes the variable of job similarity with the relationship intensity between remaining employees and departing colleagues. Additionally, it introduces organizational commitment as a moderating variable between the perceived external job opportunities of remaining employees and their resignation intentions. Through constructing this theoretical framework, the study aims to explore the mechanism of departure influence, facilitating a better understanding of the relevant factors influencing departure for business managers.

Moreover, it assists business managers in taking proactive measures and engaging in effective communication with remaining employees immediately following employee departures, especially those closely associated with departing employees. Through such interactions, managers can take steps to enhance these employees' commitment to the organization, thereby alleviating job stress and instability that may arise from colleague departures. Furthermore, timely incentives such as salary adjustments and promotion opportunities can convey organizational recognition of these employees' value and demonstrate potential for career development within the current organization. These strategies not only help maintain employee motivation and loyalty but also hold significant importance in preventing further talent loss.

1.5 Research roadmap and thesis structure

1.5.1 Research roadmap

This thesis begins by establishing the background of the research topic, meticulously defining the research questions, and delving into their origins to clearly identify the core issues of the study. Building upon this foundation, an extensive literature review is conducted to propose a series of research hypotheses. Based on these hypotheses, a rigorous theoretical model is constructed, and appropriate research methods are selected. Subsequently, through careful field research, data is systematically collected, scientifically preprocessed, and thoroughly analyzed. Finally, based on the results of the data analysis, this study summarizes and elucidates the main findings and contributions of the research topic.

The technical roadmap of this thesis is illustrated in Figure 1.1.
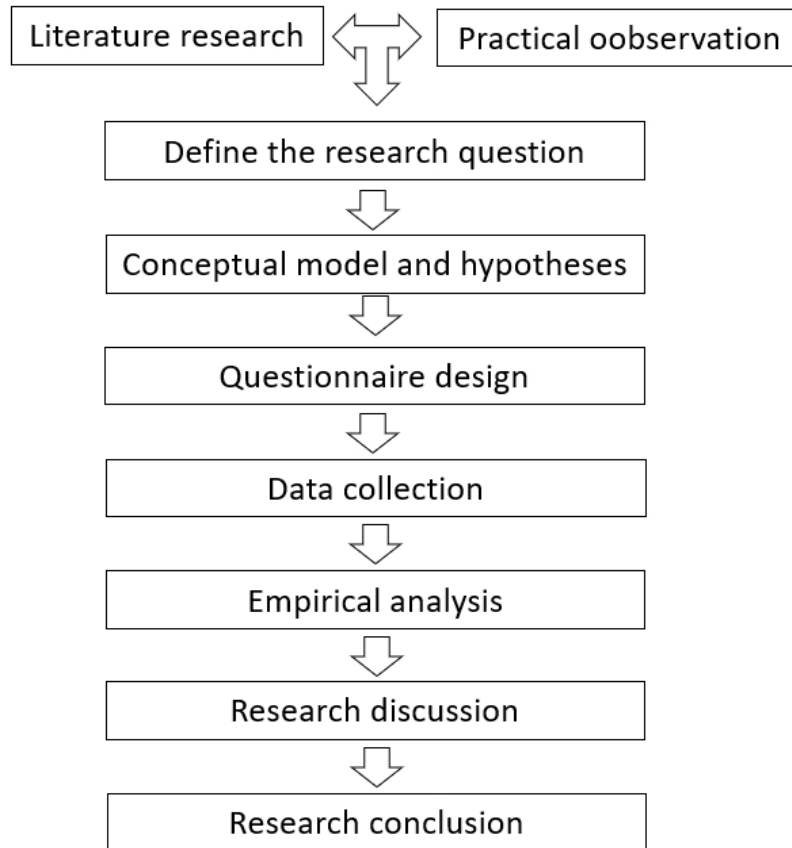
Figure 1.1 Technical roadmap of this study

1.5.2 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters, structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter elucidates the research background, clarifies the research questions, discusses the research significance, and introduces the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. A review of existing research is conducted to reveal the shortcomings of current studies and identify future research perspectives. Key concepts such as "resignation intention" and key variables are reviewed, including social comparison theory, episodic envy, perception of external job opportunities, and organizational commitment.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses. Constructing the model and proposing hypotheses are the core components of the research. In this chapter, a theoretical framework is established among variables, and propositions and theoretical hypotheses are put forward.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods. Based on existing research and literature, this chapter defines variables and their measurement methods, as well as questionnaire collection

and data statistical preprocessing methods.

Chapter 5: Empirical Analysis and Results Discussion. This chapter mainly showcases the construction of the model and the data analysis process. Descriptive statistical analysis of each variable is presented, hypotheses are tested, and the reasons for untested hypotheses are discussed in depth.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Outlook.The results of the study are discussed, conclusions are drawn, theoretical and managerial implications are emphasized, research limitations are pointed out, and prospects for future research directions are proposed.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Employee turnover

2.1.1 Conceptual definitions

2.1.1.1 Definition of employee turnover

The study of employee turnover has a long history, tracing its origins back to the early 20th century. In academia, the definition of employee turnover varies between broad and narrow interpretations. Price (1978) adopts a broad perspective, describing turnover as "a change in an individual's status as a member of an organization." This definition encompasses various career movements including entry, promotion, demotion, job transfer, and exit. On the other hand, Mobley (1982) propose a narrower concept of turnover, defining it as "the process whereby an employee ends their economic relationship with an organization, i.e., forfeiting material compensation from the organization." This narrow definition excludes other forms of employee movement, focusing solely on the termination of the employment relationship and clarifying the economic aspect of turnover, where employees are parties receiving compensation.

Additionally, this definition does not include individuals in the organization who are not motivated by material compensation, such as volunteers. Therefore, this study adopts the narrow definition of turnover, viewing it as an employed individual severing their association with the organization, excluding non-compensatory voluntary staff.

In the field of management, the phenomenon of turnover can be divided into three main types based on the employee's intent: voluntary turnover, involuntary turnover, and natural turnover. Voluntary turnover occurs when an employee proactively decides to end their employment, including scenarios such as resigning on their own initiative, often unexpectedly and difficult to predict and control by the organization. In contrast, involuntary turnover occurs when the organization initiates the termination for various reasons such as layoffs or dismissals, and this form of turnover can largely be predicted and managed by the organization. Natural turnover occurs due to inevitable circumstances such as retirement or death, naturally ending the employment relationship. Although turnover can have both potential negative and positive impacts on an organization, excessive voluntary turnover is

typically detrimental, thus attracting widespread attention from researchers. This thesis focuses on "voluntary turnover," aiming to deeply explore its impacts and strategies to address it, in order to provide useful insights for organizational human resource management.

2.1.1.2 Definition of intention to leave

Intention to leave, also known as turnover intention, refers to an employee's thoughts or plans to leave an organization. According to the research by Mobley (1977), employees undergo a thoughtful process when considering leaving their job. During this period, dissatisfaction with their current job triggers withdrawal behaviors, which in turn lead to thoughts of leaving. The intention to leave is an employee's final reaction before they start looking for other job opportunities and assess various options. Subsequent study shows that the intention to leave, as a summary of factors related to actual employee turnover behavior, is significantly correlated with actual turnover actions. In other words, the intention to leave is the most direct and strongest precursor to employee turnover, and can be considered the best predictor of actual turnover behavior (Mobley et al., 1979).

In extensive research on voluntary turnover, scholars generally regard the intention to leave as the best indicator for predicting turnover behavior. The key to determining whether an employee will actually leave lies in analyzing the causes of their intention to leave deeply (Michaels & Spector, 1982; Mobley et al., 1979). Thus, Mobley et al. (1978) further noted that the intention to leave can be seen as a comprehensive expression of job dissatisfaction, the search for other jobs, the harboring of thoughts of leaving, and the likelihood of finding another job. In summary, this thesis defines the intention to leave as the attitude and thoughts of employees actively deciding to leave an organization, which can be used to measure the extent of voluntary turnover among employees.

2.1.2 Employee turnover

Talent retention, as a crucial component of corporate human resource management, has garnered increasing attention in today's competitive talent landscape. Employee turnover not only results in the loss of corporate resources but can also trigger a chain reaction of human resource losses. In recent years, the issue of employee turnover has become a pressing challenge for businesses, and research on turnover remains a hot topic in management studies (Griffeth et al., 2000).

Research on employee turnover abroad dates back to the early 20th century. The development of turnover studies can be divided into three stages:

First Phase: The early stage of research on turnover intentions primarily focused on employees' job satisfaction and their expected likelihood of internal mobility within the organization. One of the most influential studies in the field of organizational behavior on turnover was presented in the turnover decision model (Lucier, 1959), one of the first to link the labor market with individual behavior, proposed that turnover is the result of an employee's decision-making. This model includes two parts: the employee's perceived subjective desire to leave the organization and its influencing factors, and the perceived ease of leaving the enterprise and its influences.

Second Phase: Starting in the 1970s, psychologists and management scholars increasingly led research on employee turnover, criticizing economists for solely focusing on the influence of economic factors. Some researchers from a micro-perspective examined how individual psychological constructs lead to employee turnover and described the psychological changes in the decision-making process of leaving. Research during this stage mainly revolved around the antecedents, consequences, and process controls of turnover. Models developed in this period typically used attitudinal variables as the main basis for predicting turnover intentions and behaviors. Such studies indicated that numerous job-related endogenous variables influence employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which then lead to turnover intentions and actual turnover. Thus, these models continually explored and supplemented the antecedents affecting job satisfaction and organizational commitment to enhance the explanatory power of the models. Influential models from this period include Price's (1978) turnover model, Mobley et al's (1978) mediating chain model, and the turnover models by Price and Mueller (1981) and Bluedorn (1982).

The research perspective led by Price (1978) focuses on job opportunities and job satisfaction as key mediating factors in individual turnover behavior. This model emphasizes that job opportunities play a moderating role in the mechanism of influence between job satisfaction and turnover behavior, more specifically, when alternative job opportunities are plentiful, those dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to choose to leave. This model plays a significant role in integrating internal organizational variables, external environmental variables, and individual variables, and has a profound impact. However, its limitation lies in the lack of explicit explanation of the cognitive process by which individuals understand and evaluate these determinants, especially the perception and assessment of job opportunities. Furthermore, Mobley et al's (1978) mediating chain model primarily considers employee turnover as a psychological process for in-depth study. This model points out that employee turnover is influenced by a combination of five key factors: job satisfaction, expected benefits

of the current job, expected benefits of changing jobs, non-work values, and random factors. This model comprehensively reveals the behavioral process of employee turnover, involving many interacting factors, and has been widely recognized at the theoretical level. However, due to the complex relationships between these factors, the application of this model in practice still faces certain challenges, particularly in terms of the ability to validate and support these complex relationships in practical operations.

Mowday et al. (1981) presented a theoretical framework focused on exploring the multifaceted factors influencing employee turnover and detailed the dynamic characteristics of the turnover process. Their model clarified the sequence of evolution for variables such as work values and expectations, personal subjective attitudes, non-professional life factors, and intentions to leave. These factors collectively influence an employee's decision to leave. A key innovation of their model is its challenge to the oversimplified assumptions commonly found in previous research, which directly transitioned from employees' subjective attitudes to intentions to leave. They proposed that the relationships and influences among variables could vary by individual, thereby providing a richer perspective for understanding turnover behavior. Building on this, Lee and Mitchell (1994) further developed an expanded model of the turnover process, deepening the understanding of the complexity and diversity of employee turnover behaviors. This expanded model not only inherited the theoretical achievements of Steers and Mowday but also brought new theoretical insights to the field of turnover research by considering more situational and individual differences.

Price and Mueller (1981) designed their causal model to comprehensively capture the key factors affecting employee turnover behavior. The model identifies four major categories of variables: environmental factors (involving job opportunities and family responsibilities), personal characteristics (such as training experiences, emotional and job involvement), structural elements (including fairness, autonomy, promotion prospects, job stress, social support, and compensation), and procedural factors (such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job search behavior, and retention intentions), as shown in Figure 2.1. This model's significant contribution lies in its comprehensive description of the psychological dynamics during the employee turnover process, covering a wide range of related variables. Despite this, the model somewhat lacks in explaining the relative importance of each variable and the tightness of their interactions, which limits a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between certain variables.
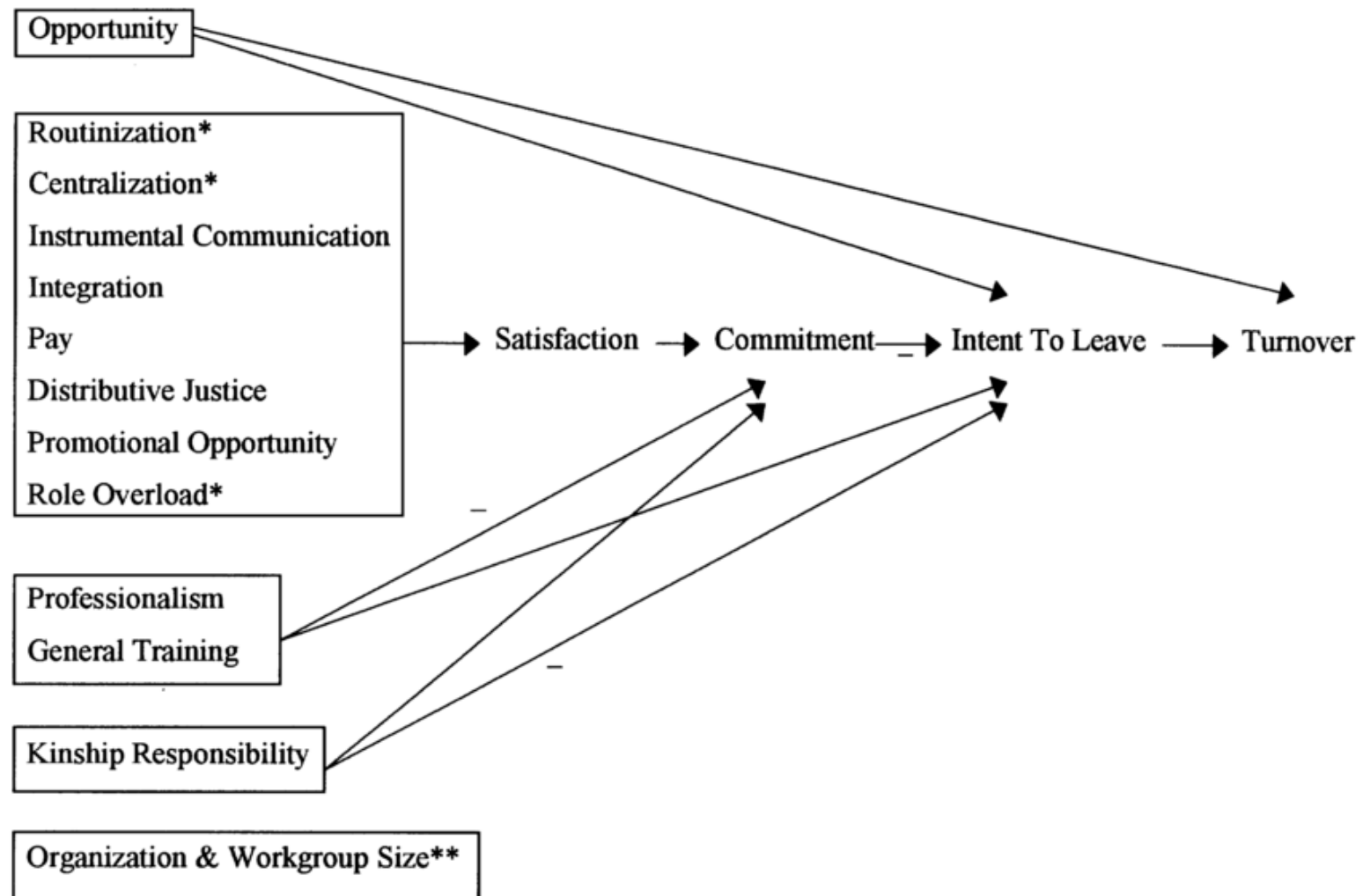
Figure 2.1 Causal model of turnover

Source: Price and Mueller (1981)

In their comprehensive analysis of voluntary turnover studies published in classic management journals, Griffeth et al. (2005) identified a range of variables related to turnover behavior. Their research revealed that these variables mainly revolve around multiple attitude models, which can be categorized as follows:

1. Demographic Characteristics (12 categories): These provide the basic sociodemographic background for understanding employee turnover.

2. Structural Variables Related to Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment (30 categories): These variables delve into the psychological state of employees regarding their work and organization.

3. External Environmental Factors (6 categories): These emphasize the potential impact of the macro environment on individual turnover decisions.

4. A Series of Moderating Variables that Can Influence the Impact of Attitude Variables (9 categories): These moderating variables are significant for predicting the complexity of turnover behavior.

This review provides a multidimensional analytical framework for future research, helping to more comprehensively understand the drivers of turnover behavior.

Third Phase: Since the late 1990s, research in the field of employee turnover has progressively moved beyond the single paradigm of job attitude analysis towards a more comprehensive and in-depth direction. Although previous models had covered many potential factors, the core mediating attitude variables—job satisfaction and organizational commitment—contributed relatively low variance to explaining turnover behavior, at only 3.6%. This finding indicates that the drivers of employee turnover are far more complex than mere job dissatisfaction or weakened organizational commitment (Griffeth et al., 2000). Consequently, subsequent studies began to broaden their scope, shifting focus beyond attitude variables to other related factors, thus initiating a new paradigm in turnover research. This shift facilitated a series of studies exploring new variables and potential pathways, not only expanding the boundaries of turnover theory but also providing richer support for empirical research.

Lee and Mitchell (1994) introduced the "unfolding model," which offered a new perspective on the study of voluntary employee turnover, particularly focusing on so-called "shocks to the system." These events can disrupt employees' existing work and psychological equilibrium, prompting them to reassess the meaning of their work. Such shocks might include any factor that causes changes to the social system, spurring employees to actively evaluate their work and sometimes even leading to their decision to leave. For example,

research by Fesseha (2023) noted that economic factors, work environment, and career development are positively correlated with intentions to leave. The significant contribution of this model lies in its identification that the process of employee turnover may not always stem from job dissatisfaction but could be triggered by factors outside of emotions. This implies that not all cases of turnover follow the traditional process from job dissatisfaction to external job searching, to the evaluation of alternative job opportunities, and finally deciding to leave. In some instances, employees might leave due to the direct impact of external events, even if they have not experienced job dissatisfaction or evaluated external opportunities.

Thus, this research will further explore in subsequent sections how external events like colleague resignations can influence the turnover intentions of remaining employees.

2.2 Turnover based on interpersonal influence

2.2.1 Theoretical basis of colleague departure influence

Since the 1980s, researchers have conducted in-depth studies on the impact of colleague departures on individual turnover tendencies. This surge in research interest has been driven by both practical and theoretical motivations. Initially, changes in employee turnover patterns were observed in corporate management practices. Historically, the voluntary departure of one employee would not immediately trigger the departure of others, but in recent years, phenomena such as chain or mass resignations have become increasingly common. This has prompted researchers to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon. They discovered that the departure of one employee could trigger the turnover intentions of others, sometimes even causing a chain reaction that affects a broader range of employees.

Moreover, researchers recognized that previous research methodologies were insufficient to explain these newly emerging turnover patterns (Griffeth et al., 2000). As a result, there was a call to broaden the research scope and adopt new methods to explore these phenomena. Many scholars advocate that emerging turnover research should expand its perspective, not only focusing on the individual factors of those who leave, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but also considering the impact of colleague departures on the retention of other employees and the potential social influences behind turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2005).

In explaining employee turnover, the social sciences have adopted two main research paths (Felps et al., 2009). One is from a macroeconomic perspective, where economists

analyze market factors in specific industries or economic regions, such as unemployment rates and labor supply and demand relationships, to explore how these factors influence employee turnover decisions (Haveman, 1995). The other approach is from a micro-psychological perspective, viewing turnover as an interactive process between the individual and the organization, seeking to understand employee turnover decisions by examining individual factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For example, research by Ihwanti and Gunawan (2023) through literature review methods indicated that job satisfaction among corporate employees has a significant negative impact on their intentions to leave. Studies also show that organizational commitment influences employee turnover intentions and consequently affects turnover rates (N. J. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Compared to other disciplines, management studies, as a branch of applied social science, delve deeply into the interactions between individual and organizational factors (Bradbury et al., 2007). Management focuses on employee turnover within the business environment, aiming to optimize human resource management strategies by understanding the psychology and behavior of employee turnover, as well as how businesses respond to these changes. Thus, management not only considers the personal factors of those who leave but also examines the impact of the organizational environment, corporate culture, and colleague relationships on employee turnover.

Many scholars believe that researchers in the field of organizational behavior should pay more attention to "meso-level" research, focusing on individual behavior within social contexts (Johns, 2006). However, it is regrettable that despite the potential importance of the impact of colleague departures on individual turnover intentions, this line of research has not received sufficient attention and in-depth exploration. In most organizations, the process of employee turnover is often simply understood as an independent decision-making process at the individual level, and many turnover models often overlook the profound impact of social structures on individual decisions (Pfeffer, 1991). In fact, Pfeffer (1991) also pointed out that colleagues who employees directly interact with at work, as key elements of the social structure, are most likely to significantly influence an individual's decision to leave. However, this important perspective was not given the due attention and in-depth study it warranted for some time.

Thus, delving deeply into the impact of colleague departures on the turnover intentions of remaining employees is not only crucial for understanding the increasingly common phenomenon of consecutive departures in reality, but it also significantly enriches the

theoretical framework of turnover research, further deepening our understanding of the mechanisms behind individual turnover decisions. Colleague departures are not merely an individual phenomenon; they can also have a series of psychological and emotional impacts on remaining employees, subsequently influencing their desire to leave. While the effects may vary due to individual differences, in-depth study of these influences will help us better understand the complexity and diversity of turnover phenomena.

This research perspective not only holds theoretical value but also offers useful insights and guidance for organizational management practice, thereby possessing significant research significance and value (D. G. Allen et al., 2003).

2.2.2 The relationship between colleague departure and turnover intentions

Colleague departures impact the emotions, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance (Bal et al., 2015), and turnover intentions of incumbent employees (those remaining as opposed to those leaving). Past research has analyzed these impacts from various perspectives, including information dissemination, social comparison, social contagion, attribution of turnover (S. Liu et al., 2014), and surface-level similarity.

The investigation into the impact of internal organizational communication on employee turnover behavior can trace its origins back to the pioneering work of Krackhardt and Porter (1985), who first analyzed the phenomenon of employee turnover from the perspective of organizational communication networks. Their research revealed a crucial insight: employee turnover is not an isolated random event, but a dynamic process that can trigger a chain reaction, known as the "snowball effect." In this process, employees gain important labor market information and start to assess their chances of securing new job opportunities by observing the departures of their colleagues. This finding challenges the common intuition that turnover behavior only negatively affects those who remain within the organization. On the contrary, the findings of Krackhardt and Porter (1985) revealed that under certain conditions, the departure of colleagues might positively influence the retention decisions of remaining employees.

The rationale behind this phenomenon is that departing colleagues might have spread dissatisfaction with the job or organization before leaving. As these colleagues leave, the negative information they spread also dissipates, thereby reducing its adverse impact on other employees. Furthermore, Feeley and Barnett (1997) delved deeper into how communication network characteristics influence turnover decisions in their research. Their findings indicated

that both communications directly related to work tasks and those involving indirect interpersonal interactions significantly influenced individuals' intentions to leave. Furthermore, Feeley et al. (2008) conducted an in-depth analysis of the influence of communication network characteristics on turnover decisions. Their research found that both direct communication related to work tasks and indirect interpersonal interactions had a significant impact on individuals' intention to leave.

The Evolutionary Search Model of Employee Turnover offers a new perspective on understanding the role of information dissemination in decision-making about leaving an organization. This model highlights that traditional turnover research often overlooks the dynamic changes in an individual's awareness of job opportunities throughout the process of leaving. Steel suggests that an employee's recognition and evaluation of job opportunities evolve during different stages of departure. Therefore, a static research model may fail to fully capture the influx and impact of new information during this process. The Evolutionary Search Model especially emphasizes the crucial role of labor market information and its sources in employee turnover decisions. According to this model, an employee's acquisition of information is influenced not only by their own active job searching but also by the departures of colleagues. When colleagues leave, employees pay more attention to the information these departing colleagues bring, and they use this information to search for and evaluate new job opportunities (Steel, 2002; Steel & Landon, 2010).

This model provides a more complex and dynamic framework for understanding employee turnover behavior. It underlines the importance of how employees adjust their perceptions and actions based on updated information and social cues within their environment. Such a perspective encourages organizations to consider not only the individual factors affecting turnover but also the broader information and social networks that significantly influence these decisions. This approach can help organizations develop more effective strategies to manage turnover by addressing not just individual discontent but also enhancing information sharing and transparency within the workplace.

Social Comparison Theory provides a critical theoretical basis for studies examining the impact of colleague departures on individual turnover intentions. This theory posits that comparing oneself with others is a pervasive psychological phenomenon that has profound implications in the realms of organizational behavior and work attitudes (Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990). Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) extended Festinger's (1954) foundational research on social comparison into the fields of organizational behavior and work attitudes, thereby laying the groundwork for these areas of study. Their perspective was also

significantly supported by Social Learning Theory, which expanded the scope of social comparison and further propelled the development of organizational behavior studies (Bandura, 1982).

Festinger's (1954) theory suggests that when individuals perceive differences between themselves and others in opinions, emotions, or behaviors, they may adjust their cognitions to align with others. During the process of making turnover decisions, employees often reference the behavior patterns of their colleagues to evaluate possible alternative career paths. Within this framework, departing colleagues serve as benchmarks for the social comparison activities of the remaining employees, stimulating them to conduct in-depth evaluations of their own career capabilities, the likelihood of securing new opportunities, and the potential costs and benefits of leaving. This evaluative process can lead employees to decide whether to stay within the current organization or seek new professional opportunities.

When employees within an organization leave, it may trigger a comparison mechanism among the remaining staff. These employees might compare their own jobs with the new positions secured by the leavers, or their own capabilities with those of the departing colleagues (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2015). Research by Brockner and Kim (1993) indicates that the quality of the job found by departing colleagues can influence the inclination of incumbent employees to make such comparisons, and this tendency is negatively correlated with their own job satisfaction. If departing colleagues secure better job opportunities—such as positions with higher company prestige, higher roles, or better salaries—it could lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and even foster turnover intentions among those who remain.

In recent years, management studies have begun integrating contagion theories from biology and psychology to enhance understanding of the dynamics of emotion and social environmental transmission (Barsade, 2002; Felps et al., 2009). The application of this theory extends beyond biological and disease transmission; it also plays a crucial role in studies of emotional transmission and social phenomena (Bakker et al., 2005; Barsade, 2002). Social contagion describes how individuals are influenced by the attitudes or behaviors of other influential individuals (Bovasso, 1996), covering multiple layers including behavioral patterns, ideas, and emotional cognition (Marsden, 1998). In the social sciences, contagion theory is used to analyze the transmission mechanisms of behaviors such as suicide and smoking; in organizational behavior, it is also applied in studies related to consumer behavior and network effects.

As the theory continues to develop, our understanding of its application scope and influence deepens. It holds significant importance in fields like biology and psychology and

profoundly impacts the development of management studies and organizational behavior. This broadening of application demonstrates how complex and interconnected human behaviors are within organizational settings, providing valuable insights for managing employee satisfaction and retention effectively.

Subsequent turnover studies have gradually incorporated the perspective of social contagion theory to deepen the understanding of the mechanisms through which turnover behaviors spread. Similar to the "snowball effect," turnover contagion emphasizes the imitation behaviors sparked among employees as they compare themselves to departing colleagues. Felps et al. (2009) conceptualized turnover contagion as the process by which individuals make stay-or-leave decisions influenced by their colleagues, and around this concept, they developed a theoretical model of turnover contagion. This model introduces elements like job embeddedness and job searching behaviors, explaining how colleague departures influence employees' turnover tendencies.

As employees witness their colleagues engaging in job-seeking activities, such as updating resumes or participating in job fairs, they may become aware of potential external career opportunities. This awareness might prompt them to weigh the benefits and risks of leaving their current organization, potentially leading to the emergence or strengthening of their intention to leave. This theoretical framework provides a new perspective for understanding the transmission mechanisms of employee turnover behavior.

By acknowledging the role of social contagion in turnover, organizations can better anticipate and manage these dynamics. Strategies might include enhancing communication and transparency about career development opportunities within the organization, improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and developing supportive workplace cultures that can help mitigate the impact of turnover contagion. Additionally, by monitoring signs of increased job searching activities among employees, organizations might be able to address potential issues before they lead to a wave of departures, thus maintaining a more stable workforce.

From the perspective of attribution of turnover, there's a close connection between the reasons for departure and the emotional responses of remaining employees. Current research indicates that different attributions for turnover can trigger a variety of emotional reactions among staff. Specifically, Sheehan (1995) explored this phenomenon and found that when a colleague's departure is attributed to reasons unrelated to work, remaining employees often express regret and sadness over their colleague's departure. However, when the departure is due to job dissatisfaction, employees may feel happy for their colleague, perceiving that the

colleague has escaped an unsatisfactory work environment. These studies not only enrich our understanding of how attributions for turnover influence employee emotions but also provide insights for organizational managers to consider the underlying reasons behind departures to better understand and address employees' emotional responses.

Furthermore, research by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2014) suggests that when remaining employees attribute a colleague's departure to external factors (such as company-related issues), they might perceive that the colleague was treated unfairly, which contradicts their value systems, thereby triggering negative emotions. Z. X. Wang (2011) revealed an interesting phenomenon through in-depth interviews: the experiences of colleagues often prompt remaining employees to deeply reflect on their current jobs. In this process, employees may resonate with their colleagues' experiences, leading to a cascade of negative emotions.

These findings not only reveal the complexity of emotional resonance among colleagues but also offer new perspectives and insights for organizational management and emotional management of employees. By deeply understanding the psychological reactions of employees facing their colleagues' situations, organizations can better attend to employees' emotional states, implement effective measures to alleviate negative emotions, and enhance job satisfaction and overall well-being. This approach emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments that acknowledge and address the emotional dynamics triggered by turnover, thereby fostering a more engaged and resilient workforce.

Past research has convincingly demonstrated the significant impact of attributing reasons for colleagues' departures on the work attitudes and behaviors of remaining employees. For example, research by Mowday et al. (1981) highlighted that when colleagues leave due to job dissatisfaction, it can ignite feelings of discontent among remaining employees, negatively affecting their attitudes toward their own jobs. Similarly, Sheehan (1995) found that when employees perceive a colleague's departure as reflecting negative aspects of the job, their own satisfaction significantly decreases, which can even lead to reduced productivity. This effect was not pronounced among employees who attributed colleagues' departures to non-work-related reasons such as illness.

Moreover, research by Cai (2007) found significant differences in the mean levels of turnover intentions based on different attributions for colleagues' departures, further confirming the substantial impact of departure attributions on employees' intentions to leave. These studies not only deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of turnover attribution but also offer new insights and methods for organizational managers addressing employee

turnover issues.

D. Liu et al. (2012) argued that when employees attribute a colleague's departure to company-related reasons (external attribution, such as poor management quality or inadequate pay), they might perceive it as a situation that the company could change but has chosen not to. This perception can lead to job dissatisfaction and reduced organizational commitment. On the other hand, when employees perceive that the company is capable but unwilling to make necessary changes, it is often interpreted as a lack of willingness for transformation on the part of the organization. In such cases, employees might be inclined to seek a balance and realization of self-worth by changing employers, thereby generating a higher intention to leave. This perspective deepens our understanding of the motivations behind employee turnover and emphasizes the subtle connections between organizational changes and employees' intentions to leave.

These insights are critical for organizational leaders as they underscore the importance of understanding how employees perceive the reasons behind their colleagues' departures. By actively managing and responding to these perceptions, organizations can better control turnover rates and enhance overall employee satisfaction and engagement.

