

# The Effects of Workplace Stress, Work-Life Balance on Turnover Intention: An Empirical Evidence from Pharmaceutical Industry in Thailand

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Article History:

Submitted: 09.12.2019

Revised: 06.01.2020

Accepted: 02.02.2020

## ABSTRACT

Turnover intention is an individual's thinking on the probability of switching the job within a certain stretch of time. Due to turnover intention on employee's mind, employee's responsibilities in the organization might be hampered which will make ultimate damage to working productivity of the company. It has been extensively discussed by a lot of researchers from various perspectives on main reasons for studying turnover intention. There are several aspects which would make influence on employees to have an intention to switch the jobs. In this study, the researchers attempt to investigate the influence of workplace stress and work life balance on turnover intention of the employees in pharmaceutical industry of Thailand. Workplace stress is one of the major contributors of how the employees perform for their job. Work-life balance deals with the techniques for balancing the professional life and private life that an individual request for the home and work. This research is a quantitative research which utilizes structural equation modelling by

using Smart PLS version 3. The unit of analysis is the individual employee working in one of the pharmaceutical companies in Thailand. Total 300 employees selected from these 13 companies for distributing the questionnaires. A total of 277 usable questionnaires were collected back and proceeded for further analysis. Findings showed that, work life balance and workplace stress significantly influence the turnover intention of the organization.

**Keywords:** Workplace Stress, Work-Life Balance, Turnover Intention, Thailand

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DOI: [10.5530/srp.2020.2.86](https://doi.org/10.5530/srp.2020.2.86)

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## INTRODUCTION

The attention of both researchers and practitioners have attracted for decades due to the organizational problem such as turnover which worries employers as well. According to Long, Perumal, and Ajagbe (2012), competitive industry and low employment rates are the top two factors that are worsening in Thai organization lately and are proofed to contribute the link in the trend of job-hopping among Thai. In other words, "turnover" whereby this statement is strongly proven by Apker (2017) which stated that the percentage of turnover rates has increased from 12.3 % in 2012 to 13.2 % in 2013. The above statistics indicate that employee turnover is continuous issues for the organization. Thus, employee turnover issues should not be ignored by employers since this issue is continuously arising.

In facts, it is imperative to investigate the facts behind this problem empirically. Arshad and Puteh (2015), includes that turnover can cause problems in organizations as the cost-burdened to replace each of one lost executives who

could reach up to 213% of the top management's salary. Asiedu-Appiah, Mehmood, and Bamfo (2015), adding that turnover can be considered as costly because it incurs training, separation and recruitment cost whereby indirectly could contribute to losses in term of productivity, quality, clients and at the same time it will reduce remaining employee's morale. On the other hand, there will be additional work for the remaining employees as well. That is the reason why organizations should make an effort to reduce turnover. Belton (2018) stress on the point that to avoid any unfavourable outcomes for the organization, the HR management department should thoroughly analyse the reasons behind the facts. Meanwhile, Boamah and Laschinger (2016), has highlighted that turnover intention positively related to the actual turnover, which means representation for actual turnover. Deery and Jago (2015), also sharing a similar understanding that it is worthwhile to be the focus on turnover intention because before the actual turnover emerged, corrective actions can be taken to avoid.



Figure 1: Work-life balance structure

Source: (Jones & Taylor, 2017)

Figure 1 shows the work-life balance model. Researches divided the work-life into two parts which are personal life and professional life. After that, they separated personal life in three portions (family, friends & self) and professional life into (job & career) parts. According to researches M. Kim and Windsor (2015), Human Resource Management Practices (HRM practices) can affect employee's turnover intention. Additionally, as

stated by researchers (Lindfelt, Ip, Gomez, & Barnett, 2018), employers who practice the proper HRM practices in an organization and employees who is appreciated by employer with training practices, job security, career development opportunities, and performance appraisal will definitely respond positively by remaining on their present job.

