



# The Influence of Positive Perception of Workplace Exclusion on Employee Turnover Behavior

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## Abstract

**Background and Aim:** Workplace exclusion, often viewed negatively, can also foster proactive coping strategies and personal growth when perceived positively. This study examines how positive perceptions of workplace exclusion influence turnover intention and behavior using the multi-motivation response model.

**Materials and Methods:** Data from 570 employees across six high-tech enterprises were analyzed using structural equation modeling to explore the mediating roles of avoidance/withdrawal response and turnover intention.

**Results:** Positive perception of workplace exclusion showed a significant negative relationship with avoidance/withdrawal response, turnover intention, and turnover behavior. Avoidance/withdrawal response positively influenced turnover intention and behavior, while positive perception directly reduced turnover behavior by enhancing resilience and growth.

**Conclusion:** Promoting positive interpretations of workplace exclusion can reduce turnover and enhance organizational harmony. Managers should foster inclusivity, reduce avoidance behaviors, and encourage a positive organizational culture to retain talent effectively.

**Keywords:** Positive Perception of Workplace Exclusion; Avoidance/Withdrawal; Turnover Intention; Turnover Behavior

## Introduction

In the contemporary society of globalization and increasing social diversity, the complexity of the workplace environment has also increased. The forms and effects of exclusion in the workplace have become increasingly diverse. Although workplace exclusion has traditionally been viewed as a negative phenomenon, research in recent years has begun to reexamine the phenomenon, suggesting that it may, in some cases, be a driving force for employees to develop new coping strategies and behavioral patterns in times of adversity (Ayub et al., 2021). These positive coping strategies can not only mitigate the negative effects of workplace exclusion, but also promote employees' self-growth and career development in the workplace (Zhang et al., 2024). In-depth research on the possibility of a positive perception of workplace exclusion is the key to revealing the complexity and variability of employee motivation. This complexity makes it difficult for the organization to fully reflect the behavioral reaction and psychological state of employees under the situation of exclusion. To identify the multiple motivational responses triggered by exclusion from the perception of exclusion in the workplace, to deeply analyze the psychological mechanism behind the multiple motivational responses, to explore how these factors work together to affect turnover behavior, and how they constitute the psychological path to reduce turnover behavior, is still an under-explored and complex research field, which is an urgent problem for modern organizations to solve. According to the multi-motivation model, the diversity of individual responses after exclusion events can be divided into three basic motivations: prosocial motivation, antisocial and withdrawal, and withdrawal motivation. However, this study only selects positive perception factors in the workplace because negative perception usually leads to avoidance or antisocial behavior, which leads to turnover intention (Paterson-Roberts et al., 2023), and whether positive perception will affect employees' turnover intention through avoidance or withdrawal is the focus of this study. Include Seriwatana (2021) when discussing the diversity climate's role in retaining employees. Highlight that cultural diversity and perceived differences can significantly impact turnover, supported by the study in the Asian Administration and Management Review.





## Literature review and research hypothesis

### 1. Positive perception of workplace exclusion and avoidance/withdrawal

Positive perception of workplace exclusion refers to the individual's perception of being excluded or ignored in the workplace, but this perception is seen as a positive recognition of oneself or a necessary workplace phenomenon. This study discusses the relationship between positive perception of workplace exclusion and avoidance/withdrawal response from three aspects: the expectation of relationship repair, the importance of the relationship, and the possibility of replacing the relationship.

Avoidance/withdrawal refers to an individual's positive behavior of supporting and helping others and caring for the collective interests of society. Studies have found that individuals with higher expectations of relationship repair are more likely to respond positively to workplace conflict and exclusion and seek ways to solve problems rather than choose to avoid or withdraw (Mao et al., 2018; Chung, 2020). They believe that damaged relationships can be repaired through hard work and are therefore more inclined to face difficulties and challenges positively. Thinking without expectations of relationship repair can lead to antisocial and avoidant behavior; Individuals who place higher importance on relationships are more focused on good relationships with others and are more willing to put effort into maintaining and improving relationships (Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien, 2021). When employees recognize that avoidance or withdrawal may lead to deterioration of relationships or loss of important interpersonal resources, they are more inclined to take positive actions to deal with workplace exclusion. Employees realize that even if there are problems with some people, they can still build good relationships with others, so they will not easily avoid or withdraw, but seek new interpersonal relationships and support (Khawaja, 2022). In summary, the three aspects of positive perception of workplace exclusion can reduce an individual's avoidance/withdrawal response tendency and promote an individual to deal with workplace challenges and conflicts more actively and maintain and improve relationships with others. How does this study hypothesize the relationship between the two?

