



Universidad  
del Valle



Cuadernos de  
Administración

*Journal of Management*

Print ISSN: 0120-4645 / E-ISSN: 2256-5078 / Short name: *cuad.adm.*

Pages: e4113757 / Vol: 40 / Issue: 80 / Sep. - Dec. 2024

Faculty of Administration Sciences / Universidad del Valle / Cali - Colombia

## Perspectives Historical and Contemporary on Employee Turnover: A Literature Review

Perspectivas Históricas y Contemporáneas sobre la Rotación de Empleados:  
Una Revisión de la Literatura

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Review Article

Submitted: 07/04/2024

Reviewed: 15/06/2024

Accepted: 05/09/2024

Published: 25/11/2024

Thematic lines: Administration and Organizations

JEL classification: J63, J60, M12

<https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v40i80.13757>

### Abstract

For over a century, employee turnover has been a topic of interest for many researchers globally. This literature review primarily aimed to examine the evolution of employee turnover from the perspective of senior researchers and to discuss potential future research directions in the field. The methodology was qualitative, involving a comprehensive bibliographic review. Searches were conducted in databases such as Scopus, SciELO, PsycArticles, JSTOR, Wiley, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, resulting in the analysis of 77 articles from international journals ranked "Q1" in the Scimago Journal & Country Rank (2022 evaluation) and Brazilian journals from the "A" stratum of Qualis/CAPES (2017-2020 quadrennium). The key findings revealed that: (i) the historical evolution of turnover studies highlights the increasing interest in the topic and the pursuit of understanding its causes, characteristics, and consequences; (ii) initially, the phenomenon was addressed through individual characteristics and aspects, but research has evolved towards collective approaches at group, unit, and organizational levels; (iii) the studies analyzed in recent decades highlight the diversity of contexts across different continents, with a focus on cultural and value influences affecting turnover. The main conclusions indicate that, historically, the phenomenon of employee turnover began to be analyzed in the USA in the early 1900s, later evolving with the application of various theories, and contemporary research focuses on approaches that consider organizational and socio-cultural influences.

**Keywords:** Employee turnover; Turnover intention; Turnover theory; Voluntary turnover; Collective turnover; Human Resources.

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## Resumen

Desde hace más de un siglo, la rotación de empleados ha captado el interés de numerosos investigadores a nivel mundial. El objetivo principal de esta revisión literaria fue examinar cómo ha evolucionado la percepción de la rotación de empleados desde la perspectiva de investigadores experimentados y explorar direcciones futuras para estudios en este campo. La metodología adoptada fue cualitativa, basándose en una extensa revisión bibliográfica. Se realizaron búsquedas en bases de datos como Scopus, SciELO, PsycArticles, JSTOR, Wiley, ScienceDirect y Google Scholar, culminando en el análisis de 77 artículos de revistas internacionales clasificados en la categoría "Q1" según el Scimago Journal & Country Rank (evaluación de 2022) y revistas brasileñas del estrato "A" de Qualis/CAPES (cuatrienio 2017-2020). Los hallazgos más significativos indican: (i) una evolución histórica de los estudios sobre rotación que subraya un interés creciente en el tema y en la comprensión de sus causas, características y efectos; (ii) inicialmente, el fenómeno se analizaba desde una perspectiva de características individuales, pero con el tiempo la investigación se ha orientado hacia enfoques más colectivos y organizacionales; (iii) los trabajos revisados demuestran una variedad de contextos en distintos continentes, resaltando las influencias culturales y valorativas en la rotación laboral. En conclusión, la rotación de empleados se comenzó a estudiar en los Estados Unidos a principios del siglo XX, evolucionando posteriormente mediante diversas teorías, y las investigaciones actuales priorizan enfoques que integran factores organizacionales y socioculturales.

**Palabras Clave:** Rotación del personal; Intención de Rotación; Teoría del Rotación; Rotación voluntaria; Rotación colectiva; Recursos humanos.

## 1. Introduction

It is believed that the first documented reports involving the topic of employee turnover occurred in the United States (USA) around the 1900s (Hom *et al.*, 2017). However, it seems that only in the year 1925 was the first empirical study on turnover published (Bills, 1925). Since then, the USA has stood out with many studies and publications on the topic of turnover (Bolt *et al.*, 2022), and a significant number of articles have been published worldwide (Lee *et al.*, 2017).

