



## Mediating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between burnout and intention to quit among the employees of select hotels in South India

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**Abstract.** *Purpose.* Transformational leadership the most widely researched leadership theories in the present business world, emphasizing on “broaden and elevate the interests of the employees when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group.” India is a prominent and attractive hub during the past decade made the service industry agile with round-the-clock rendering of quality services for its customers. Thus, creating more work stress among the employees of this sector in India leading to burnout and then to quit from the organization. This paved the way to estimate and investigate the effect of Transformational leadership on burnout of employees working in hotels in South India with empirical evidence to conceptualize transformational leadership and its relation with employee job burnout and thereby the intention to quit. *Methodology.* A self-administered questionnaire for measuring the level of burnout using MBI Scale, perception on supervisor’s transformational leadership was tested by using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x; Bass, 1985), intention to quit measured by the scale developed by C. D. Crossley et al., (2002). The data collected was treated using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis and Mediation analysis. *Findings:* The impact of employee burnout on the intention to quit is mediated by transformational leadership with direct and total effects as 0.2347 and 0.2477 respectively and is significant at  $p < 0.00$  also 53.17% of variability of data can be explained by transformational leadership. *Values of the results.* The results posts a platform to explore supervisors’ leadership style so as to reduce employee intention to quit. This paper also poses the researchers to test on other organizational and psychological factors influencing job burnout leading employee turnover.

**Keywords:** HoReCa, burnout, intention to quit, leadership, mediation, transformational leadership.

### Introduction

The concept of burnout has been highlighted in the recent literature for its impact on individuals, and also on the organizations (Singh, 2000). With the increase in the service quality and customer-centric processes, the service industry across the globe facing tremendous challenges in retaining the customers. This led the supporting and first level employees to stretch beyond and fulfill the organization’s goals. This, in turn, develops a feeling of stress among the workforce translated to burnout and finally to quit the organization. Job burnout, a syndrome of inappropriate attitudes

towards clients and oneself, often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms (Freudenberger, 1974; Kahn, 1978). Burnout strikes employees when they have exhausted their physical or emotional strength. C. Maslach and S. Jackson (1981) conceptualized burnout tendency and developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI defines three dimensions to burnout, and the first is emotional exhaustion — the feeling of being overextended emotionally and physically. The second dimension, depersonalization, is the aspect of burnout that is connected to feelings of lost identity and meaningfulness. Finally, a sense of low personal accomplishment makes the employee feel dissatisfied with the work accomplishments and/or believe that the actions no longer make a difference (Golembiewski, Munzenrider, Stevenson, 1986). These negative attitudes develop an intention to quit the organization, is a serious issue especially today wherein employee leaves the organization or the organization itself fires him/her. This can be either voluntary or involuntary.

M. S. Ghasabeh et al., (2017) and B. J. Galli (2019) proposed that the current environment which is characterized by uncertainty and organizational instability calls for transformational leadership to prevail in different levels of the organization. Transformational form of leadership can be viewed as building emotional attachments between followers and leaders (Wylie, Gallagher 2009). This emotional attachment could work magic in today's organizations regardless of type. L. B. Andersen et al., (2018), stated that transformational leadership is the one wherein a leader works with the subordinates to identify the needed change and inspire the employees towards such change and implement the same, reducing the intention to quit among the employees. Transformational leadership majorly focus on the ability to lead oneself, others and other leaders as well.

This study intends to examine the effect of burnout on the intention to quit, and also the moderating effect of transformational leadership between burnout and intention to quit. Employees from hospitality sector were chosen for the study because they have received adequate attention from researchers (Wang et al., 2015), despite their priority to a large and growing industry that vitally contributes to the nation. Also, the hospitality industry was chosen for this study because of the recent dramatic changes in demand that have led to pressures in the labor market and rising competition among hotels to attract and retain skilled and qualified service-oriented employees.

## Review of Literature

S. I. Wong et al., (2007) opined that reduced willingness of employees to push or extend themselves in delivering quality service is an outcome of burnout. This impact can be weakened when management improves employees' level of affective commitment towards organization and supervisory support to manage work tasks better. Burnout occurs in a variety of jobs and is an indication that employees are no longer able to adequately manage their interactions with the stakeholders (Dormann, Zapf, 2004).

