

Business Retention Strategies through Argosy Theory: A Qualitative Case Study of Voluntary Turnover in Call Centers

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Abstract

Employee retention is a challenging issue for HR practitioners at present. This study, grounded in Argosy Theory—a novel integrative framework that synthesizes principles from social exchange theory, person-organization fit, and HR technology research—analyzes voluntary turnover and turnover intentions in call centers using a qualitative single-case study design that combines semi-structured interviews with call center leaders and an analysis of internal turnover data. The results indicate that intentions to leave were contingent on perceived reciprocity, person-organization fit, leadership quality, and work-life balance. Employee perceptions of a fair and balanced exchange were associated with reduced intent to leave (Blau, 1964). The study examines AI-based scheduling and supervision as dual factors: they support retention when used transparently but cause stress when seen as surveillance. The findings extend social exchange theory in call center turnover research and offer practical guidance for managers, including fostering genuine employee-organization relationships, clarifying role expectations, and investing in supervisory leadership development (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Holtom et al., 2008). The financial and customer service impacts of voluntary turnover are discussed, highlighting the strategic importance of focused retention programs in call center environments.

Keywords

Argosy Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Employee Retention, Turnover Intentions, Organizational Alignment, Work-Life Integration, Leadership Development, Employee Engagement, Call Centers, Technology Mediators

1. Introduction

One of the most urgent problems within the human resource management has been employee retention (Holtom et al., 2008). The voluntary turnover in high volume companies like call centers is particularly a problem as it will cause real financial expenses, deterioration in service quality, and disruption of the organizational culture (Batt & Colvin, 2011). The average turnover rates in the current industry have been estimated to be over 30 percent, and the employees have also often cited stress, limited opportunities of career development, and lack of management support as some of the factors that push them out of the call centers (Holman, 2002; Zito et al., 2018). This trend shows the necessity to investigate evidence-based strategies in order to learn and mitigate voluntary turnover intentions.

The call center environment presents a very informative background of studying turnover in the context of the organization because it relies on frontline employees who have a direct influence on customer satisfaction and organizational performance (Batt & Colvin, 2011). In case the staffing turnover, the company does not only incur expenses related to hiring and training but also suffers adverse effects regarding the quality of customer service and brand reputation (Holtom et al., 2008). In this way, retention is not merely human resources issue, it is a major business imperative with direct competitive advantage implications (Albrecht et al., 2015).

This study employs Argosy Theory as the overarching theoretical framework to investigate voluntary turnover. Argosy Theory is a novel integrative framework developed by the author that synthesizes principles from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017), person-organization fit research (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and contemporary HR technology scholarship (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Argosy Theory conceptualizes the employment relationship as a dynamic journey in which employees continually assess reciprocity, value alignment, leadership quality, and technology-mediated experiences when deciding whether to remain with or leave the organization. The framework extends prior work by explicitly incorporating the mediating role of technology into reciprocity-retention relationships, addressing a significant gap in traditional social exchange scholarship. Like social exchange theory, Argosy Theory emphasizes reciprocity, balance, and congruence between individuals and organizations, with particular focus on justice perceptions, organizational support, developmental opportunities, and how technology influences these perceptions (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). When employees perceive that they are treated fairly, receive adequate support to meet organizational expectations, and experience technology implementations that enhance rather than undermine fairness, they develop stronger psychological contracts and exhibit lower turnover intentions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Contrary to transactional views of turnover that focus narrowly on compensation or job dissatisfaction, Argosy Theory views turnover through the broader lens of psychological and organizational

reciprocity, mediated by contemporary HR systems and technology (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014; Zito et al., 2018).