In the early years, turnover research was treated as an individual phenomenon (Hom *et al.*, 2017). However, starting in 2011, there was an interest in collective turnover at the group, unit, and organizational levels (Bolt *et al.*, 2022). High turnover rates can

have negative impacts on organizational performance (Hancock *et al.*, 2017), both in terms of productivity (Langle Flores *et al.*, 2021; Flores *et al.*, 2019) and the quality of services provided (Moon *et al.*, 2023; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2019).

Understanding employee turnover is recognized as a complex and dynamic task by numerous researchers (Hom *et al.*, 2017; Rubenstein *et al.*, 2018; Yuan *et al.*, 2024). It is believed that these characteristics are responsible for the ongoing significant gaps in comprehending the phenomenon both in Brazil and in the world (Bolt *et al.*, 2022; Boroni *et al.*, 2020; Soares *et al.*, 2022). Against this backdrop, the following research question emerges: How has the evolution of investigations into employee turnover unfolded? The primary aim of this study was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the employee turnover phenomenon and to explore potential future research directions in this field. The secondary objectives were: (i) to present turnover concepts; (ii) to examine the incidence and key characteristics of studies on the subject across different geographical contexts; and (iii) to organize the models and theories applied in studies on the phenomenon.

To achieve the proposed research objectives, a literature review was conducted over the past ten years in renowned international journals - classified as "Q1", the first quartile, in 2022 in the Scimago Journal & Country Rank - and prestigious national journals - classified in the "A" stratum Qualis/CAPES, four-year evaluation period 2017-2020. In the review process, searches were conducted in the Scopus and SciELO databases, which are repositories known to contain articles in prestigious journals in the field of Applied Social Sciences (Calvosa and Ferreira, 2023). In order to expand the study's results, searches were also carried out in the PsycArticles, JSTOR, Wiley, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar databases.

This study stands out for its relevance by highlighting the phenomenon of employee turnover, its organizational consequences (Maertz *et al.*, 2023), and its socioeconomic impacts (Serenko, 2023). Thus, this research can offer valuable insights for young researchers and organizational managers.

**Table 1. Some Definitions of the Term Employee Turnover**

Authors	Definition of turnover
Park & Shaw (2013)	Number of employees who leave divided by the total number of employees.
Oliveira & Honório (2014)	Permanent departure of employees from the company, which can be voluntary (when the employee chooses to leave) or involuntary (when the company decides to terminate the employee).
Agapito <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Proportion of employees who leave the organization within a specific period.
Oliveira <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Transitory displacement of employees, either by the company's decision (involuntary departure) or by the employee's decision (voluntary departure).
Hom <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Voluntary termination of employment relationships by employees.
Rubenstein <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Voluntary cessation of participation in an organization by an individual who receives monetary compensation for their involvement in that organization.
Seidl <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Ratio between the number of employees who joined and left the organization within a specific period, which can be due to voluntary turnover (planned by the worker) or involuntary turnover (initiated by the organization).
Ayodele <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Voluntary termination of the contractual relationship with the employer.
Bernd & Beuren (2021)	Individual's interest in leaving the organization and pursuing alternative opportunities.
Santos & Santos (2022)	Volume of people entering and leaving organizations.
Souza <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Ratio between the number of employees entering and leaving the organization within a specific period.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

In terms of originality, a comprehensive search was conducted in July 2024 across the scientific databases Scopus, Redalyc, DOAJ, SciELO, and Portal de Capes. Additionally, searches were carried out on Google Scholar and in prestigious national journals, including the Brazilian Administration Review (BAR), Brazilian Business Review (BBR), Cadernos EBAPE.BR, Revista de Administração Contemporânea (RAC), Revista de Administração Mackenzie (RAM), Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios (RBGN), RAUSP Management Journal, Revista de Gestão (REGE), and Revista Psicologia Organizações e Trabalho (RPOT). Despite the analysis of 77 articles resulting from this extensive literature review, no publications were found that addressed the topic in the aspects considered by this study.