The in-depth study by Holtom et al. (2008) highlighted a significant phenomenon: when employees believe that a colleague's departure is due to external factors, they may perceive a misalignment between the organization and their personal goals and values. This perception often leads to decreased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn may enhance the employees' tendency to leave. From the perspective of attribution style, Luo (2011) further explored its impact mechanism on turnover intentions. Through path analysis, she found that employees who tend to attribute negative events, such as a colleague's departure, to external factors may see their intention to leave significantly influenced through the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These studies not only deepen our understanding of employee turnover behavior but also provide organizational managers with new ideas on how to reduce turnover rates by optimizing the work environment and enhancing employees' sense of belonging.

Research by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2014) showed that employees' external attributions for a colleague's departure can have multidimensional impacts on their psychology and behavior. Specifically, this tendency toward external attribution can exacerbate negative emotions among incumbent employees, increase their intentions to leave, and weaken their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, it is noteworthy that the strength of the relationship between the remaining employees and the departing colleague plays a crucial

moderating role. When this relationship is strong, the negative impacts of external attribution on turnover tendencies, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment are correspondingly weakened. Furthermore, job satisfaction and organizational commitment mediate the interaction between external attribution and relationship strength in their impact on turnover tendencies. In other words, although external attributions may increase employees' negative emotions and intentions to leave, close relationships with departing colleagues can mitigate these negative impacts to some extent, and this mitigation process is achieved through the mediating effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This finding not only deepens our understanding of employee turnover behavior but also offers new perspectives on how organizations can effectively use relationships among employees to mitigate turnover tendencies in management practices.

The perspective of surface-level similarity focuses on the extent to which incumbent employees share visible characteristics such as gender, age, tenure, and education with departing colleagues. Nabi and Keblusek (2014) noted that this type of similarity is significant for understanding employee turnover behavior. Krackhardt and Porter (1985), through their study of employees at three fast-food restaurants, found that turnover behaviors are not random but are more significantly influenced by employees who have a high structural homophily with the departing colleague, with this influence expanding like a snowball effect. Additionally, Brockner and Kim (1993) demonstrated that the higher the surface-level similarity with a departing colleague, the lower the job satisfaction of the incumbent employees, subsequently increasing their turnover intentions.

D. Liu et al. (2012) further discovered that when colleagues with similar work experiences and responsibilities leave, incumbent employees perceive external job opportunities as more accessible and believe they could find new jobs just as successfully as their departing colleagues. As a result, the likelihood of incumbent employees developing intentions to leave also increases following the departure of colleagues who are similar to them. These studies collectively reveal the significant impact of surface-level similarity in employee turnover behavior, providing valuable insights for organizational management and the development of employee retention strategies.

Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) conducted an in-depth study into the effects of upward mobility of departing colleagues and the surface-level similarity between incumbent employees and those departing on the turnover intentions of the remaining staff. They innovatively introduced the mediating role of episodic envy and the moderating role of external attribution. Their findings indicated that the upward mobility of departing colleagues, along with

similarities in visible characteristics like gender and age with incumbent employees, significantly enhances episodic envy among the remaining staff, which in turn fosters increased turnover intentions. Additionally, the study found that the tendency of incumbent employees to attribute the departure of their colleagues to external factors further strengthens the positive relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues, surface similarity, and episodic envy, thereby intensifying the formation of turnover intentions.

Further research by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) revealed a significant phenomenon: when incumbent employees have high surface-level similarity with departing colleagues, they tend to have lower job satisfaction, and consequently, their intentions to leave are relatively higher. However, it's important to note that this enhanced effect of turnover intentions due to high surface-level similarity is negatively moderated by job embeddedness—higher job embeddedness can mitigate the turnover tendencies brought about by similarity. This finding deepens our understanding of the mechanisms influencing employee turnover behavior.

From a more macroscopic analytical level, the perspectives of information dissemination and social comparison are interconnected in explaining the mechanisms through which colleague departures influence remaining employees. The information dissemination perspective focuses on the process and content of turnover-related information spreading, while the social comparison perspective concentrates on the psychological reactions of employees after receiving this information, including how they compare themselves to others. These two perspectives complement each other, together constructing a more comprehensive framework for understanding the impacts of colleague departures and the underlying psychological dynamics involved.

The advancement of contagion theory and its application in organizational behavior research represent an innovative effort to integrate different perspectives. The "contagious" nature of turnover behaviors among employees fundamentally stems from the social comparisons they make with colleagues, based on the information they gather to assess the costs and benefits of leaving, which then influences their final decision-making process. This process involves not only the transmission of emotions and the contagion of attitudes but also rational analysis of information and thoughtful social comparisons. Therefore, when discussing employee turnover issues, it is necessary to consider multiple layers, including information dissemination, social comparison, and rational decision-making, to more comprehensively and deeply reveal the internal mechanisms.

2.3 Turnover based on job opportunities

After a detailed examination of the development of turnover research (as discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2), it becomes evident that the paradigms of turnover research are undergoing a profound transformation. The traditional model, centered on the individual decision-maker, is gradually being replaced by emerging models that incorporate multi-agent interaction decision-making. Simultaneously, the influence of traditional attitudinal variables in explaining turnover intentions has significantly weakened, while models integrating multidimensional factors such as job opportunities and work values are emerging with stronger explanatory power. These changes are not isolated but are interrelated and mutually influential, collectively shaping the new face of turnover research.

Especially in exploring the phenomenon of turnover contagion, our focus needs to be more precisely directed towards the dynamic processes of interpersonal interactions among individuals. As discussed in Section 2.2, the decision-making process based on the evaluation of job opportunities may play a central role in the potential impact of a colleague's departure on an individual's turnover intentions. Therefore, this thesis is dedicated to systematically reviewing and organizing the latest advancements in the job opportunities perspective within turnover research. It aims to delve deeper into how job opportunities serve as a key variable in explaining the mechanisms by which a colleague's departure influences an individual's turnover intentions, thereby contributing new theoretical perspectives and empirical support to the field and promoting further in-depth research and development in this area.

2.3.1 Theoretical foundations of job opportunities

In discussing the many factors that influence turnover intentions, a deep analysis of the utility of job opportunities indeed has a longstanding lineage in the field of turnover research. As early as 1958, March and Simon (1958), in their seminal work, proactively identified "alternative job opportunities" as having a significant impact on an employee's intention to leave. They highlighted that the two main factors influencing an employee's decision to leave are the perceived desirability of leaving and the perceived ease of leaving the organization.

When exploring the decision-making process of employee turnover, it is observed that employees might contemplate leaving when they perceive that the incentives provided by the organization are of relatively low value compared to the value of their contributions, coupled with the availability of alternative employment opportunities externally. This model initially

presented a mechanism for assessing utility in the employee turnover decision process. Subsequently, Mobley et al (1978) deepened this research, emphasizing the impact of employees' expectations of their current job and future employment on their turnover decisions, further highlighting the rational considerations in the turnover decision-making process.

Price and Mueller's (1981) model provided a more detailed perspective, incorporating the impact of internal promotion opportunities and thoroughly considering the role of external job opportunities in the turnover decision. This reflects the more rational approach modern employees take in weighing their turnover decisions, where they no longer base their judgment on a single factor but rather consider multiple factors, especially the overall utility of leaving for their career development.

In recent years, the trend of integration between decision-making research and organizational behavior has become increasingly prominent, with the rise of vocational decision theory being particularly noteworthy. This theory views career choice as a complex decision-making process based on bounded rationality, deepening our understanding of career choice behavior. Within this theoretical framework, the impact of colleagues' departure on the decision of incumbent employees to leave cannot be ignored, and the role of job opportunities as an important moderating factor deserves further analysis. This analysis not only closely connects with the evolution of theoretical research but also is more relevant to the actual circumstances in which employees make departure decisions in real environments. By drawing on previous research findings (Eby et al., 2008), this study can more comprehensively reveal the internal mechanisms of departure decisions, providing targeted management strategies for organizations to effectively address employee turnover issues.

The decision-making process essentially involves evaluating and selecting from various alternative courses of action, with its core lying in judging the expected value and the likelihood of its realization, aiming to maximize expected utility through selection. However, traditional economic theories, based on the assumption of perfect rationality, have constructed the concept of "rational individuals," which significantly differs from the rational behavior of people in reality, limiting its explanatory power.

In contrast, Simon (1955) proposed the concept of bounded rationality, providing a new perspective for the development of modern decision theory, suggesting that individuals make decisions under conditions of incomplete information and limited processing capabilities, providing a more realistic basis for understanding career choice and departure behavior. He pointed out that individuals do not possess complete rationality when making decisions but

are constrained by the complexity of the task environment and limited computational capabilities, exhibiting bounded rationality. Individuals are limited in the amount of information they can obtain during the decision-making process and typically rely on subjective assessments to make choices. One significant characteristic of bounded rationality is the asymmetry and incompleteness of knowledge acquisition, which forces individuals to rely on the information they currently possess to predict potential outcomes. The amount of knowledge individuals possess or the information related to behavioral outcomes directly affects the rationality of their decisions. At the same time, individuals' expectations display adaptability, influenced by factors such as personal traits and the ease of information acquisition. Therefore, faced with the same information, different individuals may interpret and make decisions differently due to differences in their cognition, experience, and values (Qi, 2005).

Furthermore, bounded rationality is also reflected in individuals not necessarily seeking the optimal solution when making decisions but rather seeking a satisfactory solution (Kabiawu et al., 2016). This satisfactory solution may not be globally optimal but is a reasonable choice under limited information and cognitive capabilities. Simon (1955) suggested that managers simplify the complex real world into highly simplified models, considering only a few key situational elements and making choices within them. Cognitive psychology suggests that several important individual characteristics influence decision-making, including perception, intrinsic motivation, and attitudes (X. J. Zhou, 2005), all of which contribute to the decision-making process bearing strong personal characteristics.

Building on Simon's research, Kahneman and Tversky (2013) further deepened and developed prospect theory, which provides powerful theoretical support for understanding how decision-makers evaluate various choices. Prospect theory breaks down the decision-making process into two main stages: editing and evaluation. In the editing stage, individuals finely process information, including complex processes such as encoding, merging, decomposing, and canceling information, with the key being to establish a subjective reference point. When evaluating different choices, individuals often judge their value based on a subjectively set reference point, considering options below this point as losses and options above it as gains. The determination of the reference point is influenced by individual subjective factors, leading to different decisions even when faced with the same information. This phenomenon reflects the subjectivity and individual differences in the decision-making process. In the evaluation stage, decision-makers comprehensively evaluate the expected outcomes processed in the editing stage to determine the optimal solution.

Prospect theory emphasizes the importance of information acquisition and interpretation in decision-making, with its core value function being reference-dependent, meaning that value assessment is not based on absolute value but on relative differences from the reference point. For example, in the workplace, an employee may expect the salary of a new job to be higher than their current level. If the actual salary matches the current one, even if it exceeds the industry average, it may still cause dissatisfaction because individual satisfaction is based on a comparison with the original salary level rather than an absolute standard in the industry. Therefore, according to prospect theory, individual decisions depend not only on objective value but also on subjective value formed by comparison with the subjective reference point.

In modern times, the dual-process model was proposed, which categorizes decision-making into heuristic and analytic types. Within this framework, analytic decision-making relies on systematic analytical processing, requiring significant cognitive resources, thus placing high demands on the quality and processing of information. This theoretical model particularly emphasizes the crucial role of information in the decision-making process, highlighting the importance of thorough information analysis for making rational decisions (Jonathan, 2017; E. R. Smith & Collins, 2009).

Overall, the core focus of decision theory lies in how decision-makers process information, a process requiring deep cognitive involvement. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, decision-making is seen as a system involving complex information processing, where individuals employ various cognitive strategies to carefully process relevant information (J. F. Smith et al., 1982). However, this detailed information processing is not without flaws, as it is constrained by bounded rationality. Due to differences in individual characteristics and environmental factors, biases may arise during the decision-making process. Nevertheless, individuals still strive to weigh the pros and cons among multiple alternatives, ultimately selecting the option they perceive as having the highest value and satisfaction. This process not only reveals the complexity and dynamics of decision activities but also provides valuable insights for a deeper understanding of individual decision-making behavior.

In recent years, the integration of decision theory with organizational behavior has become particularly close, especially in the field of career development, where the rise of Career Decision Theory has deepened our understanding of career choices, viewing them as complex decision-making processes constrained by bounded rationality. Within this framework, the so-called "alternative options" represent numerous career paths, while "value" is reflected in individuals' pursuit of career growth and success. The importance of career

decision-making lies in employees having to rationally assess and choose from numerous career opportunities to maximize personal utility and promote continuous advancement in their careers.

Career Decision Theory can be divided into two main schools of thought: one focuses on the outcome of individual-career fit theory, which emphasizes maximizing individual interests, the alignment of traits with job requirements, and optimizing self-value realization; the other focuses on the decision-making process, with the development of career decision models deeply influenced by the evolution of decision theory. The early standardized decision theory, though based on the rational actor assumption, emphasized comprehensive information processing and the principle of utility maximization in career decision-making (Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1947), but its overly idealistic nature has gradually been questioned in practice.

With further research into the concept of bounded rationality, career decision models have begun to transcend the limitations of traditional standardized decision-making. Specifically, career decisions are categorized into three main types: rational, intuitive, and dependent (Harren, 1979). Rational career decision-making emphasizes individuals' rational analysis during the decision-making process, following logical and systematic procedures with the goal of maximizing expected benefits, involving comprehensive collection and analysis of career-related information. Intuitive career decision-making emphasizes individuals' emotions and sensitivity to the environment, decisions often based on internal emotional cues and intuition, possibly made impulsively or based on feelings. Dependent career decision-making reflects individuals seeking external guidance or following others' opinions and expectations during the decision-making process. These different types of career decision-making strategies collectively constitute complex behavioral patterns in individual career choices, providing rich theoretical and practical insights for organizational management and personal career development.

Existing research generally agrees that rational decision-making is considered the most effective decision-making strategy in most situations. While intuitive decision-making may achieve decent results in some contexts, it still falls short compared to rational decision-making. As for dependent decision-making, it is often considered the least effective, and may even have negative consequences (Harren, 1979). This classification method highlights the crucial role of information in career decision-making. Before making career choices, individuals need to systematically collect and analyze relevant information, which not only promotes a deep understanding of personal traits and external environments but also

increases the probability of making effective decisions (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013). Additionally, the process of career decision-making aligns with the decision stages described by prospect theory, divided into two main stages: firstly, the information processing stage, focusing on in-depth analysis of career-related information, aiming to build a comprehensive understanding of the career environment and individual capabilities; secondly, the opportunity evaluation stage, involving comprehensive assessment of the utility and risks of various potential job opportunities, ultimately leading to the determination of career choices. These two stages are interconnected, collectively forming the dynamic process of career decision-making.

With the vigorous development of the Chinese economy, modern employment relationships are gradually shifting towards flexibility, abandoning traditional notions of stability. This transformation has given rise to the emergence of borderless organizations (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) and the ascent of individual boundaryless careers (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Hom et al., 2017). In this reality, employee turnover is no longer a passive choice in dilemma but a strategic decision actively sought for personal career growth and advancement. This study argues that turnover decision, as a particular case in the field of career decision-making, is unique in its focus on the fundamental choice of "stay" or "leave." This is distinct from traditional career decisions, which involve multiple potentially equivalent job opportunities as alternatives. In contrast, turnover decisions primarily focus on whether to continue staying in the current organization, which may involve exploring development opportunities within the organization or seeking external career development paths across organizational boundaries (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001). In this decision-making process, employees' grasp of job opportunity information becomes crucial in evaluating existing jobs and potential alternative job opportunities, significantly influencing their turnover decisions.

2.3.2 Perceived job opportunities

Although the variable of job opportunities is frequently mentioned in traditional turnover studies, its conceptual definition has not been clearly defined. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the concept of job opportunities in turnover research using relevant theories of career growth. Career growth, as an important aspect of individual career development, refers to the process of achieving personal career development through job system mobility that enhances individual capital (Graen et al., 2006). Career growth can be

subdivided into intra-organizational growth and inter-organizational growth based on the environment in which it occurs. Career success refers to the experiences, achievements, and outcomes accumulated by individuals in their career, which can be objectively measurable success (evaluated by external standards) or subjective success (individual satisfaction with current work) (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Career development describes the overall progress of employees on their career path, including career planning, development activities, and various achievements throughout their career (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). The pursuit of career success is closely linked to career growth, which helps promote growth at specific career stages, thereby advancing the overall career development. This continuous process may unfold within a single organization or occur alongside organizational changes. To achieve continuous career advancement, individuals need to actively seek out and fully utilize opportunities for career growth at each stage. Building upon this foundation, this study will delve into the specific role of job opportunities in turnover decisions, aiming to enrich the theoretical content and practical guidance of turnover research.

Kim et al. (1996) proposed that career growth opportunities are opportunities provided by organizations to individuals to enhance their knowledge and skill development. Building upon this, Peng (2009) further expanded the scope of this concept, suggesting that career growth opportunities not only include personal skill enhancement but also involve the possibility of promotion and upward mobility, thus constructing a broader perspective of career development. Therefore, career growth opportunities focus not only on individual growth in knowledge, experience, and skills but also on the potential for achieving objective achievements such as job promotions. This comprehensive definition is more closely aligned with employees' holistic evaluation of career value in actual work, highlighting the importance of career growth opportunities in driving employees' career progression.

Furthermore, although there may be discrepancies between objectively existing career growth opportunities and individuals' subjective perceptions, individuals' perception of career growth opportunities is actually their personal understanding and interpretation of opportunities in the work environment (Tsuboi et al., 2006). In the process of individuals' career development, they will set goals based on their personal career expectations, and only when the job opportunities provided align with these expectations will individuals perceive the job as having the potential to promote career growth. Building upon career motivation theory (London & Noe, 1997), Kraimer et al. (2011) introduced the concept of "perceived career opportunities," which reflects employees' personal beliefs about whether a job or position can meet their career goals and interests.

Based on the perspective that career growth opportunities can be considered from both internal and external aspects, this study further subdivides perceived job opportunities and provides clear definitions. Perceived Internal Career Opportunity (PICO) is defined as employees' perception of opportunities within the organization that can help them achieve their career development goals and promote success and growth in their careers. In contrast, Perceived External Career Opportunity (PECO) involves employees' perception of available opportunities in the external labor market that align with their career goals and have the potential to bring success and development in their careers. Given the central focus, this study will particularly explore how the perception of external job opportunities among retained employees influences their decision-making mechanisms, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for employee retention and career development in practice.

In the specific measurement process, compared to perceived internal job opportunities, the measurement of perceived external career opportunities is more diverse. Griffeth et al. (2005), integrating previous research on perceived alternative opportunities, creatively introduced the "Employment Opportunity Index" (EOI), aimed at comprehensively and accurately quantifying employees' perception of external opportunities. They carefully designed a measurement scale consisting of five sub-dimensions: ease of mobility, mobility willingness, networking, job opportunity concretization, and liquidity. These sub-dimensions not only provide a specific and detailed reference framework for individuals to assess their career development opportunities in the external labor market but also help researchers to better understand the perceptual structure of employees regarding external career opportunities. Several studies have confirmed the high accuracy and effectiveness of this scale in measuring employees' perception of external career opportunities, and it significantly predicts employees' job-seeking intentions and behaviors (Steel & Landon, 2010). Therefore, since its development, this scale has been widely recognized and extensively used in relevant research, becoming one of the important tools for measuring perceived external career opportunities.

2.3.3 The relationship between perceived job opportunities and the turnover intention

The impact of perceived job opportunities on quitting has been mentioned as early as in the model by Lucier (Steel & Landon, 2010), and subsequent models of quitting have also involved similar constructs. These models generally consist of two core parts: first, a detailed analysis of employees' perceptions of the rationality of leaving an organization; second, an

exploration of employees' perceptions of the ease or difficulty of quitting. These two parts often intertwine and jointly affect the formation of employees' quitting decisions, thereby determining whether they choose to leave. Through this systematic and comprehensive analytical framework, this study can more accurately grasp the mechanisms by which perceived job opportunities influence quitting behavior, providing deeper theoretical support and practical guidance for studies on quitting.

These models hold an important place in the field of resignation research because they help researchers deeply understand the complex process of employee turnover. However, these models also face some challenges and criticisms. For example, some researchers believe that these models may be overly simplified and do not adequately consider the dynamic processes and individual differences in employee resignations. Additionally, some variables in these models may be difficult to measure, or the measurement tools may not be reliable enough. Despite these issues, these early models still provide an important theoretical foundation for later research. For instance, some researchers attempt to improve these models by introducing new variables or theoretical perspectives to better explain the phenomenon of employee turnover. Moreover, these models also provide managers with important tools to understand the risks of employee turnover, thereby helping them develop effective retention strategies.

In Lucier's (1959)discussion, the alignment between employees' job satisfaction and the realization of their self-worth at work was thoroughly explained. This realization of self-worth is influenced by key factors such as compensation, level of job involvement, promotion opportunities, and the likelihood of raises, reflecting an employee's overall identification with and satisfaction from their job. When discussing the perceived ease of exit, the number of external organizations and the availability of external positions become particularly important considerations. These factors together form a crucial basis for employees to evaluate the possibility of leaving.

Lucier's (1959) model deeply analyzes how employees comprehensively weigh the value of their current job position within the organization against the value of job positions outside the organization when deciding to leave. This core concept has laid a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent turnover research and has been widely inherited and further developed in many turnover models. For example, Mobley et al's (1978) model explicitly states that before taking actions to leave, employees prudently weigh various potential options and conduct an in-depth comparison and assessment of their current job against potential alternative jobs. In this process, the expected net benefits of changing jobs within the

organization and the expected net benefits of changing jobs outside the organization become key determinants of the intention to leave. However, although Mobley's model made significant contributions to understanding the decision-making process of leaving, he did not clearly define the specific content of "net benefits," which to some extent limits the theoretical expansion and empirical research accuracy of the model in evaluating internal and external jobs. Therefore, a deep analysis and definition of "net benefits" will be an important direction for future turnover research.

The classic model by Mowday et al (1981) thoroughly analyzes how employees' expectations and values regarding their current jobs shape their subjective attitudes, which in turn influences their intentions to stay or leave. This model specifically points out that job performance also significantly impacts an individual's retention intentions. When making decisions about leaving, employees also base their judgments on a careful analysis of the macroeconomic and market environment, assessing other potential job opportunities, which subtly affects their desire to leave. The innovation of this model lies in breaking away from the traditional singular pathway assumption of turnover studies that only considers subjective attitudes leading directly to turnover intentions. Instead, it emphasizes the multi-dimensional impact of the current job's value and employees' job performance on subjective attitudes, revealing that the emergence of turnover intentions is not solely due to job dissatisfaction.

Price and Mueller's (1981) model has significant influence in the field of turnover research, systematically integrating environmental, individual, structural, and process variables to provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing turnover behavior. Among these, structural variables such as job stress, compensation, and opportunities for promotion, which are key indicators of the current job's value, play an indispensable role in understanding employee turnover decisions. Job stress involves multiple factors such as resource insufficiency, role ambiguity, and workload overload; compensation covers both direct and indirect economic benefits that employees receive from their jobs; and promotion opportunities reflect the potential for career development within the organization. Additionally, process variables focus on employees' behavior in searching for external job opportunities, revealing the proactivity and selectivity of employees in the decision-making process of leaving. However, despite the rich dimensions of turnover analysis provided by Price and Mueller's (1981) model, it still has some shortcomings. First, whether the variables covered by the model comprehensively reflect employees' expectations of job value warrants further exploration. Non-material rewards such as skill enhancement and experience growth, which employees expect to receive at work, are also important aspects of job value but are not

adequately represented in this model. Secondly, these variables often indirectly affect turnover intentions through mediating variables such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, previous research has also pointed out that expectations about current and external jobs can directly influence turnover intentions; thus, the direct and indirect relationships between these variables and turnover intentions require more in-depth theoretical discussion. Lastly, the model falls slightly short in analyzing external opportunities, failing to thoroughly explain how employees evaluate the value and net benefits of external job opportunities, which somewhat limits the explanatory power of the model in turnover research (Kim et al., 1996). Therefore, future studies need to further refine these variables, incorporate more factors related to job value expectations, and deeply explore the mechanisms by which employees assess the value of external job opportunities to more comprehensively reveal the process of forming turnover intentions.

In the field of empirical research, the relationship between perceived internal job opportunities and the intention to quit has been supported to some extent. This relationship has gradually transitioned from theoretical exploration to empirical testing and has shown robust associations in numerous studies. Specifically, Price (2001) in his turnover model, views career length and the speed of organizational promotion as key factors influencing the intention to quit, providing theoretical support for subsequent empirical research. Empirically, Bedeian et al. (1991) have pointed out a negative relationship between internal career opportunities and the intention to quit, indicating that the more internal promotion opportunities employees perceive, the lower their intention to quit tends to be. This conclusion has also been widely validated in domestic studies. For example, M. Zhang and Zhang (2003, 2007), in their empirical studies using technical staff as sample, showed that internal career growth and the speed of promotion within an organization are negatively correlated with employees' intentions to quit.

On the other hand, the association between perceived external job opportunities and the intention to quit is a hot topic in the field of turnover research. Most studies agree that employees' perceptions of external career opportunities are significantly positively correlated with their intentions to quit and turnover rates. In other words, the richer the external career opportunities perceived by employees, the stronger their intention to quit, which in turn may increase the turnover rate. The classic model by Price and Mueller (1981) explicitly explains the significant impact of the quantity and quality of external job opportunities perceived by employees on their quitting behavior, providing a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent research. In the context of domestic research, Ye et al. (2015) in their study on the turnover

rates of employees in high-tech enterprises also indicated that perceived external career opportunities are one of the significant factors of quitting. However, despite the extensive research on the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and the intention to quit, there are still many shortcomings in the current field of turnover research. First, there is no consensus on the definition of internal and external job opportunities, making the related concepts vague and hindering the in-depth development of turnover theories and the accuracy of empirical research. Secondly, although numerous studies have explored the relationship between job opportunities and the intention to quit, there is still a lack of clear empirical research support on how employees evaluate job opportunities and how these evaluations directly affect their intentions to quit. Lastly, although the model by March and Simon (1958) examined internal and external job opportunities, the theoretical framework for integrating and comparing the two is still insufficient, and empirical research is even scarcer. To address these shortcomings, future research needs to further clarify the definitions of internal and external job opportunities, deeply explore the mechanisms between job opportunities and the intention to quit, and construct a theoretical framework integrating both types of job opportunities to more comprehensively and deeply understand the factors affecting employee turnover behavior.

Perceived external job opportunities are one of the significant factors influencing employee turnover intentions and behaviors. Existing research indicates that the more employees perceive external job opportunities, the higher their likelihood of leaving may be (Kirschenbaum & Mano-Negrin, 1999), further confirming that employees evaluate external job opportunities and make decisions based on the value of these opportunities when considering quitting. Additionally, employees are more likely to choose other companies primarily because these companies might offer them higher positions and more compensation benefits (Shukla & Sinha, 2013).

Perceived external job opportunities can be categorized into two types: actual, available job opportunities and potential, possible job opportunities. Actual job opportunities refer to those already existing in the market, while potential job opportunities refer to those that may appear in the future but are not yet present (Blau, 1994). When assessing the impact of perceived external job opportunities on employees, multiple factors need to be considered, including personal characteristics of employees (such as age, gender, education level, work experience), organizational characteristics (such as organizational size, industry, geographical location), and market characteristics (such as employment rates, wage levels, degree of competition) (Blau, 1994). These factors not only affect employees' perceptions of external

job opportunities but also influence their turnover intentions and behaviors.

The relationship between employees' perceptions of external job opportunities and their turnover intentions is also influenced by several critical factors, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. When employees are dissatisfied with their current job or do not have a strong commitment to their organization, they may be more proactive in seeking external job opportunities, thereby increasing the likelihood of quitting (Kirschenbaum & Mano-Negrin, 1999).

This complex relationship clearly demonstrates that the impact of perceived external job opportunities on employee turnover intentions is not caused by a single factor, but rather by the combined effects of multiple factors. Therefore, in practical applications, organizations can reduce the impact of employees' perceptions of external job opportunities on their turnover intentions by providing better working conditions, improving job satisfaction, and strengthening organizational commitment, thereby reducing employee turnover rates.

In the study by W. Huang et al. (2022), the researchers explored the impact of colleagues' departures for better job opportunities on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, analyzing the mediating role of remaining employees' perceptions of their own employability and the moderating role of job similarity. Their findings indicate that when colleagues leave and secure better job opportunities, the remaining employees' perceptions of their own employability are positively enhanced, thereby increasing their turnover intentions. Additionally, the study revealed that job similarity is an important moderating variable. When the job similarity between the remaining employees and the departing colleagues is high, the upward mobility of the colleagues has a more significant positive impact on the remaining employees' perceptions of employability, increasing their willingness to leave. This research not only enriches the theoretical domain of organizational behavior but also provides practical guidance for organizations in managing the turnover intentions of remaining employees. Furthermore, their research model also offers a reference for the study in this thesis.

This study will further explore the role of remaining employees' perceptions of external job opportunities in the impact of departing colleagues on their intentions to leave. This research aims to address the deficiencies in existing studies in this area, thereby more comprehensively understanding the complex mechanisms behind employee turnover behavior.

2.4 Social comparison theory in turnover research

Social comparison theory was initially proposed by Festinger in 1954, revealing deep psychological mechanisms in human behavior. Festinger (1954) suggested that individuals have an intrinsic need to evaluate their own opinions and abilities. In academia, the cognitive mechanisms of self-evaluation and its relationship with social comparison have always been a focal point of research. In specific contexts, when objective standards are insufficient to support an individual's self-evaluation, individuals may engage in comparisons with others to reduce internal uncertainty, thus fulfilling the need for self-assessment. Kruglanski and Mayseless (1990) expanded on social comparison theory, introducing a broader concept of social comparison, which is the comparative evaluation that individuals make in response to social stimuli. This development broke through the traditional limits of social comparison theory, which was confined to situations lacking objective evaluation standards, and revealed the general applicability of social comparison across various contexts. Following Kruglanski and Mayseless, Klein (1997) further confirmed in his research that even in the presence of objective evaluation standards, individuals still tend to use social comparison to refine or verify self-evaluations, highlighting the ubiquity and importance of social comparison in human behavior. Wood (1996) delved deeper into the process of social comparison from a procedural perspective, emphasizing it as a dynamic process involving the examination, analysis, and response to information about others. Wood's theory particularly emphasized the analysis of social information as a core aspect of social comparison, marking the substantive commencement of an individual's active processing and comparison of social information.

After a comprehensive analysis of the related literature, social comparison has been identified as a phenomenon widely present in the field of social psychology. In this process, individuals continuously engage in self-evaluation and adjustment, with the exchange of information playing a crucial role in the construction of individual self-cognition (Wood, 1989). This understanding not only deepens our insight into human self-evaluation mechanisms and social interaction dynamics but also lays a solid theoretical foundation and empirical reference for future research.

Social comparison as a psychological phenomenon encompasses multiple motives. These motives mainly include self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement (Wood, 1989). The core of the self-evaluation motive is the individual's desire to clearly define their abilities and opinions. By comparing themselves with others, individuals can more accurately assess their actual situation, thereby finding their place in society. The motive for

self-improvement focuses on seeking self-perfection and enhancement through comparison, especially in contexts where achievement is pursued, making this motive particularly strong. The self-enhancement motive involves using social comparison to maintain self-esteem, improve emotional states, and protect oneself from potential psychological harm. It is important to note that these three motives do not exist in isolation but are intertwined and mutually influencing. The self-evaluation motive provides individuals with a clear self-positioning, while the self-improvement motive guides individual behavior on this basis to pursue higher self-realization. Ultimately, these efforts all serve the self-enhancement motive, which aims to maintain self-esteem and enhance the sense of self-worth.

Early research on social comparison was heavily influenced by Festinger's (1954) perspective on ability comparison. Festinger (1954) posited that individuals have an intrinsic drive to continually enhance their abilities, a concept known as the "upward drive". This perspective provided important theoretical support for subsequent social comparison research, guiding researchers to delve deeper into the psychological mechanisms and behavioral expressions of individuals during social comparison processes.