The three main objectives of this research are as follows: first, the proposed study aims to add to the academic literature by presenting and developing the Argosy Integrative Framework as a new conceptual model for explaining voluntary turnover intentions in call centers, and by providing initial qualitative evidence to demonstrate its applicability; second, as a researcher, the author seeks to show how technology operates as a mediating construct in the context of reciprocity relationships; and third, the research study aims at providing practical and evidence-based advice to HR managers and organizational decision-makers interested in adopting effective voluntary turnover strategies. The study offers both methodological and contextual triangulation by using a qualitative single-case study design (Yin, 2018) that integrates semi-structured interviews with supervisors and the analysis of turnover records. The findings indicate that the impact of leadership quality, reciprocity, and technology on turnover intentions is dynamic, and the outcomes are explained by theoretical research and practical implications to the study, practitioners, and policymakers concerned with workforce stability and organizational effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Leadership in Employee Retention

As a contributing factor to employee retention and organizational commitment, leadership has always been found important (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Matta et al., 2017). Transformational leaders with a focus on fairness, open communication, and employee development have a positive impact on organizational commitment and are negatively correlated with turnover intentions (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Authoritative or inconsistent leadership styles, on the other hand, contribute to stress and withdrawal behaviors among employees and disengagement (Matta et al., 2017). Supervisors in call centers observe and measure employee performance on a daily basis, and leadership styles become especially relevant in the context of employee experiences and retention choices (Holman, 2002; Zito et al., 2018).

Studies show that the widely used adage that people leave managers, not companies—is a major cause of voluntary turnover on the employee side (Matta et al., 2017). Workers that view their supervisors as supportive, fair, and developmentally oriented have increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and desire to stay in the organization (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Supervisor employee relationship quality is an important mediating factor in which the organizational practices and policies can mediate the individual retention outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

2.2. Reciprocity and Organizational Alignment

Reciprocity has been found to be the key principle in retention studies based on a

social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). When employees feel that their organization does provide them with training opportunities, recognition, fair treatment, and developmental resources, they are more likely to stay in their jobs (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Saks, 2019). This view of reciprocity where people in an organization make investments and employees reciprocate with equal contributions, forms psychological ties that diminish the intentions of turning over (Blau, 1964).

Likewise, the organizational alignment, which is defined as person-organization fit, is the alignment of the individual values and the organizational mission, culture and expectations (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). It is confirmed by meta-analytic evidence that person-organization fit is a significant predictor of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and intention to stay (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The social exchange theory explains that long-lasting employment relationships are based on the balanced two-way exchange relationships which stabilize over time (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Employees in the workplace become more resolute in turnover, and job search behaviours begin when they sense inequity, dissimilarity or value misalignment (Holtom et al., 2008).

3. Technology and Turnover Intentions

The use of artificial intelligence and other technologies is transforming the way human resource management is being conducted in modern organizations (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). The AI-based scheduling systems, performance management tools, and communication technologies in the context of the call center can eliminate the administrative load on the employees, thus, enhancing the productivity of employees (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Regardless of these benefits, it has been cautioned that the application of intrusive (HRM) technology must be approached with caution as excessive application may be harmful and not beneficial to the company, resulting in the loss of trust in the workplace, stress, and even the desired turnover (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

The recent HR literature has highlighted the two facets of technology residing simultaneously as the facilitator of performance and the burden on employee disconnection (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Since the technological systems are implemented without any secret, as long as proper training is offered and the purpose of the implementation is also communicated, it may reinforce the sense of equity and organizational support (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). Stated differently, technology is perceived by employees as a tool of monitoring and punishing them, thus breaking the principle of reciprocity, which is usually a fundamental aspect of social exchange relationships (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

Summary of Research Gaps

Despite an extensive body of research on turnover, there is room to apply Argosy Theory in the call center industry, especially by comparing this idea with current

HR Technologies. Many research studies to date remain too narrow, focusing on single antecedents of turnover (e.g., compensation and leadership) while excluding others from a broader perspective. This paper also fills in such gaps by embedding transitory elements into the Argosy Theory, focusing on reciprocity, organizational fit, and integration between human and technological factors (Zito et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2024).