## 2. Theoretical Contextualization

### 2.1 Turnover: Concept, Occurrence, and Characteristics

The expression “rotatividade de empregados,” commonly used in the context of Brazilian organizations, can also be referred to by the term in English, “turnover” (Bernd

and Beuren, 2021; Santos and Santos, 2022; Saraiva, 2023). This phenomenon is defined as the termination or permanent departure of an employee from the organization where they work (Oliveira and Rocha, 2019). In this work, the expressions “rotatividade” and “turnover” will be treated as synonymous and convey the same idea. Table 1 will present some definitions of the expression turnover in the last ten years, as found in national and international scientific literature.

Table 1 reveals that the expressions “admission,” “termination,” “voluntary departure,” “involuntary departure,” “ratio,” and “period” are present in most definitions of employee turnover. This demonstrates the authors' concern in clarifying that turnover results from the relationship between admissions and terminations – both voluntary and involuntary – of employees in a specific period, usually over a fiscal year. Therefore, for the purposes of this work, the definition by Seidl *et al.* (2019) will be adopted and considered a reference for examples and discussions on the topic, as it expresses a current concept that explains the phenomenon of employee turnover. After analyzing the various definitions of the expression “rotatividade de empregados” over time, it is essential to explore the

**Table 2. Incidence by Continent of Studies on Turnover**

Position	Continent	Main contextual characteristics	Most studied sector	Country
1	North America	Competitiveness of value and tolerance to uncertainty (Canada and USA).	Healthcare	USA
2	Asia	(i) In the southern part (Indonesia; India; Iran; Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand): results-oriented and encouragement of group goals;" (ii) In the southern part (Indonesia; India; Iran; Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand): results-oriented and encouragement of group goals; (iii) In the Middle Eastern part (Kuwait and Morocco): loyalty to internal groups, and gender equality is not a priority; (iii) In the Confucianist part (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan): emphasis on family and concern for the community.	Manufacturing	China
3	Europe	(i) In the eastern part (Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovenia): emphasis on support for colleagues; (ii) In the Germanic part (Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands): results-oriented; (iii) In the Latin part (France, Israel, Italy, Spain, and Portugal): emphasis on individual autonomy; (iv) In the Nordic part (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden): emphasis on long-term success.	Healthcare	United Kingdom
4	Oceania	Value competitiveness and tolerance to uncertainty (Australia and New Zealand).	Service	Australia
5	African	Sensitivity to others and emphasis on family loyalty (Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).	Manufacturing	South Africa
6	South America	Group loyalty and devotion to family (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela).	Healthcare	Brazil

Source: developed from Allen & Vardaman (2021); Beria *et al.* (2017); Bolt *et al.*, (2022); Rubenstein *et al.* (2018); Seidl *et al.* (2019); Steil *et al.* (2019).

incidence of these studies in different regions of the world and their main characteristics when applied in these geographical contexts, as evidenced in Table 2.

When examining Table 2, it is observed that each continent presents its distinct contextual characteristics, reflecting the diversity of cultures, values, and priorities regarding turnover. In this analysis, it is possible to infer that North America, Asia, Europe, Oceania, Africa, and South America have specific focuses on understanding this phenomenon, highlighting the most studied sectors and the main influential cultural traits in their approaches. This comparative analysis provides a more comprehensive and contextualized view of employee turnover in different parts of the world, providing a solid foundation for future reflections and investigations in this area of study (Allen and Vardaman, 2021; Bolt *et al.*, 2022).

In terms of the historical volume of research, North America is the continent that leads scientific production on the topic worldwide (Bolt *et al.*, 2022), possibly due to the pioneering observations and analyses of the United States regarding this phenomenon (Hom *et al.*, 2017), as well as labor policies (De Meulenaere *et al.*, 2021) and high turnover rates in the country (Moon *et al.*, 2023; Serenko, 2023). This continent, with a perspective centered on value competitiveness and tolerance for uncertainty (Allen and Vardaman, 2021), also influences many global turnover models and theories to this day (Maertz Jr *et al.*, 2024; Kiazad *et al.*, 2024).