Wheeler's (1966) study explored individuals' tendencies for social comparison under ranking conditions, noting that individuals in such contexts are more inclined to compare themselves with those who are better off. However, as research progressed, scholars gradually discovered that this type of upward comparison could have certain negative effects. Specifically, when individuals compare themselves with others who have higher abilities or achievements, it may intensify the perceived threat to their own capabilities, thereby triggering negative emotions and self-defensive responses (Klein & Kunda, 1993). To mitigate the discomfort caused by self-threat, the concept of downward comparison was developed in social comparison theory. In situations where a self-threat is perceived, individuals tend to compare themselves with others who perform worse. Such comparisons help to alleviate the sense of self-threat and protect self-esteem. The introduction of this theory represents a key development in the field of social comparison research, and also made the contrasting effects of upward and downward comparisons a critical topic for subsequent studies (Friend & Gilbert, 1973).

In the field of social comparison, research has revealed two key psychological effects: assimilation and contrast effects (S. L. Zhu, 2007). The contrast effect typically refers to a deviation in self-evaluation that individuals experience during social comparison processes. Specifically, when individuals engage in upward comparisons, comparing themselves with others who are performing better, they may experience a decrease in self-evaluation and the

emergence of negative emotions (Mussweiler et al., 2000). Conversely, downward comparisons, where individuals compare themselves with those performing worse, often lead to an enhancement in self-evaluation and may generate positive emotions derived from the comparison (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992).

The assimilation effect, on the other hand, demonstrates a tendency for individuals to align their self-evaluations closer to those of the comparison target during social comparison. For example, when faced with upward comparison information, individuals may seek similarities with the comparison target to enhance their self-evaluation (Collins, 1996). Conversely, in the context of downward comparison, individuals may adjust their self-evaluation to match that of the comparison target, thereby achieving psychological consistency (Friend & Gilbert, 1973).

Through the above analysis, this study can see that the social comparison theory has continuously unveiled the complex psychological processes and varying effects that arise as people compare themselves in different situations. These studies not only enrich our understanding of individual social comparison behaviors but also provide valuable insights and new directions for subsequent research.

2.4.1 Employee social comparison with colleagues

Social comparison theory suggests that individuals, when faced with new environments or when objective standards are unclear, tend to evaluate their own status by comparing themselves with others. During career transitions, which are often accompanied by potential risks and uncertainties (D. G. Allen et al., 2014), employees within an organization may assess whether they should seek new career opportunities by observing their colleagues' behavior patterns (Felps et al., 2009). This process of social comparison provides employees with a mechanism to evaluate the key question of whether they should consider changing jobs. According to the representational comparison theory, individuals tend to prefer comparing themselves with others who have similar backgrounds, experiences, or abilities, as such comparisons are considered more accurate and relevant.

Given this, in everyday work interactions, employees most frequently interact with their immediate colleagues, whose behaviors and choices inevitably become the most direct social comparison references when making decisions to leave. This research will conduct an in-depth analysis of this process from multiple dimensions including the directionality, content, clarity, and proactivity of comparisons. By thoroughly elucidating these

characteristics, the study aims to more comprehensively reveal the psychological dynamics and behavioral mechanisms of employees during the decision-making process of leaving.

2.4.2 Social comparison in the context of social comparison theory

In the context of social comparison theory, social comparison can be classified into three forms based on the directionality of the comparison: upward social comparison, parallel comparison, and downward social comparison.

Upward comparison involves individuals comparing themselves with others who outperform them in certain aspects, aiming to stimulate self-improvement. Festinger's (1954) research suggests an inherent tendency for individuals to seek upward comparison objects when assessing personal abilities, motivating self-enhancement.

Parallel comparison, on the other hand, involves comparing oneself with others whose conditions are equivalent. This type of comparison can provide more accurate and effective information when objective standards are lacking, helping individuals to assess their views and abilities more precisely. The Related Attribute Hypothesis further explains that individuals evaluate similarity based on attributes related to specific behaviors, such as gender and experience, when selecting comparison objects (Goethals & Darley, 1987). The Proxy Comparison Model further emphasizes the role of social comparison information in forming expectations for future task performance, especially when choosing similar others as comparison objects, resulting in more accurate expectations (Wheeler et al., 1997).

Downward comparison involves individuals comparing themselves with others who perform worse than them, typically used to protect self-esteem and enhance subjective well-being. Downward comparison theory provides a comprehensive perspective, suggesting that individuals can effectively maintain their sense of well-being by comparing themselves with others in worse situations when facing setbacks or failures (Wills, 1981).

In the context of this study, remaining employees comparing themselves with former colleagues who have achieved greater success after leaving constitutes a pattern of upward comparison.

The dimensions of social comparison exhibit diversity, including comparisons of abilities, opinions, and emotions. In the realm of opinion comparison, individuals contrast their views with those of others to evaluate the reasonableness and acceptability of their own perspectives. This type of comparison not only aids in the reconfirmation of personal beliefs but also can prompt openness to new information and adjustments in viewpoints. Through this process,

individuals can better understand their positions within the social environment, potentially facilitating changes in cognition and attitudes.

Ability comparison involves individuals comparing their capabilities with others to gauge their level of competence in specific areas or tasks. Through such comparisons, individuals can more clearly recognize their strengths and weaknesses, thereby developing more suitable strategies for personal development (Festinger, 1954). Emotional comparison involves individuals understanding their own emotional states by contrasting them with those of others. This type of comparison helps individuals better recognize and manage their emotions, which is crucial for maintaining psychological health and improving the quality of life.

This study specifically focuses on the scenario of workplace envy that remaining employees may feel toward colleagues who have moved upward upon leaving the organization. Through a study of emotional comparisons, it delves deeper into how such feelings of envy can influence employees' intentions to quit.

According to the clarity of comparison, social comparison can be divided into two types: spontaneous social comparison and explicit social comparison. Spontaneous social comparison usually occurs naturally in everyday life (Festinger, 1954) without the need for a specific comparison target or standard (Mussweiler et al., 2000), reflecting individuals' natural contrasting behaviors in an unconscious state. In contrast, explicit social comparison involves consciously choosing comparison targets and standards, thereby generating specific comparison results (Wood, 1996). In the context of the current study, we focus on exploring the impact of colleagues' departure behavior on the remaining employees' intentions to leave. Remaining employees use departing colleagues as explicit comparison targets, making this comparison have a clear purpose and directionality, thus falling into the category of explicit social comparison.

From the dimension of the activeness of comparison, social comparison can be further divided into active and passive types. Active social comparison occurs when individuals consciously choose objects for comparison based on their psychological motivations or goals in a specific situation. Conversely, passive social comparison describes scenarios where individuals encounter comparison information non-actively in a certain environment. This type of comparison is not a result of individual spontaneous choice but is induced by external circumstances (L. Li, 2006). Within the framework of this study, this study focuses on exploring how remaining employees react to making resignation decisions after a colleague's departure. In this process, employees' social comparison behavior may more often exhibit passive characteristics, as they compare under the influence of external events, rather than

from spontaneous psychological needs. Therefore, this study pertains to the category of passive social comparison.

By precisely delineating and defining the types of social comparison, this study can more accurately understand the psychological mechanisms behind employees' resignation decisions and provide a clearer theoretical basis for subsequent research.

2.4.3 Social comparison and turnover intentions

In exploring the causes of turnover intentions, social comparison theory is often used to explain how individuals form perceptions and attitudes towards their jobs through comparisons with others. Research has extensively examined the impact of social comparison on employee organizational commitment and job satisfaction, particularly focusing on the different effects triggered by upward and downward comparisons (Igalens & Roussel, 1999). Downward comparison, by establishing a lower reference point, may lead employees to have a more positive view of the benefits and work experiences provided by the organization. In contrast, upward comparison may set a higher reference point, thus diminishing individuals' positive evaluations of benefits (Brown et al., 2007). While it is generally believed that upward comparison is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment, and downward comparison is positively correlated, and that these modes of comparison directly influence job search behavior, the findings are not entirely consistent. For instance, research by Ray and Genicot (2023) found that in some cases, upward comparison may be associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced job burnout, which contradicts previous research findings. This discrepancy suggests that the certainty of conclusions drawn from studying the impact of social comparison on turnover intentions through job satisfaction and affective commitment remains to be further explored.

Given the contradictions and deficiencies in previous studies, this research will focus on upward comparisons and their comparative results, exploring the mechanisms by which colleagues' departures influence individual turnover intentions. We aim to provide new insights and supplements to the application of social comparison theory in the study of turnover intentions and also offer more precise theoretical support and practical guidance for organizational managers in managing employee turnover.

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) posits that individuals evaluate their abilities and opinions by comparing themselves with others. In the workplace, employees may compare their job conditions with those of departing colleagues, thereby influencing their

intentions to leave. For example, observing a colleague securing a better job opportunity might increase an employee's own intention to quit (Klein & Kunda, 1993). Additionally, the process of social comparison can lead to either upward or downward comparisons, subsequently affecting an individual's self-esteem and satisfaction (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992).

In organizational behavior research, social comparison is considered one of the key factors influencing employee turnover intentions. Employees may think about leaving when they compare their own job conditions, compensation, and career development opportunities with others and find themselves at a disadvantage (Collins, 1996). Especially when such comparisons indicate they are in a less favorable position, employees may seek better job opportunities. Moreover, social comparison can lead to dissatisfaction with the organization and reduced work engagement, further intensifying the propensity to leave (Mussweiler et al., 2000).

Understanding the dynamics of social comparison in the workplace can provide crucial insights for managers. By recognizing how comparisons impact employee perceptions and behaviors, organizational leaders can better design strategies to improve job satisfaction, align compensation and benefits with industry standards, and create clearer career pathways to retain talent. This approach not only helps in managing turnover but also enhances overall workplace morale and productivity.

Employees from different cultural backgrounds may have varying tendencies toward social comparison and intentions to leave their jobs. For instance, employees from collectivist cultures might be more inclined to compare themselves with colleagues within the organization, whereas those from individualistic cultures may focus more on personal career development and external opportunities (S. L. Zhu, 2007).

Surface similarity focuses on the degree of similarity or consistency in overt characteristics such as gender, age, tenure, and education level between the comparators (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Within the classical framework of social comparison theory, especially in situations involving risk or ambiguity, individuals tend to choose others who are superficially similar to themselves as reference points for comparison. This enables a more precise and comprehensive evaluation of one's own abilities or opinions. This selective comparison behavior is based on the premise that surface similarity can provide more relevant and comparable information, thereby helping individuals to form a clear understanding of their self-positioning in uncertain environments.

This comparison process subsequently influences individuals' evaluations and decisions about job opportunities (Brockner & Kim, 1993).

These research summaries demonstrate that social comparison plays a significant role in the formation of employees' intentions to leave, and it is influenced by various factors, including individual psychological states, organizational environments, and cultural backgrounds.

This research focuses on the surface similarity between remaining employees and departing colleagues, using it as a moderating variable to explore factors influencing social comparison scenarios. Through empirical research and measurement, this study aims to deeply analyze how this surface similarity moderates the social comparison process, thereby affecting the turnover intentions and behaviors of remaining employees. Through this study, we hope to provide new perspectives and empirical support for the application of social comparison theory in the field of employee turnover decisions.

In summary, this study uses surface similarity between remaining employees and departing colleagues as a moderating variable, conducting empirical research and measurement to deeply explore the impact of social comparison scenarios on employee turnover intentions. This research not only helps to enrich the application scope of social comparison theory but also provides organizational managers with deeper insights and strategic bases to address employee turnover issues.

2.5 Turnover based on personality trait theory

In traditional perspectives on turnover research, researchers often link employees' intentions to leave with external factors such as job characteristics and the environment. However, the relationship between individual traits and propensity to leave also has a long history of study and warrants thorough consideration. For example, Ghiselli (1974) explored why some individuals seem naturally more inclined to change jobs. Shaw et al. (1999) further noted that variables closely related to turnover, such as job satisfaction, actually include a tendency that stems from stable personality traits. These personality traits, as intrinsic characteristics of individuals, are independent of job and situational factors and determine the individual's different levels of attention to positive and negative events, thereby affecting their perception of job characteristics and the environment.

Thus, considering the perspective of personality traits is crucial when analyzing employee turnover intentions. It helps to deeply understand how different individual characteristics can potentially influence the intention to leave. By integrating this perspective, this study can not only enrich the theoretical framework of turnover research but also provide more

comprehensive and precise guidance for managing employee turnover in practice.

2.5.1 Theoretical foundations of personality traits

Trait Theory, first proposed by American psychologist Gordon Allport, has been a focal point in the study of personality structures. Allport argued that traits are the most stable and consistent parts of individual behavior, akin to the concept of "same stimuli" and "same responses." In other words, regardless of the situation, when external stimuli have a consistent meaning to an individual, they evoke an innate tendency, leading to consistent behavior patterns. Traits can be seen as psychological structures that enable individuals to respond to a variety of stimuli with the same effect and evoke specific forms of behavior. These traits are manifested in an individual's thinking, emotions, and actions and display enduring stability across different environments. They reflect an individual's personality and behavioral tendencies, appearing as long-term and coherent characteristics (Zuroff, 1986). By studying trait theory deeply, this study can better understand individuals' behavioral responses in various contexts.

Within the realm of organizational behavior research, many scholars use personality trait theory to explain individual differences. Even though there is consensus on certain common personality traits, individuals still exhibit clear variations in the intensity and frequency with which they display these traits (Shah & Ayub, 2021). It is particularly noteworthy that personality traits, as long-standing and relatively fixed patterns of behavior, are characterized by their resistance to environmental and temporal changes. For organizations and leaders, a profound understanding of employees' personality traits is extremely valuable for management. By grasping employees' personality traits, organizations and managers can not only more accurately predict employee behavior but also use this information as a crucial basis for decisions regarding recruitment, selection, staff placement, job rotation, and promotion. This management approach, based on personality traits, not only enhances organizational efficiency but also boosts employee satisfaction and sense of belonging, thereby fostering overall organizational development.

Many scholars have proposed various systems for classifying personality traits. Cattell (1973) identified 16 source traits in his research, which are independent of each other and form the basic components of personality. He argued that an individual's overall personality is composed of all or some of these 16 traits, and that source traits significantly influence the overall expression of personality. In recent research progress, the academic community has

gradually formed a general understanding of personality structure and widely recognized a famous personality classification framework, the "Five-Factor Model" (FFM). Goldberg (1993) hailed the introduction of this model as a revolution in the field of personality psychology. Through lexical research methods, researchers found that approximately five traits can comprehensively cover all aspects of personality description, which is what we know as the "Big Five" personality theory. The Big Five personality model is a commonly used personality trait classification model in psychology. Conscientiousness, as one of its dimensions, together with the other four dimensions (openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), constitutes this model. Butler et al. (1994) conducted a longitudinal study on the trait of conscientiousness, analyzing the effects of age and gender on its development.

In international academic literature, the concept of "conscientiousness" is closely associated with responsibility. Its definition encompasses two key aspects: firstly, it reflects an individual's principled trait based on inner conscience; secondly, it demonstrates an individual's responsible, meticulous, and diligent work attitude. Numerous international scholars have defined the concept of conscientiousness from different perspectives.

Harris et al. (1994) have a broader understanding of conscientiousness, viewing it as an individual's comprehensive attitude towards work, family, and interpersonal relationships within the community. Schlenker et al. (1994) define conscientiousness as the willingness to be accountable to others. This includes not only moral or legal responsibilities but also duties consistent with social roles. Lerner and Tetlock (1999) analyze conscientiousness from a cognitive psychological perspective, viewing it as an individual's expectation held during the assessment of cognitions, emotions, and behaviors related to themselves, whether overt or latent. Quinn and Schlenker (2002) propose a state-based perspective, suggesting that conscientiousness is a psychological state of an individual being accountable for their decisions and actions. This state not only reflects an individual's sense of conscientiousness but also their cognition and commitment to their own behavior.

Chinese scholars consider conscientiousness to be an important quality of personality psychology (Yan, 1997; Z. X. Zhu, 1989). Xu (2008) conducted an in-depth analysis of the concept of conscientiousness. She proposed that conscientiousness could be viewed as a clear conscious awareness and appropriate understanding of the duties an individual should bear while living in a social collective. This awareness and understanding are not only manifested at the cognitive level but also reflected on emotional and behavioral levels, thus shaping the individual's unique psychological traits. On the other hand, researchers like L. C. Zhang (2006) interpreted conscientiousness from different perspectives. They argued that conscientiousness

is an individual's proactive attitude towards the common lifestyle, behavioral norms, and tasks of their group. This attitude consists of three basic elements: awareness of conscientiousness, emotional conscientiousness, and responsible behavior.

In Chinese academic research, many scholars tend to interpret the sense of conscientiousness as a psychological or behavioral tendency, reflecting its core status in individual psychology and behavior. G. H. Liu and Zhang (1997) elaborated on the composition of conscientiousness. They argued that conscientiousness is not only reflected in an individual's proactive behavior to take on responsibilities but also shows a tendency in behavior. This tendency includes a deep understanding of personal conscientiousness and a proactive trend toward action.

Zheng (2008) study further explored the psychological motivations of conscientiousness in the process of individuals fulfilling their role obligations. He proposed that conscientiousness is a psychological driving force for individuals to perform corresponding duties and responsibilities under the guidance of self-awareness, based on role expectations.

Tan and Qin (2005) in defining conscientiousness, also emphasized the importance of conscious awareness and proactive behavior, considering these as key elements of conscientiousness. Sun (2006), from the perspective of social activities, pointed out that the sense of conscientiousness is gradually formed through interactions with the social environment, manifesting as a profound self-awareness and proactive behavior tendency towards one's responsibilities. This view emphasizes that the cultivation and development of social conscientiousness are gradually formed through the interaction between the individual and the social environment.

Zhao and Zhang (2006) and others noted that conscientiousness is the individual's psychological tendency to conscientiously perform their duties and fulfill moral obligations, representing an important aspect of the self-characteristics dimension of personality psychological qualities.

Zou (2008) and other scholars explored the essence of conscientiousness, arguing that it is not just a simple psychological tendency or behavioral manifestation, but a profound personality trait. This trait is reflected in the individual's clear cognition and conscious awareness of the responsibilities they should bear, accompanied by a proactive tendency to fulfill these responsibilities. This definition not only emphasizes the importance of conscientiousness on the psychological level but also highlights its proactivity and initiative in behavioral expressions.

After synthesizing related academic literature, it can be observed that

"conscientiousness," widely discussed in the international academic community, and "sense of responsibility," frequently mentioned in the context of Chinese culture, share conceptual connections as well as distinctions. Both concepts focus on the core issue of responsibility, but Western research tends to emphasize the moral dimensions more, while research in China focuses more on the responsibilities that individuals bear within the social collective.

Given that the aim of this study is to explore the structural characteristics of the conscientiousness within the Chinese cultural context, our definition of conscientiousness will focus more on integrating the understanding of domestic scholars. Accordingly, this study defines conscientiousness as: a psychological motive for individuals, based on a certain level of cognition and value orientation, to consciously and proactively fulfill the duties stipulated by their roles. This definition not only highlights the importance of the sense of responsibility within the individual's psychological structure but also emphasizes the influence of cultural context on the formation and expression of responsibility.

2.5.2 The relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intentions

Numerous researchers have explored the relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intentions. It is generally believed that there is a negative correlation between the two, meaning that individuals with a stronger conscientiousness tend to have lower intentions to leave their jobs. This relationship may be due to the fact that employees with a high conscientiousness are more willing to take on work duties, thus reducing the likelihood of resignation. The impact of conscientiousness on turnover intentions can be mediated through various pathways, such as the level of commitment an employee has towards their job (D. G. Allen et al., 2003), which in turn affects their intentions to leave.

The relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intentions is not a simple linear one but is influenced by multiple factors. Some studies have found a negative correlation between conscientiousness and turnover intentions, i.e., the stronger conscientiousness, the lower the intention to leave (D. G. Allen et al., 2003). The connection between conscientiousness and employee turnover intentions was examined in depth. Their findings suggest that conscientiousness influences turnover decisions by acting on individuals' normative commitments and ethical/moral motivations. Specifically, employees considering resignation might introspect, questioning whether their departure would be irresponsible towards the organization. Driven by moral and ethical factors, employees with a strong conscientiousness are more likely to feel obligated to continue serving the organization

(Maertz Jr & Campion, 2004).

Furthermore, Maertz and colleagues also discovered that individuals holding religious or moral beliefs tend to view a steadfast work attitude as a virtue and frequent job-changing behavior as unethical. Zimmerman (2008) provided further support for this viewpoint through a meta-analysis, finding that conscientiousness can significantly predict employee turnover behavior. Research by Eby et al. (2008) on the impact of mentorship on employee turnover intentions showed a negative correlation between conscientiousness and turnover intentions, emphasizing how personal values and work environment dynamics interact to influence employee retention.

Domestic scholars have conducted in-depth studies on the relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intentions. He (2008) explicitly indicated in his research that there is a negative correlation between employees' conscientiousness and their intentions to leave. This finding highlights the significant role that conscientiousness plays in employees' intentions to stay, suggesting that the stronger the employees' conscientiousness towards their work, the lower their desire to leave. Y. Q. Zhu (2013) further expanded understanding in this area by discovering that conscientiousness has a negative predictive effect on turnover tendencies. This means that employees' conscientiousness not only reflects their attitudes and commitment towards their work but can also serve as an important indicator for predicting their likelihood of leaving.

Synthesizing the above research, this study can conclude that there is a negative correlation between conscientiousness and turnover behavior. Upon reviewing related literature, it is evident that studies on the relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intentions are relatively scarce. Therefore, this research, which investigates the conscientiousness as a moderating variable between retained employees' feelings of envy in their scenarios and their intentions to leave, holds significant importance.

2.6 Organizational commitment

2.6.1 Overview of organizational commitment

Organizational commitment, as a key concept in management studies, has received attention from multiple disciplines such as psychology and organizational behavior since its inception. During discussions on organizational commitment, many scholars have presented their unique insights. Western sociologist Becker (1960) was the first to theoretically define organizational

commitment. Becker believed that organizational commitment originates from an employee's deep engagement with the organization, which is unidirectional, and as this engagement increases, the employee's participation in organizational activities and emotional connection to the work gradually strengthen. This theory emphasizes a positive correlation between the degree of an employee's engagement and the strength of organizational commitment. Subsequently, in the 1980s, organizational behaviorists further reconceptualized organizational commitment. They argued that organizational commitment reflects an individual's involvement and identification with an organization, focusing more on the emotional bonds and cognitive connections between the individual and the organization (Mowday et al., 1981). At the same time, sociologist offered a different view. He believed that employees' organizational commitment stems from loyalty and conscientiousness to the organization, which are internalized behavioral norms. During the socialization process of an individual, certain moral concepts and behavioral norms are continuously emphasized, such as loyalty to the organization being seen as appropriate and commendable behavior. Hence, individuals gradually develop an attitude that conforms to these norms (Wiener, 1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) further enriched our understanding of organizational commitment. They discovered that organizational commitment is the psychological attitude of employees towards their relationship with the organization, involving whether employees are willing to continue staying with the current organization.

In exploring the localization of organizational commitment theories, Chinese scholar Wang Chongming built on the three-dimensional theory of organizational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991), introducing new concepts of attitudinal commitment and calculative commitment, further expanding the theoretical domain of organizational commitment. Attitudinal commitment integrates elements of affective and normative commitment, emphasizing the social exchange dimension within organizational commitment; while calculative commitment focuses on the economic exchange aspect, resonating with continuance commitment. Additionally, Ling Wenquan and other researchers conducted detailed empirical studies in the Chinese cultural context and in 2000 constructed a structure of employee organizational commitment that includes five dimensions: economic commitment, opportunity commitment, normative commitment, ideal commitment, and affective commitment. These five dimensions reflect not only the universal characteristics of organizational commitment in both Eastern and Western contexts but also reveal specific qualities under different cultural backgrounds. Economic and opportunity commitments reflect employees' considerations of economic losses and career opportunities; normative

commitment reflects adherence to moral norms; ideal commitment and affective commitment reflect the importance employees place on career development and organizational identification, respectively.

In a deeper exploration of the dimensions of organizational commitment in Eastern and Western contexts, this study can clearly observe commonalities and differences. The affective and normative commitments shown by Chinese employees share obvious commonalities with the affective and normative commitments in the three-factor structure proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Similarly, economic commitment conceptually resembles continuance commitment in the three-factor structure. However, the dimensions of "ideal commitment" and "opportunity commitment" are relatively rare in international research literature, appearing to be unique components of organizational commitment in the Chinese cultural context (Ling et al., 2001). The causes of these differences warrant further exploration: Are they due to the different environmental and cultural backgrounds of different countries, or are there limitations in the systematic and comprehensive nature of previous studies? Researching this question holds significant theoretical and practical value.

Currently, research in the field of organizational commitment is actively progressing, with its focus primarily centered around four key areas: First, exploring the causal relationships affecting organizational commitment, where many studies have reached a consensus that organizational attributes, job characteristics, and individual employee attributes are the primary factors shaping organizational commitment. Second, the study of the focus of commitment, which may be directed towards an employee's immediate superior, their work team, or extend to the entire organization. Third, analyzing the structural components of organizational commitment, i.e., discussing whether organizational commitment is unidimensional or composed of multiple dimensions, such as subdividing organizational commitment into different dimensions like affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991). Lastly, examining the formation mechanisms of organizational commitment, where factors like perceived fairness, job security, and trust are considered key elements in fostering the development of organizational commitment.

In recent years, Chinese researchers X. Liu et al. (2023) conducted a systematic exploration of the formation mechanisms of organizational commitment among Chinese workers, and constructed an innovative three-stage model. The initial stage of this model is the preliminary assessment stage, where employees form initial emotional tendencies based on a comparison between observations of the current state of the enterprise and their personal

expectations. The second stage involves a deeper attribution analysis of this assessment, i.e., thoroughly analyzing and interpreting the results of the initial judgments. The third stage is based on the results of the attribution analysis to decide whether to maintain the existing work relationship. This model provides an important theoretical framework for understanding the formation mechanisms of organizational commitment in the Chinese context.

X. Liu et al. (2023) further elaborated that organizational commitment is manifested as employees' loyalty and conscientiousness towards their organization. This attitude and behavioral tendency of loyalty and conscientiousness originate from the employees' deep identification with the organization's goals and values. Additionally, organizational commitment is reflected in employees' deep emotional attachment to the organization, as well as their voluntary acceptance of the responsibilities and obligations that come with being a member of the organization (H. Zhang et al., 2009). These studies provide significant theoretical insights and empirical support for comprehensively revealing the intrinsic meaning of organizational commitment and the factors influencing its formation.

2.6.2 The relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention

The significance of organizational commitment lies in the desire of organizations for employees' deep commitment. This commitment not only concerns the survival and continuity of the organization but also has a profound impact on improving work quality, optimizing services, and product quality (Kanwal & Shar, 2021). The concept of organizational commitment has become a focal point for many managers and human resources departments in organizations when used as an indicator to predict employee retention . Organizational commitment, as a reflection of employee loyalty to the institution, also reflects the process by which employees contribute to the organization's goals in a sustainable manner (Mansor & Idris, 2015). To achieve a high level of organizational commitment, it is crucial to set clear goals, adopt the right strategies, and implement effective incentive measures. These measures can actively promote employees' commitment and involvement in the organization. However, if employees fail to demonstrate commitment to organizational improvements, all the efforts mentioned above may be in vain (Shin & Sohn, 2015). In other words, lacking employees' commitment to organizational improvements renders all efforts futile (Al Hakim et al., 2019).

In the field of management, organizational commitment is regarded as a core variable in studies on turnover intention, receiving significant attention from researchers. The prevailing view suggests that the deeper an employee's commitment to the organization, the higher their

loyalty to it. In other words, employees with high commitment are less inclined to leave or seek employment elsewhere, choosing instead to continue serving the organization. The research findings of Slattery and Rajan Selvarajan (2005) support this viewpoint, as they discovered a significant negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention. The study conducted by Pratama et al. (2022) also indicates that employees' organizational commitment has a significant negative impact on their turnover intention, meaning that higher levels of organizational commitment lead to lower turnover intentions.

Furthermore, multiple studies have demonstrated that employees with a high level of dedication are more inclined to stay for the long term rather than easily opting to leave the organization (Larkey & Morrill, 1995; Nogueras, 2006). Additionally, other research provides compelling evidence for a negative correlation between employees' organizational commitment levels and their turnover intention, indicating that higher commitment is associated with a lower likelihood of turnover (Ismail et al., 2006; Kassim, 1997). Indeed, organizational commitment plays a crucial role in studies on employees' turnover intentions (Khatri et al., 2001). It not only reflects employees' identification with and dedication to the organization but also to some extent predicts their turnover behavior. The research conducted by Rahman et al. (Khatri et al., 2001) further confirms the negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention.

Atchison and Lefferts (1972) explored the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention. Their findings revealed a significant negative correlation between employees' clear intentions to stay in the organization and their commitment to it, and turnover behavior. In other words, employees who exhibit high levels of commitment to the organization and are willing to invest more effort in achieving organizational goals are more inclined to remain within the organization, actively supporting the attainment of its highly valued objectives. Subsequently, a series of empirical studies all confirmed a significant negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover. These studies clearly indicated that the higher the level of organizational commitment among employees, the lower their tendency to leave (Michaels & Spector, 1982; Porter et al., 1974; Steers, 1977). Recent research by Widyawati et al. (2023) similarly demonstrates a significant negative impact of organizational commitment on turnover intention, indicating that lower organizational commitment is associated with higher turnover intention, and vice versa. The findings from this series of studies are of paramount importance in understanding the motivations and influencing factors behind employee turnover behavior. Additionally,

research by X. Liu et al. (2023) suggests that compared to temporary workers, permanent employees in an organization are generally less likely to have intentions to leave or to voluntarily resign due to their higher levels of organizational affective commitment.

In studying the relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction, the research findings of Steers (1977) and Kraut (1975) indicate that compared to job satisfaction, organizational commitment exhibits a closer correlation with employees' inclination to leave. This finding suggests that even if employees are dissatisfied with aspects such as compensation or management style, they may still choose to stay within the organization due to their strong identification with the organization and firm commitment to its goals. Additionally, research indicates that although compensation is an important factor in attracting employees, when employees are satisfied with other aspects of their career development, their level of commitment to the organization may remain high, leading them to choose to continue serving the organization.

It's worth noting that Porter et al. (1974) further pointed out that organizational commitment, relative to job satisfaction, is a more holistic and enduring evaluative response. Job satisfaction typically pertains to transient emotional responses to specific tasks, while organizational commitment involves employees' overall identification and dedication to the organization. Therefore, even if employees are dissatisfied with a particular job, it does not necessarily mean they hold a negative attitude toward the entire organization. Conversely, low levels of organizational commitment may more directly impact employees' decisions to leave. High organizational commitment is often associated with low intentions to quit. Employees with strong commitment to the organization may be less likely to seek alternative job opportunities because they are unwilling to relinquish the benefits and relationships associated with the organization (1974). However, this relationship may be influenced by employees' individual characteristics, organizational culture, and external labor market conditions.

Recently, domestic researcher W. K. Chen et al. (2012) conducted a survey study targeting employees of insurance companies. Through the analysis of 217 paired questionnaires from senior leaders, middle managers, and frontline employees, the study revealed a significant trend: the lower the employees' level of organizational commitment, the higher their intention to leave. This finding provides new empirical support for understanding the relationship between organizational commitment and employee retention. Meanwhile, the research by Tian and Ma (2023) also emphasized the significant negative predictive role of organizational commitment on the intention to leave among incumbent employees. Their

findings further underscore the important role of organizational commitment in maintaining employee retention.

The literature review indicates that research on organizational commitment has garnered widespread attention from researchers worldwide. This is mainly due to the profound recognition by numerous organizations of the value of human resources. They generally believe that loyal and dedicated employees are the cornerstone of maintaining competitiveness and sustainable development for organizations. Specifically, some studies point out that employees with high affective commitment, as an important manifestation of organizational commitment, often demonstrate higher job performance and make more valuable contributions (Kalkavan & Katrinli, 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1997). These employees not only contribute to enhancing the organization's competitiveness but also play an actively promoting role in the survival and development of the organization (Jemesunde & Ng Eno, 2022).