J. Jung and Y. Kim (2012) confirmed that personal background and working environment as the predictors of burnout in the organization and the consequences were reduced organizational commitment and high level of intention to quit. Y.-D. Dai et al. (2019) have added that burnout depends on the leadership style. E. W. Bradley and K. P. Sanjay (2010) confirmed that the lowest level of burnout was found when the supervisors reported a high level of initiation. Thus, we can say that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of consideration and the level of burnout. It is therefore posited that burnout will have an impact on the employees' intention to quit the organization.

*H1: The employee intention to quit an organization is positively related to burnout.*

The change in the economy has changed the traits and the competencies a leader should possess have changed because of the agile requirements in the global business (Hoch et al., 2018). The competencies like negotiation, influencing others and communication have not really changed but innovative and creative thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, decision making stands at the top of the pyramid. A leader is said to be successful when the outcome is to contribute to the growth of both the organization and the economy. This highlighted the changing role of leader from transactional to transformational. Transformational leaders improve commitment and loyalty (Tuna, et al., 2011) among the employees in the organization through inspiration thereby raising one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. This style ultimately becomes moral in which it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the subordinate, thus having a transforming effect on both (Bums, 1978). Superior leadership performance — transformational leadership (Bass, 1990) occurs when leaders broaden the interests of their employees, generate awareness and accept the purposes, and strive their subordinates to move forward beyond own self-interest.

Transformational leadership does influence the performance of the organization. A transformational leader motivates the employees and inspires them to go out of the way to build relations with the customers and thus earn a brand image for the organization (Erkutlu, 2008, Gumusluoglu, Ilsev, 2009; Patiar, Mia, 2009). With this style, managers pass on the decision making authority to the department heads and other junior managers, giving a sense of responsibility. A. Patiar, L. Mia (2009) found that when all the three are combined i.e., transformational leadership, market competition insight and the effective use of the management accounting systems information, this has a positive impact on the nonfinancial performance of the organization. By non-financial performance, it means improving the various departments' performance and ultimately the customer satisfaction. Thus, it is said that transformational leadership leads to improved performance (Patiar, Mia, 2015; Dai et al., 2019). From the above reviews about transformational leaders and their role in the organization, we can conclude that transformational leadership relates to the employees' decision whether to stay or leave the organization. It is therefore posited that transformational leadership will have an impact on the employees' intention to quit.

*H2: The employee intention to quit is inversely related to the transformational leadership style followed in the organization by the superiors.*

D. A. Waldman et al., (2012) opined that leadership can be an important link that embeds employees. Prospective leavers are less bound to quit when supervisors show a transformational style of leadership toward them. The loss of employees with vital skills or talents can incur sizeable personnel costs (Peterson, Luthans, 2006) and risk organizational effectiveness, like decrease in customer service (Shaw, Duffy, Johnson, Lockhart, 2005). Although currently, high unemployment rates are discouraging employees from dropping, leading companies nonetheless are preparing for the eventual bottled up turnover that will arise as the economy recovers (Allen, Bryant, Vardaman, 2010). When followers perceive their leaders as behaving transformational (Hughes et al., 2010) they report a higher-quality exchange relationship, their preparatory job search feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are less salient.

E. W. Bradley and K. P. Sanjay (2010) found that in government organizations, the officers usually exhibit a greater level of transformational leadership than expected by the general public. Also, transformational leadership behaviors in an organization are not really affected by the constraints that are made by the external people or external authorities, and it is the innate quality of the leaders. L. Firth et al., (2004) and J. E. Hoch et al. (2018) opined that followers who believe that their personal needs are being met through a leader's individualized thoughtfulness and consideration will be less likely to leave the leader who is looking into these needs and will thus remain as a member of the

organization. Transformational leadership could mediate the relationship between the intention to quit and the burnout levels. Thus, posited the below hypothesis.

*H3: Transformational leadership mediates the effect of burnout levels of employees and their intention to quit the organization.*

### Conceptual Model

Based on the understanding of the situation and above concepts and literature, a conceptual model has been developed for this study which is as shown below. In this model, Burnout, as discussed, has three dimensions and it is said to have a direct impact on the intention to quit factor. Also, transformational leadership is considered to have a direct impact on the intention to quit. Transformational leadership as discussed above is shown as a moderating variable that will moderate the effect of the level of burnout on the intention to quit.