Asia emerges as the second most studied continent on the topic (Bolt *et al.*, 2022), with an emphasis on family, community concern, and results orientation, particularly highlighting China due to its cultural context

(Moon *et al.*, 2023), singularities in labor relations (Serenko, 2024), and a high level of turnover (Allen and Vardaman, 2021; Moon *et al.*, 2023). Next, Europe ranks third in studies on employee turnover (Bolt *et al.*, 2022), presenting significant diversity in contextual characteristics in its workforce, such as valuing support for colleagues, results orientation, valuing individual autonomy, emphasis on long-term success, competitiveness, and tolerance for uncertainty (Allen and Vardaman, 2021). The United Kingdom stands out as one of the countries with significant turnover rates in this continent (Serenko, 2024).

Oceania, mainly represented by Australia, is the fourth continent with the highest number of studies on employee turnover. Its workforce is characterized by valuing competitiveness and tolerance for uncertainty. The most investigated sectors are services, highlighting the relevance of understanding turnover dynamics in this specific area (Allen and Vardaman, 2021; Bolt *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, the African continent, represented by South Africa, ranks fifth in the number of studies on employee turnover (Bolt *et al.*, 2022). The workforce in this region is characterized by an emphasis on family loyalty and sensitivity to others (Allen and Vardaman, 2021).

On the other hand, South America was the continent with the lowest volume of research on the topic (Bolt *et al.*, 2022). However, Brazil has contributed with relevant studies over the years (Beria *et al.*, 2017; Matos *et al.*, 2023; Rocha and Santana, 2022; Seidl *et al.*, 2019; Steil *et al.*, 2019). In fact, according to the review by Seidl *et al.* (2019), Brazil's scientific production saw a significant growth in the number of studies on employee turnover from the year 2006 onwards. Additionally, other national reviews reveal that the volume of publications on turnover intensified after the year 2010 (Beria *et al.*, 2017; Steil *et al.*, 2019). These seem to be derived from the gradual increase in turnover rates in the national job market (Beria *et al.*, 2017). Many of these studies investigate the influence of the work-family relationship (Seidl *et al.*, 2019) and the perception of justice in employee departures (Steil *et al.*, 2019), inferring that this occurs due to the main contextual characteristics of the phenomenon in the country being

group loyalty and family devotion (Allen and Vardaman, 2021).

### 3. Theoretical Development

#### 3.1. Birth of Research

In the early years of the 20th century, employee turnover began to be evident: journalists reported resignations, consultants detailed the financial costs of the phenomenon, and scholars speculated about the reasons for dismissals (Hom *et al.*, 2017). From 1916 onward, many documents and scientific studies were disseminated by various international and national authors, as presented in Table 3.

In 1916, Boyd Fisher, vice-president of the executives' club in Detroit, USA, wrote about methods to reduce turnover at Ford Motor Company (Fisher, 1916). The following year, Hugo Diemer, a professor of engineering at the University of Pennsylvania, published one of the first academic articles on the subject (Diemer, 1917). Other studies were conducted until 1923 (Douglas, 1918, 1923; Eberle, 1919), but it wasn't until 1925 that Marion A. Bills presented the first empirical study on turnover in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, revealing differences in dismissal rates between large offices and small businesses (Bills, 1925). About three decades after Bills' study, March and Simon (1958) published the first formal model, which aimed to analyze the turnover phenomenon.

Over the formative years, the birth of research on employee turnover was observed in Brazil. Although there are earlier records (Biblioteca Nacional [BN], 1941a; 1941b), it is believed that one of the first studies on employee turnover was published in 1943 in the *Revista do Serviço Público*. The theoretical article "*Do 'Turnover' e sua influência na administração de Pessoal*" was developed by Luiz Guilherme Ramos Ribeiro, an administration technician at *DASP - Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público*. This study presented reflections on concepts, causes, and consequences of the turnover phenomenon (Ribeiro, 1943). Almost twenty years after Ribeiro's publication, in 1964, Orlando Figueiredo published one of the first empirical articles on turnover,