In summary, employees with high levels of organizational commitment undoubtedly become valuable assets to organizations. They feel a deep conscientiousness and obligation to the organization, thus they are more inclined to fully support the organization, actively engage in their work, and maintain good cooperative relationships with the organization. This strong organizational commitment also significantly reduces their likelihood of leaving, providing strong assurance for the stability and development of the organization.

2.7 Research on episodic envy

Envy, as a widely recognized emotional phenomenon across diverse cultural backgrounds, is often associated with negative emotional experiences that individuals undergo during comparison processes (Foster et al., 1972; Maloney & Ward, 1976). In Western societies, envy is sometimes metaphorically referred to as the "green-eyed monster" (Carson & Cupach, 2000), while in traditional Chinese culture, it is commonly known as the "red-eye disease," reflecting the universality of envy across the globe. The mechanism underlying the emergence of envy essentially involves individuals' sensitive recognition of differences between themselves and others, often accompanied by feelings of discomfort (West, 2010). Furthermore, Hudak (2000) proposed a more complex understanding of envy emotion. He pointed out that envy is not merely a simple comparison psychology but also a deep-seated recognition and reflection of one's own limitations. This understanding provides us with a more comprehensive perspective to explore the psychological mechanisms behind envy. Such

recognition triggers individuals' sensitive perceptions of their own inadequacies and others' superiority, thus leading to the emergence of envy emotions. Some scholars also define envy from a social comparison perspective, suggesting that it entails hostility towards those who excel and a desire for others to lose advantages that one desires but lacks (Clanton, 2006).

In academic circles, envy is generally regarded as a complex negative emotional state involving feelings of dissatisfaction, frustration, anger, and potential destructive behavior (Parrott & Smith, 1993; H. J. Smith et al., 1996). This emotion typically arises when individuals perceive themselves to be at a comparative disadvantage to others, potentially triggering feelings of threat to their own status or relationships . The multidimensional nature of envy implies that it can lead to a range of psychological and behavioral reactions, thus impacting individual well-being and interpersonal relationships (Fiske, 2010).

As a complex emotional experience, envy often originates from the process of social comparison. It's worth noting that not all social comparisons elicit envy, but specifically upward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to those perceived as superior (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2007; Moran & Schweitzer, 2008; Takahashi et al., 2009). Envious individuals may sometimes even sacrifice their own interests solely to undermine the relative advantage of the envied (Parks et al., 2002; Takahashi et al., 2009; Zizzo & Oswald, 2001). When the envied suffer misfortune or failure, envious individuals may experience a subtle malicious pleasure (Leach et al., 2003), even in the face of undeserved misfortunes of the envied (Brigham et al., 1997). Once the envied lose their original relative advantage, envious individuals often exhibit schadenfreude attitudes (H. J. Smith et al., 1996).

Given the implicit nature of envy and its concealment under social expectations, people are often reluctant to readily admit to their feelings of envy. Therefore, scholars have gradually shifted from traditional questionnaire measures to more indirect measurement methods to more accurately reveal the nature of envy (Clanton, 2006; Foster et al., 1972). A wealth of empirical research has confirmed that feelings of envy can lead to a range of negative consequences, including criminal behavior (Maloney & Ward, 1976) and intergroup conflicts (Glick & Fiske, 2001), while also adversely affecting individuals' physical and mental health. Therefore, in-depth research into coping strategies for envy is particularly important.

Previous studies have explored different types of envy, with the most common classification being trait envy and episodic envy (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Trait envy refers to an individual's inherent tendency to experience envy in specific situations. Although feelings of envy are prevalent among most individuals, there are significant differences in envy

tendencies between individuals (R. H. Smith et al., 1999). Empirical research on trait envy in the field of psychology began with the development of the Dispositional Envy Scale (DES). R. H. Smith et al. (1999) believed that people possess relatively stable tendencies toward envy and designed the DES scale accordingly, which has been validated in subsequent studies, demonstrating good structural validity and criterion-related validity.

Existing research findings reveal an interesting phenomenon: individuals with higher trait envy tendencies, after experiencing unfair treatment, even if subsequently compensated in some form, still find it difficult to completely diminish their feelings of envy. This phenomenon suggests that for these individuals, feelings of envy may have a persistent psychological impact. Moreover, in team collaboration environments, these individuals show a significant decrease in willingness to cooperate and participation (DeCarufel & Schopler, 1979). This finding is important for understanding individuals' response patterns in organizational behavior. Although psychology's research on envy mainly focuses on trait envy, we must recognize that envy is not merely a personality trait. Even individuals who typically do not show envy tendencies may experience feelings of envy in specific situations (Schalin, 1979). Therefore, future research should comprehensively explore the various manifestations of envy and their influencing factors, not limited to trait envy alone. Additionally, we need to further develop and refine measurement tools for episodic envy to more accurately reveal its manifestations and mechanisms in different contexts.

Episodic envy is a complex emotional experience closely related to negative emotions individuals encounter during social comparisons, involving perception and comparison as two key dimensions (Cohen-Charash, 2009). According to them, episodic envy is not limited to individuals with envy tendencies; in fact, almost all individuals may experience this emotional response in specific social comparison situations. To more accurately measure episodic envy, they developed a specialized scale called the Episodic Envy Scale (EES), which assesses individuals' experiences of envy in specific contexts in detail. Unlike episodic envy, trait envy focuses more on individuals' long-term stable emotional tendencies, primarily revolving around the perception dimension. In contrast, the structure of episodic envy is more complex, encompassing not only the perception dimension but also the comparison dimension. The perception dimension is closely related to various negative emotions (such as anxiety, depression, and hostility) and resulting behaviors (such as harming others or disrupting the work environment). The comparison dimension is associated with individuals' motivation to enhance their status within the organization. Therefore, episodic envy not only reflects individuals' reactions in specific social comparison contexts but is also a universal emotional

experience that may affect every individual. The multidimensional nature of this emotion, along with its interaction with individual behavior and organizational climate, provides important insights for understanding and managing interpersonal relationships and work atmosphere within organizations.

Individual trait envy, as a stable tendency, is a psychological state formed during the growth process, characterized by a habit of comparing oneself with others (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Due to its entrenched nature, organizations often find it difficult to effectively regulate. In contrast, episodic envy in the workplace is triggered by specific situations and can significantly affect employees' attitudes and behaviors (Wu & Chang, 2012). Fortunately, organizations can take a series of measures to intervene and mitigate the potential negative impact of episodic envy. When exploring the predictive factors of individual envy behavior, episodic envy demonstrates a more significant predictive power compared to trait envy. Specifically, episodic envy exhibits higher accuracy and explanatory power in predicting negative behaviors individuals may engage in, such as displays of hostility, feelings of anxiety, and intentions to damage others' reputations (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007). This finding emphasizes the importance of episodic envy in understanding individuals' emotional responses and behavioral patterns in specific social interaction contexts. The predictive power of episodic envy not only enriches our understanding of envy emotions but also provides valuable insights into how to effectively identify and address envy behaviors in management practice.

However, existing psychological research mostly focuses on trait envy, and there is still insufficient exploration of envy emotions experienced by employees in the workplace, especially episodic envy. Therefore, this study believes that a thorough investigation of episodic envy among employees in organizational contexts is of significant theoretical and practical importance. It can help us gain a more comprehensive understanding of employee emotions, thereby optimizing organizational climate and improving work efficiency.

2.7.1 The relationship between episodic envy and turnover intention

Episodic envy, triggered by negative social comparisons, is a complex emotion comprising both affective and comparative components, profoundly impacting individual psychology (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Within this emotional state, turnover intention emerges as one of its negative consequences, manifested by individuals consciously and thoughtfully harboring the desire to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Turnover intention is not only a focal

point in the field of organizational behavior but also attracts multidisciplinary attention at both micro and macro levels.

At the micro level, researchers explore the subtle link between job satisfaction and overall organizational costs from the perspective of organizational behavior, while at the macro level, the relationship between the level of economic activity and employment levels has become a hot topic (Mobley et al., 1979). It is noteworthy that turnover intention triggered by episodic envy is an indispensable factor in these studies.

Envy, as an unpleasant and uncomfortable emotion, is closely linked to both physical and psychological pain (Duffy et al., 2012). This pain often leads to the accumulation of frustration and stress in the workplace. When stress persists and individuals cannot effectively cope, resignation may become an attractive solution (Vecchio, 2000). Furthermore, envy of leadership excellence, skills, and status among employees cannot be overlooked (Tai et al., 2012). This envy may not only undermine the relationship between leaders and subordinates but also further exacerbate the formation of turnover intentions. In summary, episodic envy, as a complex negative emotion, has a significant impact on turnover intentions. Currently, there is relatively limited research on the influence of episodic envy on employees' turnover intentions. Future studies should further explore the mechanisms underlying the relationship between episodic envy and turnover intentions, which holds important research value.

When colleagues leave the company and successfully find a better job, indicating upward mobility, it can trigger a sense of inadequacy in employees' hearts more easily compared to other reasons for departure such as layoffs or family factors. This situation reflects the departing colleague's achievement surpassing one's own expectations, thus more likely giving rise to emotional reactions of episodic envy. Episodic envy, as a negative emotion triggered by specific circumstances, has significant implications for employees' psychology and behavior. Research by Erdil and Müceldili (2014) explicitly reveals that episodic envy can significantly influence employees' turnover intentions and have a negative impact on their behavior to some extent. This finding further confirms the potential influence of episodic envy on employees' decision-making regarding leaving the organization.

Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) and others investigated the impact of upward mobility of departing colleagues on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, analyzing the mediating role of episodic envy and the moderating effect of external attributions. Their research found that when departing colleagues achieve career advancement, remaining employees with higher perceived surface similarity to these departing colleagues exhibit higher turnover intentions. Furthermore, this surface similarity is positively correlated with

episodic envy among remaining employees, which in turn reinforces their turnover intentions. Their study revealed the psychological mechanism through which surface similarity and upward mobility influence turnover intentions among remaining employees via episodic envy, providing a new perspective for organizational management. Additionally, their research model serves as a relevant reference for the present study.

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Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

3.1 Emotion (envy) perspective on the impact of colleague departure on remaining employees' turnover intentions

3.1.1 The relationship between colleague departure and upward mobility and episodic envy

In the field of social psychology, Festinger (1954) proposed the social comparison theory, which emphasizes the psychological mechanism of individuals continually evaluating themselves in social interactions. This theory suggests that individuals calibrate their self-perceptions through comparisons with others, enabling them to more accurately assess their abilities and viewpoints. In this process, individuals often demonstrate a tendency toward self-enhancement, seeking to position themselves above the average in social comparisons (Festinger, 1954; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). This psychological trait prompts individuals to not only pursue satisfying basic emotional needs but also to absorb information from others through comparison, engage in self-reflection, and aim for personal growth and improvement. In this study, colleague departure with upward mobility is defined as employees obtaining superior positions after leaving their original company, whether in terms of job level, the size of the new company, or career development potential (Brockner & Kim, 1993). This phenomenon not only reflects individuals' motivation for self-enhancement in social comparisons but also reveals how individuals in the workplace adjust their career expectations and goals through comparison with others.

In psychological studies exploring individual emotional responses, episodic envy is understood as an emotional state triggered by specific work environments (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Envy, as a complex emotional experience, stems from individuals recognizing the advantages others possess in social comparisons, which they themselves lack, leading to a sense of longing and dissatisfaction (Wu & Chang, 2012). Envy towards others is a common phenomenon in daily life and work, and as a complex emotional reaction, it often manifests in interactions and comparisons between individuals, exerting profound effects on both individuals and organizational behavior (X. Liu et al., 2023). In competitive workplace environments, employees may experience strong feelings of inadequacy due to perceived

favoritism towards other colleagues by leadership, the belief that praise and achievements rightfully belonging to them are taken by others, or witnessing colleagues achieve rewards they have long desired.

Specifically, when a colleague obtains better job opportunities through resignation, this upward mobility situation may be perceived as a significant achievement marker, thereby triggering strong feelings of inadequacy among remaining employees and potentially eliciting episodic envy. Compared to other reasons for departure, such as company layoffs or family-related factors, colleague upward mobility-type resignations are typically associated with success, making this cognitive perception particularly impactful on remaining employees. Such departure events may prompt reflection on personal career development among remaining employees. For instance, in exploring the impact of departing colleagues' upward mobility on the intention of remaining employees to leave, researchers such as Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) analyzed the mediating role of episodic envy. Their study found that when departing colleagues achieve career advancement, remaining employees exhibit strong feelings of envy. Therefore, this positive departure behavior by colleagues may trigger a series of psychological and behavioral chain reactions among remaining employees. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Colleague upward mobility-type resignations are positively correlated with episodic envy among remaining employees.

3.1.2 Mediating effect of episodic envy

Social comparison is the psychological process through which individuals compare their own status, position, health, abilities, or opinions with others in social interactions to establish their social attributes, such as capabilities or intelligence (Menon & Thompson, 2010). This concept, also known as interpersonal comparison, is a widely recognized and unavoidable psychological phenomenon. Research shows that during the process of social comparison, individuals may experience envy, a complex emotion involving feelings of inferiority, resentment, and hostility when they perceive others to possess something desirable but unattainable to themselves (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Menon & Thompson, 2010).

In studies of envy, scholars often categorize it into two types: trait envy and episodic envy (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Trait envy, viewed from the perspective of individual traits, is considered a relatively stable psychological tendency, and corresponding scales have been developed for its measurement (Krizan & Johar, 2012). On the other hand, episodic envy

focuses on emotional reactions in specific situations, which can occur in any individual, particularly in the workplace, triggered by specific workplace contexts (Wu & Chang, 2012). Trait envy formed during individual development manifests as a relatively stable comparison tendency, with limited responses to organizational interventions. In contrast, episodic envy induced in the work environment, as an emotion triggered by specific circumstances, significantly influences employees' work attitudes and behaviors (Wu & Chang, 2012). Given this, organizations can take targeted measures to intervene and mitigate the negative impact of episodic envy. Despite extensive exploration of envy's trait dimensions in psychological research, there remains a relative lack of studies on episodic envy experienced by employees in the workplace environment. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the impact of episodic envy on employee behavior within the context of situational factors, contributing to a deeper understanding of employee psychology.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that the underlying elements of envy, including hostility, resentment, and depression, not only pose threats to individuals' psychological and physiological health (Wu & Chang, 2012) but also have negative impacts on job performance. Furthermore, the presence of envy not only damages individuals' mental and physical well-being but also correlates with negative outcomes at the team level. In a longitudinal study conducted, it was found that envy is negatively associated with team efficacy, member satisfaction, team cohesion, and team influence. Additionally, the study observed a positive relationship between envy and social loafing behavior and employee absenteeism (Duffy et al., 2012). Vecchio's (2000) research further found that envy is negatively correlated with job satisfaction, self-esteem, and organizational identification and may exacerbate employees' tendency to leave the organization. Totland and Asp (2019) conducted a study on part-time workers in the Norwegian healthcare industry and found that envy at work was positively correlated with turnover intention. Tussing et al.'s (2022) study show that envy felt by employees leads to more absenteeism, thereby increasing turnover. Dahri et al. (2023) found that workplace envy has a positive impact on turnover intention.

Studies by Schaubroeck and Lam (2004) also support this view, suggesting that employees' experience of envy may make them feel undervalued in the organization, leading to decreased job satisfaction and weakened organizational commitment. Moreover, the rise of envy may trigger employees' intention to leave, ultimately adversely affecting organizational cohesion and overall performance. For example, Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) analyzed the mediating role of episodic envy when exploring the impact of colleagues' upward mobility on the intention of remaining employees to leave. Their study found that when departing

colleagues achieve career advancement, remaining employees exhibit strong feelings of envy, further reinforcing their intention to leave. Their research reveals the psychological mechanism through which colleagues' upward mobility affects the intention of remaining employees to leave through episodic envy.

Based on the exploration of the mechanisms through which envy affects individuals and organizations, numerous scholars have reached a consensus through empirical research, indicating that envy has negative effects on employees' job performance. These research findings suggest that the presence of envy not only reduces employees' job satisfaction but also enhances their intention to leave (Duffy et al., 2012; Tai et al., 2012). Based on this, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Colleagues' upward mobility through episodic envy has a positive indirect effect on the intention of remaining employees to leave.

3.1.3 Surface similarity as the moderator

When examining the episodic envy in psychological states, research indicates that this emotion primarily arises during individuals' processes of social comparison and is influenced by various factors related to social comparison. Among these factors, the role of similarity is particularly significant and considered one of the main triggers of envy (Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Previous studies have pointed out that when the target of envy shares high similarity with the individual on certain important dimensions, the envy experienced by the individual tends to be more intense (Cikara & Fiske, 2012). Additionally, during social comparison, individuals are more likely to experience envy towards those who are similar to them (e.g., in terms of gender, age, or social status) (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004). Schaubroeck and Lam's research further supports this notion; they found that among bank employees, individuals who were more similar to colleagues who received promotions exhibited stronger feelings of envy. The study by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015) also indicates that individuals tend to compare themselves with similar others, which is more likely to trigger feelings of envy. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of similarity in eliciting feelings of envy during social interactions and provide a deeper understanding of the emergence of envy emotions.

In the context of this study, a colleague's voluntary or proactive departure may be interpreted as the manifestation of their personal desires, such as a reflection of dissatisfaction with the work environment. For those remaining employees who share high levels of surface

similarity with the departing colleague, they may perceive the colleague's departure as the realization of their own personal aspirations, such as seeking better career development opportunities. This perception may lead to envy emotions among the remaining employees, especially when they share similar career development aspirations with the departing colleague (e.g., pursuing opportunities for overseas further education). The successful pursuit of the departing colleague may trigger strong feelings of envy among the remaining employees because they realize that they have not yet achieved these shared aspirations.

In this study, surface similarity refers to the degree of similarity or consistency in explicit characteristics such as gender, age, tenure, and educational background between the parties involved in the comparison (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). This similarity to some extent influences the remaining employees' perceptions and emotional reactions to the achievements of departing colleagues, particularly when the departing colleague is able to achieve goals that they themselves desire but have not been able to accomplish. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Surface similarity positively moderates the relationship between a colleague's upward departure and episodic envy.

3.2 Conscientiousness as the moderator

In the field of management studies, traditional research on turnover has focused on the impact of job characteristics and environmental factors on turnover intentions. However, an increasing amount of research has begun to pay attention to the role of individual traits in turnover intentions. Park and Shaw (2013) proposed that factors closely related to turnover, such as job satisfaction, are influenced by individuals' inherent personality traits. These traits are considered the foundation of individual differences, affecting employees' attitudes and behaviors towards work. In the study of personality traits, the Five-Factor Model (OCEAN) has become a widely accepted framework, described as a significant advancement in personality psychology. This model identifies five basic traits through lexical methods: conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness, which broadly cover various aspects of personality description. The NEO-PI-R is a commonly used tool for assessing the Big Five personality traits (Bartone et al., 2009).

Existing research further indicates that the Big Five personality traits have a significant impact on employees' turnover intentions and behaviors (Mishra, 2009). Specifically, conscientiousness is negatively correlated with feelings of envy. Individuals with a strong

sense of conscientiousness tend to exhibit high levels of achievement orientation, conscientiousness, and resilience, traits closely associated with diligence and reliability. Individuals with a strong sense of conscientiousness are more likely to focus on the tasks at hand rather than comparing themselves with colleagues, thereby reducing the occurrence of envy. Individuals with a strong sense of conscientiousness are often better able to manage their own negative emotions and focus on completing tasks. This positive work attitude and behavior may help reduce feelings of envy because they are more focused on fulfilling their personal responsibilities rather than comparing themselves to others (Mishra, 2009). Research has also found a negative correlation between conscientiousness and turnover intention, meaning that individuals with a stronger sense of conscientiousness have lower turnover intentions (D. G. Allen et al., 2003). Subsequently, studies by Maertz Jr and Griffeth (2004) delved into the relationship between conscientiousness and employees' turnover intentions. Their findings suggest that conscientiousness influences employees' turnover decisions through their contractual commitment and moral/ethical motivations. Specifically, employees considering leaving may engage in self-reflection, questioning whether their departure represents irresponsibility towards the organization. Driven by moral and ethical factors, employees with a strong sense of conscientiousness are more likely to feel obligated to continue serving the organization. He (2008) explicitly stated in his research that there is a negative correlation between employees' conscientiousness and their turnover intentions. Meta-analytical results further support this view, indicating that conscientiousness significantly predicts employees' turnover behavior (Zimmerman, 2008). Subsequently, Y. Q. Zhu (2013) has further expanded understanding in this area, finding that conscientiousness has a negative predictive effect on turnover propensity.

Existing research has shown that conscientiousness not only influences individuals' emotional experiences but also affects their retention decisions within organizations. Therefore, understanding and cultivating employees' conscientiousness is of great significance for reducing turnover rates and enhancing organizational stability. In this study, conscientiousness refers to individuals having a high achievement orientation and a responsible attitude towards work, which is a trait highly correlated with resilience, thoroughness, and accountability (Mishra, 2009). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Conscientiousness negatively moderates the relationship between episodic envy and turnover intention.

3.3 Cognitive (external job opportunities) perspective on the relationship between colleagues' departure and the turnover intentions of remaining employees

3.3.1 Relationship between colleagues' upward mobility and remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities

In exploring employee turnover behavior, job opportunities serve as a crucial variable, yet their specific definition and implications remain to be further clarified. The objective of this study is to provide a more precise definition and elucidation of the concept of job opportunities in the context of turnover research, drawing on the perspective of career growth opportunity-related theories. Career growth can be understood as the speed at which individuals advance towards roles or positions that enhance their personal value along their career paths. Its connotations are rich and multidimensional (Graen et al., 2006). This process can be distinguished as internal and external career growth depending on the context in which it occurs (Weng & Hu, 2009). A job is considered an opportunity for career growth when it aligns with individuals' career expectations and provides potential for advancement. Based on career motivation theory (London & Noe, 1997), Kraimer et al. (2011) propsed the concept of "perceived career opportunities", which involves employees' subjective assessments of whether their current job or position can fulfill their personal career goals and interests. Furthermore, career growth opportunities are subdivided into internal and external opportunities to reflect employees' perceptions of different dimensions of career development possibilities. This binary classification aids in deepening the understanding of how employees seek career development internally within the organization and evaluate opportunities provided by the external market. Building upon this, this study defines perceived internal job opportunities (PICO) and perceived external job opportunities (PECO). PICO refers to employees' belief in the existence of opportunities within the organization that align with their career development goals, while PECO refers to employees' belief in the existence of alternative job opportunities in the external job market that align with their career goals. This study will primarily analyze the perception of external job opportunities among remaining employees and its impact.

The influence of colleagues' departure on remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities can be explained from two perspectives. The primary perspective involves the issue of external job opportunity allocation, which requires in-depth exploration within the

context of the characteristics of the external labor market. The operation of the external labor market is based on the principles of supply and demand, and traditional economics' understanding of such markets is based on a series of assumptions: perfect competition, substitutability of labor, and transparency of market information. These assumptions form the theoretical basis for individuals to acquire external job opportunities, with individual employability and knowledge of relevant employment information becoming decisive factors in accessing opportunities.

It is worth noting that a series of behaviors by departing colleagues, such as updating resumes, exploring opportunities, and arranging interviews, provide valuable information about the dynamics of the external labor market for employees (Felps et al., 2009). This information not only directly demonstrates the existence of external job opportunities but also further confirms the richness and convenience of job mobility in the external labor market after colleagues' departure (Hancock, 2012). Consequently, employees are more likely to perceive the activity and opportunities in the external labor market, thereby enhancing their perception of external job opportunities.

Furthermore, from the perspective of social comparison, individuals tend to assess their own abilities or viewpoints accurately by comparing themselves with others (Festinger, 1954; Wooten & Reed II, 1998). In daily work interactions, colleagues become crucial reference groups in individuals' self-evaluation processes (Kulik & Ambrose, 1992). Research indicates that employees, when assessing their external job opportunities, use their colleagues' situations as a basis (Felps et al., 2009). When witnessing colleagues successfully leave and seek new employment opportunities, remaining employees may initiate a comparison process between themselves and the departing colleagues, thereby evaluating their own market competitiveness. This social comparison process may enhance remaining employees' sensitivity and awareness of external job opportunities, leading them to believe that they also have the potential to find better positions in the current market. For instance, the research results of W. Huang et al. (2022) suggest that colleagues' departure and obtaining good job opportunities positively influence remaining employees' perceptions of their own employability, thereby impacting their intention to leave their current job. Therefore, colleagues' departure not only triggers psychological mechanisms of social comparison but also may stimulate remaining employees to explore and pursue broader career prospects. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Colleagues' upward departure is positively correlated with remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities.

3.3.2 Perceived external job opportunities as the mediator

In the field of management, employee turnover has always been a hot topic of research. In particular, the relationship between remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities and their intention to leave has become a focal point of academic discussion. One recent study indicates that employees' turnover decisions are not only influenced by personal attitudes but also related to their perception of job opportunities in the market (Gerhart, 1990). March and Simon (1958) proposed in their model that employees' turnover decisions are attitude-based processes, including perceptions of the ease and attractiveness of job changes, which are closely related to the perception of job opportunities in the market. From an economic perspective, the supply and demand relationship in the labor market directly affects employees' intention to leave (Bowen & Siehl, 1997). During economic prosperity, when there are more job opportunities than job seekers, employees may be more inclined to seek new job opportunities because they perceive more choices and possibilities in the market. This viewpoint has been widely supported in early turnover research, where researchers often consider external job opportunities as moderating variables between attitude factors and turnover intentions, and use the unemployment rate as an indicator of labor market conditions (Ferris et al., 1985; Gerhart, 1990).

However, as research has progressed, scholars have started to pay more attention to individuals' subjective perception of job opportunities rather than just objective market conditions. In exploring models of employee turnover behavior, the theoretical framework proposed by Mobley and other researchers highlights the significant impact of employees' subjective perception of labor market conditions on turnover decisions. They argue that this perception influences employees' evaluation of potential job opportunities, thereby indirectly affecting their intention to leave (Price & Mueller, 1981). Further elaborating on employees' perception of external job opportunities, their research emphasizes the close relationship between perceived job opportunities, both in quantity and quality, and turnover intentions. Their findings suggest that once employees believe there are better job opportunities in the market, they perceive lower risks and costs associated with turnover, which may facilitate their decision to leave.

Existing research findings suggest that the more employees perceive external job opportunities, the higher their turnover rates may be (Kirschenbaum & Mano-Negrin, 1999). This further confirms that employees consider external job opportunities and make decisions based on the value of these opportunities when contemplating leaving. Moreover, employees

are more inclined to choose other companies mainly because these companies may offer them higher positions and more salary and benefits (Shukla & Sinha, 2013).

In the context of domestic research, Ye et al. (2015) study revealed the significant influence of labor market supply and demand conditions on employee turnover behavior, confirming the market conditions as key external factors influencing employee turnover decisions. Their research emphasizes the impact of changes in the labor market on employee turnover behavior in the specific socio-economic context of China. These research findings suggest that whether in an international or domestic context, employees' perception of external job opportunities is a key factor influencing their intention to leave.

In summary, the positive correlation between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intentions among remaining employees has received widespread theoretical and empirical support. Employees' perceptions are influenced not only by objective market conditions but also by personal expectations, career goals, and satisfaction with their current job. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Perceived external job opportunities among remaining employees are positively correlated with turnover intentions.

Colleagues' upward mobility, wherein employees leave their current positions to pursue higher-level positions or better working conditions, has been shown to have significant psychological effects on remaining employees (Hom et al., 2017). These effects are often manifested through various psychological and social mechanisms, including social comparison (Festinger, 1954), balance theory (Heider, 1946), and emotional contagion (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Social comparison theory, in particular, suggests that individuals tend to assess their own social and occupational status by comparing themselves to others. Therefore, when remaining employees observe colleagues successfully leaving, they may undergo a social comparison process, leading to questioning of their own career satisfaction and job engagement.

Perceived external job opportunities, which refer to employees' subjective evaluations of potential positions in the external labor market, are one of the key factors influencing employees' turnover intentions (Steel & Landon, 2010). The formation of this perception is influenced by various factors, including but not limited to individual career goals, current market conditions, and satisfaction with their current position. Multiple studies have shown a positive correlation between employees' perception of external job opportunities and their intention to leave (Maertz Jr & Campion, 2004; Rainayee, 2013). When employees perceive that the external market offers better career development opportunities, they are more likely to

consider leaving. The turnover model developed by Mobley et al. delves into the mechanisms through which labor market factors affect employees' turnover intentions, emphasizing how these factors influence individuals through their unique perceptions of the labor market. This impact model is not isolated but resonates strongly with the model proposed by Price and Mueller (1981). Price and Mueller's model explores in depth how employees' perception of available job opportunities in the market correlates with their turnover intentions. The study found that once employees realize there are better job opportunities in the market, they may perceive the potential costs and risks of job change as lower, significantly increasing their likelihood of considering turnover. In the context of Chinese research, the study by Ye et al. (2015) focusing on the impact of labor market supply and demand conditions on employee turnover intentions is also noteworthy. They explicitly point out the significant impact of this external factor on employee turnover intentions. In recent years, researchers such as W. Huang et al. (2022) explored the impact of colleagues obtaining better job opportunities after leaving on the turnover intentions of remaining employees, analyzing the mediating role of remaining employees' perception of their own employability. Their study found that when colleagues leave and obtain better job opportunities, remaining employees' perception of their own employability is positively enhanced, thereby increasing their turnover intentions.

Based on the literature review above, colleagues' upward mobility may trigger a social comparison process among remaining employees, leading them to reassess their career development and job satisfaction. This reassessment may further influence the remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities, leading them to believe that the external market offers more career development opportunities. At the same time, they may perceive the prospects of staying in the current organization as unfavorable, which increases their positive perception of external job opportunities, thereby increasing their turnover intentions. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Perceived external job opportunities mediate the relationship between colleagues' upward mobility and remaining employees' turnover intentions.

3.3.3 Relationship strength as the moderator

Relationship strength refers to the degree of closeness between nodes in a social network structure. This closeness can be measured along multiple dimensions, including but not limited to the duration of interaction, depth of emotional connection, intimacy, and frequency of mutual help and support (Granovetter, 1973). Generally, if the interaction between two

individuals is more frequent, emotional connection is stronger, the relationship is closer, and they provide each other with more frequent support, then the relationship strength between them is considered higher. Conversely, if these dimensions are less evident or less frequent, the relationship strength is considered weaker. In the field of social network research, there is evidence that the strength of ties between nodes in a network significantly influences the interaction patterns between individuals and the efficiency of information transmission (Feeley et al., 2008; Z. Y. Wang et al., 2014). These studies suggest that differences in relationship strength may affect the circulation of information, provision of social support, and accumulation and utilization of social capital.

In the process of social comparison, individuals tend to select comparison targets based on the accessibility of comparative information (Buunk et al., 2011). For example, Unkelbach et al. (2023) show that in actual social comparison, the characteristics of the selected standard are often linked to the target. This comparison is driven by two cognitive mechanisms: structural consistency and selective accessibility. The close connection between departing employees and remaining employees facilitates the flow of information and the occurrence of comparison behaviors. Remaining employees, when maintaining close relationships with departing colleagues, are more likely to perceive the departure dynamics of their colleagues and access more detailed departure-related information, which may trigger resonance with the departure. Additionally, departure events may generate chain reactions within the team, such as the spread of dissatisfaction, affecting remaining employees to varying degrees, especially those who have closer relationships with the departing employees (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985).

Furthermore, in the process of social comparison, individuals tend to choose those with whom they have close relationships as reference points. This tendency stems from individuals' deep understanding of close associates, which can provide comprehensive and trustworthy comparative information, making such information more valuable for individuals' decision-making (Krizan & Johar, 2012). The research by Bian and Sun (2019) shows that retained employees who have a good relationship with their former colleagues may even obtain external employment opportunities through recommendations from their former colleagues.

Existing research indicates that employees use departing colleagues as a basis for evaluating alternative job opportunities (Felps et al., 2009). Especially when a colleague's departure is accompanied by a promotion, employees may reassess their market value and believe they also have the potential to obtain better positions in the external job market. This

comparison process may stimulate employees to explore external career opportunities, thereby influencing their retention decisions.