TABLE 1. Employees demands for better balance work-life

| Country     | Balance life demand (%) |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Hong Kong   | 67%                     |
| Indonesia   | 58%                     |
| Japan       | 57%                     |
| Singapore   | 70%                     |
| South Korea | 50%                     |
| Thailand    | 61%                     |
| Vietnam     | 55%                     |

Source: (Cahill, McNamara, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Valcour, 2015)

Table 1 shows the demand for a better work-life balance from different countries. Here, it can be observed that 70% of employees in Singapore are demanding better work-life. On the other hand, 50% of South Korean employees are demand for better work-life. 61% of employees in Thailand are also demanding better work-life.

Although employees often change jobs due to career advancement and better training programs, the management cannot be dependent on those practices to retain employees for long-term production. Having similar opinion Lindfelt et al. (2018), pointed out that decrease in the turnover rate of the employees is possible if and only if standard performance appraisal and proper training are delivered by the employer to employee. Besides, employee retention can be preserved by giving better compensation practices and giving promotions. Similar to that, Giaque, Anderfuhren-Biget, and Varone (2019) found that job security and increasing level of experience will weaken **employee's turnover rate**. Those employees who have a thought that they do not be in the right place in an organization, they are more likely to leave for another company. For this reason, investigating the relationship between job stress, job security and **employee's turnover intentions** will be essential for the management to avoid the actual losses from the employees (Mu'taman Jarrar & Don, 2016).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Workplace Stress

The workplace is a community or a society that contributes to the sense of the individuals in terms of their identity, affiliation, worth and meaning (Bae & Min, 2016). It is one of the major contributors to how the employees perform for their job. This kind of stress in the workplace had an impact on the individuals, the organization, and as for the whole country specifically. Workplace stress was as stated as the adverse reaction that people had to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. From the statement mentioned above, workplace stress is the stress not only just because of the work or what must be done by an employee based on the job descriptions but also from the environment of the workplace itself. Workplace stress

can be affected by the employees in certain aspects. It can be manifested by the lack of motivation, ill health, poor employee performance, ill health, and also absence (Blanc-Lapierre, Rousseau, & Parent, 2017). These are the signs or indicators that are showing on how the workplace stress takes place among the employees and the implications of the workplace stress towards their performance (Patwary & Rashid, 2016).

Workplace stress is defined as the response or feedback in terms of physical and emotional aspects, and usually, this situation happens when the job requirements are contradictory with the abilities that are available within the employees. Workplace stress is the stress that comprises the environment surrounding them and also the conflicts within the employees to fulfil the responsibilities that need to be done in a given time by their bosses or employers. The workplace stress comes from various ways and gives effect to the employees differently. Basically, the reactions for the issues on stress are actually not an isolated phenomenon, and the workplace stress is becoming one of the major problems today for most employees (Chao, Jou, Liao, & Kuo, 2015), and this is closely related to the various factors that affect the levels of workplace stress among employees in most of the organizations.

According to Eddy, Heckenberg, Wertheim, Kent, and Wright (2016), they reported that there were several factors affecting workplace stress, such as mental illness, anxiety, and depression. Workplace stress can be categorized into two aspects which consisting of work-related stress and as well as non-work-related stress. The work-related stress can be developed when an employee had the difficulties to cope with the duties and responsibilities that they need to carry on. Work-related stress can be related to various factors such as role ambiguity, workload, bureaucracy in the organizations, role schedules and tasks and other factors that can give significant effect to the workplace stress among employees.

Furthermore, workplace stress also can be affected with the non-work-related stress, for instance, financial problems, relationship breakdown among spouses in the family, personal and also family illnesses could contribute to the elevation of workplace stress. According to Foy, Dwyer,

Nafarrete, Hammoud, and Rockett (2019) the factors of workplace stress also included demands, control, support, relationships at work, role, change and also culture and these factors were able to affect the levels of workplace stress among employees. These factors are significant to the consequences of illness that can lead to several effects such as high levels of absenteeism, high rate of turnover, and others.