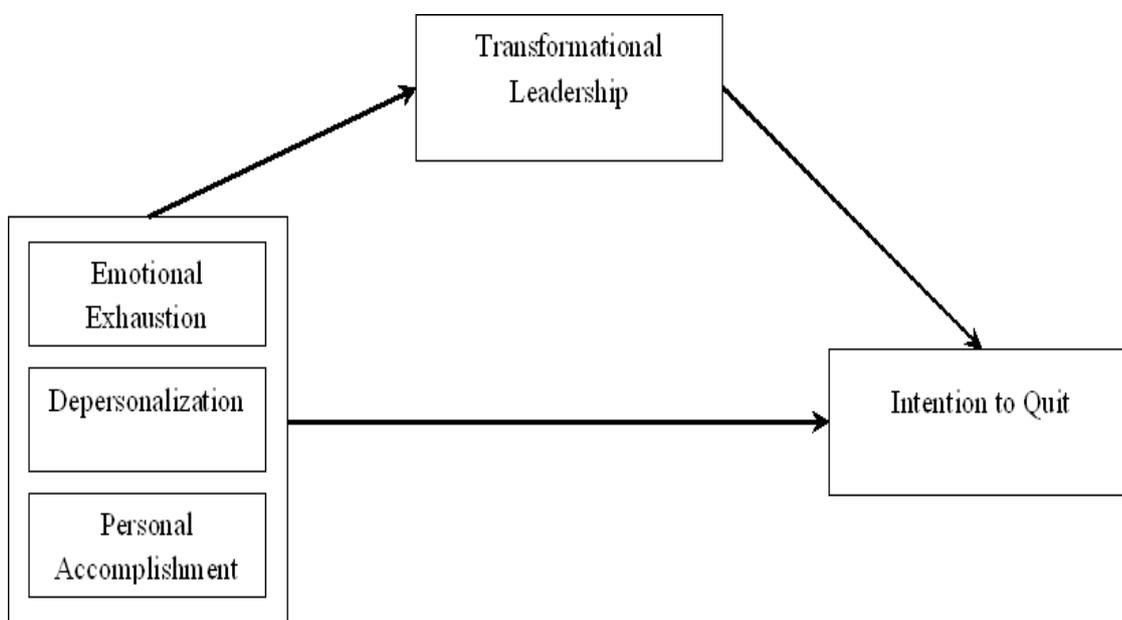


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

### Methodology

Data was collected for the study by self-administering structured questionnaires to the hotel employees of the select hotels. So the population for the study is the hotel employees of South India. Simple random sampling technique irrespective of the respondent cadre was adopted for data collection. As a result of data collection out of 265 questionnaires circulated, all 150 fully filled in questionnaires were received with a response rate of 56.6%.

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory scale* for data collection of burnout on the job has been adopted. Respondents rated the statements with each of the items on a 5-point Likert's scale, where «1» represents "strongly disagree" and «5» represents "strongly agree." In the same lines, transformational leadership was tested by using the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x; Bass, 1985)*. The *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x)* is the accepted instrument for estimating transformational and transactional leadership behavior (Bass, Avolio, 2000; Avolio, Bass, 2004). Respondents rated agreement with each of the items on a 5-point Likert scale, with «1» representing "strongly disagree" and «5» representing "strongly agree."

To measure the quit intentions of the employees, C. D. Crossley et al., (2002) developed scale was used. This scale can be used as a reliable and valid scale to assess turnover intentions and can, therefore, be used in research to validly and reliably assess turnover intentions or to predict actual turnover (Bothma, Roodt, 2013).

## Findings and Results

Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to test the reliability of the data. It is found that the items included in the questionnaire are reliable as the alpha value is greater than 0.7 (0.794). Descriptive tests were done to know the frequencies of various items in the questionnaire like:

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
< 20 years	38	25.3
20 — 29 years	63	42.0
30 — 39 years	42	28.0
40 — 49 years	7	4.7
Total	150	100.0

The results from table 1, indicate that the age of the respondents who undertook the survey is as follows, 25.3% i.e., 38 members are below 20 years, 42% (63 members) are between 21 and 29 years, 28% (42 members) are between 30 — 39 years, 4.7% (7 members) are in between 40 and 49 years. From this, we can find out that most of the people working in the hotel industry are of a young age below 29 years.