In this study, relationship strength is defined as the degree of closeness in the connections between individuals in a social network, which can be measured through dimensions such as the duration of interaction, depth of emotion, intimacy, and mutual support and assistance (Granovetter, 1973). The closeness of relationships is manifested not only in frequent interactions but also in deep exchanges at psychological and personal levels (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Such relationships provide individuals with rich comparative information, thus playing an important role in the process of social comparison. For example, in investigating the impact of upward mobility of departing colleagues on the retention intentions of remaining employees, scholars such as Z. Y. Wang et al. (2014) have demonstrated that the strength of relationships between incumbent employees and departing colleagues plays a crucial moderating role.

Moreover, individuals are influenced by the accessibility of comparative information when selecting comparison targets (Buunk et al., 2011). Generally, individuals tend to compare themselves with those with whom they have close relationships because such comparison targets can provide more detailed and trustworthy information, aiding individuals in making accurate self-assessments and decisions. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H8: Relationship strength positively moderates the relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and the perception of external job opportunities among remaining employees.

3.3.4 Organizational commitment as the moderator

The concept of organizational commitment was initially introduced by sociologist Becker (1960) to describe the intrinsic psychological state of employees who choose to remain in and engage with the organization as their investment in it increases. This definition emphasizes the psychological contract between employees and the organization. Porter et al. (1974) further elaborated on organizational commitment, viewing it as the level of psychological identification that employees have with the organization, characterized by their investment in and identification with the organization. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), developed by them, has become a widely used assessment tool in this field.

After a thorough analysis of the organizational commitment domain, Meyer and Allen

(1997) proposed a more nuanced conceptualization, defining organizational commitment as a psychological state reflecting the relationship between employees and the organization, which reveals employees' inclination to continue remaining in the organization. They constructed an organizational commitment model comprising three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment, which has become a widely adopted framework in organizational commitment research. According to this model, affective commitment reflects the emotional bond between employees and the organization, which goes beyond material interests; continuance commitment arises from employees' avoidance of potential losses associated with leaving the organization; and normative commitment stems from employees' moral obligation to the benefits provided by the organization, motivating them to reciprocate to the organization. These three commitments together constitute employees' comprehensive commitment to the organization.

The social exchange theory emphasizes the economic and social exchange relationships between individuals and organizations based on the principle of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1990). When organizations demonstrate care for employees and recognize their contributions, the perceived level of support by employees increases. This emotionally based exchange relationship can significantly enhance employees' affective commitment (Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997). Furthermore, research has indicated that the higher the organization's attention to employees' career development, the higher the employees' loyalty (Steers, 1977). During periods of organizational change, employees with higher internal employability often exhibit stronger positive emotions and deeper affective commitment to the organization (Fugate et al., 2004). Within the framework of social exchange, faced with uncertainty, employees may enhance their continuance commitment to the organization as a strategy to mitigate potential risks. Social cognitive theory provides a perspective on how individuals choose optimal behavior patterns based on their assessment of their employability (Bandura, 1982). Different perceptions of internal and external job opportunities among employees evoke differential responses in their behavior. Furthermore, the interaction between employees and organizations through the mechanism of social exchange imposes certain constraints on the behavior of both parties (Thau et al., 2007). Specifically, when employees possess higher internal employability, they may exhibit stronger normative commitment due to the perceived support from the organization and a sense of social moral responsibility (S. Liu et al., 2014). Conversely, those employees who are highly valued in the external market may weaken their normative commitment compared to the current organization due to perceived unfairness. This dynamic indicates that employees' perception

abilities and market value significantly influence their interaction with the organization and their level of commitment. Previous research has indicated a significant negative correlation between organizational commitment and turnover behavior, meaning the higher the level of organizational commitment, the lower the employees' inclination to leave (Michaels & Spector, 1982; Porter et al., 1974; Steers, 1977). Recently, a substantial body of research has also confirmed this conclusion. For example, Pratama et al. (2022) found that employees' organizational commitment significantly negatively affects their turnover intentions, meaning the higher the level of organizational commitment, the lower the employees' turnover intentions. Additionally, X. Liu et al. (2023) indicated that compared to temporary workers, regular employees in organizations are generally less likely to have turnover intentions or actively leave due to their higher level of organizational affective commitment.

Based on the aforementioned, organizational commitment demonstrates a stronger correlation with turnover behavior compared to job satisfaction (Kraut, 1975; Steers, 1977). These findings underscore the crucial role of organizational commitment in maintaining employee retention and promoting organizational stability.

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H9: Organizational commitment negatively moderates the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intentions among retained employees.

Combining the above hypotheses, this study proposes the following research model, as illustrated in Figure 3.1:
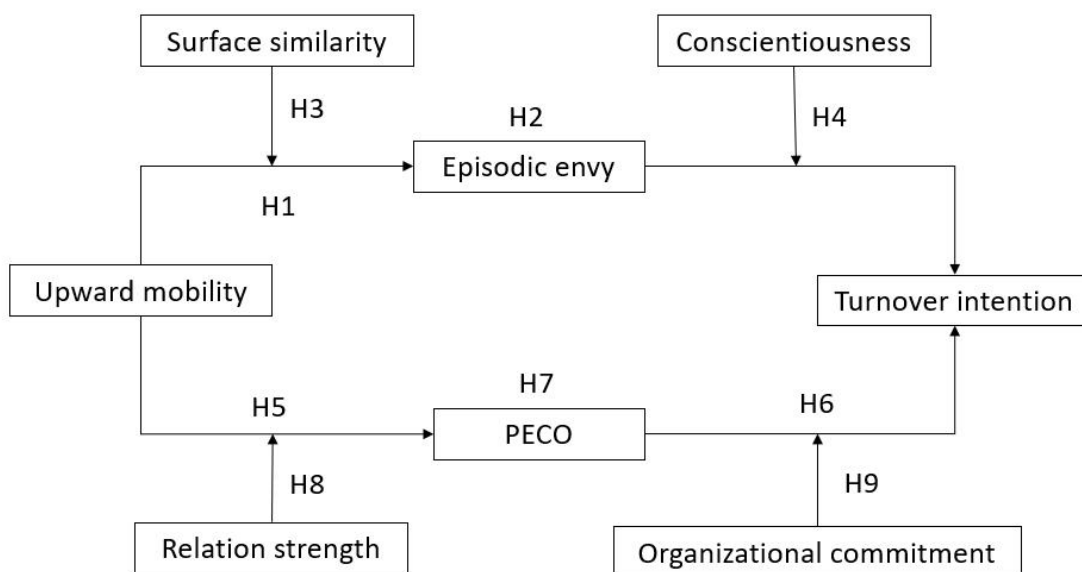
Figure 3.1 Research model of this study

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Chapter 4: Research Methods

This study aims to construct a systematic and rigorous theoretical framework by thoroughly analyzing the inherent logic and connections among research variables. The objective is to reveal the intrinsic correlations and mutual influences among these variables in an intuitive and scientific manner. In delving into the complex mechanisms of this process, it is imperative to build upon a solid foundation of literature review to ensure the study's theoretical basis is robust and reliable. To gain a deeper understanding of the intrinsic relationships between variables, we rely not only on normative logical deductions but also emphasize the importance of empirical testing. Empirical research methods provide us with direct and objective data support, aiding in the validation of the accuracy and universality of theoretical hypotheses. In terms of data collection, this study primarily employs the questionnaire survey method. This method is widely popular due to its ease of implementation and broad appeal. We recognize deeply that the quality of the questionnaire is crucially influential on the accuracy and effectiveness of the research results.

4.1 Questionnaire design

Questionnaire surveys, as a widely recognized and applied research method, play a crucial role in academic research both domestically and internationally. Employing this strategy, researchers can efficiently, quickly, and directly collect raw data. To ensure the rigor of the data collection process and the high quality of the obtained data, meticulous and rational planning of the research design is particularly crucial. To ensure the accuracy of the study, it is essential not only to trace back to the roots and delve into literature relevant to the topic but also to select measurement scales with high value. In this study, the use of questionnaire surveys aims to minimize interference with participating departments and employees, thereby promoting the active participation and cooperation of respondents, and subsequently enhancing the authenticity and accuracy of data collection.

The choice of questionnaire surveys as the primary means of data collection in this study results in relatively minimal negative impacts on the surveyed departments and individuals, making it easier to obtain their understanding and cooperation. Through this gentle and effective approach, this study can collect more genuine and accurate data, providing solid

support for the in-depth development of the research and the reliability of its conclusions. At the same time, this study also fully considers the privacy and rights protection of the respondents, ensuring the compliance and ethicality of the study.

To ensure the efficiency of the questionnaire, this study primarily considers the following two points:

Firstly, selecting research development scales directly relevant to this study to ensure the specificity of the measurement tools.

Secondly, prioritizing the selection of scales that have been widely recognized, repeatedly applied, and possess high reliability and validity. Due to constraints such as time, experience, culture, and language in academic research, many researchers tend to adopt previously validated research methods and tools.

4.1.1 Questionnaire design procedure

4.1.1.1 Literature review and synthesis

In academic research, variables often represent theoretical abstractions of specific phenomena, necessitating meticulous scrutiny and interpretation of relevant literature by researchers. This study adopted a systematic transformation process to operationalize the conceptual elements of the theoretical framework, rendering them quantifiable indicators amenable to empirical measurement through questionnaire surveys. To achieve this objective, this study conducted thorough reviews and comprehensive analyses of literature in the relevant field, ensuring that the designed measurement items not only were scientifically sound but also effectively reflected the core elements of theoretical concepts.

To ensure the reliability of the study, this study employed authoritative scales or scales revised by prominent Chinese scholars to measure all variables. Additionally, to comprehensively and accurately capture the multidimensional characteristics of variables, this study meticulously constructed a repository of measurement items encompassing various potential scenarios. During the item selection process, this study placed particular emphasis on choosing scale items with demonstrated reliability and validity from previous empirical studies, ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of the measurement tools. Simultaneously, this study fully considered the specific requirements and characteristics of this study, conducting detailed assessments and selections of these items to ensure their effectiveness in capturing the multidimensional features of the research variables.

In this study, the scales initially used were in English. To ensure the rigor of the research

and the reliability of the analysis results, this study employed a professional translation and proofreading procedure. Specifically, a professional translation team was entrusted to utilize the "back-translation" method (Wharton et al., 1991) to meticulously translate and verify the English scales. This process involved two groups: one group was responsible for accurately translating the English original version into Chinese, while the other group was tasked with back-translating the results of the first group into English. By comparing the differences between the two sets of translations, this study could precisely identify and correct expression problems caused by language differences. Through this series of translation and verification procedures, this study ensured the semantic consistency and cultural adaptability of the scales.

Ultimately, this study developed a relatively comprehensive and practical set of scales, which contributed to ensuring the reliability and validity of cross-cultural research. In this study, this study made meticulous localized adjustments to scales developed by foreign scholars to adapt to the actual cultural differences between East and West. During this process, this study not only gained profound insights into the underlying implications of Western cultural theories but also thoroughly considered the unique attributes of Chinese culture. Based on this cross-cultural understanding and analysis, we carefully selected and modified the scale items. This process involved flexible utilization and skillful adaptation of the original scale items to ensure their applicability and effectiveness within the cultural context of this study. Through this approach, the research aimed to achieve precision and reliability in cross-cultural scale measurement while respecting and reflecting cultural diversity.

4.1.1.2 Localization of measurement scales

In constructing measurement scales for variables in this study, this study primarily drew upon mature scales developed by Western scholars, which have been widely recognized for their reliability and validity. However, considering the differences in cultural and social backgrounds, we recognized the importance of moderately localizing the scales in practical research. To achieve this, the researcher has engaged in multiple discussions and exchanges with my supervisor, classmates, colleagues, and experts in the field of management studies. Through collective wisdom, we adjusted the scales appropriately, taking into account the practical situations in China, to ensure they better met the needs of local research. Ultimately, with the assistance of these professionals, we formed measurement scales suitable for localized thematic research.

4.1.1.3 Pilot survey and optimization of scales

Building upon the localized measurement scales mentioned above, and incorporating insights from interviews with human resources management personnel in enterprises, along with meticulous guidance from the supervisor, this study developed the initial version of the survey questionnaire scales. Pilot survey of the questionnaire is a crucial step to ensure data quality and research effectiveness before conducting extensive surveys. Pilot survey not only helps identify and rectify potential flaws in the questionnaire but also validates whether the questionnaire adequately covers all key issues required for the study. In this research, the pilot survey of the questionnaire was conducted through two meticulously executed phases, aiming to enhance the accuracy and coverage of the data collection tool and lay a solid foundation for subsequent analysis. Through this series of rigorous steps, this study ensures the effectiveness and reliability of the questionnaire, thereby enhancing the scientific and methodological rigor of the entire study.

Phase One: To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the questionnaire, this study conducted a series of meticulous adjustments to the questionnaire. During this process, the researcher engaged in a series of professional exchanges and collaborated closely with the supervisor and human resources management personnel from various companies. Together, we thoroughly examined various aspects of questionnaire design, including but not limited to the reasonable time required for questionnaire completion, the clarity of question formulations, and the identification of any potential ambiguities that could lead to misunderstandings. It not only enhanced the usability and response rate of the questionnaire but also ensured the quality of data collection and the accuracy of research results. Additionally, we conducted a detailed examination of semantic redundancies among items. Through these discussions, the researcher carefully documented and summarized the valuable opinions and suggestions of the participants. Subsequently, under the further guidance of the supervising teacher, cothe researcher meticulously revised and optimized the deficiencies in the questionnaire, aiming to enhance the overall quality of the questionnaire and ensure the effectiveness of its measurements.

Phase Two: Prior to the formal commencement of the questionnaire survey, this study conducted a pre-survey aimed at assessing the scientific validity and applicability of the questionnaire to enhance the rigor of the research. The target group for the pre-survey comprised human resources and corporate strategic planning professionals with profound management backgrounds and relatively high cognitive abilities within a large corporate

group. The pilot survey employed a questionnaire that is intended for use in the forthcoming formal survey. During this phase, the HR manager of the participating company facilitated the assembly of 10 targeted participants in a designated conference room. The study team briefed the respondents on the objectives of the research and the instructions for completing the questionnaire. A total of 10 questionnaires were distributed on-site, and all were successfully retrieved after completion, with an average completion time of 419 seconds. Upon meticulous examination, all 10 questionnaires were fully completed with all measurement items, indicating the respondents' serious attitude and high cooperation level towards the questionnaire, thus ensuring the accuracy and effectiveness of the questionnaire data. Subsequently, we systematically organized and deeply analyzed the questionnaire data, and re-examined the rationale of each question in the questionnaire to further ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. This series of activities not only enhanced the scientific integrity of the questionnaire but also laid a solid foundation for the subsequent formal survey.

4.1.1.4 Compilation of the questionnaire

Based on the results of the pre-survey of the questionnaire items, this study optimized and addressed potential flaws in the questionnaire, implementing corresponding improvement measures for any shortcomings. Additionally, relevant control variables concerning the surveyed sample (such as demographic variables) were incorporated. To ensure the collected data aligned closely with the research objectives, particular attention was paid to formulating guidance language during the questionnaire design phase. Clear instructions were provided to respondents, emphasizing the necessity to base their responses on the real experiences and current situations of their most recent departed colleagues. Finally, under the careful guidance of the supervisor and after undergoing multiple adjustments and optimizations, the survey questionnaire for this study was finalized.

In summary, Figure 4.1 outlines the compilation process of the questionnaire in this thesis.
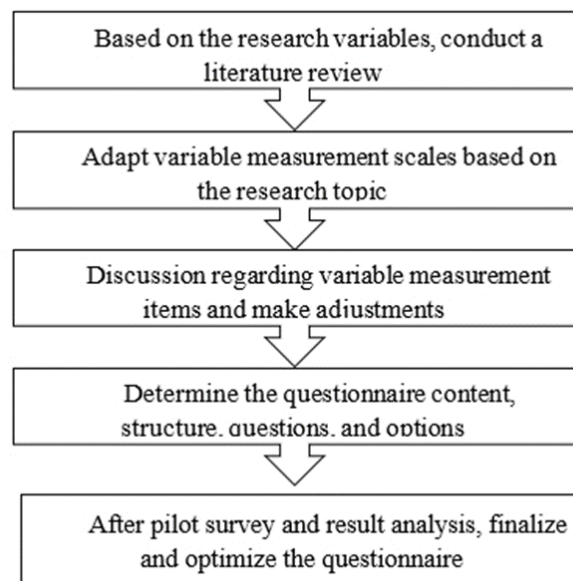
Figure 4.1 Compilation process of the questionnaire

4.1.2 Considerations for Reducing Errors

To enhance the universality and practical value of the questionnaire while minimizing errors in the data collection process, this study paid special attention to avoiding the following common issues when designing the questionnaire.

Firstly, we rigorously avoided posing questions with dual meanings, as such questions often confuse respondents, thereby impacting the accuracy and consistency of their responses.

Secondly, we endeavored to avoid setting questions that might exhibit bias, ensuring all questions were based on an objective understanding of the research topic rather than subjective judgment. During the construction of questions, we aimed for objectivity and neutrality to prevent the researcher's biases from inappropriately influencing respondents' answers. Through these measures, this study aimed to ensure the objectivity of the questionnaire and the reliability of the data.

Thirdly, it is important to avoid requiring respondents to rely on memory to answer questions. The ambiguity of memory can significantly affect the accuracy of answers. In questionnaire design, we should refrain from demanding respondents to rely on memory as it may lead to serious distortions in answers and even provoke dissatisfaction and resentment among respondents, thereby affecting the accuracy and reliability of the data. To ensure the authenticity of the data, questions should be scheduled within recent timeframes as much as possible. Additionally, we need to fully consider the cognitive abilities and memory

characteristics of respondents during questionnaire design, employing appropriate question types and expressions to minimize the impact of memory factors on the accuracy of answers.

Furthermore, to avoid respondents giving answers that contradict their true thoughts to meet their own moral beliefs, we should try to avoid questions related to social expectations or moral judgments. Everyone has their own behavioral standards in social life, but they are often influenced by social expectations. Therefore, when setting questions, we should minimize the impact of these social expectations on respondents.

By avoiding the above-mentioned issues, we can enhance the effectiveness and reliability of the questionnaire, providing a more solid data foundation for subsequent data analysis and conclusion refinement.

4.2 Sample selection

From the perspective of empirical research, sample selection plays a crucial role in ensuring the authenticity and effectiveness of research results. In this study, we strictly adhere to the following principles of sample selection:

Firstly, the principle of feasibility in sample selection. To ensure accurate and reliable data, cothe researcher utilized personal professional social networks to contact friends, classmates, and former colleagues working in various types of enterprises. Through the first-hand information they provided, we systematically collected relevant information about the enterprises. Particularly for enterprises located in Tibet, we adhered to the spirit of on-site investigation, tirelessly visiting each target unit, and conducted comprehensive on-site data collection work, aiming to reflect the actual situation comprehensively and multidimensionally.

Secondly, the alignment between sample selection and the research topic is crucial. This study focuses on enterprises where the phenomenon of employees voluntarily resigning has occurred recently, aiming to ensure that the selected sample are highly relevant to the core issues of the study.

Thirdly, we also pay special attention to the diversity of sample attributes. Considering that there may be differences in the research topic among different types of enterprises and industries, we selected over 30 enterprises from different industries and natures for the questionnaire survey. These enterprises include state-owned enterprises and private enterprises, covering various industries such as investment, construction, transportation, energy, consulting, technology, hospitality, finance, trade, manufacturing, new materials,

telecommunications, and others.

Fourthly, we place great emphasis on the diverse representativeness of the sample to ensure the broad applicability of the research results. Considering that the research topic may be significantly influenced by the types of enterprises and industry attributes, this study carefully selected over 30 enterprises covering multiple industries and ownership types as research subjects, and conducted meticulous and comprehensive questionnaire surveys. The selected enterprises include both state-owned and private enterprises, involving various industries such as investment, construction, transportation, energy development, consulting services, technological innovation, hospitality and tourism, financial services, trade and circulation, manufacturing, research and development of new materials, and telecommunications technology, effectively reflecting the characteristics of different economic sectors and industrial ecologies in China. This enhances the universality and robustness of the research conclusions.

Fifthly, in the selection process of sample enterprises, we particularly emphasized the breadth and representativeness of geographical distribution to minimize potential biases resulting from regional differences. This study meticulously planned to achieve in-depth coverage across mainland China, involving over 30 enterprises from various industries and natures across 49 cities in 18 provincial-level administrative regions, ensuring the diversity of sample and the vastness of geographical space. Specifically, we covered various major regions of China, including but not limited to: Lhasa, Shannan, Nyingchi, Chamdo, Ngari, and Shigatse in the Tibet Autonomous Region; Chengdu and Mianyang in western China; Beijing in the northern region; Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province in the eastern coastal developed areas; Chongqing and multiple cities in Shanxi Province such as Taiyuan, Yangquan, Datong, Xinzhou, Lvliang, Yuncheng, Jinzhong, and Jincheng; Dalian in Liaoning Province in the northeastern region; Guiyang and Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province in the southwestern hinterland; Shenzhen, Shantou, and Guangzhou in Guangdong Province in the southern coastal area; Xi'an, Xianyang, and Weinan in Shaanxi Province; Kunming, Qujing, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Baoshan, and Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province; Haikou in Hainan Province; Zhengzhou and Jiaozuo in Henan Province in the central plains; Hengyang in Hunan Province in the central region; Haidong Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Xining in Qinghai Province on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau; Jinan in Shandong Province in the eastern coastal area; Hefei in Anhui Province in the central region; Shijiazhuang and Handan in Hebei Province in the North China Plain, among others. By conducting questionnaire surveys among

employees of enterprises with diverse geographical and industry backgrounds, we not only ensured a nationwide perspective of the research but also demonstrated comprehensive comparative advantages across industries and regions, thereby enhancing the universality and scientificity of the research outcomes. This rigorous sample selection strategy facilitates a better exploration and understanding of the similarities, differences, and characteristics of the research topic across different regions and industry backgrounds.

4.3 Variable selection

Selecting appropriate variable indicators plays a decisive role in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of empirical analysis. To ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of measuring variables, this study utilized validated scale items to measure each variable, including upward mobility, turnover intention, episodic envy, surface similarity, conscientiousness, perceived external job opportunities, relational strength, and organizational commitment. In this study, all scales involving variables were rigorously selected and compared, sourced from internationally recognized authoritative scales or scales revised by authoritative domestic scholars based on the Chinese context, ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of the measurement tools. To further validate the reliability of these scales, this study employed internal consistency testing, namely Cronbach's α test. According to widely accepted standards in academia, Cronbach's α values between 0.700 and 0.900 are considered an acceptable range of reliability (Meijer et al., 2015). In practice, this study conducted meticulous reliability tests on all scales, ensuring that the Cronbach's α coefficient of each scale met or exceeded this standard, thus providing solid assurance for the reliability of the research results.

4.3.1 Turnover intention

Turnover intention in this study refers to the attitude and thoughts employees have about voluntarily leaving the organization, which can measure the degree to which employees want to leave voluntarily. Through literature review and in line with the research theme, this study adopted a 4-item scale to measure turnover intention, following the research of Kim et al. (1996), and referring to the translation by M. Zhang and Zhang (2003). In this study, Likert five-point scales were used to rate these items. In this scale, "1" indicates "strongly disagree," representing a high level of disagreement from the respondents with the statement; while "5" indicates "strongly agree," representing a high level of agreement from the respondents with

the statement. The reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.807, denoting "R" for reverse scoring. The specific items include:

(1) I also wish to leave the current company shortly after my colleagues leave.

(2) After my colleagues leave, I have thought that I would leave the current company if possible.

(3) Even though my colleagues have left the company, I still intend to stay with the current company for as long as possible (R).

(4) Despite my colleagues leaving the company, in general, I would not voluntarily leave this company (R).

4.3.2 Colleague upward mobility

Colleague upward mobility in this study refer to employees finding a better job (with higher position, larger scale of the new company, and greater potential for career development) after leaving the company (Brockner & Kim, 1993). Through literature review and in line with the research theme, this study adopted a 7-item scale to measure upward mobility, following the research of Brockner and Kim (1993), and referring to the translation by Z. Y. Wang (2015). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.851. "1" indicates "strongly disagree," representing a high level of disagreement from the respondents with the statement; while "5" indicates "strongly agree," representing a high level of agreement from the respondents with the statement. The specific items include:

(1) I feel that the new company where the departing colleague is located has a larger scale.

(2) I feel that the new company where the departing colleague is located has a higher reputation in the industry.

(3) I feel that the new company where the departing colleague is located has higher growth potential.

(4) I feel that the departing colleague has better career opportunities in the new company.

(5) I feel that the position of the departing colleague's new job is higher than the previous one.

(6) I feel that the salary and benefits of the departing colleague's new job are more generous than before.

(7) I feel that the departing colleague has found a better job after leaving.

4.3.3 Episodic envy

Episodic envy in this study refers to the internal components of envy emotions (such as animosity, resentment, depression), which can harm people's physical and mental health (Wu & Chang, 2012). Through literature review and in line with the research theme, this study adopted a 10-item scale to measure episodic envy, drawing on the research of Lange and Crusius (2015). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.895. "1" indicates "strongly disagree," representing a high level of disagreement from the respondents with the statement; while "5" indicates "strongly agree," representing a high level of agreement from the respondents with the statement. Items marked with "R" indicate reverse scoring. The specific items include:

(1) When I envy others, I focus on how I can achieve similar success in the future.

(2) If I find someone better than me, I strive to improve myself.

(3) Envy of others can motivate me to achieve my goals.

(4) I strive to achieve the outstanding achievements of others.

(5) If someone has outstanding qualities, achievements, or possessions, I will strive to obtain them myself.

(6) I hope that people who are superior lose their advantages (R).

(7) If others have something I want, I want to take it away from them (R).

(8) I feel resentful towards people I envy (R).

(9) Envy makes me dislike the person I envy (R).

(10) Seeing others' achievements makes me feel repulsed (R).

4.3.4 Surface similarity

Surface similarity in this study refers to the degree of similarity or consistency between parties in terms of explicit characteristics such as gender, age, tenure, and education (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Drawing from literature review and aligned with the research theme, this study adapted a 7-item scale to measure surface similarity, based on the work of Brockner and Kim (1993), with reference to translations by Z. Y. Wang (2015). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.829. "1" indicates "strongly disagree," representing a high level of disagreement from the respondents with the statement; while "5" indicates "strongly agree," representing a high level of agreement from the respondents with the statement. The specific items include:

(1) I feel that I have a relatively small age difference compared to the departing colleague.

(2) I feel that I am relatively close to the departing colleague in terms of work tenure.

(3) I feel that I have a similar background to the departing colleague.

(4) I feel that I have similar work experience to the departing colleague.

(5) I feel that I have similar job responsibilities to the departing colleague.

(6) I feel that I have similar job content to the departing colleague.

(7) I feel that my work performance is similar to that of the departing colleague.

4.3.5 Relationship strength

In this study, relationship refers to the depth of interaction and communication between parties, with stronger relationships involving more extensive exchanges on psychological and personal aspects (Brockner & Kim, 1993; Nabi & Keblusek, 2014). Drawing from literature review and aligned with the research theme, this study adapted a 7-item scale to measure relationship strength, based on the study of Y. Chen et al. (2009), with reference to translations by Z. Y. Wang (2015). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.863. "1" indicates "strongly disagree," representing a high level of disagreement from the respondents with the statement; while "5" indicates "strongly agree," representing a high level of agreement from the respondents with the statement. The specific items include:

(1) In the past, I often shared my thoughts, concerns, needs, and feelings with this departing colleague.

(2) In the past, I felt very relaxed when communicating with this departing colleague.

(3) In the past, when this departing colleague encountered difficulties in life, I always tried my best to help him/her.

(4) In the past, this colleague would ask me to help with some personal matters.

(5) In the past, during holidays, this departing colleague and I would call or visit each other.

(6) In the past, during non-working hours, this departing colleague and I would engage in social activities together, such as dining out or entertainment.

(7) I am familiar with the family situation of this departing colleague, and I have some contact with his/her family members.

4.3.6 Perceived external career opportunity

In this study, the concept of "Perceived External Career Opportunity" (PECO) specifically refers to employees' subjective evaluation and perception of potential job opportunities in the external labor market that align with their career aspirations and contribute to career advancement and growth. PECO reflects employees' internal perception of the availability and relevance of external job vacancies and their personal career development opportunities. Based on a review of the literature, this study carefully selected the Employment Opportunity Index (EOI) developed by Griffeth et al. (2005) as the measurement tool. This scale has been extensively validated, demonstrating good reliability and validity, and covers five key dimensions: ease of mobility (three items), mobility inclination (three items), social networks (three items), concretization of job opportunities (two items), and job mobility (three items). These dimensions collectively form a comprehensive and detailed measurement framework that effectively assesses individuals' perceptions of external employment opportunities. Following study confirmed the applicability and effectiveness of this scale in empirical research. Prior research has fully demonstrated that the scale possesses a high degree of flexibility in the measurement process, allowing researchers to selectively extract several dimensions for measurement according to research needs, while maintaining good validity (Steel & Landon, 2010). In the specific application process, considering that the core focus of this study is to explore the potential impact of external job opportunities on employees' intention to leave, and primarily focuses on key factors directly related to work, adjustments were made to the original scale in a targeted and appropriate manner to better fit the specific needs and objectives of this study while respecting the theoretical framework of the original scale.

In this study, the dimension of "job mobility" in the original scale, which focuses on non-work factors, was excluded. The remaining four dimensions—ease of mobility, mobility inclination, networks, and concretization of job opportunities—were retained, resulting in a total of 11 items. Each item was answered using a Likert 5-point scale to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the measurement results, where "1" indicates "Strongly Disagree," representing a high level of disagreement with the statement; and "5" indicates "Strongly Agree," representing a high level of agreement with the statement. This approach not only ensured the validity of the measurement but also met the specific needs of this study. The specific items are as follows:

1. There are many jobs in the current labor market that are suitable for me.

2. With my abilities and experience, finding a new job is not difficult.

3. If I were to look for a job, I believe several companies would be interested in hiring me.

4. If I were to look for a job, I might find a better one.

5. Overall, the job I could find after leaving would be better than my current one.

6. Most of the jobs I could find would improve my situation compared to my current one.

7. I have a wide network of contacts, which helps me find other job opportunities.

8. I know people in other companies who could help me connect with new job opportunities.

9. My job or social activities expose me to many people who could help me find a new job.

10. Currently, other companies have offered me a job waiting for me to accept.

11. I have found better alternatives to my current job.

4.3.7 Organizational commitment

In this study is defined as "a psychological state reflecting the relationship between employees and the organization, implying the decision of whether to continue staying in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment is an important employee attitude variable in human resource management research, defined as the acceptance of organizational goals and values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to remain in the organization. Drawing upon the work of H. Zhang et al. (2009), who translated the organizational commitment questionnaire compiled by Cook and Wall (1980), this study measures employees' organizational commitment with 9 items. In this study, a Likert five-point scale was used to rate these items, where "1" indicates "Strongly Disagree," representing a high level of disagreement with the statement; and "5" indicates "Strongly Agree," representing a high level of agreement with the statement. The reliability of this scale is reported as 0.87. Items marked "R" indicating reverse scoring. The specific items are as follows:

1. I am proud to tell people about the company I work for.

2. I would not recommend my friends to work for the company I am currently employed at (R).

3. I feel like I am part of this company.

4. Even if the company's economic situation is not very good, I would not consider taking

another job.