According to Carvalheiro, Peterson, and Rylander (1995), he explored that role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload as previously reported by most of the industrial workers and at the same time, the research was conducted among managers were having higher levels of stress due to the higher role overload and this was one of the issues being discussed regarding the organization especially in the aspect of the stress in the workplace. The higher the tasks and responsibilities being carried out by an employee, the higher the levels of workplace stress. Workplace stress could be one of the major contributors to the employees and organizational performance.

The scenario of workplace stress could lead to negative consequences towards the health status and well-being within the employees (Goh, Pfeffer, Zenios, & Rajpal, 2015) and if it was not being prevented for such time, most of the employees would be affected in terms of their health but also their individual performance which will then give such impact towards the organizational performance. Workplace stress was basically the harmful and emotional responses that can happen to all employees when there was a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee had over meeting these demands.

#### Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the balance that an individual need to maintain the time for the work and other aspects of life. Other aspects of life include personal interest, social and leisure activities, and more importantly, the family. Work-life balance has gained the attention in the 1970s, and during that many childcare assisting programs introduced for the employees with focal points for reducing the stress, and increasing the efficiency of the employees (Boiarintseva & Richardson, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to offer the assistance program for the workforce, especially the employees, are having difficulty managing the work and family life and other activities. Simple, work-life balance refers to the technique of managing individual employees in the workplace (Cahill et al., 2015). Indeed, for the employees in the pharmaceutical industry in Thailand, work-life balance is highly relevant facets to research and practice.

By and large, work-life balance observation is the relationship between the professional life and private life of the individual employees (Patwary, Roy, Hoque, & Khandakar, 2019). In addition to that, previous literature claims that work-life balance has spill over effects between the professional and private life of every individual employee (Direenzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2015). Once the private and professional life exists, then the work-life is perceived as balanced or not (Jones & Taylor, 2017). If professional life and private life create a negative perception and conflict between two domains, then it is considered as problematic.

In contrary to the facts, when two domains of life create a balance without any conflict, it is considered the balance work-life (Melo, Ge, Craig, Brewer, & Thronicker, 2018). More specifically, work-life balance is the conflict-free relationship between the professional and private. This compromise of the two areas is likewise identified with the particular demands (Schwartz et al., 2019) and the various jobs that workers need to take on in these two domains (Sexton et al., 2017). Any unbalance between the private and professional lives of employees' work-life balance and the performance, the emotional labour ten to leave the job which is understood as ones' reactions to different job characteristics (MacIntyre, Thivierge, & MacDonald, 1997).

Notwithstanding the job requirement of the emotional labours' responses relies upon individual and their characteristics qualities (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). In a nutshell, emotional labour comprises with emotional dissonance need to exhibit positive emotions and causes various stress reactions that consequently lead to low job performance, satisfaction and further impacts private life because of the contending concurrence of these areas (Zheng, Kashi, Fan, Molineux, & Ee, 2016).

Work-life balance deals with the techniques for balancing the professional life and private life that an individual request for the home and work. In other words, it reflects how individuals do or should fulfil their business-related and personal commitments in such a procedure, that a clashing circumstance does not happen (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015). Work-life balance is basic, especially when organizations need to oversee uncommonly specialized proficient on the grounds that their high faithfulness and duty is required forward accomplishment of the establishment.

Moreover, as indicated by Braun and Peus (2018) adjusting work and life is the improvement of draping an ideal parity among the employment of a private other than their own existence with the entirety of their few affiliations. Therefore, previous scholars expressed the importance of upgrading the work-place balance between work and private life (Macphee, Wardrop, & Campbell, 2010). Another important fact is that the gender differentiation in the work-place, which makes difficult in balancing and managing employees for both the organization and employees themselves. Denson, Szelényi, and Bresonis (2018) had said on his paper that accomplishing a balance of work and a better life can bring benefits to employers in terms of having a workforce that is persuaded productive and less stressful since they had the feeling that they esteemed to the company, attracting more candidates, improve productivity and decrease absenteeism, gained a reputation as an employer of choice, retain employees are important to the organization and maximize the existing workforce. While according to Isaksson (2018), stated work-life balance have demonstrated that it is the factor that has the potential to influence the issue in the workplace such as employee turnover, stress, organizational commitment, absenteeism, productivity and job.