<b>Table 3. Initial Research, Formative Years, and Foundational Models of Turnover (1916-1979)</b>		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Research</b>
Initial Research (1916-1925)	1916	Boyd Fisher published in The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science the document Methods of reducing the labor turnover.
	1917	Hugo Diemer and collaborators published a study on the causes of turnover among university professors.
	1918	Paul Howard Douglas publishes the article The Problem of Labor Turnover.
	1919	George J. Eberle publishes an article on labor turnover.
	1923	Paul Howard Douglas analyzes labor turnover in the industry.
	1925	Marion A. Bills publishes in the Journal of Applied Psychology one of the first empirical studies on turnover.
Formative Years (1920-1964)	1930	Descriptive reports of occupational turnover patterns emerge.
	1940	Researchers examine the demographic and psychological “correlates” of turnover.
	1943	Ribeiro publishes in the Revista do Serviço Público the national article “Do ‘Turnover’ e sua influência na administração de Pessoal”.
	1958	March and Simon publish the first formal model.
	1960	Continued study of turnover antecedents (e.g., selection test scores, job satisfactions, demographic data).
	1964	Figueiredo publishes one of the first empirical Brazilian articles, which examined labor turnover in industries in São Paulo.
Foundational Models (1970-1979)	1973	Porter and Streers review the literature on turnover and propose the fulfilled expectations theory.
	1977	(i) Mobley’s intermediate linkages model appears; (ii) Price develops the taxonomy of turnover determinants.
	1979	Mobley <i>et al.</i> , conduct a literature review and publish.

Source: developed from Bolt *et al.* (2022); Bills (1925); Douglas (1918;1923); Eberle (1919); Figueiredo (1964); Fisher (1916); Hom *et al.* (2017); Lee *et al.* (2017); March & Simon (1958); Mobley (1977); Mobley *et al.* (1979); Porter & Streers (1973); Price (1977); Ribeiro (1943); Rubenstein *et al.* (2018).

which sought to analyze the labor mobility of employees in the industry of São Paulo (Figueiredo, 1964).

### 3.2. Testing Period and Models in Research

During the 1980s and 1990s, researchers analyzing the employee turnover phenomenon began testing different models in an attempt to understand the consequences of the phenomenon (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Lee and Mitchell, 1994; Price and Mueller, 1981; Rusbult and Farrell, 1983), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 presents the evolution of studies on the employee turnover phenomenon between 1980 and 1999. During this period, a complex causal model of determinants and factors of

turnover was created and tested (Price and Mueller, 1981). Later, Rusbult and Farrell (1983) proposed and tested an investment model. Between 1990 and 1999, there was a proliferation of models on the topic, with emphasis on the model proposed by Thomas W. Lee and Terence R. Mitchell on voluntary turnover (Lee and Mitchell, 1994). Shaw *et al.* (1998) theorized and investigated the antecedents of turnover at the organizational job level. During the 1980s and 1990s, some theories gained prominence in turnover studies, including Social Identity Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory.

Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner developed the Social Identity Theory in 1986 (Tajfel and Turner, 2004). When applied to turnover studies, this theory seeks to analyze the construction of employees’ social identity based on their participation in the company

**Table 4. Main Tests and Research Models on Turnover (1980-1999)**

Period	Year	Research
Tests (1980-1989)	1980	Barry M. Staw publishes the article "The Consequences of Turnover."
	1981	(i) Prince & Mueller test a complex causal model of determinants and intervening factors; (ii) Steers and Mowday expand and refine the Price-Mueller models.
	1983	Rusbult & Farrell propose and test the investment model.
	1985	Hulin, Roznowsky, & Hachiya formally address the role of job opportunities.
	1986	Cotton & Tuttle publish a meta-analysis on the topic.
Models (1990-1999)	1990	Allen and Meyer develop the three-component organizational commitment model.
	1992	Hom <i>et al.</i> provide a comprehensive test of the Mobley model.
	1994	Lee and Mitchell propose the theory of the voluntary turnover model.
	1998	Shaw <i>et al.</i> theorize formally and investigate the antecedents of organizational-level job turnover.
	1999	Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaneil & Hill test the basic principles of the unfolding model.

Source: developed from Allen and Meyer (1990); Bolt *et al.* (2022); Cotton & Tuttle (1986); Hom *et al.* (1992); Hom *et al.* (2017); Hulin *et al.* (1985); Lee & Mitchell (1994); Lee *et al.* (1999); Lee *et al.* (2017); Price & Mueller (1981); Rusbult & Farrell (1983); Rubenstein *et al.* (2018); Shaw *et al.* (1998); Staw(1980).

(Wikhamn *et al.*, 2021). Thus, Social Identity Theory can enhance understanding of employees' immersion, adaptation, and sense of belonging, aiding in the comprehension of turnover processes. In Brazil, this theory can help understand the relationship between employee turnover and actions related to mergers/acquisitions in large private organizations, as the merger of two companies often transforms the vision and culture of the new institution.