5. Sometimes, I think about leaving the company for some personal benefits (R).

6. Even if I could earn a higher salary by working for another company, I have never considered changing jobs.

7. Knowing that my work contributes to the company's profitability makes me happy.

8. I hope to work not only for myself but also for the company.

9. I am not willing to work hard just to help the company (R).

4.3.8 Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness, in this study, is defined as the high achievement orientation and accountable attitude individuals exhibit in the workplace, which is a trait related to resilience, thoroughness, and accountability (Mishra, 2009). Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and closely aligning with the thematic needs of this study, to accurately measure individuals' level of conscientiousness in the workplace, we have carefully selected to utilize the conscientiousness measurement scale from the Chinese version of the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2) revised and validated (B. Zhang et al., 2022). This scale, as an authoritative tool for measuring the Big Five personality traits, provides an effective means of measurement for researchers in the Chinese context. It is noteworthy that this scale has demonstrated good reliability in previous studies, with Cronbach's α coefficient as high as 0.7, indicating high internal consistency suitable for the context of this study (B. Zhang et al., 2022).

Specifically, the BFI-2 Conscientiousness Scale consists of 12 carefully designed items, presented in a 12-item scale format, and utilizes a Likert 5-point rating scale where "1" indicates "Strongly Disagree," representing a high level of disagreement with the statement; and "5" indicates "Strongly Agree," representing a high level of agreement with the statement. Among them, items marked with "R" require reverse scoring. This design aims to comprehensively and accurately reveal the performance of research subjects in terms of conscientiousness and related personality traits, providing solid data support for subsequent research. The specific items are as follows:

1. I am a disorganized person (R).

2. I am a rather lazy person (R).

3. I am a trustworthy and reliable person.

4. I am a person who plans and organizes things.

5. I am a person who finds it difficult to get started and complete a task (R).

6. I am a person who is sometimes irresponsible (R).

7. I am a person who likes to keep things neat and orderly.

8. I am an efficient person who gets things done.

9. I am a reliable person who others can always count on.

10. I am a messy person who doesn't like to tidy up (R).

11. I am a persistent person who sticks to tasks until they are completed.

12. I am a person who sometimes behaves irresponsibly (R).

4.3.9 Control variables

In the process of conducting research, to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results, this study particularly emphasizes the exclusion of other potential explanatory factors. Therefore, several key control variables have been carefully selected and included to effectively control and analyze the core variables. This study focused on controlling demographic variables, specifically including gender, age, education level, position, tenure, and job satisfaction. A large body of prior research has shown that these variables have a significant impact on employees' intention to leave (H. H. Chen et al., 2012; Park et al., 2016). By effectively controlling for these variables, we hope to more accurately reveal the underlying mechanisms and influencing factors of employees' intention to leave.

The gender variable is a dummy variable, where 0 represents male and 1 represents female; in the age variable, 1 represents 0-18 years old, 2 represents 19-30 years old, 3 represents 31-45 years old, and 4 represents over 45 years old; in the education level variable, 1 represents junior college and below, 2 represents bachelor's degree, 3 represents master's degree, and 4 represents doctoral degree; in the position variable, 1 represents ordinary employees, 2 represents middle-level managers, and 3 represents senior managers; in the tenure variable, 1 represents 1 year and below, 2 represents 1 to 5 years, 3 represents 6 to 10 years, and 4 represents 11 years and above.

According to existing research, job satisfaction has always been one of the most important attitude variables affecting turnover (Rubenstein et al., 2018). Within the framework of this study, to ensure the accuracy of hypothesis testing and eliminate potential confounding factors, job satisfaction is included as a control variable. This study draws on the research by (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951) and references the translation by M. Zhang and Zhang (2007) to measure job satisfaction with 5 items, using a Likert 5-point scale for responses.

The reliability of this scale is 0.847. Items marked with "R" are reverse scored. Specific items include:

In addition, to effectively control for the potential interference of social desirability effects on the true relationship between research variables, this study specially included an assessment of social desirability of the survey respondents in the questionnaire design process. This study carefully selected five items with significant factor loadings to construct a social desirability scale, aiming to detect whether respondents tend to provide answers that conform to social expectations or moral norms when answering the questionnaire. This scale also adopts a Likert five-point scale to rate these items, where "1" indicates "Strongly Disagree," representing a high level of disagreement with the statement; and "5" indicates "Strongly Agree," representing a high level of agreement with the statement. After preliminary statistical analysis, the social desirability scale displayed a high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.717, indicating good internal consistency among the items. Specifically, the items composing the social desirability scale include but are not limited to the following, used to more accurately quantify and correct potential social desirability biases:

(1) I would readily step forward to help someone in distress.

(2) I am always willing to admit my mistakes.

(3) I always strive to practice the principles I advocate.

(4) Even when facing unpleasant individuals, I am always courteous and polite.

(5) When others express views that are completely different from mine, I never feel annoyed.

4.4 Process of data collection

In this study, the establishment of research questions, the selection of research methods, the precise measurement of variables, and the effective collection and in-depth analysis of data constitute an organic whole, closely interrelated and mutually constraining. The core focus of this thesis is to deeply explore the profound impact of upward mobility after colleague departure on the turnover intention of remaining employees. To effectively address this complex issue, this study employed a questionnaire survey as a convenient, efficient, and widely used data collection method, aiming to provide robust support for revealing the underlying patterns behind the phenomenon.

The quality and completeness of data during the research process are crucial for the accuracy and scientific validity of the research results. They directly affect the verification

effectiveness of research hypotheses and are also core criteria for judging research quality. Therefore, this study strictly adhered to the principles of scientific rigor, conducting meticulous screening and systematic organization of data to ensure that the final analysis results accurately reflect the actual impact of colleague departure and upward mobility on the turnover intention of remaining employees. This approach aims to avoid misleading conclusions due to data quality issues. The high level of attention and refinement in data processing enables this study to comprehensively and holistically reveal the deep connections between colleague departure and upward mobility and the turnover intention of remaining employees. Consequently, it provides solid empirical support and theoretical basis for enriching and developing relevant theoretical frameworks and guiding effective responses to employee turnover and talent retention strategies in business practice.

4.4.1 Questionnaire distribution and collection

In this study, the survey questionnaire serves as a crucial data collection tool meticulously designed and applied to support our core research topic—the impact of colleague departure and upward mobility on the turnover intention of remaining employees. In the specific practice of questionnaire distribution and collection, this study adopted a diversified approach to accommodate the practical circumstances of different regions and enterprises.

First, for local enterprises, the researcher directly established contact with senior management or human resources department heads and conducted face-to-face communication. After gaining their understanding and support, this study arranged dedicated time and space within the company to invite participants to centralized questionnaire filling meetings. At the meeting, we elaborated on the objectives and requirements of the questionnaire survey to ensure clarity for each participant, and then collected completed thesis questionnaires.

Second, for remote enterprises, whenever possible, we personally conducted on-site distribution and collection of questionnaires. However, in cases of objective limitations such as remote geographical distance or time conflicts, we leveraged the power of personal social networks and entrusted friends, classmates, or former colleagues in relevant enterprises to assist with the task. During the delegation process, we provided detailed explanations of the importance of this study and its expected outcomes, requesting them to organize survey participants to complete the questionnaires and ensuring the effective collection of the questionnaires.

Third, for enterprises located in remote areas or where we could not personally visit, we innovatively utilized digital methods for data collection. By contacting the human resources department heads through various channels, we established dedicated survey WeChat groups, including all target survey participants. Subsequently, we directly sent the carefully designed electronic survey questionnaire links to each member of the group, while repeatedly emphasizing the purpose and requirements of questionnaire filling to ensure the rigor and effectiveness of the survey. Through this method, we successfully conducted electronic questionnaire collection for employees of remote enterprises, significantly expanding the coverage and data sources of the research.

In summary, by flexibly applying various questionnaire distribution and collection strategies, we have overcome geographical barriers, ensuring the diversity and breadth of data, thus providing rich and comprehensive primary data for this study, which strongly supports subsequent analysis and argumentation.

During the data collection stage of this study, a total of 452 questionnaires were distributed on site to comprehensively explore the impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intention of retained employees. Through rigorous distribution and collection processes, a total of 440 valid responses were received on site, and after strict screening and removal of invalid ones, a total of 391 valid questionnaires were obtained. Through the online platform of Questionnaire Star, a total of 365 valid responses were collected for time point 2 and time point 3 combined. Detailed statistics on the distribution and collection of data are shown in Table 4.1 to intuitively demonstrate the sample size and data collection efficiency of this study.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire distribution and recovery statistics

Distribution channel	Time	Distribution quantity	Recovered quantity	Recovered rate	Number of valid questionnaires	Validity rate
On-site	2023/12/5 (T1)	452	440	97.35%	391	86.50%
Online platform	2023/12/5 (T2)	-	465	93.00%	365	-
Online platform	2024/1/5 (T3)	-	455	91.00%	365	-
Total		452	1360		756 (Matching T2 and T3)	

For the 49 invalid on-site questionnaires, the main reasons for their invalidity can be explained from several aspects: Firstly, some respondents did not strictly follow the predefined 5-point Likert scale for answer selection, making the data difficult to quantify for

analysis. Secondly, some questionnaires had obvious incomplete filling, where respondents did not provide necessary answers for all items, severely affecting the completeness of the data and the effectiveness of the analysis. Thirdly, a few questionnaires exhibited significant duplicate selections, possibly due to negligence or misunderstanding during the filling process, which cannot accurately reflect individual attitudes or behavioral characteristics. Additionally, some questionnaires showed clear logical contradictions between the responses to items, such as reverse items having consistent response directions with positive items, which obviously contradicts the original design of the scale and hinders the correct interpretation of respondents' positions and views. Therefore, these situations constitute the main causes of invalid questionnaires, and during the data cleaning stage, we removed these questionnaires that did not meet the research requirements to ensure that the valid questionnaires included in the analysis could truthfully and accurately reflect the essence and actual situation of the research problem.

This study conducted a two-month data collection process from the beginning of December 2023 to the end of January 2024, aiming to thoroughly investigate the impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intention of retained employees, while taking into account the potential influence of common method variance on the research results. To minimize common method variance as much as possible, we adopted a phased and batched distribution of questionnaires to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the data.

Firstly, in the beginning of December 2023 (T1), an on-site questionnaire survey was conducted, where a total of 452 paper questionnaires were distributed. The survey focused on the independent variables, moderating variables (surface similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, organizational commitment), mediating variables (episodic envy, PECO), dependent variables, and control variables (job satisfaction, social desirability). By the deadline for responses, we received 440 valid responses. After rigorous screening, 391 questionnaires met the research requirements, resulting in an effective questionnaire response rate of 86.5%.

Subsequently, in mid to late December of the same year (T2), we initiated the second phase of the electronic questionnaire survey. This survey delved deeper into the independent variables, moderating variables (surface similarity and relationship strength), control variables (job satisfaction and social desirability), and some other variables. By the response deadline, we received 465 valid responses.

To ensure the rigor of causal inference, a third round of electronic questionnaire survey was conducted in January 2024 (T3), one month after the second survey. This survey focused

on changes in the dependent variable, the mediator variables (episodic envy and perceived external job opportunities), and another set of moderating variables (conscientiousness and organizational commitment). 455 responses were valid.

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data from T2 and T3 electronic questionnaire surveys, this study adopted a multifaceted approach. First, considering that the T2 and T3 questionnaires covered only some variables, the study matched these questionnaires using the last four digits of the respondents' mobile phone numbers to ensure the same individuals completed both surveys.

Furthermore, to enhance participation enthusiasm, particularly for the T2 and T3 questionnaires, the study engaged with business leaders or HR managers who have close connections with the researcher. The importance of the study for their organizations and management practices was explained in detail, emphasizing the scientific and practical value of the results to gain their support and assistance. They helped communicate the research's purpose and encouraged employees to participate actively in the survey.

The researcher also leveraged personal networks by informing friends, classmates, or former colleagues about the study's significance for personal academic pursuits. These individuals were asked to help communicate the importance of the research to their colleagues and to monitor the completion of the questionnaires. Additionally, to motivate ongoing participation, respondents were informed during the T2 questionnaire distribution that if they diligently completed both surveys, they would be eligible to participate in an online raffle for cash prizes, incentivized through their mobile phone numbers.

For paper-based questionnaires distributed onsite, the researcher personally managed distribution and collection, providing small gifts as tokens of appreciation to onsite participants. Lastly, during initial communications, efforts were made to exclude individuals who could only participate in T2 but not in T3, thus ensuring the integrity and consistency of the final sample.

After integrating the data from the three questionnaire surveys and conducting scientific and reasonable matching and screening, a total of 365 complete and valid sample were matched for both T2 and T3 phases. In total, this study obtained 756 valid paired sample data. The detailed demographic characteristics of these sample data have been organized and summarized in Table 4.2 for subsequent statistical analysis and theoretical modeling purposes. Through this series of rigorous data collection procedures and quality control measures, we ensured the reliability and validity of the research data, laying a solid foundation for in-depth exploration of the research topic.

Table 4.2 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Item	Code	Type	Quantity	Percentage
Gender	0	Male	423	56.0%
	1	Female	333	44.0%
Age	1	0～18 years old	2	0.3%
	2	19～30 years old	439	58.1%
	3	31～45 years old	228	30.2%
	4	Above 45 years old	87	11.5%
Education	1	Sub-degree and Below	208	27.5%
	2	Bachelor's	500	66.1%
	3	Master's	42	5.6%
	4	Doctorate	6	0.8%
Position	1	Ordinary Employee	612	81.0%
	2	Middle Manager	89	11.8%
	3	Senior Manager	55	7.3%
Length of Service	1	Less than 1 year	70	9.3%
	2	1-5 years	189	25.0%
	3	6-10 years	88	11.6%
	4	More than 11 years	15	2.0%

In the basic characteristics analysis of the research sample, the gender distribution shows that males constitute a relative majority, accounting for 56%, while females account for 44%. Regarding age distribution, the sample covers a wide range of age groups. Specifically, the percentage of individuals below 18 years old is only 0.3%, with young employees aged 19 to 30 dominating the sample at 58.1%. Middle-aged employees aged 31 to 45 account for 30.2%, while senior employees aged above 45 constitute 11.5% of the sample.

In terms of educational attainment, individuals with a diploma or below represent 27.5% of the sample, while those with a bachelor's degree or above constitute the majority. Specifically, individuals with a bachelor's degree represent 66.1% of the sample, master's degree holders represent 5.6%, and although the proportion of doctoral degree holders is low, it still reaches 0.8%.

Regarding the company's hierarchical structure, ordinary employees represent the most significant proportion, accounting for 81% of the total sample, reflecting the broad representativeness of the research sample. Middle-level managers account for 11.8%, while senior managers account for 7.3%.

Regarding the length of employee tenure in the company, there are data available for 362 individuals, while data for 394 individuals are unfortunately missing. Among the valid sample, employees with less than 1 year of tenure account for 9.3%, those with 1 to 5 years of tenure account for 25%, those with 6 to 10 years of tenure account for 11.6%, and those with more than 11 years of tenure account for 2%. These data comprehensively depict the detailed distribution of the research sample in terms of gender, age, educational background,

hierarchical position, and tenure length.

4.4.2 Common method variance

In the methodology section of this thesis, we focus on exploring and addressing potential biases in the questionnaire survey. Particularly, we pay attention to the issue of Common Method Variance (CMV) that may arise from data collected from a single source. Despite strictly adhering to the anonymity principle to encourage participants to truthfully reflect their opinions, we still design specific strategies to control for data reliability and validity. To address CMV, we employ the single-factor test model (Harman, 1976), which has been confirmed to effectively identify and mitigate the impact of common method variance, thus ensuring the internal consistency and reliability of the data (Podsakoff et al., 2009).

Furthermore, we rigorously consider and validate potential non-response bias that may affect the analysis results. Although obtaining substantive internal information from non-responsive enterprises poses a challenge, we refer to strategies proposed by Armstrong and Overton (1977). Through comparative analysis between 50 actively responding questionnaires and 50 randomly selected questionnaires from non-respondents, we use independent sample t-tests to explore their differences in depth. The results show that there is no significant difference in non-response bias.

In summary, based on the statistical control measures and comparative analysis results mentioned above, we can reasonably conclude that the risks of common method bias and non-response bias in the questionnaire survey relied upon in this doctoral thesis have been properly controlled. This ensures the high accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

In this study, to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire survey data, we adopted two widely recognized and practiced methods for bias control. These methods systematically measure and effectively prevent CMV and non-response bias in the questionnaire survey, aiming to maximize the authenticity and utility of the data and enhance the accuracy of empirical analysis results, thereby providing strong evidence support for the conclusion of subsequent research. Specifically, to address common method bias, we adopted the classic Harman's single-factor test method (Harman, 1976). This method can effectively detect and eliminate potential CMV in questionnaire data, ensuring that the measurement of variables is not solely based on single reporting bias but truly represents their unique constructs.

At the same time, we also attached great importance to non-response bias and drew on the

research strategies of Armstrong and Overton (1977). Through comparative analysis of two groups of sample actively participating and passively participating in the questionnaire survey, we used independent sample t-tests to carefully explore whether significant differences exist. In this study, we were pleased to find that there were no significant non-response biases in the main research variables for both actively and passively participating sample.

To ensure that the collected data align closely with the research purpose, we paid special attention to the formulation of instructions during the questionnaire design phase, clearly requiring respondents to fill in scales related to upward mobility, surface similarity, episodic envy, interpersonal relationships, perceived external job opportunities, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions based on the real experiences and current situations of their most recent departing colleagues. Through such rigorous operational design and data processing processes, this study obtained more targeted and persuasive data, thereby effectively promoting in-depth exploration and scientific analysis of the relationship between colleague departure for upward mobility and the turnover intentions of remaining employees.

4.5 Statistical analysis

4.5.1 Sample and data

This thesis adopted a questionnaire survey as a quantitative research method aimed at collecting data on a broad scale. After a meticulous screening process, the study ultimately included 756 questionnaires as valid research sample. These sample span a diverse range of industries and geographic regions, ensuring the breadth and representativeness of the sample and thus guaranteeing the general applicability and credibility of the research findings. These detailed data descriptions will be displayed in Table 5.1 in the appendix, aiming to lay a solid data foundation for subsequent empirical research and theoretical analysis.

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics of sample characteristics

	Catergory	Frequency	Proportion
	Manufacturing	20	5.12%
	Construction	23	5.88%
	Computer and Software	34	8.70%
	Finance	71	18.16%
Industry	Real Estate	15	3.84%
	Business Services	26	6.65%
	Energy	68	17.39%
	Accommodation and Food Services	45	11.51%
	Transportation	89	22.76%
City	Lass	375	49.60%
	Taiyuan	39	5.16%

Yangquan	37	4.89%
Chengdu	33	4.37%
Shenzhen	29	3.84%
Kunming	28	3.70%
Guangzhou	25	3.31%
Dalian	23	3.04%
Changdu	21	2.78%
Xi'an	19	2.51%
Beijing	13	1.72%
Xianyang	12	1.59%
Ali	11	1.46%
Lvliang	11	1.46%
Mianyang	11	1.46%
Shannan	11	1.46%
Haikou	10	1.32%
Others	48	6.35%

Note: According to the National Economic Industry Classification Standard

4.5.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability, also known as consistency, refers to the degree to which results obtained from measuring the same object using the same method are unaffected by errors. It determines whether a scale exhibits consistency or stability and indicates the coherence of meaning among the items on the measurement scale. Reliability reflects the accuracy and dependability of measurements, and even a perfectly designed research study cannot compensate for the flaws introduced by imprecise and unreliable measurements. Therefore, conducting reliability tests is an essential prerequisite and a crucial step in data analysis.

Commonly used reliability indicators include stability, reliability, and internal consistency. Among these, internal consistency is the most frequently used indicator, with higher internal consistency indicating greater reliability and robustness. The reliability of a measurement scale is a vital metric for assessing the quality of the scale. In recent years, domestic scholars have made significant progress in exploring more accurate ways to estimate test reliability, both theoretically and instrumentally. Generally, a Cronbach's coefficient greater than 0.7 indicates good internal consistency of the scale, falling within the high reliability range. However, Cronbach's coefficient, as the most commonly used reliability indicator, remains of paramount significance. Wen et al. (2022) argue that assuming error independence is reasonable for most tests. If the Cronbach's coefficient is sufficiently high and reaches an acceptable level, the test reliability is considered acceptable.

Validity represents the extent to which a measurement scale accurately measures the intended content. Test validity mainly includes content validity and structural validity. Based on numerous previous research results (Hu & Bentler, 1998; Wen et al., 2004), the chi-square

degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) are considered ideal fit indices. For most tests, RMSEA < 0.08 and SRMR < 0.08 are acceptable levels. Moreover, smaller RMSEA and SRMR values indicate a more ideal model fit. TLI > 0.90 and CFI > 0.90 are considered moderate levels, and higher values for TLI and CFI suggest a better model fit.

4.5.3 Common method bias

Common method bias (CMB) refers to the bias caused by common method variance (CMV). Common method variance mainly results from the false common variation between traits caused by using the same measurement tool, typically observed in data measured by self-report scales (Xiong et al., 2013). It primarily originates from using the same data collection method, respondent response tendencies, and characteristics of the items themselves (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Common method bias is a systematic error unrelated to the traits of the items, primarily stemming from the same data collection method and respondent response preferences, which may affect the validity of measurements (Simmering et al., 2015).

4.5.4 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Descriptive statistics provide the mean and standard deviation of each variable in the study, reflecting the distribution of variables in the surveyed sample. Correlation analysis, on the other hand, helps assess the direction and strength of the relationships between pairs of research variables. It serves as a preliminary test of the relationships between variables and lays the foundation for subsequent data regression analysis and hypothesis testing. The correlation coefficient "r" reflects the degree of linear correlation between variables, with absolute values ranging from 0 to 1. When |r| < 0.4, variables are weakly correlated; when 0.4 < |r| < 0.7, variables are moderately correlated; when |r| > 0.7, variables are highly correlated.

4.5.5 Test of mediation effect

Wen et al. (2022) summarized relevant methods for testing mediation effects in domestic research and suggested scholars use the stepwise method for initial testing. If the mediation effect is not significant, they can further employ the Bootstrap method to test the mediation effect. The stepwise method, also known as the joint significance method, is a way to test the

product of indirect coefficients. The specific testing procedure involves executing the following test equations (Equation 4.1 and Equation 4.2), sequentially testing the coefficient a in Equation (1) (testing H0: a = 0) and the coefficient b in Equation (2) (testing H0: b = 0). If both coefficients a and b are significant (a $\neq$ 0 and b $\neq$ 0), it is sufficient to conclude that the mediation effect ab is significant (ab $\neq$ 0).

$$M=aX+\varepsilon\_1 \tag{4.1}$$

$$Y=cX+bM+\varepsilon\_2 \tag{4.2}$$

The regression coefficient a in Equation 4.1 represents the effect of the independent variable X on the mediator variable M. The regression coefficient b in Equation 4.2 represents the effect of M on the dependent variable Y after controlling for the influence of X. The coefficient c represents the effect of X on Y after controlling for the influence of M. ε represents the residuals, assuming that the residuals follow a normal distribution and are mutually independent.

4.5.6 Test of moderation effect

In accordance with the research conducted by Fang et al. (2022) on testing methods for moderation effects in domestic studies, when both the independent variable (X) and the moderating variable (Z) are continuous variables in Formula 4.3, the test for moderation effects can be analyzed through the following regression equation. If the regression coefficient β_3 is significant, it indicates a significant moderation effect.

$$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1 X+\beta_2 Z+\beta_3 XZ+\varepsilon \tag{4.3}$$

Y: Dependent Variable, representing the outcome variable in the study.

X: Independent Variable, representing the primary explanatory variable in the study.

Z: Moderator Variable, representing a third variable that influences the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

XZ: Interaction term between the independent variable and the moderator variable, representing the moderating effect.

β_0: Intercept, representing the expected value of the dependent variable when all independent and moderator variables are zero.

β_1: Regression coefficient of the independent variable, representing the direct effect of X on Y.

β_2: Regression coefficient of the moderator variable, representing the direct effect of Z on Y.

β_3: Regression coefficient of the interaction term, representing the magnitude of the moderating effect. If significant, it indicates a statistically significant moderating effect.

ε: Error term, representing the random error that the model fails to explain.

Chapter 5: Empirical Analysis and Results Discussion

5.1 Reliability and validity

The present study employed a questionnaire survey method to acquire primary data necessary for the research. To ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the data, it is imperative to conduct tests on the validity and reliability of the collected questionnaire data. Drawing on a substantial body of relevant literature, this study constructed a theoretical framework among research variables and designed a targeted survey questionnaire accordingly. Through the consolidation of the gathered valid data, the research identified a satisfactory fit between these data and the relationships among the research variables, with no instances of poor validity or reliability observed. Nevertheless, to further ensure the relevance and effectiveness among the individual items within the variables, a more meticulous examination is still required.

5.1.1 Reliability

For most tests, calculating and reporting the Cronbach's coefficient is often sufficient to support the test of reliability. In this study, SPSS 26.0 software was employed for reliability analysis of the data collected. The reliability analysis results for the data in this study are presented in Table 5.2. The Cronbach's coefficients for turnover intention, upward mobility of departing employees, episodic envy, surface similarity, conscientiousness, perceived external job opportunities, relationship strength, and organizational commitment range from 0.763 to 0.968, all exceeding 0.7. This indicates that the eight variables selected in this study are within the high reliability range, and the measured results are stable and reliable.

Table 5.1 Cronbach's α results

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Turnover intention (T1 T3)	4	0.763
Departing colleagues' upward mobility (T1 T2)	7	0.918
Episodic envy (T1 T3)	10	0.957
Surface similarity (T1 T2)	7	0.897
Conscientiousness (T1 T3)	12	0.953
Perception of external job opportunities (T1 T3)	11	0.949
Relationship strength (T1 T2)	7	0.907
Organizational commitment (T1 T3)	9	0.968

5.1.2 Validity

Given that the measurement scales used in this study are derived from mature scales developed in previous research, and have been extensively applied and tested, the measurement scales selected in this study can ensure the content validity of the scales.

Regarding structural validity, this study employed AMOS 26.0 software for confirmatory factor analysis to examine the structural validity of each scale. Additionally, this study compared the validity of the eight-factor model with seven competing models to better examine the discriminant validity of the eight-factor model. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.2 CFA results

Model	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI	CFI
8 factors	2.858	0.050	0.048	0.917	0.922
7 factors	4.291	0.066	0.096	0.853	0.861
6 factors	4.713	0.070	0.107	0.834	0.843
5 factors	5.739	0.079	0.115	0.789	0.799
4 factors	7.933	0.096	0.147	0.691	0.705
3 factors	9.545	0.106	0.169	0.619	0.636
2 factors	11.349	0.117	0.192	0.539	0.559
1 factor	13.506	0.203	0.129	0.443	0.466

Note：N=756

The basic hypothesis model is the eight-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees, episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities, turnover intention, surface similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, organizational commitment). The seven competing models include the seven-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities, turnover intention, surface similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, organizational commitment), six-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention, surface similarity, relationship strength, conscientiousness, organizational commitment), five-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention, surface similarity + relationship strength, conscientiousness, organizational commitment), four-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention, surface similarity + relationship strength, conscientiousness + organizational commitment), three-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention, surface similarity + relationship strength + conscientiousness + organizational commitment), two-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy +

perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention, surface similarity + relationship strength + conscientiousness + organizational commitment), and one-factor model (upward mobility of departing employees + episodic envy + perceived external job opportunities + turnover intention + surface similarity + relationship strength + conscientiousness + organizational commitment). The results indicate that the eight-factor model in this study has $\chi^2/df = 2.858 < 3$, RMSEA $= 0.050 < 0.08$, SRMR $= 0.048 < 0.08$, TLI $= 0.917 > 0.90$, and CFI $= 0.922 > 0.90$. All fit indices are ideal and significantly better than the seven alternative competing models. Therefore, the eight-factor model in this study demonstrates good validity, supporting further analysis.

5.2 Common method bias testing

To minimize common method bias, this study diversified data collection methods during the research design. Two collection methods were employed: on-site paper-based questionnaire collection and online questionnaire collection through the Wenjuanxing platform. This was done to reduce the impact of systematic errors resulting from using the same data collection method. Additionally, to prevent potential systematic errors caused by respondent response biases, the study sample included employees from various industry sectors, dispersed across multiple provinces and cities in China. However, these measures cannot completely eliminate common method bias, and therefore, it is necessary to test whether there is a significant issue of common method bias in the research data before conducting data analysis.

5.3 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

In this study, SPSS 26.0 software was used to calculate the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficients for the 15 variables involved in the research design, as shown in Table 5.4 and Table 5.5. From Table 5.5, it can be observed that upward mobility of departing colleagues is significantly positively correlated with episodic envy (r = 0.15, p < 0.01), and episodic envy is significantly positively correlated with turnover intention (r = 0.16, p < 0.01). Upward mobility of departing colleagues is also significantly positively correlated with perceived external job opportunities (r = 0.22, p < 0.01), and perceived external job opportunities are significantly positively correlated with turnover intention (r = 0.13, p < 0.01). These findings provide preliminary support for H 1, H5, and H6 in this study.

Table 5.3 Mean and SD of variables

	M	SD
2 age (T1 T2 T3)	2.53	0.70
3 education level (T1 T2 T3)	1.80	0.57
4 position (T1 T2 T3)	1.26	0.58
5 tenure (T1 T2 T3)	2.13	0.77
6 job satisfaction (T1 T2)	3.17	0.61
7 social desirability (T1 T2)	3.73	0.58
8 turnover intention (T1 T3)	3.41	0.56
9 upward mobility (T1 T2)	3.33	0.66
10 episodic envy (T1 T3)	3.51	0.46
11 surface similarity (T1 T2)	3.42	0.46
12 conscientiousness (T1 T3)	3.94	0.55
13 perception of external job opportunities (T1 T3)	3.18	0.60
14 relationship strength (T1 T2)	3.16	0.74
15 organizational commitment (T1 T3)	3.67	0.62

Table 5.4 Correlation between variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. gender														
2. age	-0.14**													
3. education level	-0.03	-0.01												
4. position	-0.20**	0.42**	0.22**											
5. tenure	-0.03	0.25**	0.16**	0.09										
6. job satisfaction	0.01	-0.13**	0.15**	-0.06	-0.04									
7. social desirability	0.02	0.10**	0.04	0.10**	-0.01	0.15**								
8. turnover intention	0.00	-0.05	0.01	0.02	-0.07	0.06	0.17**							
9. upward mobility	0.00	0.06	0.15**	0.12**	0.02	0.40**	0.26**	0.09*						
10. envy	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	0.08	0.08*	0.14**	0.16**	0.15**					
11. surface similarity	-0.05	0.03	0.12**	0.08*	-0.03	0.36**	0.28**	-0.01	0.49**	0.21**				
12. conscientiousness	-0.02	0.06	0.00	0.10**	-0.03	0.02	0.11**	0.36**	0.06	0.23**	0.03			
13. PECO	-0.03	-0.06	0.16**	0.09*	-0.08	0.20**	0.07*	0.13**	0.22**	0.10**	0.21**	0.10**		
14. relationship strength	-0.05	0.10**	0.09*	0.14**	-0.09	0.35**	0.22**	0.03	0.46**	0.09*	0.43**	0.07	0.09*	
15. organizational commitment	0.02	0.07	0.01	0.09*	-0.02	-0.01	0.16**	0.35**	0.15**	0.17**	0.04	0.34**	0.16**	0.12*

5.4 Hypotheses testing

5.4.1 Test of the direct effect of upward mobility of departing colleagues on envy of remaining employees

The test of direct effects can use the hierarchical enter method, entering the variables into the regression equation in order of their importance to test the direct effect of upward mobility of departing colleagues on episodic envy. The regression results are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.5 Regression test of hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2

Variable	Episodic Envy		Turnover Intention
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	2.992***(0.159)	2.919***(0.159)	2.423***(0.235)
Gender	-0.023(0.034)	-0.025(0.034)	-0.009(0.041)
Age	-0.03(0.027)	-0.034(0.027)	-0.054(0.033)
Education Level	-0.046(0.031)	-0.053(0.03)	-0.001(0.037)
Position	-0.015(0.033)	-0.023(0.033)	0.033(0.04)
Tenure	0.064*(0.032)	0.064*(0.032)	-0.048(0.039)
Job Satisfaction	0.05(0.028)	0.015(0.03)	0.005(0.037)
Social Desirability	0.110***(0.029)	0.092**(0.029)	0.139***(0.036)
Upward Mobility		0.086**(0.028)	0.023(0.035)
Episodic Envy			0.164***(0.045)
R^2	0.034	0.046	0.054
ΔR^2	0.034	0.012	0.054
F	3.752**	4.470***	4.705**

Note: * means p<0.05, ** means p<0.01, *** means p<0.001; standard errors are in parentheses.