Work-family struggle happens when the person needs to perform different roles as husband and wife, parents, friends and social life. Each part requires time, commitment and vitality to be implemented. Additionally, due to a strong direct association between work-life balance and the productivity of the organization, both the current

researchers and employers have greater attention to investigate the facts (Nawaz & Hassan, 2016). Therefore, when employees have a good work-life believe in reacting positively in order to reduce the workload inside the organization, develop a good organizational philosophy where the workforce is not pushed, and additional work is not focused as load. Other than that, work-life balance also can help in the increment of the efficiency and high performance of the workforce in an organization (Shanafelt et al., 2015). This is because, when employees feel happy and satisfy with the work, so they will put extra effort into their job with a great performance.

#### Turnover Intention

Boamah and Laschinger (2016), defined Turnover Intention (TI) of an organizational member as the subjective perception to quit the current job for other opportunities. According to Carlson, Carlson, Zivnuska, Harris, and Harris (2017), turnover is the permanent withdrawal either voluntary or involuntary from an organization. DiPietro and Bufquin (2018), adding in that employee turnover can be considered as an employee cycle in a particular industry whereby there will be rotation between employment and unemployment situation and also between organizations, jobs and occupations. It is also the rate at which employees quit their jobs. Meanwhile, Ertas (2015) stated that turnover by an employee of a particular organization, meaning that voluntary termination from involvement in an organization.

Turnover intention is widely studied by researchers in the past decades. Turnover intention is defined as individual thinking on the probability that will change his or her job within a certain stretch of time. When a thought for turnover exists in employees mind, the possibility for a turnover to happen is high. It has been extensively discussed by a lot of researchers from various perspectives on the main reasons for studying turnover intent (Jermsittiparsert, Namdej, & Siriattakul, 2019; Saengchai, Duangkaew, & Jermsittiparsert, 2019; Saengchai, Thaiprayoon, & Jermsittiparsert, 2019).

Ferguson et al. (2016) used the term turnover intentions as thoughts of quitting from the current job, the intention to search for a different job, and then intention to quit which refer to three specific thoughts in the withdrawal cognition process. Since turnover intention linked with actual turnover well-known as an appropriate dependent variable. Turnover intentions or intentions to quit a job have been found to be one of the best predictors of actual quitting. This has been proven through research conducted by. Apart from that, Karatepe and Avci (2017) in their views stating that turnover intention is defined as the moderator

factor between attitudes affecting commitment in an organization and actually quitting from the organization. Accordingly, various organizational processes, for instance, selection and coaching/mentoring, have chosen turnover as one of the criteria to evaluate employee effectiveness. Therefore, understanding the influential factors on turnover will give an opportunity for an organization to increase employee morale, decrease selection and training cost, provide customer satisfaction and at the same time organizational productivity can be enhanced. Human resource management is the greatest strength of an organization (J. Kim, 2015). HRM policies and practices can be strategically planned and implemented appropriately. Through this strategic implementation, organizations can gain necessary outcomes from employees such as the improvement in term of in-role and extra-role behaviours of employees. However, most of the organizations are actively seeking for techniques to improve the linkage between employees and their organizations even though it involves costly investment. The support of suitable implementation, these techniques often enable a more committed workforce.

#### Research Methodology

Research design is defined as a series of rational decision-making choices regarding several aspects such as the purpose of the study, its location, the type of investigation, time of horizon, unit of analysis, also it involves the sampling design, data collection methods, measurement and as well as the data analysis (Sekaran, 2003). The purpose of the research design is basically important as the guidance for the researchers to make sure that all ideas, procedures, instruments used, and data analysis methods were able to support this particular study.