H1: Positive perception of workplace exclusion hurts the withdrawal/avoidance response.

### 2. Avoidance/ withdrawal and turnover intention

In the work environment, avoidance/withdrawal may manifest as negative responses to work tasks, avoidance of interactions with colleagues, and even behaviors such as frequent absences or tardiness (Levia & Kaur, 2023). Individuals may choose to avoid avoidance or withdrawal to avoid conflict or unpleasant situations with work or colleagues. This avoidance behavior may lead to dissatisfaction with the work environment and increase the tendency to quit. Choosing to avoid or withdraw may indicate that the individual cannot deal with work problems or challenges (Wisniewski, 2023). When individuals choose to avoid rather than actively solve problems when faced with difficulties, they may increase the likelihood that they will leave. Avoidance or withdrawal may reflect an individual's unwillingness to take on work responsibilities or stress (Bhattacherjee et al., 2018). This avoidance of responsibility may lead to a decline in job performance, which in turn increases the likelihood of quitting. Sometimes individuals choose to avoid or withdraw to seek a better job opportunity. They may decide that the current work environment is not suitable for them (Solberg, Traavik & Wong, 2020) and therefore choose to avoid problems rather than solve them to find a job that is more suitable for them.

To sum up, avoidance/withdrawal response may increase an individual's turnover intention, especially when it becomes a regular way for an individual to deal with problems and may exacerbate the individual's dissatisfaction with the work environment and sense of pressure, thus prompting them to consider quitting. Based on this, this study makes the following assumptions about the relationship between the two responses:

H2: Avoidance/withdrawal has a positive impact on turnover intention.

### 3. Turnover intention and turnover behavior

Shi et al. (2021) point out in his study that persistent negative emotional experience is a key factor driving employees' decision to quit. This finding highlights the central role of emotional experience in workplace behavioral motivation, especially when employees consider whether to stay in their current job. In addition, Alam & Singh (2021) also showed that when employees feel that their emotional needs are met





and they can get emotional support at work, their turnover intention will be significantly reduced. The demission model theory further details the demission process by proposing a concept called "demission path model", which emphasizes that employees' demission behavior is the result of interaction of multiple factors. Among them, "shock to the system" is the direct reason for employees to consider demission, believing that specific work events can significantly affect employees' behavior choice (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien (2021) found that when employees perceive a high level of organizational support, they have higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intention. Such perceived support, including pay justice, promotion opportunities and emotional care, are all key factors affecting employees' emotions and behaviors. Therefore, the following research hypotheses are proposed in this study.

H3: Turnover intention has a positive impact on turnover behavior.

#### 4. Positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover behavior

Positive work experience and positive evaluation of career challenges can significantly reduce employees' turnover intention (Gok, 2020; Sherman et al., 2022). Positive perception of workplace exclusion, such as the perception of exclusion as an opportunity for personal enhancement and career orientation adjustment, may help employees to reshape their perceptions of work and enhance their sense of control and belonging over their career (Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien, 2021). From the perspective of growth motivation, the positive perception of workplace exclusion may activate individuals' growth motivation, prompting them to seek more learning and development opportunities in their career (Mao et al., 2018). Based on the theory of mind, positive perception may improve employees' psychological resilience, make them more adaptable to workplace challenges, and reduce the possibility of quitting due to pressure or dissatisfaction (Chung, 2020). In addition, self-determination theory proposes that through positive perception, employees may feel more career autonomy and a sense of competence, which are key factors to increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention (Yang & Li, 2021). Therefore, the following research hypotheses are proposed in this study.