From Table 5.6, Model 1 includes all control variables (gender, age, education level, position, tenure, job satisfaction, and social approval) to test the regression results for the dependent variable (episodic envy). Model 2 adds the independent variable (upward mobility of departing colleagues) on top of Model 1. The results show that upward mobility of departing colleagues has a significant positive impact on the episodic envy of remaining employees (b = 0.086, p < 0.01). Additionally, with the inclusion of upward mobility of departing colleagues in the regression model, the increase in R² is 0.012. The new regression equation can explain the increased variability in the dependent variable (episodic envy), indicating a more ideal fit between the model and the data. Furthermore, the variance inflation factors (VIF) in the model are all below 10 (Ma, 2008), indicating the absence of severe common method bias.

Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which posits a positive correlation between upward mobility of departing colleagues and episodic envy of remaining employees, is validated.

Therefore, according to the stepwise method, from Table 5.6, it can be observed that in

Model 2, upward mobility of departing colleagues is significantly positively correlated with episodic envy, with a coefficient (a) of 0.086 (p < 0.01). In Model 3, episodic envy is significantly positively correlated with turnover intention, with a coefficient (b) of 0.164 (p < 0.001). Thus, the mediation effect of episodic envy is significant. However, one limitation of the stepwise method is that it does not provide confidence intervals for ab. Therefore, this study will further use the Bootstrap method to test the mediation effect.

5.4.2 Episodic envy's mediating effect test

This study utilized the PROCESS plugin (Model 4, simple mediation model) in SPSS 26.0 for Bootstrap testing. The mediation effect of episodic envy in the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and turnover intention was tested, while controlling for gender, age, education level, position, tenure, job satisfaction, and social approval. The sampling was set to 5000 times, and a 95% confidence interval level for the Bootstrap sampling standard was established. If the indirect effect of episodic envy on the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and turnover intention does not include 0 at the 95% confidence interval level, then the mediation effect is considered established.

The Bootstrap test results are shown in Table 5.7, indicating that the 95% confidence interval for the mediation effect of episodic envy is [0.004, 0.028], which does not include 0. This implies that the mediation effect of episodic envy is established. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which posits that upward mobility of departing colleagues has a positive indirect impact on turnover intention through episodic envy of remaining employees, is supported.

Table 5.6 Hypothesis 2 Bootstrap test

	Effect	BootSE	BootLL95%CI	BootUL95%CI
Total effect	0.037	0.035	-0.032	0.105
Direct effect	0.023	0.035	-0.046	0.091
Episodic envy as the mediator	0.014	0.006	0.004	0.028

5.4.3 Surface similarity's moderating effect test

Following Fang et al.'s (2022) research on moderation effect testing, this study employed SPSS26.0 for regression analysis to examine the moderating role of surface similarity. The results are presented in Table 5.8, where Model 2 incorporates the standardized interaction term between upward mobility of departing colleagues and surface similarity on top of Model 1. This interaction term is significantly positively correlated with turnover intention (b=0.097, p<0.05), indicating a significant moderating effect of surface similarity. Furthermore, this study conducted Bootstrap testing using the PROCESS plugin (Model 1 Simple Moderation

Model), as shown in Table 5.9, providing additional evidence supporting the significant moderating effect of surface similarity. Different levels of surface similarity were depicted based on one standard deviation above and below the mean, creating a moderation effect graph for the change in envy caused by departing colleagues' upward mobility, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. As surface similarity increases, the slope of the relationship between departing colleagues' upward mobility and envy becomes steeper, suggesting that higher surface similarity enhances the promoting effect of departing colleagues' upward mobility on envy among retained employees. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, asserting that surface similarity positively moderates the relationship between departing colleagues' upward mobility and envy, is validated.

Table 5.7 Hypothesis 3 moderating effect test

Variable	Episodic Envy	
	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	$2.641^{***}(0.173)$	$2.793^{***}(0.188)$
Gender	$-0.017(0.034)$	$-0.017(0.033)$
Age	$-0.035(0.026)$	$-0.035(0.026)$
Education Level	$-0.057(0.03)$	$-0.055(0.03)$
Position	$-0.025(0.032)$	$-0.022(0.032)$
Tenure	$0.067^{*}(0.031)$	$0.068^{*}(0.031)$
Job Satisfaction	$-0.009(0.03)$	$-0.024(0.031)$
Social Desirability	$0.071^{*}(0.029)$	$0.069^{*}(0.029)$
Upward Mobility	$0.043(0.03)$	$0.03(0.031)$
Surface Similarity	$0.168^{***}(0.043)$	$0.145^{**}(0.044)$
Upward Mobility×Surface Similarity		$0.097^{*}(0.048)$
R^2	0.065	0.070
ΔR^2	0.065	0.005
F	5.765^{***}	5.620^{***}

Note: * means $p<0.05$, ** means $p<0.01$, *** means $p<0.001$; standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 5.8 Hypothesis 3 Bootstrap test

	Effect	BootSE	BootLL95%CI	BootUL95%CI
High surface similarity (+1SD)	-0.011	0.040	-0.090	0.068
Middle surface similarity (M)	0.030	0.031	-0.030	0.090
Low surface similarity (-1SD)	0.074	0.034	0.009	0.140
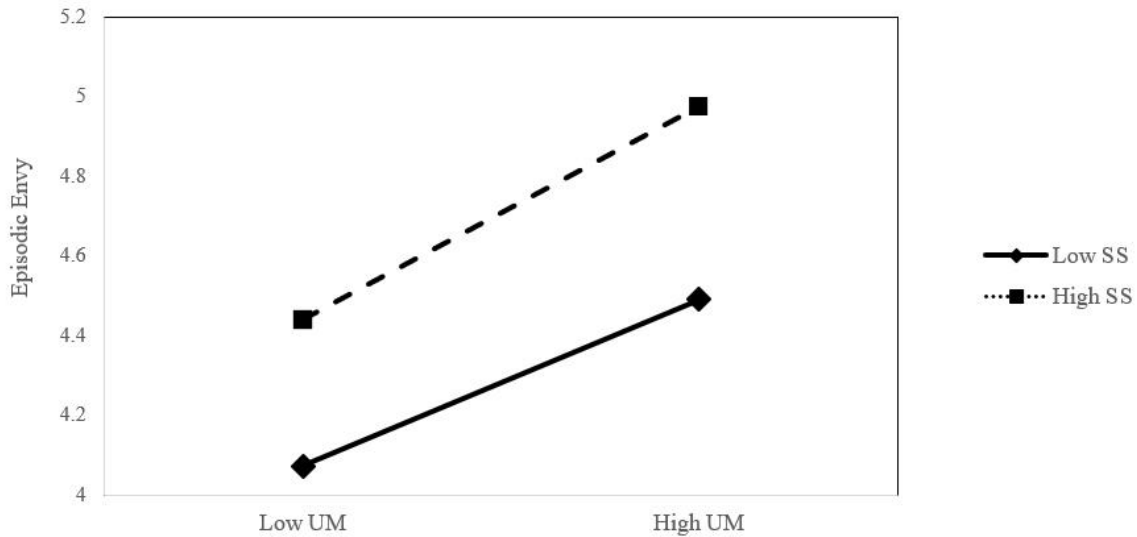
Figure 5.1 Surface similarity as the moderator

5.4.4 Conscientiousness's moderating effect test

Similar to the tests conducted for moderation effect hypotheses, this study employed SPSS26.0 for regression analysis to examine the moderating role of conscientiousness. The results are presented in Table 5.10. Model 1 indicates a significant positive correlation between envy and turnover intention (b=0.167, p<0.001). However, in both Model 2 and Model 3, after introducing the moderating variable (conscientiousness) and the interaction term (envy × conscientiousness), the coefficient for the interaction term is not significant (b=0.072, p>0.05), indicating that conscientiousness does not significantly moderate the relationship between envy and turnover intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 4, suggesting a negative moderating effect of conscientiousness in the relationship between envy and turnover intention, is rejected.

Table 5.9 Hypothesis 4 moderating effect test

Variable	Turnover Intention		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	$2.433^{***}(0.234)$	$1.509^{***}(0.241)$	$1.506^{***}(0.241)$
Gender	-0.008(0.041)	-0.009(0.039)	-0.01(0.039)
Age	-0.053(0.033)	-0.06(0.031)	-0.058(0.031)
Education Level	0.001(0.037)	0.004(0.035)	0.006(0.035)
Position	0.035(0.04)	0.006(0.038)	0.005(0.038)
Tenure	-0.048(0.039)	-0.035(0.037)	-0.035(0.037)
Job Satisfaction	0.014(0.034)	0.014(0.032)	0.015(0.032)
Social Desirability	$0.144^{***}(0.035)$	$0.121^{***}(0.033)$	$0.122^{***}(0.033)$
Episodic Envy	$0.167^{***}(0.045)$	0.076(0.043)	0.077(0.043)
Conscientiousness		$0.343^{***}(0.036)$	$0.338^{***}(0.036)$
Episodic Envy×Conscientiousness			0.072(0.074)
R^2	0.053	0.157	0.158
ΔR^2	0.053	0.104	0.001

F	5.248***	15.484***	14.03***

Note: * means $p<0.05$, ** means $p<0.01$, *** means $p<0.001$; standard errors are in parentheses.

In this study, conscientiousness refers to an individual's high achievement orientation and conscientiousness towards work. When an individual perceives that colleagues leaving the organization can secure better job opportunities, whether in terms of higher salaries or elevated job positions, continuing to stay may seem like stagnation with limited prospects for personal development. If choosing to leave, similar to colleagues, the individual might also find better job opportunities and achieve higher levels of success. Opting for resignation could be viewed as a more responsible choice for one's life and career, considering the potential for greater achievements. Therefore, based on these reasons, conscientiousness did not weaken the positive correlation between envy and turnover intention.

5.4.5 Direct effect test of upward mobility of departing colleagues on perceived external job opportunities

Similar to the direct effect test conducted for Hypothesis 1, the direct effect test for Hypothesis 5, which examines the relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and perceived external job opportunities, also employed the hierarchical entry method. The regression results are presented in Table 5.11. Model 1 includes all control variables (gender, age, education level, position, tenure, job satisfaction, and social approval) to test the regression results for the dependent variable (perceived external job opportunities). Model 2, built upon Model 1, introduces the independent variable (upward mobility of departing colleagues). The results reveal that the upward mobility of departing colleagues significantly and positively influences the perceived external job opportunities of retained employees (b=0.140, $p<0.001$). After adding the upward mobility of departing colleagues to the regression model, the increase in R^2 is 0.019. This suggests that the new regression equation better explains the variability in the dependent variable (perceived external job opportunities), indicating a more ideal fit between the model and the data. Additionally, the variance inflation factors (VIF) in the model are all below 10 (Ma, 2008), indicating the absence of serious common method bias. Therefore, Hypothesis 5, proposing a positive correlation between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and the perceived external job opportunities of retained employees, is supported.

Table 5.10 Hypothesis 5 direct effect test

Variable	Perception of external job opportunities	
	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	2.472***(0.203)	2.352***(0.204)
Gender	-0.032(0.044)	-0.036(0.043)
Age	-0.069*(0.034)	-0.077*(0.034)
Education level	0.122**(0.039)	0.11(0.039)
Position	0.099*(0.042)	0.085*(0.042)
Tenure	-0.063(0.041)	-0.064(0.04)
Job satisfaction	0.167***(0.036)	0.110**(0.038)
Social desirability	0.042(0.037)	0.013(0.037)
Upward mobility		0.140***(0.036)
R^2	0.072	0.091
Δr^2	0.072	0.019
F	8.339***	9.333***

Note: * means p<0.05, ** means p<0.01, *** means p<0.001; standard errors are in parentheses.

5.4.6 Direct effect test of perceived external job opportunities on turnover intention

Similar to the direct effect tests conducted earlier, the direct effect test for Hypothesis 6, examining the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intention, followed the hierarchical entry method. The regression results are presented in Table 5.12. Model 1 includes all control variables (gender, age, education level, position, tenure, job satisfaction, and social approval) to test the regression results for the dependent variable (turnover intention). Model 2, built upon Model 1, introduces the independent variable (perceived external job opportunities). The results indicate that perceived external job opportunities significantly and positively influence the turnover intention of retained employees (b=0.100, p<0.01). After adding perceived external job opportunities to the regression model, the increase in R² is 0.009. This suggests that the new regression equation better explains the variability in the dependent variable (turnover intention), indicating a more ideal fit between the model and the data. Similarly, the variance inflation factors (VIF) in the model are all below 10 (Ma, 2008), indicating the absence of serious common method bias. Therefore, Hypothesis 6, proposing a positive correlation between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intention of retained employees, is supported.

Table 5.11 Regression test of hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7

Variable	Turnover intention		
	Model1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	2.934***(0.195)	2.686***(0.212)	2.674***(0.213)
Gender	-0.012(0.042)	-0.009(0.041)	-0.009(0.042)
Age	-0.058(0.033)	-0.051(0.033)	-0.052(0.033)
Education level	-0.007(0.038)	-0.019(0.038)	-0.021(0.038)
Position	0.033(0.04)	0.023(0.04)	0.021(0.04)
Tenure	-0.037(0.039)	-0.031(0.039)	-0.031(0.039)
Job satisfaction	0.022(0.034)	0.005(0.035)	-0.004(0.037)

Social desirability	$0.162^{***}(0.035)$	$0.158^{***}(0.035)$	$0.153^{***}(0.036)$
Perception of external job opportunities		$0.100^{**}(0.035)$	$0.097^{**}(0.035)$
Departing colleagues' upward mobility			$0.023(0.035)$
R^2	0.035	0.046	0.046
Δr^2	0.035	0.009	0.000
F	3.908^{**}	4.487^{***}	4.033^{***}

Note: * means $p<0.05$, ** means $p<0.01$, *** means $p<0.001$; standard errors are in parentheses.

5.4.7 Mediation effect test of perceived external job opportunities

Following the sequential test method proposed by Wen et al. (2022) to examine Hypothesis 7, the test results are presented in Model 2 of Table 5.9 and Model 3 of Table 5.10. Model 2 in Table 5.9 indicates a significant positive correlation between turnover intention and perceived external job opportunities (b=0.140, p<0.001). Model 3 in Table 5.10 shows that perceived external job opportunities are significantly positively correlated with turnover intention (b=0.097, p<0.01). Combining the regression results from the two models, the mediation effect of perceived external job opportunities between turnover intention and the upward mobility of departing colleagues is significant.

To test the confidence interval of the mediation effect of perceived external job opportunities, this study further employed the Bootstrap method. Controlling for gender, age, education level, position, tenure, job satisfaction, and social approval, the mediation effect of perceived external job opportunities in the relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and turnover intention was tested. The PROCESS plugin's Model 4 (simple mediation model) was used, with 5000 iterations and a 95% confidence interval level for the bootstrap sampling standard. The Bootstrap test results are shown in Table 5.13, indicating that the 95% confidence interval of the mediation effect of perceived external job opportunities is [0.003, 0.028], excluding 0. This implies that the mediation effect of perceived external job opportunities is established. Therefore, Hypothesis 7, proposing a positive indirect impact of upward mobility of departing colleagues on turnover intention through perceived external job opportunities for retained employees, is supported.

Table 5.12 Hypothesis 7 Bootstrap test

	Effect	Bootse	Bootll95%CI	Bootul95%CI
Total effect	0.037	0.035	-0.032	0.105
Direct effect	0.023	0.035	-0.046	0.092
PECO as the mediator	0.014	0.007	0.003	0.028

5.4.8 Moderation effect test of relationship strength

Following the methodology used for testing the moderation effect in Hypothesis 3, the

moderation effect of relationship strength in Hypothesis 8 was examined through linear regression. If the regression coefficient of the moderation interaction term is significant for the dependent variable, the moderation effect is established. The test results are presented in Table 5.14, where Model 2 includes the standardized interaction term of upward mobility of departing colleagues and relationship strength on the basis of Model 1. The interaction term is significantly positively correlated with perceived external job opportunities (b=0.072, p<0.05), indicating a significant moderation effect of relationship strength. Furthermore, this study employed the PROCESS plugin (Model 1 simple moderation model) for Bootstrap testing, and the results are shown in Table 5.15, further confirming the significant moderation effect of relationship strength.

Table 5.13 Hypothesis 8 moderating effect test

Variable	PECO	
	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	$2.377^{***}(0.205)$	$2.449^{***}(0.207)$
Gender	-0.037(0.043)	-0.034(0.043)
Age	$-0.073^{*}(0.034)$	$-0.074^{*}(0.034)$
Education level	$0.110^{**}(0.039)$	$0.112^{**}(0.039)$
Position	$0.089^{*}(0.042)$	$0.087^{*}(0.042)$
Tenure	-0.067(0.04)	-0.064(0.04)
Job satisfaction	$0.121^{**}(0.039)$	$0.109^{**}(0.04)$
Social desirability	0.017(0.037)	0.001(0.038)
Upward mobility	$0.154^{***}(0.038)$	$0.159^{***}(0.038)$
Relationship strength	-0.039(0.033)	-0.043(0.033)
Upward mobility×relationship strength		$0.072^{*}(0.033)$
R^2	0.093	0.098
Δr^2	0.093	0.005
F	8.460^{***}	8.119^{***}

Note: * means p<0.05, ** means p<0.01, *** means p<0.001; standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 5.14 Hypothesis 8 Bootstrap test

	Effect	BootSE	BootLL95%CI	BootUL95%CI
High relationship strength (+1SD)	0.104	0.044	0.017	0.191
Middle relationship strength (M)	0.157	0.038	0.083	0.231
Low relationship strength (-1SD)	0.209	0.046	0.120	0.299

The moderation effect plot, depicted in Figure 5.2, illustrates that as relationship strength increases, the slope of the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and perceived external job opportunities becomes steeper. This indicates that the stronger the relationship between departing and retained employees, the more pronounced the facilitating effect of upward mobility on perceived external job opportunities for retained employees. Therefore, Hypothesis 8, proposing a positive moderating effect of relationship strength in the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and perceived external job opportunities, is supported.
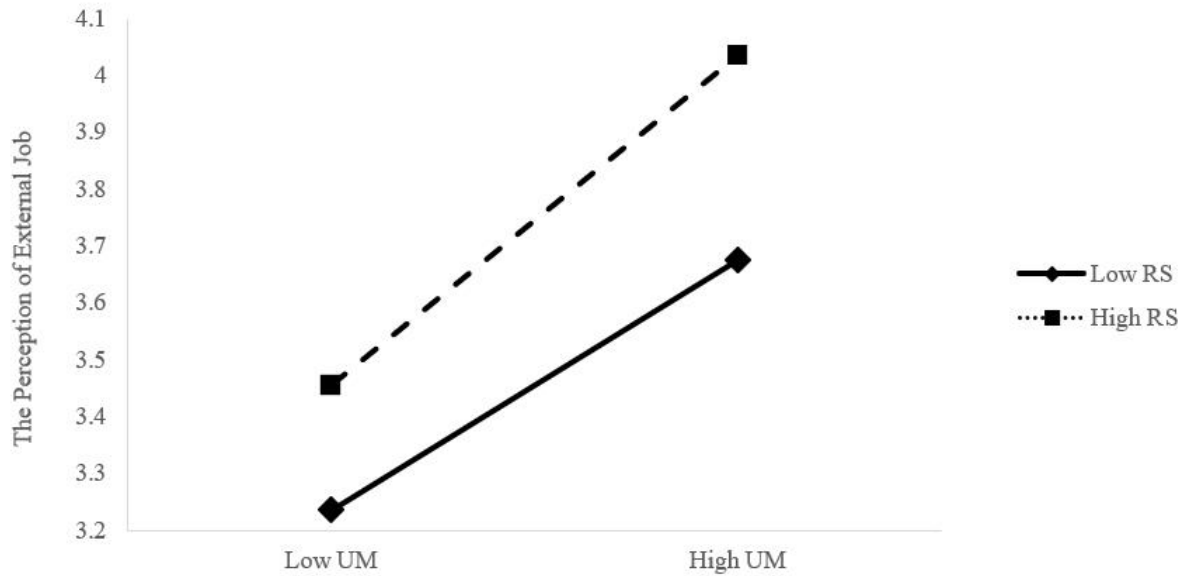
Figure 5.2 Relationship strength as the moderator

5.4.9 Moderation effect test of organizational commitment

Similar to the above-mentioned tests for moderation effects, the moderation effect of organizational commitment in Hypothesis 9 was examined through linear regression. If the regression coefficient of the moderation interaction term is significant for the dependent variable, the moderation effect is established. The test results are presented in Table 5.16, where Model 2 includes the centralized interaction term of perceived external job opportunities and organizational commitment on the basis of Model 1. The interaction term is significantly negatively correlated with turnover intention (b= -0.093, p<0.05), indicating a significant moderation effect of organizational commitment. Furthermore, this study employed the PROCESS plugin (Model 1 simple moderation model) for Bootstrap testing, and the results are shown in Table 5.17, further confirming the significant moderation effect of organizational commitment.

Table 5.15 Hypothesis 9 moderating effect test

Variable	Turnover intention		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	1.925***(0.217)	1.888***(0.217)	0.8***(0.605)
Gender	-0.024(0.039)	-0.024(0.039)	-0.024(0.039)
Age	-0.063*(0.031)	-0.061*(0.031)	-0.061*(0.031)
Education level	-0.013(0.036)	-0.014(0.036)	-0.014(0.036)
Position	0.008(0.038)	0.006(0.038)	0.006(0.038)
Tenure	-0.028(0.037)	-0.028(0.037)	-0.028(0.037)
Job satisfaction	0.019(0.033)	0.023(0.033)	0.023(0.033)
Social desirability	0.112**(0.034)	0.109**(0.034)	0.109**(0.034)
Perception of external job opportunities	0.051(0.033)	0.079*(0.036)	0.422*(0.189)

Organizational commitment	0.294***(0.032)	0.282***(0.032)	0.578***(0.146)
Perception of external job opportunities×organizational commitment		-0.093*(0.047)	-0.093*(0.047)
R^2	0.145	0.150	0.150
Δr^2	0.145	0.005	0.005
F	14.06***	13.100***	13.100***

Note: * means p<0.05, ** means p<0.01, *** means p<0.001; standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 5.16 Hypothesis 9 Bootstrap test

	Effect	BootSE	BootLL95%CI	BootUL95%CI
High organizational commitment(+1SD)	0.137	0.055	0.030	0.244
Middle organizational commitment(M)	0.079	0.036	0.008	0.150
Low organizational commitment(-1SD)	0.021	0.037	-0.051	0.093

The moderation effect plot, depicted in Figure 5.3, illustrates that as organizational commitment decreases, the slope of the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intention becomes steeper. This indicates that the lower the organizational commitment of retained employees, the more pronounced the facilitating effect of perceived external job opportunities on their turnover intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 9, proposing a negative moderating effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between perceived external job opportunities and turnover intention, is supported.
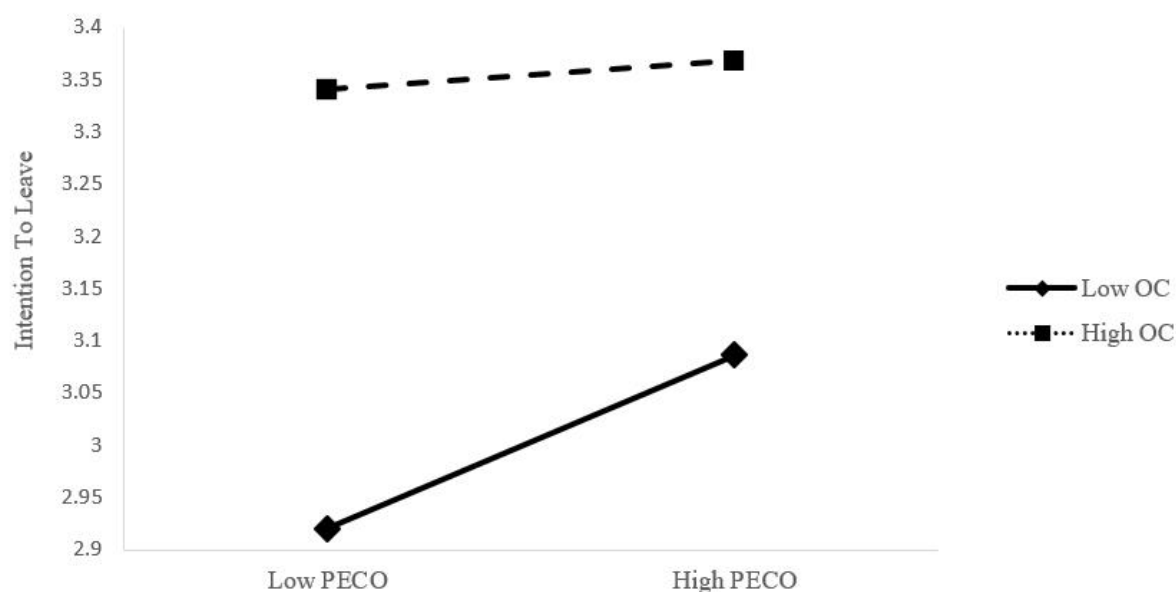
Figure 5.3 Organizational commitment as the moderator

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, building upon the research design outlined in the previous chapter, data

analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 software. The hypotheses proposed earlier were examined. Firstly, reliability and validity analyses were performed on the paired questionnaire data, confirming the trustworthiness of the collected data. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the eight-factor model proposed in the research design had the best fit. Secondly, common method bias was assessed using the Harman's single-factor test and the control for unmeasured latent method factors, confirming the absence of severe common method bias issues in the collected data.

Next, descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted, providing preliminary support for some of the direct effect hypotheses proposed in this study. Finally, through hierarchical regression and Bootstrap methods, the study further tested the direct effect hypotheses, mediating effect hypotheses, and moderating effect hypotheses. The results of the hypothesis tests are summarized in Table 5.18. Except for Hypothesis 4, all other hypotheses proposed in this study received support.

Table 5.17 Hypotheses testing results

No.	Hypotheses	Result
H1	The upward mobility of departing colleagues is positively correlated with envy among remaining employees.	Supported
H2	Departing colleagues' upward mobility has a positive indirect impact on the intention to leave among remaining employees through the mediation of envy.	Supported
H3	Surface similarity positively moderates the relationship between departing colleagues' upward mobility and envy.	Supported
H4	Conscientiousness negatively moderates the relationship between envy and the intention to leave.	Rejected.
H5	Departing colleagues' upward mobility is positively correlated with the perception of external job opportunities among remaining employees.	Supported
H6	The perception of external job opportunities is positively correlated with the intention to leave among remaining employees.	Supported
H7	The perception of external job opportunities mediates the relationship between departing colleagues' upward mobility and the intention to leave among remaining employees.	Supported
H8	Relationship strength positively moderates the relationship between departing colleagues' upward mobility and the perception of external job opportunities among remaining employees.	Supported
H9	Organizational commitment negatively moderates the relationship between the perception of external job opportunities and the intention to leave among remaining employees.	Supported

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Outlook

In this study, through a series of rigorous academic procedures including problem formulation, literature review, theoretical framework construction, scale development, questionnaire design and implementation, as well as data analysis and processing, we comprehensively investigated the impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intentions of retained employees. The objective of this chapter is to systematically summarize the key findings of this research, present the research outcomes clearly, and extract important supplements to existing theories as well as profound insights for organizational management practices. Additionally, this chapter will objectively point out the limitations encountered during the research process and explore possible directions for future research based on these limitations.

6.1 Research discussion and conclusions

Based on social comparison theory, this study constructed a multidimensional research framework and hypotheses regarding the impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intentions of retained employees, integrating literature research and theoretical deduction. The study involved employees from over 30 different industries and types of enterprises nationwide, with 756 valid sample collected through three-stage questionnaire surveys and paired questionnaire methods. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 software, and the proposed hypotheses were tested, leading to insightful conclusions.

Firstly, in this study, we thoroughly investigated the positive impact mechanism of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intentions of retained employees. Through systematic analysis and research, this study found that episodic envy played a mediating role in this impact process, while the superficial similarity between retained employees and departing colleagues had a moderating effect on this phenomenon. Specifically, when colleagues achieved career advancement through departure, this upward mobility success experience often triggered episodic envy among retained employees. Retained employees might feel that their career development lagged behind that of their colleagues due to their colleagues' career success, thereby generating a state of episodic envy. This emotional response not only affected the psychological state of retained employees but also possibly further enhanced their turnover intentions. Additionally, this study found that the superficial

similarity between retained employees and departing colleagues had a positive moderating effect on the relationship between colleague upward mobility and episodic envy. Superficial characteristics such as educational background and work experience are aspects easily observed and compared among employees. When retained employees had a higher degree of similarity with departing colleagues in these characteristics, they were more likely to compare their colleagues' career success with their own, thereby intensifying the emotional experience of episodic envy. This intensified emotional experience further reinforced the positive impact of colleague upward mobility on the turnover intentions of retained employees. This finding aligns with existing social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), attribution theory (Heider, 1946), and emotional contagion theory (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Social comparison theory suggests that individuals tend to evaluate their own worth and status through comparison with others, and colleague upward mobility, as a clear social comparison object, easily triggers emotional responses among retained employees. Attribution theory explains how retained employees interpret the reasons for colleague upward mobility, thus influencing their emotions and behavior. Emotional contagion theory emphasizes the spread and diffusion of emotions among individuals, and the episodic envy triggered by colleague upward mobility may spread among retained employees through the mechanism of emotional contagion.

In the analysis of this study, this study observed patterns consistent with those identified by Z. Y. Wang et al. (2015), specifically that the degree of similarity in superficial characteristics between colleagues who leave for upward mobility and those who remain significantly affects the emotional experience of the remaining employees. Specifically, when remaining employees share high similarity in superficial traits such as educational level and career history with departing colleagues, they exhibit stronger emotional responses to the career advancements of these colleagues, a reaction defined in psychology as episodic envy. Further research found a positive correlation between the intensification of these emotions and an increase in the departure intentions of the remaining employees. This finding not only validates previous research conclusions but also provides new empirical support for understanding the socio-psychological mechanisms behind employee departure behavior. Additionally, this study further revealed the mediating role of episodic envy, aligning with the research on envy classification and its impact on individual behavior (Crusius et al., 2020). Their perspective on envy classification, particularly the theoretical discussions centered on episodic envy, offers a solid theoretical foundation for a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms that drive remaining employees' departure intentions due to upward movements of departing colleagues.

Secondly, this study delved into the significant positive impact of colleagues' departures for upward mobility on the departure intentions of remaining employees. The results indicate that the remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities plays a mediating role in this process. Specifically, when remaining employees learn that their colleagues have achieved career development through departure, it triggers their awareness of external job opportunities, which in turn intensifies their departure intentions. Additionally, this study discovered that the strength of the relationship between remaining employees and departing colleagues positively moderates the link between colleagues' upward mobility and the remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities. That is, when the relationship between remaining employees and departing colleagues is close, the departure for upward mobility is more likely to stimulate the remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities, thereby enhancing their intention to leave. Meanwhile, organizational commitment negatively moderates the relationship between the perception of external job opportunities and departure intentions among remaining employees. This means that the higher the remaining employees' commitment to the organization, the lower their intention to leave, even if they perceive external job opportunities.

The conclusions of this study show that colleagues' departures for upward mobility have a significant positive effect on the departure intentions of remaining employees, consistent with the findings of a positive correlation between employees' perception of external job opportunities and their departure intentions (Maertz Jr & Campion, 2004). This study also found that this process is mediated by the remaining employees' perception of external job opportunities, in line with the findings of the importance of perceived external job opportunities in the departure process (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Furthermore, the results are consistent with the research of W. Huang et al. (2022), who proposed that perceived employability mediates the relationship between colleagues' upward mobility and employees' departure intentions from the perspective of social comparison theory. Additionally, this study found that organizational commitment plays a moderating role in the formation of departure intentions, aligning with the protective effect of organizational commitment on employee departure behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

In this study, some hypotheses were not confirmed. Hypothesis 4 (H4), which posited that conscientiousness negatively moderates the relationship between episodic envy and intention to leave among remaining employees, was not supported. The results of this study are inconsistent with some studies (Mishra, 2009); at the same time, they are also inconsistent with the results of He's (2008) study that "there is a negative correlation between employees'

sense of conscientiousness and turnover intention". The reason may be that their studies all studied sense of conscientiousness as an independent variable, while this thesis studied it as a moderating variable.