Researchers have selected the quantitative research approach method to examine the relationships between workplace stress, work-life balance and turnover intention among the employees working in 13 companies of pharmaceutical located in Thailand. The unit of analysis is the individual employee working in one of the pharmaceutical companies in Thailand. Total of 300 employees selected from these 13 companies for distributing the questionnaires. A total of 277 usable questionnaires were collected back and proceeded for further analysis. Structural Equation Modelling utilized on analysis using Smart-PLS version 3.0. SPSS version 23 used for descriptive statistics of the study. In order to measure the turnover intention, three items were adapted from Jaros (1997). Workplace stress was measured using six items adapted from MacKay\*, Cousins, Kelly, Lee, and McCAIG (2004).

TABLE 2. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n= 277)

| Characteristics    | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender             |           |            |
| Male               | 150       | 54.2       |
| Female             | 127       | 45.8       |
| Marital Status     |           |            |
| Single             | 103       | 37.2       |
| Married            | 174       | 62.8       |
| Age (Years)        |           |            |
| 25 years and below | 67        | 24.2       |
| 26-35 years old    | 104       | 37.5       |

|                        |     |      |
|------------------------|-----|------|
| 36-45 years old        | 56  | 20.2 |
| 46-55 years old        | 37  | 13.4 |
| 56 years old and above | 13  | 4.7  |
| Income                 |     |      |
| Below 10000 Bhat       | 21  | 7.6  |
| 10000 - 30000 Bhat     | 61  | 22.0 |
| 30001- 50000 Bhat      | 112 | 40.4 |
| Above 50000 Bhat       | 83  | 30.0 |
| Education              |     |      |
| Diploma                | 8   | 2.9  |
| Degree/Bachelor        | 113 | 40.8 |
| Masters                | 121 | 43.7 |
| PhD/Doctoral           | 35  | 12.6 |
| Experience             |     |      |
| 1-3 years              | 174 | 62.8 |
| 4-6 years              | 85  | 30.7 |
| 7-9 years              | 15  | 5.4  |
| More than 9 years      | 3   | 1.1  |

Table 2 shows the demographic distribution of the respondents for gender, marital status, age, income, education level and working experience in the industry. For gender, 54.2% of the respondents are male, and 45.8% are female. Majority of the respondents are married, which is 62.8% and single are 37.2%. In terms of age group, highest age group consists of “26 to 35 years” 37.5% followed by “25 years and below” which is 24.2%, “36 to 45 years” 20.2% “46 to 55 years” is 13.4%, and 56 years and above is 4.7%. Majority of the respondents have the income of 30001 to 50000 Bhat which is 40.4% followed by above 50000 Bhat (30.0%), 10000 to 30000 Bhat (12.6%) and below 10000 Bhat (2.9%). For education level, majority of the bachelor and master’s degree holder, which are 40.8% and 43.7% respectively, and PhD/ Doctoral degree holder (9.7%) and diploma holder is 2.1%. While looking into the job experience of the respondents, most of them have experiences of 1 to 3 years (62.8%), followed by 4 to 6 years is 30.7%, 7-9 years is 5.4% and more than 9 years is 1.1%.

#### Measurement Model of the Constructs

We examined the data using PLS-SEM to assess the EM and HRM on the firm’s operational performance in the pharmaceutical companies in Thailand. We report results using a level of significance at  $p < .10$ . While looking into the measurement of the study, the major considerations given to the convergent validity, discriminant validity, R square, effect size, and average variance extracted (AVE). The two independent variables, which are work-life balance and workplace stress, have explained 58.1 per cent variance on turnover intention among the employees of the Thai pharmaceutical industry. Cronbach’s Alpha values are considered to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs. The minimum Cronbach alpha for operational performance is 0.745, which is more than the suggested value of 0.70. Cronbach’s Alpha values for remaining variables are considered as high, and items are suitable to be in the constructs. The average variance extracted for variables are in accepted range as all are above 0.50. The minimum average variance extracted for work-life balance which is 0.501.