In 1989, Stevan E. Hobfoll developed the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) to examine the cause-and-effect relationships between individuals and stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory has been applied to analyze contexts of conflict and the departure of talented employees, such as job insecurity and turnover intention (Peltokorpi *et al.*, 2023). For these reasons, Conservation of Resources can help understand the phenomenon of turnover, aiding in the comprehension of employees' perceptions and organizational dysfunctions. In the context of Brazil, this theory can provide relevant insights into turnover and the privatization of companies or the relationship between abusive supervision and the departure of talented subordinates.

Kristof-Brown (1996) formulated the Person-Organization Fit Theory, which suggests that employees' social behavior

at work is influenced by psychological interactions between employee and employer. Based on the presented information, it can be inferred that the Person-Organization Fit Theory assists in studies that seek to analyze turnover intention and is capable of supporting organizational managers in creating talent retention actions, as well as in building a strategic plan on the topic for the entire organization (Calvosa, 2023). Through the use of the theory, it is also possible to support research examining the impacts of employee turnover on the operational performance of large organizations.

### 3.3. Contemporary Research

Since March and Simon, hundreds of studies have emerged (Hom *et al.*, 2017), and thousands of articles have been published (Lee *et al.*, 2017). In contemporary research, some notable contributions stand out, as shown in Table 5.

Between 2000 and 2012, there was a notable advancement in understanding the antecedents of employee turnover. During this period, meta-analytic research was conducted, analyzing the factors influencing employee exits from organizations, with an emphasis on turnover intention as a precursor to the actual behavior of leaving a job (Griffeth

**Table 5. Contemporary Research on Employee Turnover (2000-2024)**

Period	Year	Research
Meta-Analyses and Turnover Intention (2000-2012)	2000	Griffeth and colleagues publish a meta-analysis on the antecedents of turnover.
	2001	Mitchell and colleagues theorize job embeddedness in relation to turnover.
	2002	Morrell, Loan-Clarke, & Wilkinson theorize about turnover intention as a precursor to variable turnover.
	2005	Ferreira & Siqueira test turnover intention in the Brazilian context.
	2007	Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine conduct a meta-analysis to explore the differentiated relationships between various types of stressors, job attitudes, and turnover.
	2012	Jiang et al. published a meta-analysis to investigate how job integration predicts employee turnover.
Collective Turnover (2013-2000)	2013	Nyberg and Ployhart theorize about collective turnover.
	2016	Oliveira, Beria, & Gomes apply the eight forces model in the context of Brazil.
	2017	(i) Hom and colleagues publish a historical review of a hundred years of studies on turnover; (ii) Beria et al. publish a bibliometric review of Brazilian production on the topic of employee turnover.
	2018	Rubenstein and collaborators publish a meta-analysis on antecedents of voluntary turnover.
	2019	(i) Seidl, Borges-Andrade, and Neiva publish a literature review on twenty years of turnover studies in Brazil; (ii) Steil and collaborators synthesize the Brazilian scientific production on turnover intention.
	2021	Porter & Rigby analyze the turnover contagion process.
Social Movements and Artificial Intelligence (2021-2024)	2021	Allen and Vardaman publish a study on the relevance of the global sociocultural context in employee turnover.
	2022	Bolt, Winterton, & Cafferkey publish a systematic review on global scientific production on turnover.
	2023	(i) Serenko publish article on "The Great Resignation"; (ii) Chowdhury and collaborators use an artificial intelligence machine learning model to predict the probability of employees voluntarily leaving their jobs.
	2024	Serenko publish article on "Quiet Quitting".

Source: developed from Allen & Vardaman (2021); Bolt *et al.* (2022); Ferreira & Siquiera (2005); Hom *et al.* (2017); Jiang *et al.* (2012); Lee *et al.* (2017); Nyberg & Ployhart (2013); Podsakoff *et al.* (2007); Porter & Rigby (2021); Rubenstein *et al.* (2018); Seidl *et al.* (2019); Serenko (2023); Serenko (2024); Steil *et al.* (2019).