In this study, a sense of conscientiousness refers to an individual's high achievement orientation and responsible attitude towards work (Mishra, 2009). When individuals discover that colleagues who leave obtain better job opportunities, whether it be higher pay or a more prestigious position, remaining in their current positions likely feels like stagnation, with little opportunity for advancement. If they choose to leave like their colleagues, they are likely to find better job opportunities and achieve higher success, which could be seen as a more responsible decision for their personal and professional lives. Therefore, based on these reasons, conscientiousness might not weaken the positive correlation between episodic envy and the intention to leave.

The findings of this study not only address the research questions posed in the first chapter's introduction but also provide specific guidance and insights for management practice.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This thesis delves into the impact mechanisms of colleagues' upward mobility on the turnover intentions of remaining employees. Within the framework of Social Comparison Theory, this thesis exhaustively explores the mediating roles of episodic envy and the perception of external job opportunities in this relationship, further solidifying the effectiveness of this theoretical perspective through empirical research, and providing a new theoretical lens for explaining individuals' departure decisions. This study extends the empirical research on cognition and emotion proposed by Crusius et al. (2022) that social comparison not only affects cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior, but is also influenced by cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors.

Moreover, this study systematically analyzes the mediating effects of episodic envy and the perception of external career opportunities between colleagues' upward mobility and the turnover intentions of remaining employees, deeply investigating the indirect connections between employee mobility and turnover intentions, revealing their complexity and dynamism. Additionally, this thesis conducts an in-depth analysis of the moderating factors affecting the turnover intentions of remaining employees. The theoretical contributions of this thesis can be summarized in the following four areas:

First, the thesis makes a significant theoretical contribution by deeply investigating the impact of colleagues' upward mobility on the turnover intentions of remaining employees. Existing research mainly studies the impact of colleague turnover on the turnover intention of retained employees from the perspectives of social comparison (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2016), attribution theory (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2014), emotional contagion (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2015), and perceived job opportunities (Pi, 2017). Specifically, it innovatively integrates the emotional perspective of "episodic envy" and the cognitive perspective of "perception of external job opportunities" as dual mediating variables, constructing a new research framework. This framework not only encompasses the cognitive processes inherent in social comparison but also delves into the associated psychological and emotional mechanisms, providing a richer perspective for comprehensively understanding this phenomenon. Although many scholars have explored the impact of colleague departure on remaining employees in previous studies, few have conducted in-depth exploration from both emotional and cognitive dimensions simultaneously. Therefore, this study theoretically fills this gap, offering the academic community new perspectives and approaches. This innovative method, which considers both cognitive processes and emotional responses within Social Comparison Theory, proposes a novel research approach. In existing literature, such a multidimensional research perspective has not been widely explored, thus highlighting the innovativeness and foresightedness of this study. Through this approach, the study not only provides new empirical support for Social Comparison Theory but also offers a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding employee turnover behavior. It reminds us that when studying employee turnover intentions, we should not overlook the two interconnected and important factors of emotion and cognition. This theoretical contribution not only enriches the field of study on employee turnover behavior but also provides new directions and theoretical foundations for future research.

Second, this thesis extends the application of Social Influence Theory in the field of turnover management. Social Influence Theory emphasizes that individual behavior is influenced by the actions of others, and this study provides a new perspective on how emotional responses can act as mediating variables affecting departure decisions (Festinger, 1954). By applying Social Influence Theory to the domain of turnover management, the study found that the upward mobility of departing colleagues can trigger episodic envy among remaining employees, thereby increasing their intention to leave. This finding enriches Social Influence Theory, especially in explaining the emotional factors in the employee departure decision process; it also deepens our understanding of the mechanism of action of Social

Influence Theory in the field of turnover management, offering organizations a new perspective for preventing employee attrition. Furthermore, when remaining employees have a high level of surface-level similarity with departing colleagues, they are more likely to experience episodic envy, thereby intensifying their propensity to leave. The positive moderating role of surface-level similarity further illustrates the importance of individual characteristics in the social comparison process, echoing the principle of similarity within Social Influence Theory (Tesser, 1988). This finding expands the boundaries of Social Influence Theory, revealing the significant role of similarity in the social influence process.

The research findings demonstrate that the perception of external job opportunities by remaining employees mediates the relationship between colleagues' upward mobility and their intention to leave, while organizational commitment plays a negative moderating role in this process. This discovery extends the application of Social Influence Theory within organizational behavior, especially in understanding how employees make departure decisions based on external environments and internal organizational factors. The concept of organizational commitment is a key variable in Social Influence Theory, affecting employees' loyalty to and willingness to stay with an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Through empirical analysis, this study provides new theoretical support for understanding how organizational commitment influences employees' perceptions of external opportunities and their departure decisions.

The findings of this thesis indicate that the perception of external job opportunities by remaining employees acts as a mediator between colleagues' upward mobility and their intention to leave, while organizational commitment serves a negative moderating role in this process. This discovery broadens the application of Social Influence Theory in the field of organizational behavior, particularly in understanding how employees base their departure decisions on external environments and internal organizational factors. The concept of organizational commitment is a pivotal variable within Social Influence Theory, impacting employees' loyalty and retention intentions towards an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Through empirical analysis, this study offers new theoretical support for comprehending how organizational commitment affects employees' perceptions of external opportunities and their decisions to leave.

Third, building on Social Comparison Theory, the study identified a positive correlation between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and episodic envy among remaining employees, with this episodic envy having a positive indirect impact on the remaining employees' intentions to leave. This research result directly responds to the suggestions of Z.

Y. Wang et al. (2014) and Z. Y. Wang et al. (2016 that future research should add personal characteristic variables, such as emotions, the Big Five personality model, self-esteem, and other more variables to study turnover intention, thereby enriching the research on turnover issues under the social comparison theory. Moreover, the study revealed a positive moderating role of surface-level similarity in the relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and episodic envy. By applying concepts of social comparison theory and episodic envy from the field of social psychology to organizational behavior, the thesis not only expands the research scope of organizational behavior but also provides a new theoretical lens for explaining organizational phenomena such as employee turnover intentions. This interdisciplinary endeavor enriches the related theories and offers valuable insights for organizational management and employee motivation in practice (Festinger, 1954; E. R. Smith & Collins, 2009). Furthermore, through empirical testing, the thesis found a positive moderating role of surface-level similarity in the relationship between the upward mobility of departing colleagues and episodic envy. Employees with higher surface-level similarity are more likely to compare themselves to departing colleagues, thereby experiencing stronger feelings of episodic envy. This finding emphasizes the importance of individual characteristics in the social comparison process, providing new empirical evidence for the similarity principle within Social Comparison Theory (Brown et al., 2007) and enriches the study of the psychological mechanisms behind employee departure decisions.

Fourth, this study further explores the positive correlation between colleagues' upward mobility and the perception of external job opportunities by remaining employees, as well as the mediating role of this perception in the relationship between upward mobility of departing colleagues and the intention to leave. This study extends the findings of Usanova and Géraudel (2023) that when a colleague who is a friend leaves, the remaining employees are more sensitive to this decision, which will affect the retention decision of the remaining employees to a certain extent. In fact, the change in their relationship may be an important influencing factor. Additionally, the study discovered the moderating roles of relationship strength and organizational commitment in these relationships. These findings not only enrich the existing literature (P. L. Huang & Tian, 2006), but alo offer new explanatory pathways for theories of employee turnover and provide fresh perspectives on understanding the relationship between employees and organizations. They reveal how interpersonal relationships within the organization and individuals' emotional commitment to the organization influence employees' departure decisions. This exploration not only expands the boundaries of employee turnover theory but also enriches the connotations of Social

Comparison Theory, offering new theoretical contributions to the academic community (Hom et al., 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

6.3 Practical implications

In the introductory section of this research, we conducted an in-depth discussion on the real-world context of employee turnover and explained that, although employee turnover might have negative consequences for companies, from the perspective of the employee, it often represents a decision made based on individual career development planning. Accordingly, the outcomes of this study not only guide the personal career planning of employees but also provide significant reference value for corporations in their human resource management practices. For companies, an excessively high rate of voluntary employee turnover undoubtedly weakens overall performance, increases management costs, and might even cause potential harm to the company's long-term stable development. Employee turnover involves not only the loss of human capital but may also affect the operational efficiency and stability of the organizational culture (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Therefore, it is essential for companies to take proactive measures to prevent and reduce the voluntary departure of employees, ensuring the stability and efficient utilization of human capital. The research findings of this thesis offer important practical insights for organizational management and employee retention strategies, specifically in the following six areas.

First, organizations should be aware of the psychological impact that the upward mobility of departing colleagues may have on remaining employees, especially the negative emotions such as episodic envy. When colleagues opt for better career development opportunities, organizations need to take measures to alleviate the episodic envy of remaining employees, for example, by providing psychological support, strengthening communication, offering internal promotion opportunities, and enhancing employee career development planning. This way, remaining employees can feel valued and supported by the organization, ultimately helping them to mitigate negative emotions, reduce psychological imbalance triggered by individual career changes, and lower their intention to leave.

Second, organizations should pay attention to the mental health of their employees and manage the emotional reactions of remaining employees with similar backgrounds in a targeted manner. The research revealed the role of surface-level similarity in exacerbating episodic envy. Therefore, when dealing with remaining employees who have similar

backgrounds, companies should adopt effective communication and counseling measures, such as conducting psychological counseling and team-building activities, to alleviate the negative emotions caused by comparisons. At the same time, organizations can also offer psychological counseling and consultation services to help employees correctly face the pressures and challenges in work and life, reducing the impact of negative emotions like episodic envy on their intentions to leave. Organizations should also encourage positive interactions and collaboration among employees, creating an uplifting organizational atmosphere, thereby enhancing employees' sense of belonging and loyalty.

Third, organizations should be aware of remaining employees' perceptions of external job opportunities and actively manage the dissemination of information about external job opportunities. When remaining employees perceive better job opportunities elsewhere, they may develop an intention to leave. Additionally, since the success of departing colleagues can affect remaining employees' perceptions of external job opportunities, companies should proactively manage such information transfer to avoid amplifying its attractiveness to remaining employees. Therefore, organizations need to implement measures such as offering competitive compensation and benefits, a positive work environment, and atmosphere, to reduce remaining employees' perceptions of external job opportunities, thereby increasing their retention intention and loyalty.

Fourth, organizations should value and enhance employees' organizational commitment levels. Organizational commitment not only reflects employees' identification and sense of belonging to the organization but also directly affects their intentions to leave and job performance. Therefore, organizations should enhance employees' organizational commitment by formulating effective employee incentive policies, providing a good working environment and career development opportunities, and strengthening the construction of organizational culture. Using organizational commitment as a barrier can weaken the positive drive of employees' perceptions of external job opportunities towards their intention to leave. This will help reduce employee turnover rates and improve the stability and performance levels of the organization.

Fifth, organizations should leverage the positive effects of interpersonal network relationships. Given the positive moderating role of the relationship strength between remaining employees and departing colleagues in the process where departing colleagues achieve better career opportunities and remaining employees perceive external opportunities, businesses should actively build and maintain a healthy interpersonal network environment. They should encourage experience sharing and cooperation among employees while

preventing the negative impacts of excessive comparison, and instead, guide employees to learn from success stories to inspire their intrinsic growth motivation. Additionally, by sharing successful cases of exemplary departing employees, organizations can show remaining employees that it is also possible to realize personal value and achieve career success within the organization.

Sixth, organizations should establish effective employee retention mechanisms. By offering competitive compensation and benefits, promising career development prospects, and a supportive work environment, organizations can better meet the needs and expectations of their employees, reducing their intentions to leave. At the same time, organizations should regularly conduct job satisfaction surveys and turnover risk assessments among employees to promptly identify and address potential issues, improve employee retention rates and loyalty, thereby achieving sustainable organizational development.

6.4 Research limitations and future prospects

6.4.1 Limitations

Despite achieving some significant results and valuable insights both theoretically and practically, like any research facing complex questions, this study is limited by time, effort, and individual capacity. Hence, as with all empirical research, this study has certain limitations, providing space for further exploration in future research. Specifically, these limitations manifest in the following four areas:

First, the limitation of sample selection. Despite efforts to collect a diverse sample, due to various constraints, the questionnaire survey was conducted only in selected companies in Lhasa and Taiyuan, collecting 375 valid sample; for employees in other cities, data were collected online at two different time intervals, totaling 866 valid questionnaires. Due to the relatively limited number of cities covered, the range of industries involved, and the number of respondents, the sample did not comprehensively cover all industries and cities. This may affect the generalizability and applicability of the research data. Moreover, the study did not differentiate or control for the industry and nature of the companies in the collected sample, nor did it conduct comparative research. Therefore, future research should consider the regional characteristics and industry specifics of companies and aim to include a higher proportion of middle and senior management personnel in the survey sample. Also, the possibility of conducting comparative studies should be considered to gain a more

comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the factors related to employee turnover intentions.

Second, the limitation of the selection of control variables. Although this study controlled for job satisfaction and demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, education, tenure, and position) as well as the social desirability of the sample, other potential factors could influence employee turnover. For example, organizational-level factors (such as organizational climate and leadership (Palanski et al., 2014; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002) and job-level factors, such as compensation and promotion (Buttner & Lowe, 2017), may have an impact on employee turnover. These factors have been addressed in previous research but were not comprehensively considered in this study. Moreover, specific factors like low pay (Tekleab et al., 2005), abusive supervision (Palanski et al., 2014), unethical leadership (Cialdini et al., 2021), and a negative organizational climate (Shbail & Shbail, 2020) might also affect the relationship between employee upward mobility and turnover intentions. Therefore, future research must consider control variables more carefully and comprehensively. This not only helps to rule out explanations based on common third variables but also assists in determining whether colleagues' upward mobility is a causal trigger for remaining employees' intentions to leave.

Third, the limitation of variable measurement. This study's measurement of key concepts such as colleagues' upward mobility, episodic envy, perceived external job opportunities, and intention to leave primarily references the classic research findings from authoritative international journals in relevant fields to ensure the authority and reliability of conceptual definitions and measurement tools used in this research. However, it is important to note that the in-depth research and empirical testing of these concepts in the Chinese cultural context are still insufficient. Although this study uses mature scales from international research as measurement tools, it inevitably faces limitations related to culture, time, and language. Particularly, significant differences exist between Chinese traditional culture and Western culture in values and social customs. Although globalization may have mitigated these cultural differences, they could still impact and introduce errors into the research results. Moreover, the development of scales is an evolving process where the dynamic changes of numerous influencing factors might potentially affect the validity of research findings. Additionally, despite using back-translation to minimize translation errors, the inherent differences between Chinese and Western languages could still inevitably introduce some degree of interference in the data due to the conversion process between Eastern and Western thought patterns in discourse. Therefore, future research should focus on further developing

and perfecting scales and measurement tools adapted to the Chinese context to ensure the accuracy of measurement results and the reliability of research conclusions, thus providing a more solid and effective theoretical support and empirical evidence for research in the Chinese context.

Fourth, the limitation of data collection. This study uses a questionnaire survey method to collect data, which is primarily based on participants' subjective perceptions and retrospective recollections. However, this method may have limitations because data with strong subjectivity might not fully reflect objective reality, and retrospective recall could lead to memory biases or information distortion. These factors could affect the accuracy and reliability of the data to some extent, directly impacting the research results. Therefore, future research might need to consider using multiple data collection methods, such as a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the reliability and validity of the research.

Fifth, although most of the hypotheses proposed in this study (except H4) were verified, there are still some limitations. The R^2 value in this study is relatively low, and the explanatory power of the model is relatively small. The model explains part of the variation in the dependent variable, and there are other factors to be studied. Future research should consider introducing more potential explanatory variables to improve the explanatory power of the model.

6.4.2 Future prospects

In research concerning the impact of departing colleagues on the resignation intentions of remaining employees, future studies could expand in the following areas:

First, this thesis focuses on exploring the influence of upward mobility of departing colleagues on the resignation intentions of remaining employees but does not sufficiently consider other factors that may affect resignation intentions, such as salary, work environment. Additionally, it would be beneficial to include these factors in the research model, such as salary, work environment, work pressure to further refine the model.

Second, this thesis does not detail the specific types of upward mobility of departing colleagues, such as promotions or job adjustments, which may affect the accuracy of the results. Future studies could differentiate the specific types of upward mobility to more accurately reveal their impact on the resignation intentions of remaining employees.

Third, although the colleague departures discussed in this thesis refer to voluntary

resignations, the types of voluntary resignations were not detailed. In the research on employee departure behaviors, Dalton et al. (1982) introduced the concepts of "functional turnover" and "dysfunctional turnover" based on an organization's assessment of employee departures. These two types of turnover significantly differ in their potential impact on the organization. Functional turnover generally refers to situations where an employee chooses to leave voluntarily, and the organization is not particularly concerned about it. This often occurs when an employee's performance is poor or their skills no longer match the organization's needs. The organization believes that the employee's departure will not negatively impact its operations and may even be beneficial, as it provides an opportunity to reallocate resources and bring in new talent. In contrast, dysfunctional turnover refers to situations where an employee's departure has a negative impact on the organization. This type of turnover often involves high-performing employees whose departure may cause the organization to lose key skills, knowledge, and experience, thereby affecting its operational efficiency and performance. Organizations usually try to retain these employees as they are crucial to the organization's success. Future research could categorize types of voluntary departures to further explore the factors influencing and mechanisms behind dysfunctional turnover.

Fourth, one possible scenario is that the departure of colleagues may reduce internal competition for resources within the company, such as the power, training opportunities, and promotion opportunities available to remaining employees (Swab & Johnson, 2019). However, the current study did not incorporate these factors into the analytical framework, nor did it assess their potential impact on the resignation intentions of remaining employees. Future research exploring how changes in organizational opportunities affect the attitudes and behaviors of remaining employees could enrich the findings in this field. Moreover, actual individual capabilities should be controlled in studies (although this thesis considered possible substitute variables, such as education and work experience), as they can influence employees' perceptions of external job opportunities. Unfortunately, this study only used demographic variables to control for differences in actual individual capabilities and did not directly measure and control for them. Thus, one valuable direction for future research is to consider more potential influencing factors and integrate these factors into the moderating mechanisms or alternative mechanisms developed in this study.

Fifth, concerning the direction of colleagues' departures, existing research has only focused on upward mobility in predicting the resignation intentions of remaining employees. While upward mobility is still common in workplaces (Vinkenburg & Weber, 2012), this study believes that exploring other directions of mobility, such as lateral or downward

movements (Reitzle et al., 2009), is equally significant. In future research, comparing the impacts of different mobility directions will be practically meaningful.

Sixth, in our in-depth exploration of employee resignation phenomena, this study focused on employees' intentions to leave, rather than their actual departure behaviors. Resignation intentions, as the core concept of this study, are crucial for revealing employees' internal attitudes and behavior patterns. Although in practical research, resignation intentions are often used as a proxy for actual departure behaviors (Kim et al., 2013), it is undeniable that they still provide the most direct and accurate way to predict employees' retention or departure intentions. The reason this study chose resignation intentions as the dependent variable is to deeply analyze the direct psychological impact experienced by remaining employees when witnessing colleagues depart and move upward. However, this study also fully recognizes that incorporating actual departure behaviors in future research will have undeniable value. Actual departure behaviors can more directly reflect employees' resignation decisions, thereby offering a more comprehensive and in-depth research perspective. Therefore, this study recommends that future research could use a longitudinal tracking study design to combine resignation intentions with actual departure behaviors, to more comprehensively explore the nature of employee resignation phenomena and their influencing factors. This approach will help us more accurately grasp the dynamic process of employee resignation and provide a scientific basis for businesses to develop more effective employee retention strategies.

Seventh, our research results may be potentially influenced by common method bias. This bias could stem from the practice of using the same rater for data collection, which might interfere with the validity and reliability of the results to some extent (Podsakoff et al., 2009). However, this study conducted tests for CMV, and the results indicated that bias from the same source did not significantly affect our research outcomes. This finding provides some support for the robustness of our results. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that despite our attempts to mitigate potential impacts by collecting some variables' data at one-month intervals, the fundamental nature of our research design—a cross-sectional design—still limits our ability to make precise inferences about causal relationships (Rosopa & Stone-Romero, 2008). Cross-sectional designs have difficulty capturing the dynamic changes between variables and the potential long-term effects, thus presenting certain limitations when inferring causality. Given this, this study recommends that future research could utilize longitudinal studies or experimental designs to more accurately infer causal relationships between variables. These more rigorous research designs will help overcome the limitations of the current study and further advance research in the related fields.

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Annex A: Questionnaire of Time Point One

Dear Madam/Sir,

Hello! We are conducting a research project on employee work behavior. We kindly ask for your participation in answering the questionnaire based on your actual work experiences. Your information will be used for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential. Your objective responses are crucial for our research, and we appreciate your cooperation and support!

◎ There are _____ employees in your department.

◎ Since the beginning of the year, _____ colleagues have voluntarily resigned from your department.

◎ Please recall a recently departed colleague with whom you are familiar. The "departed colleague" mentioned in the following questions refers to this individual. You have worked with this departed colleague for _____ years.

1. Please evaluate and judge the following 14 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I think the new company of the departed colleague is larger in scale.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I believe the new company of the departed colleague enjoys a higher reputation in the industry.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel that the new company of the departed colleague has greater growth potential.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I think the departed colleague has better career development opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I believe the new job position of the departed	1	2	3	4	5

colleague is higher than before.					
6. I think the salary and benefits of the departed colleague's new job are more generous than before.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I believe that the departed colleague has found a better job after leaving.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel that I have a relatively small age gap with the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel that I am relatively close to the departed colleague in terms of work experience.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel that I have a similar background to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel that I have similar work experiences to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel that I have similar job responsibilities to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel that I have similar job content to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that my work performance is similar to that of the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please evaluate and judge the following 17 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. When I envy others, I focus on how I can achieve similar success in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If I find someone better than me, I strive to improve myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Envy towards others motivates me to achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I strive to reach the same level of excellence as others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. If someone possesses	1	2	3	4	5

exceptional qualities, achievements, or possessions, I work hard to attain them myself.					
6. I hope that those who are superior to me lose their advantage.	1	2	3	4	5
7. If others have something I want, I desire to take it from them.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel resentful towards people I envy.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Envy makes me dislike the person I envy.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel repulsed when I see others' achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
11. In the past, I often shared my thoughts, concerns, needs, and feelings with this departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
12. In the past, I felt very relaxed when communicating with this departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
13. In the past, I made efforts to help this departed colleague when they encountered difficulties in life.	1	2	3	4	5
14. In the past, this colleague would ask me to help with some personal matters.	1	2	3	4	5
15. In the past, during holidays, this departed colleague and I would call each other or visit each other.	1	2	3	4	5
16. In the past, during non-working hours, this departed colleague and I would engage in social activities together, such as having meals or entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am very familiar with the family situation of this departed colleague and have some contact with their family members.	1	2	3	4	5

3. Please evaluate and judge the following 20 descriptions based on your actual experiences and

perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. There are many jobs in the current labor market that are suitable for me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. With my abilities and experience, finding a new job is not difficult at all.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I were to look for a job, I believe there would be several companies willing to hire me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. If I were to look for a job, I might find a better one.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall, the jobs I could find after leaving would be better than my current one.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Most of the jobs I could find would improve my situation compared to now.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a wide network of contacts, which helps me find other job opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I know people in other companies who could help me find a new job.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My work or social activities allow me to meet many people who could help me find a new job.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Currently, other companies have already offered me a job waiting for my acceptance.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have already found better alternatives than my current job.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am proud to tell people about the company I work for.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would not recommend my friends to work at the company I'm in.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel like I am part of this company.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Even if the company's financial situation is not great, I would not want to switch jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Sometimes I think about leaving the company for some benefits.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
17. Even if working for another company could get me a higher salary, I have never considered changing jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Knowing that my work can contribute to the company's benefits makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I hope to work not only for myself but also for the company.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am not willing to work hard just to help the company.	1	2	3	4	5

4. Please evaluate and judge the following 5 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Most of the time, I am still enthusiastic about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Currently, I feel like there is no end to each day of work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. At present, I can still find enjoyment in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that my job is dull and boring.	1	2	3	4	5

5. Please evaluate and judge the following 12 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am a disorganized person.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am a rather lazy person.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am a trustworthy and reliable person.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am a person who plans and organizes things systematically.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am someone who finds it difficult to get started on	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
tasks.					
6. I am someone who is sometimes irresponsible.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am someone who prefers to keep things neat and orderly.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am an efficient person who starts and finishes tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am a reliable person who others can always trust.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am a messy person who dislikes tidying up.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am a persistent person who perseveres to complete tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am someone who sometimes acts irresponsibly.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Please evaluate and judge the following 9 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. After a colleague leaves, I also hope to leave my current company.	1	2	3	4	5
2. After a colleague leaves, I have thought that I would leave my current company if possible.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Although a colleague has left the company, I still intend to stay at my current company for as long as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Even though a colleague has left the company, under normal circumstances, I still would not voluntarily leave this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would readily step forward to help someone in distress.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am always willing to admit my mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I always strive to practice the principles I advocate.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Even when faced with unpleasant individuals, I am always courteous and polite.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When others express views completely different from mine, I never feel annoyed.	1	2	3	4	5

7. Your basic information

Gender: □ Male □ Female

Age: _____ years old

Years of service in the current company: _____ years

Education: □ Junior college and below □ Bachelor's degree □ Master's degree □ Doctoral degree

Position: □ Ordinary employee □ Middle management □ Senior management

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: _____ (for lottery purposes only)

The questionnaire ends here. Thank you again for your support. Wishing you a smooth work and a happy life! Tashi Delek！

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Annex B: Questionnaire of Time Point Two

Dear Madam/Sir,

Greetings! We are conducting a research project on employee work behavior and would greatly appreciate your participation by providing feedback based on your daily work experiences. Please rest assured that your information will be used for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential. Your objective responses are crucial for our research, and we sincerely appreciate your cooperation and support!

Number of employees in your department: _____

Number of colleagues who have voluntarily left the department since the beginning of the year: _____

1. Please evaluate and judge the following 14 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel that the new company where the departed colleague is now employed has a larger scale.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel that the new company where the departed colleague is now employed enjoys a higher reputation within the industry.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel that the new company where the departed colleague is now employed has higher growth potential.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel that the departed colleague has better career opportunities in their new job.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that the position of the departed colleague's new job is higher than their previous one.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel that the salary and benefits of the departed colleague's new job are more generous than before.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel that the departed colleague has found a better job after leaving.	1	2	3	4	5

8. I feel that the age difference between me and the departed colleague is relatively small.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel that I have similar work qualifications to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel that I have a similar background to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel that I have similar work experience to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel that I have similar job responsibilities to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel that I have similar job content to the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that my work performance is similar to that of the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please evaluate and judge the following 17 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. In the past, I often shared my thoughts, troubles, needs, and feelings with this departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
2. In the past, I felt relaxed when communicating with the departed colleague.	1	2	3	4	5
3. In the past, whenever the departed colleague encountered difficulties in life, I would make efforts to help him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In the past, the colleague would ask me to help with some tasks in life.	1	2	3	4	5
5. In the past, during holidays, the departed colleague and I would call or visit each other.	1	2	3	4	5
6. In the past, during non-working hours, the departed colleague and I would engage in social activities together, such as having meals or entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am familiar with the departed colleague's family situation and have some contact with his/her family members.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Most of the time, I am still passionate about my work.	1	2	3	4	5

10. Now, I feel like there is no end in sight to my work every day (R).	1	2	3	4	5
11. Currently, I can still find pleasure in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel that my job is boring and dull (R).	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would not hesitate to step forward to help someone in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am always willing to admit my mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I always try to practice the principles I advocate.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Even when facing unpleasant people, I am always polite and respectful.	1	2	3	4	5
17. When others express views completely different from mine, I never feel annoyed.	1	2	3	4	5

3. Your basic information

Gender: □ Male □ Female

Age: _____ years old

Years of service in the current company: _____ years

Education: □ Junior college and below □ Bachelor's degree □ Master's degree □ Doctoral degree

Position: □ Ordinary employee □ Middle management □ Senior management

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: _____ (for lottery purposes only)

The questionnaire ends here. Thank you again for your support. Wishing you a smooth work and a happy life! Tashi Delek！

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Annex C: Questionnaire of Time Point Three

Dear Madam/Sir,

Greetings! We are conducting a research project on employee work behavior and would greatly appreciate your participation by providing feedback based on your daily work experiences. Please rest assured that your information will be used for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential. Your objective responses are crucial for our research, and we sincerely appreciate your cooperation and support!

Number of employees in your department: _____

Number of colleagues who have voluntarily left the department since the beginning of the year: _____

1. Please evaluate and judge the following 10 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. When I envy others, I focus on how I can achieve the same success in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If I find someone is better than me, I will strive to improve myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Envy of others can motivate me to achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I strive to achieve the outstanding achievements of others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. If someone possesses outstanding qualities, achievements, or possessions, I will strive to obtain them myself.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I hope that those who are superior lose their advantages (R).	1	2	3	4	5
7. If others have something I want, I want to take it from them (R).	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel resentful towards the people I envy (R).	1	2	3	4	5
9. Envy makes me dislike the other person (R).	1	2	3	4	5

10. I feel repelled when I see others' achievements (R).	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please evaluate and judge the following 20 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. There are many jobs in the current labor market that are suitable for me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. With my skills and experience, finding a new job is not difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I were to look for a job, I believe there would be many companies willing to hire me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. If I were to look for a job, I might find a better one.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall, I believe I could find a better job after leaving my current one.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Most of the jobs I could find would improve my current situation.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a wide network of contacts, which helps me find other job opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I know people in other companies who could help me find a new job.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My work or social activities bring me into contact with many people who could help me find a new job.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Currently, other companies have already offered me a job waiting for me to accept.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have already found better alternatives to my current job.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am proud to tell people about the company I work for.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would not recommend my friends to work at the company I'm currently in (R).	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel like I am part of this company.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Even if the company's financial situation is not good, I would not want to switch jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Sometimes I entertain the idea of leaving the company for personal gain (R).	1	2	3	4	5
17. Even if working for another company would mean higher pay, I have never considered switching jobs.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
18. Knowing that my work can contribute to the company's performance makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I hope to work not only for myself but also for the company.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am not willing to work hard just to help the company (R).	1	2	3	4	5

3. Please evaluate and judge the following 16 descriptions based on your actual experiences and perceptions, and mark a "√" on the most appropriate number.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am a disorganized person (R).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am a rather lazy person (R).	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am a trustworthy and reliable person.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am someone who plans and organizes tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find it hard to get started on tasks and complete them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Sometimes I lack responsibility (R).	1	2	3	4	5
7. I prefer to keep things neat and orderly.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am efficient and see tasks through to completion.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am reliable and worthy of others' trust.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am messy and dislike tidying up (R).	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am persistent and committed to finishing tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Sometimes I act irresponsibly (R).	1	2	3	4	5
13. After a colleague leaves, I also wish to leave the current company.	1	2	3	4	5
14. After a colleague leaves, I have considered leaving the current company if possible.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Although a colleague has left the company, I still intend to stay for as long as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Even though my colleagues have left the company, I generally won't take the initiative to leave the company.	1	2	3	4	5

4. Your basic information

Gender: □ Male □ Female

Age: _____ years old

Years of service in the current company: _____ years

Education: □ Junior college and below □ Bachelor's degree □ Master's degree □ Doctoral degree

Position: □ Ordinary employee □ Middle management □ Senior management

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: _____ (for lottery purposes only)

The questionnaire ends here. Thank you again for your support. Wishing you a smooth work and a happy life! Tashi Delek！