TABLE 3. Measurement Model

| Variables          | Cronbach’s Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Turnover Intention | 0.843            | 0.843 | 0.895                 | 0.681                            |
| Work-Life Balance  | 0.745            | 0.758 | 0.831                 | 0.501                            |
| Workplace Stress   | 0.811            | 0.814 | 0.863                 | 0.513                            |



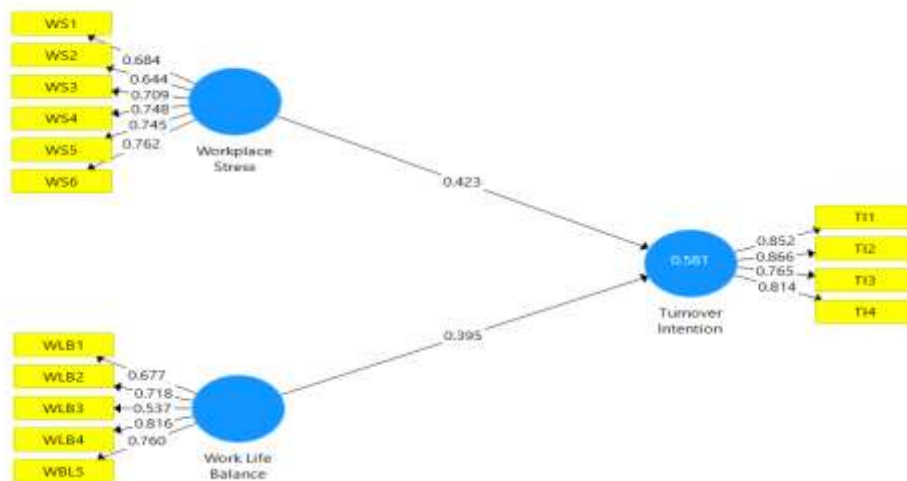


Figure 2: Diagram Measurement Model

Furthermore, for discriminant validity two most widely used method performed such as Fornell-Larcker criterion

(see table-4) and Heterotrait and Monotrait Ratio (see table-5)

TABLE 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

|                    | Turnover Intention | Work-Life Balance | Workplace Stress |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Turnover Intention | 0.825              |                   |                  |
| Work-Life Balance  | 0.706              | 0.708             |                  |
| Workplace Stress   | 0.714              | 0.736             | 0.717            |

In addition to that, HTMT also showed for the confirmation of discriminant validity. There is no

correlation which is more than the 0.85. So, this study confirms all the criterion for the measurement model.

TABLE 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

|                    | Turnover Intention | Work-life balance | Workplace stress |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Turnover Intention |                    |                   |                  |
| Work-life balance  | 0.267              |                   |                  |
| Workplace stress   | 0.115              | 0.143             |                  |

Structural Model

To find the effect of independent variables on dependent variable, the bootstrapping method performed using the Smart-PLS version 3.0.

TABLE 6. Direct effects of the constructs

|   | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics ( O/STDEV ) | P Values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Work-Life Balance -> Turnover Intention | 0.395               | 0.388           | 0.163                      | 2.424                    | 0.016    |
| Workplace Stress -> Turnover Intention  | 0.423               | 0.450           | 0.144                      | 2.942                    | 0.003    |

Table 6 represents the direct effect of work-life balance, workplace stress on turnover intention. The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of work-life balance, workplace stress on turnover intention

in the pharmaceutical industry of Thailand. Findings showed that work-life balance and workplace stress significantly influence the turnover intention of the organization.