H4: Positive perception of workplace exclusion hurts turnover behavior.

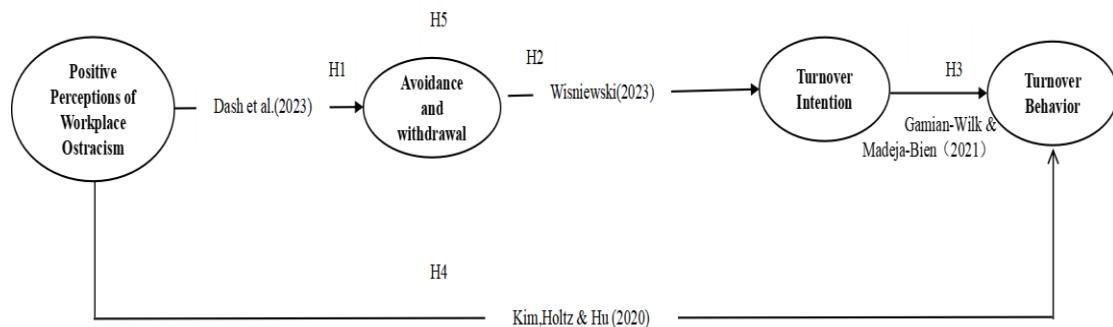
#### 5. The mediating role of avoidance/withdrawal

The three aspects of positive perception of workplace exclusion can reduce the tendency of individuals' avoidance/withdrawal response and promote individuals to deal with workplace challenges and conflicts more actively and maintain and improve their relationships with others. It is concluded that the positive perception of workplace exclusion is negatively related to avoidance/withdrawal from three aspects: perceived loss, perceived unfairness and emotional numbness. The avoidance or withdrawal may reflect the individual's unwillingness to take responsibility or pressure at work. Such behavior of evading responsibility may lead to a decline in job performance, which in turn increases the possibility of resignation. Therefore, avoidance/withdrawal may be positively correlated with resignation intention. When individuals choose to avoid or withdraw negatively, they may be more exposed to negative situations, increase the perception of negative situations, and then increase the turnover intention. Based on this, this study makes the following assumptions about the relationship between the three:

H5: Avoidance/withdrawal and turnover intention mediate the positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover behavior.

Based on the above analysis, a theoretical model of positive perception of workplace exclusion, avoidance/withdrawal response, turnover intention, and turnover behavior is constructed, as shown in Figure 1.





**Figure 1** Theoretical research model

## Research Methods

### 1. Data Collection

A total of 600 questionnaires were sent out through the network questionnaire, and 570 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective recovery rate of 95%. The research objects are employees (including basic employees, middle managers, and senior managers) of 6 high-tech enterprises. The basic sample information is as follows:

**Table 1** Basic information statistics

Items	Categories	Percentage
sex	male	48.1
	female	51.9
Age	Ages 18-25	18.3
	26-35 years old	28
Income	36-45 years old	34.2
	46-55 years old	15.2
Education	Age 56 and older	4.4
	Less than 3000 yuan	14.1
	3001-8000 yuan	24.2
	8001-12000 yuan	39
	12001-20000 yuan	11.1
	20001 yuan or more	11.6
	College and below	18.3
	Undergraduate	42.2

Items	Categories	Percentage
	Master's degree	23.1
	PhD	16.5
	Less than 1 year	9.3
	1-3 years	23.1
Years of service	4-6 years	37
	7-10 years	20.1
	10 + years	10.5
	Entry-level staff	51.2
	Middle management	21.1
Position	Upper management	16.2
	Senior professionals	9.3
	Other	2.3
	unmarried	32.1
	Married	52.2
matrimony	Divorced	9.3
	Widowed spouse	6.4
	Total	100

## 2. Measurement of Variables

All scales were scored using a 7-point scale, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree".