*et al.*, 2000; Jiang *et al.*, 2012; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2007). In this period, Mitchell *et al.* (2001) theorized about embeddedness. This theory seeks to elucidate why people stay and, in doing so, explains why people leave. Despite leaving seeming to be the opposite of staying, the reasons for leaving and staying are not always antagonistic (Hom *et al.*, 2017). Due to its broad applicability in turnover studies, Job Embeddedness has gained strength in recent years as a valuable framework for understanding turnover intention (Bolt *et al.*, 2022) and voluntary turnover decisions (Rubenstein *et al.*, 2020).

Between 2013 and 2020, the field of employee turnover studies expanded to include more collective approaches to the phenomenon. Several researchers focused on exploring collective turnover, examining how this phenomenon can be influenced by organizational and contextual factors (Nyberg and Ployhart, 2013; Porter and Rigby, 2021). In 2017, the historical review conducted by researchers Hom *et al.* (2017) stood out, a study with over 1000 citations on Google Scholar until July 2024. Another study of significant relevance, Rubenstein *et al.* (2018) conducted a meta-analysis on



the antecedents of voluntary turnover. In this period, important reviews were also conducted to analyze the scientific production on turnover in Brazil, providing an overview of the development of this specific field in the country (Seidl *et al.*, 2019; Steil *et al.*, 2019).

In the most recent period, from 2021 to 2024, studies on employee turnover have adopted an innovative approach, considering the influence of social movements and the application of artificial intelligence in the field (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2023; Serenko 2023, 2024). Research has examined the global sociocultural context and its relevance to understanding employee turnover, showing how external factors can interact with organizational issues to affect an employee's decision to stay or leave the company (Allen and Vardaman, 2021). Furthermore, the application of machine learning techniques, such as artificial intelligence models, has enabled the prediction of the probability of employees voluntarily leaving their jobs, offering new possibilities for human resources management and strategic decision-making in organizations. These recent approaches reflect the ongoing interest and evolution in research on employee turnover, as well as its growing relevance to the contemporary organizational landscape.

Mitchell *et al.* (2001) developed the Job Embeddedness Theory. The concept of this theory consists of three dimensions: (i) the link between the employee and the organization; (ii) perceived cost and benefits lost by exits; and (iii) compatibility of the workplace and external organizational environments (Hom *et al.*, 2009). Due to its broad applicability in turnover studies, Job Embeddedness has gained strength in recent years as a valuable framework for understanding turnover intention (Bolt *et al.*, 2022) and voluntary turnover decisions (Rubenstein *et al.*, 2019). In summary, this theory seeks to elucidate why people stay and, in doing so, explains why people leave. Despite leaving seeming to be the opposite of staying, the reasons for leaving and staying are not always antagonistic (Hom *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the application of this theory can help understand points regarding employees' perception of the organizational environment and the understanding of interpersonal

bonds among employees and also between employees and their organizations.

In this period, the application of the Context-Emergent Turnover (CET) Theory developed by Nyberg and Ployhart (2013) stands out, predicting a negative association between collective turnover and unit performance. Contextual factors, especially the size of the company, can have significant implications in addressing collective turnover, as depending on the organization's size, the resources available to manage the impacts of turnover are different (De Meulenaere *et al.*, 2021).

#### 4. Discussion

Over the years, various models and theories have been developed to explain employee turnover, covering everything from individual to organizational factors. Among the significant milestones of this evolution are the early investigations by Fisher (1916) and Bills (1925), moving through influential models like those of March and Simon (1958) and the Voluntary Turnover Model (Lee and Mitchell, 1994), to more recent theories such as the Emerging Turnover Context Theory (Nyberg and Ployhart, 2013) and the Turnover Contagion Theory (Porter and Rigby, 2021). These theoretical constructs reflect an expansion over time and a deepening understanding of the dynamics of employee turnover.

Observing the theoretical natures, the review revealed that a variety of models have been used to investigate the phenomenon, encompassing both sociological and psychological theories. Noteworthy among these are the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004), the Turnover Intention Theory (Morrell *et al.*, 2002), and the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, there are theories that prioritize analyzing the relationships between employees and organizations, such as the Job Embedding Theory (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001) and the Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown, 1996). These theories offer insights to understand the multiple dimensions of turnover and assist in formulating effective research strategies.