The results from table 2, indicate that out of 150 respondents 46% (69 members) of them have less than two years of experience, followed by 40% (60 members) with an experience of 2 — 5 years. here are very few respondents 13.3 % (20 members) with an experience of 6 — 9 years and only 0.7% (one member) with the highest experience of 10 — 14 years. From this, we find that the turnover rate in the hotel industry is high because most of the respondents have less than two years of experience with an organization.

Table 2. Experience of the respondent

Experience	Frequency	Percent
< 2 years	69	46.0
2 — 5 years	60	40.0
6 — 9 years	20	13.3
10 — 14 years	1	.7
Total	150	100.0

Pearson's correlation test was performed to find out the association between the mentioned variables of the study namely burnout, transformational leadership and the intention to quit which is shown in the below table 3.

The table shows the correlation between Burnout, Transformational Leadership and Intention to Quit. It is evident from the above table that Burnout and Intention to quit are moderately positively correlated (0.728). Burnout and Transformational Leadership are weak negatively correlated (-0.245). Intention to quit and transformational leadership are moderate negatively correlated (-0.479).

Table 3. Correlations

			Burnout	Intention to Quit	Transformational Leadership
Pearson's Correlation	Burnout	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.00		
	Intention to Quit	Correlation Coefficient	.728**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.00	
	Transformational Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	-.245**	-.479**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.00
N			150	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

For the first hypothesis that says that there is a positive relationship between burnout levels and the intention to quit, a regression test was performed.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.728 <sup>a</sup>	.530	.526	2.77153

a. Predictors: (Constant), Burnout

Table 5. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	-4.786	1.012		-4.731	.000
Burnout	.244	.019	.728	12.907	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to Quit

The above tables show a regression analysis for two variables namely Burnout (IV) and the intention to quit (DV). The value of R square defines that 53% (From table 4) of the variability can be explained by the independent variable (burnout) on the dependent variable (intention to quit).

The equation will be the Intention to quit = -4.786+ (0.244) Burnout from table 5, which says that for every one unit increase in Burnout, the Intention to quit increases by 0.244 times and is significant at  $p = 0.000$  ( $< 0.05$ ). So the hypothesis framed that the intention to quit is positively related to the burnout levels is accepted.

Similarly, regression test was performed for the second hypothesis as well.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.479 <sup>a</sup>	.23	.011	4.00506

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

Table 7. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	11.295	2.088		5.410	.000
Transformational Leadership	-.135	.037	-.133	-3.648	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to Quit

The value of R square states that 23% variability (from table 6) can be explained by transformational leadership on employee intention to quit. It seems there exist other factors which have an impact on employee intention to quit. The equation will be Intention to quit = 11.295+ (-0.135) Transformational Leadership from table 7.

Thus, we can say that with one unit increase in Transformational leadership, the Intention to quit reduces by 0.135 times and is significant at  $p = 0.000$ . This states that leader behavior plays a major role in reducing intention to quit. So the hypothesis framed that the intention to quit is directly related to the transformational leadership followed in an organization can be accepted.

The third hypothesis was tested for the moderating effect as follows: Mediation Analysis was performed to find out the mediating role of transformational leadership on the relationship between job burnout and intention to quit by using Using PROCESS version 3.4, Model 4 developed by Andrew F. Hayes.

Table 9. Mediation Model

Direct effects	Coefficient	SE	T	CI	Model R <sup>2</sup>
TL as outcome					
Burnout	-.0804	.0255	-3.1520	-.13, -.03	.059
Intention to Quit as outcome					
B	.2477	.0302	8.1963	.19, .31	.5317
TL	.0493	.0662	.7437	-.18, -.08	
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>	<b>BootLLCI</b>	<b>BootULCI</b>	
B → TL → IQ	-.004	.0057	-.0177	-.0055	
<b>Total Effect</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>	<b>BootLLCI</b>	<b>BootULCI</b>	
	.2437	.0189	.21	.28	
<b>Direct Effects</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>	<b>BootLLCI</b>	<b>BootULCI</b>	
	.2477	.0302	.19	.31	

A mediation analysis is comprised of three sets of regression:

- i) X (IV) → Y (DV)
- ii) X (IV) → M (MV) and
- iii) X (IV) → M (MV) → Y (DV)