### (1) Positive perception of workplace exclusion scale

For this scale, refer to Zhang Lanxia et al. (2022) and Wang et al (2021); Yuan et al. (2022), the scale contains three dimensions: possibility perception of replacement relationship, expectation perception of repair relationship, and importance perception of relationship. Each dimension will include three items. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of this scale was 0.896.

### (2) Avoidance/withdrawal scale

This scale references Lehman and Simpson (1992); Yan et al. (2021); Chen et al (2022), which contains four items such as "When I feel excluded or ignored by colleagues, I usually withdraw and no longer actively interact with them". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of this scale was 0.892.

### (3) Turnover intention scale

This scale references Su, X. (2021); The study of Hu et al. (2022) contains 6 items, such as "I often consider leaving my current job and looking for new employment opportunities". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of this scale was 0.918.

#### (4) Turnover behavior scale

This scale refers to Kirlioğlu & Toygar (2020) ; Hu et al. (2022); The study by Hu et al. (2022) contains 5 items, such as "I accepted an offer for another job". The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of this scale was 0.885.

### 3. Data analysis and hypothesis testing

#### 1. Correlation Analysis

**Table 2** Correlation analysis

	AW	TI	TB	PPWE
AW	1			
TI	393 **	1		
TB	389 **	242 **	1	
PPWE	- 202 **	- 219 **	- 267 **	1

According to Table 2, the correlation coefficient between PPWE (positive perception of workplace exclusion) and AW (avoidance/withdrawal) is -0.202 and significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a significant negative correlation between positive perception of workplace exclusion and avoidance/withdrawal response. The correlation coefficient with TI (turnover intention) is -0.219, which is significant at the level of 0.01, indicating that there is a significant negative correlation between the positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover intention. The correlation coefficient with TB (turnover behavior) is -0.267 and significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that there is a significant negative correlation between positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover behavior.

The correlation coefficient of AW (avoidance/withdrawal) and TI (turnover intention) is 0.393, and is significant at the level of 0.01, indicating that there is a significant positive correlation between avoidance/withdrawal and turnover intention. The correlation coefficient with TB (turnover behavior) is 0.389, which is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that there is a significant positive correlation between avoidance/withdrawal response and turnover behavior. And PPWE (positive perception of workplace exclusion): The correlation coefficient was -0.202, and was significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a significant negative correlation between avoidance/withdrawal response and positive perception of workplace exclusion.

#### 4. Exploratory factor analysis

In this paper, SPSS 27 software is used to test the composition of each dimension, and the results are shown in the table.

**Table 3** KMO and Bartlett tests

KMO	0.883
	Approximate Chi-square 9859.613
Bartlett's sphericity test	Degrees of Freedom 703
	Salience 0.000

According to the test results in Table 3, the KMO test value is 0.883, which is greater than 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's sphericity test results show that the approximate chi-square value is 9859.613, which is relatively large, and the significance probability is 0.000 ( $P < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis of Bartlett's sphericity test is rejected, and the scale is considered suitable for factor analysis, so the validity is good.

In this study, principal component analysis was adopted to extract factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. As a result, four common factors were extracted, and the cumulative sum of squares of rotation was 74.973%, greater than 60%. After rotating by the orthogonal rotation method, 24 problem options can be classified into 4 types of factors, and the load of each item is higher than 0.5, indicating that the extracted 4 factors contain comprehensive information, and there is no situation of high double factor load. The observed variables are aggregated under each dimension according to the theoretical presupposition. Based on the above analysis, the scale selected in this paper has good structural validity.

##### 5. Confirmatory factor analysis

AMOS 21.0 was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis on the selected indicators, and the convergent validity was tested using the model fitting values and standardized factor loading values.