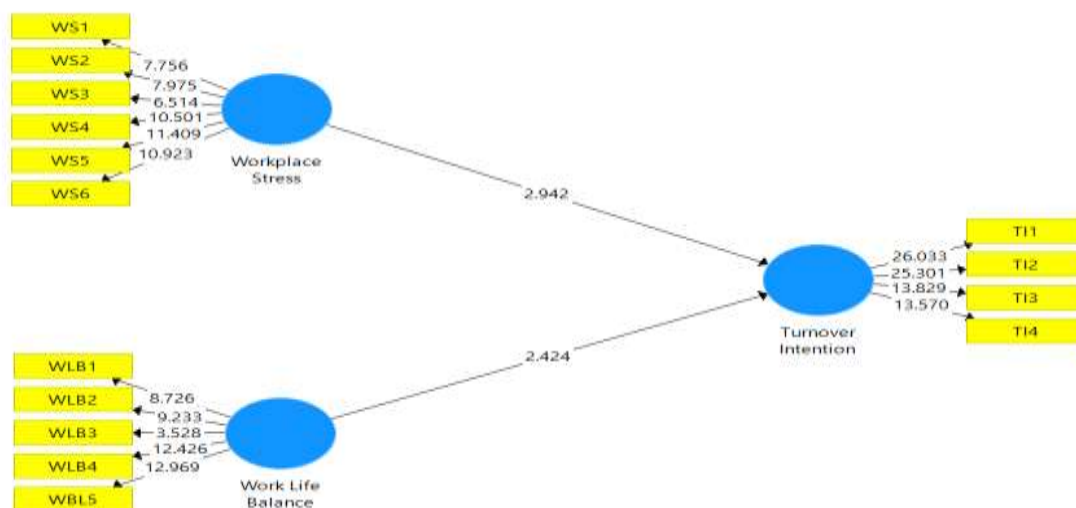


Figure 4: Structural model

As shown in Figure 4, t-values are in a good range which indicates the significant level of independent variables (workplace stress and work-life balance) towards the dependent variable (turnover intention). While workplace stress is high among the employees in a particular company, the employee's intent to switch to other available jobs. When employees are not able to make work-life balance, they tend to leave the company and look for a new job.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Workplace stress and unbalanced work life could be the major contributors to increase the turnover intention, which ultimately effects on employees and organizational performance. The scenario of workplace stress could lead to negative consequences towards the health status and well-being within the employees. This study focuses its findings on the effect of work stress and work-life balance on turnover intention among the employees in the Thai pharmaceutical industry. The study found that work stress and work-life balance have a significant relationship with the turnover intention that support the work-life balance impacting efficiency and affectively on employee performance in an organization.

Additionally, by establishing work life balance between work and individual needs, organization can produce extraordinary performance because work life balance motivate employee by reducing the stress and emotional exhaustion. In contrary, the imbalance of employees' work-life affects the job performance adversely. To make employees more concentrated at work require to establish good work life balance between the work and individual family needs. However, while employees fail to balance their work with other activities, they will feel pressure and turnover rate seems to increase dramatically in the industry. An increasing rate of turnover in the industry may cause damage to the working productivity.

Policy Implications, limitations, and Recommendation for future study

Practical implication from this study discussed below. Manager may get relevant knowledge to implement the system to reduce the anxiety, stress by balancing the family life and work life of the individual in the Pharmaceutical

industry as its regards to employee level of motivation and performance. In turn, employee motivation will have greater impacts of the overall performance of the organization. In addition to that pharmaceutical industry may look for the other related work life balance indicators that may not include in the study. Since single study does not generalise the findings, future researcher should investigate the factors in relations to employees work stress, work life balance elements to formulate the policy for further motivation.

The study focuses on the employees of the pharmaceutical industry in Thailand, which limit the rate of responses. Thus, the research is narrowed to merely on a single industry. Another important element that limits the study is the fact that the current study only focused only on the quantitative approach. The future study ought to carry out either on qualitative or both method in order to have better outcomes and suggestions for the academicians and practitioners. In addition, the study is limited to two independent variables which include work stress and work-life balance and the only dependent variable is turnover intention. Future studies must consider other predictors of turnover intention and related factors influenced by work stress and work-life balance.

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