First Regression i.e. x (IV) → y (DV) termed as Burnout (B) on Intention to Quit (IQ) the equation found to be as,

$$Y = a + b_1 X + e$$

And the equation can be denoted as

$$Y = -4.7855 + 0.2437 X + e$$

Second Regression i.e. x (IV) → m (MV) termed as Burnout (B) on Transformational Leadership (TL) the equation found to be as,

$$M = a + b_2 X + e$$

And the equation can be denoted as,

$$M = 29.0392 - 0.0804 X + e$$

Third Regression i.e. x (IV) + m (MV) → y (DV) termed as Burnout (B) and Transformational Leadership (TL) on Intention to Quit (IQ) and the equation found to be as,

$$Y = a + b_4 X + b_3 M + e$$

And the equation can be denoted as,

$$Y = -6.2158 + 0.2477 X + 0.0493 M + e$$

The Total Effect stands at 0.2437 ( $b_1$ ) is in the first regression equation: a total effect of X on Y (without M).

The direct effect 0.2477 ( $b_4$ ) is in the third regression equation: a direct effect of X on Y after considering a mediation (indirect) effect of M.

Finally, the mediation effect is the total effect minus the direct effect (i.e.  $b_1 - b_4 = 0.2437 - 0.2477 = -0.004$ ), which equals to a product of a coefficient of X in the second regression equation and a coefficient of M in the third regression equation (i.e.  $b_2 \times b_3 = -0.0804 \times 0.0493 = 0.004$ ).

From the above, it is clear that transformational leadership mediates the effect of burnout on the intention to quit and it is significant too by 0.004. From the model summary of the intention to quit, we can see the limits of transformational leadership are negative (-.18 & -.08) which implies that transformational leadership has a moderating effect of on the relationship between burnout levels and the intention to quit. So, the hypothesis is to be accepted.

## Discussion

Form the results, we find that, 42 per cent of the employees working in the hotel industry are in the age group of 20 — 29 years. A majority of 86 per cent of employees have less than five years of experience and a mere 0.7 per cent of employees have experience more than 10 years, showing no longevity in the job stand as round-the-clock servicing and uneven work timings stands as mandate in this sector. It was also found that an association between burnout and intention to quit, transformational leadership and intention to quit, along with the mediating effect of transformational leadership on between burnout and the intention to quit. The study reveals that leaders have a prominent role in reducing job burnout among the subordinates thus minimizing employee turnover.

The key finding from this study was that majority of quit decisions depend on the burnout levels. As seen in the results above, about 54 per cent of the employees' decisions to quit are directly related to the burnout levels experienced on the job. Also seen was that 18 per cent of the quit decisions of the employees in an organization depends on the transformational leadership followed by the managers in the organization. There is a negative relationship between transformational leadership and intention to quit as mentioned above but the 18 per cent means that there are other factors too which impact the quit decisions namely, perception of the organizational structure, work climate, personal issues, etc.

## Conclusion

In this study, we explored the effects of burnout on the intention to quit and also the effects of transformational leadership on the intention to quit. We found support for both the hypothesis mentioned, namely, that there is a direct relationship between burnout levels and the intention to quit and also between transformational leadership and the intention to quit. This we can say based on the above results and interpretations, which prove that there is an association between all the three dimensions of burnout namely Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment with the intention to quit and also there is an association between transformational leadership and the intention to quit decisions. In other words, we can conclude by saying that when followers perceive that transformational leaders will reduce their intentions to quit. In the same way when the levels of burnout on the job increase, the intentions to quit will also increase.

Thus, we can say that there is a direct positive relationship between the burnout levels and the intention to quit decisions. Similarly, there is an indirect relationship between transformational leadership and the intention to quit decisions. The study found that increasing job burnout correlates with the increase in the quit intentions in South India's hotel industry. These results imply that as hotel service employees burn out they become progressively less committed to delivering good quality service in the predetermined manner expected by management, and service quality and customer satisfaction suffer as a consequence. Reduced willingness on the part of service employees to extend themselves and deliver quality service because of burnout will very likely lead to corresponding reductions in customer satisfaction and the company's image, and ultimately the company's reputation. Customer satisfaction is key to retaining existing customers. Thus, burnout has

consequences for organizations that should not be overlooked. Companies that address burnout will have a more enthusiastic, loyal, and effective workforce and will enjoy greater customer satisfaction (Angerer, 2003) and less employee turnover.

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Received 10.06.2019