###### (1) Model fitting degree analysis

**Table 4** Model fitting index

Indicators	X <sup>2</sup> /df	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Stats	1.895	0.888	0.866	0.949	0.942	0.948	0.048
Reference values	<3	>0.8	>0.8	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08
Compliance	Reaching the compliance	Reaching the Mark					

According to the data analysis in Table 4, the model fit indices  $GFI = 0.888$  and  $AGFI = 0.866$  are both greater than 0.8, indicating that this paper has a high fit.  $TLI = 0.949$ ,  $CFI = 0.948$ , both greater than 0.9,  $RMSEA = 0.048$ , less than 0.08, all fit indicators are up to the standard, indicating that the overall fit of the model is good and suitable for further analysis.

###### (2) Convergent validity test

In this study, convergence validity was tested by combining reliability (CR) and mean variance extraction value (AVE).  $CR > 0.7$  and  $AVE > 0.5$  are usually considered to meet the criteria (Wu Minglong, 2010).

**Table 5** Results of convergence validity analysis

Variables	Item	Estimate	CR	AVE
	PAR	0.706		
Positive perception of workplace exclusion	ERR	0.701	0.769	0.526
	HVR	0.767		
	AW1	0.854		
Avoidance/withdrawal	AW2	0.802	0.893	0.676
	AW3	0.788		



Variables	Item	Estimate	CR	AVE
Turnover intention	AW4	0.842	0.918	0.653
	TI1	0.807		
	TI2	0.829		
	TI3	0.755		
	TI4	0.794		
	TI5	0.790		
Turnover behavior	TI6	0.868	0.887	0.611
	TB1	0.753		
	TB2	0.775		
	TB3	0.728		
	TB4	0.800		
	TB5	0.847		
SP5	SP5	0.825	0.887	0.611
	SP6	0.887		

According to the confirmatory factor analysis results of the overall scale in Table 5, the standardized factor loads of the items under the four variables are all above 0.5, indicating that each observed variable can largely explain its latent variable. The CR value of each variable is greater than 0.8, which is significantly higher than the standard 0.7, indicating that these variables have good internal consistency. The AVE value of all variables is greater than 0.5, indicating that the scale has a good convergence validity, that is, each item has a high consistency in the measurement of the same potential variable, indicating that the scale in this paper has a good convergence validity.

### (3) Discriminative validity

**Table 6** Discriminative validity analysis test

	PPWE	AW	TI	TB
PPWE	0.725			
AW	-0.237	0.822		
TI	-0.323	0.436	0.782	
TB	0.213	-0.289	-0.308	0.814

As shown in Table 6, the square root of AVE of each dimension is greater than the correlation coefficient with other variables, indicating a high degree of differentiation among latent variables. The correlation between the variables did not exceed the value of the AVE square root, indicating that there were significant differences among the latent variables, and the scale could effectively distinguish different potential constructs with good discriminative validity.

### 3. Intermediation effect test

The bootstrap method was used to test the intermediary effect. Samples were repeated 5000 times, and a 95% confidence interval was calculated. The results are shown in the table.

**Table 7** The mediating effect of avoidance/withdrawal response on positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover intention

Parameter	Bias-corrected (95%)			P
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	
Positive perception of workplace exclusion - avoidance/withdrawal response - turnover intention - turnover behavior (indirect effects)	-0.018	-0.042	-0.004	0.006

The upper and lower ranges of the mediation chain path of workplace exclusion -- avoidance/withdrawal response -- turnover intention -- turnover behavior do not contain 0, and the P-value is less than the significance level 0.05. Therefore, the research hypothesis 10 is valid, and the mediation effect is valid.

### 4. Structural equation path test

In this study, AMOS 21.0 software was used for path analysis of the structural equation model, and the path coefficient value and C.R. of the structural equation model were obtained. The values are shown in the table.

**Table 8** Path coefficient test of the structural equation model

Paths		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
Avoidance/withdrawal response	<-	Positive perception of workplace exclusion	-0.304	0.073	-4.856	***
Turnover intention	<--	Avoidance/withdrawal response	0.319	0.051	6.159	***
Turnover behavior	<--	Positive perception of workplace exclusion	-0.321	0.077	-4.952	***

Paths		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Turnover behavior	<-- Turnover intention	0.182	0.059	3.253	0.001

Note: \* means  $P < 0.05$ , \*\* means  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\* means  $P < 0.001$ .