The geographical analyses of this study highlight disparities in scientific production about turnover and the diversity of contextual characteristics across different continents. Each continent displays specific cultural peculiarities and social values, which can influence both the volume of studies conducted and the predominant characteristics in research on the phenomenon. For example, North America, which has the longest history of research, stands out due to the United States, with robust scientific production and a culture that values competitiveness and tolerance for uncertainty. In contrast, South America shows the least amount of research on the topic, but specifically in Brazil, there has been a significant increase in turnover studies since the early 2000s. This growth is driven by characteristics such as group loyalty and devotion to family, reflecting the cultural specificities that shape research in the region.

This literature review provides a relevant starting point for young researchers interested in investigating the phenomenon of turnover in different contexts, using models and theories suited to the goals of their studies. Whether examining turnover under more traditional aspects of human resource management, such as labor relations and resource maintenance, or exploring complex and uncertain contexts with the Conservation of Resources Theory. Additionally, for investigating more contemporary phenomena, the Emerging Context Turnover Theory (collective turnover) and the Turnover Contagion Theory can be utilized. Applying these theoretical lenses to the analysis of turnover can aid in constructing structured, comprehensive, and robust research.

This study offers a strategic tool for managers seeking to apply the knowledge gained to obtain relevant insights and assess the internal organizational factors that influence employee turnover. Understanding the aspects of the job embedding theory can assist in comprehending the underlying mechanisms of turnover across multiple dimensions, which can aid in formulating more effective strategies for employee engagement. This, in turn, can reduce costs associated with high turnover, such as recruitment, training, and loss of productivity. Furthermore, understanding the variables

of turnover intention allows managers and human resources professionals to better monitor and create effective talent retention policies. Implementing evidence-based measures can transform talent management within the organization, contributing to the creation of a more stable and productive work environment.

Finally, it is important to note that this work presents some limitations. Although it has examined articles from a wide range of international and national scientific journals, the study was limited to publications from the highest classifications (Qualis/Capes "A" and Scimago "Q1"), which does not fully cover the topic. Future research is recommended to expand the scope, including analyses of academic publications from various classification strata and the exploration of academic production in theses, dissertations, and conferences. Such an expansion will allow the identification of more national and international studies, enriching the understanding of employee turnover, especially in Brazilian organizations. With a more comprehensive approach, it is possible to develop new perspectives and solutions to address this organizational challenge more informed and effective way.

## 5. Conclusions

In response to the proposed research question, initial investigations into employee turnover treated it as an individual phenomenon, analyzed through generic theoretical lenses. Over time, this perspective evolved into a more collective approach, supported by specific theories. This methodological evolution enabled the conduct of predictive and contextualized studies, overcoming the limitations of theoretical approaches from the last century. In this evolutionary trajectory, most studies have focused on unraveling the causes, characteristics, and consequences of the phenomenon. Over more than a hundred years of studies, research on employee turnover has progressed both in Brazil and internationally.

The variety of distinct terms used to conceptualize turnover, including "admission," "termination," "voluntary exit,"

“involuntary exit,” “rate,” and “period,” highlights the inherent complexity of this phenomenon’s definition. This terminological diversity demonstrates the complexity of the topic and the adoption of multiple theories and analytical models for its investigation. Historically, the approaches to studying turnover included traditional methods from sociological and psychological disciplines. Over time, more contemporary frameworks have been developed that address specific aspects of the phenomenon, such as the turnover contagion theory.

In conclusion, employee turnover manifests as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, continuously and evolutionarily capturing the attention of researchers worldwide. From the early theorizations in the United States in the early 1900s to contemporary studies conducted across various continents, the phenomenon is influenced by cultural aspects and social values. Globally, North America leads with the highest volume of published research, followed by Asia, with a significant presence of studies originating from China. Oceania, Africa, and lastly, Latin America complete this spectrum, with each region contributing distinctly to the body of knowledge. Despite a smaller volume of scientific production in Latin America, Brazil stands out by offering current and relevant contributions to the understanding of employee turnover.

## 6. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## 7. Source of Financing

The expenses of this research were paid by the authors.

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**How to cite this paper?**

Dos Santos Fortunato, W., Doria Calvosa, M. V. (2024). Perspectives Historical and Contemporary on Employee Turnover: A Literature Review. *Cuadernos de Administración*, 40(80), e4113757. <https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v40i80.13757>

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