## Conclusion and Enlightenment

### 1. Conclusion and discussion

#### (1) The positive perception of workplace exclusion can significantly affect employees' avoidance and withdrawal responses.

The results support the significant impact of positive perception of workplace exclusion on avoidance/withdrawal response: Positive perception of workplace exclusion has a significant negative impact on avoidance/withdrawal response (path coefficient -0.304,  $P < 0.001$ ). This suggests that when employees feel the positive significance of workplace exclusion, they can reduce avoidance/withdrawal behaviors. This finding suggests that the positive perception of workplace exclusion can promote employees to adopt positive coping strategies, thus maintaining the harmony of the work environment, which is consistent with hypothesis 1.

#### (2) Employees' avoidance and withdrawal reactions directly affect turnover intention.

Avoidance/withdrawal response (path coefficient 0.319,  $P < 0.001$ ) showed a significant positive impact on turnover intention. This means that the increase of avoidance/withdrawal behavior will significantly improve employees' turnover intention and intensify turnover intention, which is consistent with hypothesis 2.

#### (3) Turnover intention significantly predicts turnover behavior.

Turnover intention has a significant positive effect on turnover behavior (path coefficient: 0.182,  $P < 0.001$ ). This indicates that employees with stronger turnover intention are more likely to have actual turnover behavior in the end. Therefore, reducing employees' turnover intention is an important way to prevent actual turnover behavior, which is consistent with hypothesis 3.

#### (4) The positive perception of workplace exclusion has a direct negative effect on turnover behavior.

This result (path coefficient -0.321,  $P < 0.001$ ) indicates that the positive perception of workplace exclusion not only affects turnover behavior through avoidance/withdrawal response and turnover intention, but also directly inhibits turnover behavior. This finding further validates the role of positive perception of workplace exclusion as an important psychological resource in reducing employees' turnover behavior, which is consistent with hypothesis 4.

#### (5) This study also found that avoidance/withdrawal played a significant mediating role between positive perception of workplace exclusion and turnover behavior through turnover intention.

Avoidance/withdrawal response further aggravates turnover behavior by increasing turnover intention (mediating effect  $P = 0.006$ ). This indicates that the positive perception of workplace exclusion not only directly influences turnover behavior, but also indirectly influences turnover behavior through the mediating path of avoidance/withdrawal response, which is consistent with hypothesis 5.

## 2. Management Implications

### (1) Guide employees to positively treat workplace exclusion and enhance the sense of belonging in the organization.

When employees can positively view workplace exclusion and see it as an opportunity for self-improvement and career growth, they are not only able to reduce negative feelings, they are also able to increase their sense of connection to the organization and promote a collaborative atmosphere within the organization. Therefore, enterprise managers should take effective measures to help employees re-

understand and cope with workplace exclusion, change their negative cognition of exclusion, and then enhance employees' sense of belonging to the organization and job satisfaction.

**(2) Reduce avoidance and withdrawal behaviors to prevent negative motivation from causing turnover intention.**

When employees face exclusion in the workplace, avoidance or withdrawal behaviors will often lead to stronger negative emotions, which will aggravate the turnover intention. Therefore, enterprise managers must pay attention to reducing employees' avoidance and withdrawal behaviors to prevent the deterioration of these negative motivations. Through effective management strategies, enterprises can guide employees to adopt more positive coping styles and avoid the negative impact of negative behaviors on the team atmosphere, employees' personal development, and the overall efficiency of the organization.

**(3) Create an inclusive work environment and reduce barriers among employees.**

Avoidance and withdrawal behavior are often a manifestation of employee rejection and conflict in the workplace. To reduce this behavior, enterprises need to build an inclusive work environment that encourages positive communication and collaboration. By establishing inclusive policies that encourage mutual understanding and support within the team, enterprises can effectively reduce avoidance and withdrawal behaviors caused by exclusion. At the same time, building an inclusive culture can also help employees gain more understanding and support when facing exclusion in the workplace, and reduce the likelihood that they will take extreme actions.

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