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Argosy Theory: An Integrative Framework

Argosy Theory is a novel conceptual framework developed by the author specifically to examine voluntary turnover in technology-intensive, high-turnover service environments such as call centers. The theory integrates three foundational pillars: (1) reciprocity and organizational support from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017), (2) person-organization fit and value alignment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and (3) technology's mediating role in shaping perceptions of organizational fairness, control, and support (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). While existing frameworks address reciprocity and fit in isolation, Argosy Theory explicitly synthesizes all three dimensions within a unified model, recognizing that contemporary employment relationships—particularly in call centers—are fundamentally shaped by how technology influences reciprocity and alignment perceptions. The theory proposes that employees continuously evaluate their employment journey (conceptualized as an “Argonaut voyage”) across three interconnected domains: whether they perceive balanced reciprocity with their organization, whether their values align with organizational mission and culture, and whether technology implementations strengthen or undermine their sense of being supported and valued rather than surveilled and controlled.

4.2. Social Exchange Theory and Reciprocity as Foundation

According to the social exchange theory, which is explained by Blau (1964), employment relationships are maintained when people feel that there is balance between the input they give to the organization and the reward, support and resources that they get back in the company. The theory assumes that the state of equilibrium between mutual exchange, when the effort of an employee is rewarded and supported by the organization, will yield psychological security that will reduce the likelihood of voluntary exit (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Employees turnover intentions grow significantly when they believe that there is a violation of reciprocity, that is, there is inequity in rewards or lack of support by the organization (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Zito et al., 2018).

The new theoretical trends in the social exchange scholarship focus on the idea that reciprocity is not only a transactional exchange but a relational process that is influenced by the perceptions of fairness, trust, and organizational investment in the development of employees (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This broadened no-

tion makes social exchange theory especially pertinent to the study of retention processes in the modern organization, where the expectations of the employee do not only include the compensation but also growth opportunities, work-life balance, and organizational values congruency (Saks, 2019).

4.3. Organizational Alignment and Person-Organization Fit

The second key principle that is applicable in the application of social exchange theory in turnover research is organizational alignment. The more employees share a common set of personal goals, values, and expectations with the overall organizational strategic direction, culture, and mission, the more commitment and engagement they exhibit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Mismatch generates disengagement, lack of motivation and eventually increased voluntary turnover (Holtom et al., 2008).

Organizational alignment gains special relevance in the context of the call center, because employees are subjected to very controlled and efficiency-based work environments, where individual values and the need to autonomy can be in conflict with standardized performance goals and strict workflow demands (Holman, 2002; Yang et al., 2024). The level of communication of expectations, meaningful work, and respect of contributions that organizations are able to show to their employees affect the level of person-organization fit and eventual retention (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

4.4. Leadership and the Reciprocity Balance

The quality of leadership is an important relational variable of the social exchange theory of turnover (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). By having a clear communication of expectations, recognition of employee contribution and the establishment of an environment that is developmentally supportive, leaders reinforce the perceived balance of the psychological contract between employees and the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Supervisors are the most apparent and closest organizational authority figure in the context of call centers, and their actions are especially likely to affect how employees perceive managerial support, fairness, and reciprocity (Matta et al., 2017; Zito et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership behaviors such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence have been and continue to be positively correlated with improved employee engagement, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Integrating leadership into the conceptual framework of the social exchange theory, the supervisory behavior is not just an organizational practice but it is also a relational process, which shapes the perceptions of the reciprocity and retention outcomes.

4.5. Technology as a Mediating Mechanism in Argosy Theory

Central to Argosy Theory is the explicit recognition that technology functions as

a significant mediator in reciprocity exchanges within modern organizations (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Mediation, as distinguished from moderation, refers to the mechanism through which technology influences the nature and strength of reciprocity relationships between employees and organizations (Baron & Kenny, 1986). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a mediator explains *how* or *why* effects occur, whereas a moderator changes the strength of a relationship without explaining the underlying process. The theorization of technology in the context of Argosy Theory is mediated since the technology is known to be the mediator of the mechanism of impacting the turnover intention in the end by the organizational policies and leadership practices.

In particular, technology mediates reciprocity by either supporting or suppressing the perception of employees towards organizational support, fairness, and control. The norms of reciprocity can be reinforced through AI technologies like automated scheduling software or real-time performance monitoring systems or broken by AI technologies when applied in a punitive or unaccompanied by sufficient employee training and communication (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). In cases where technology improves transparency, e.g. the use of algorithmic scheduling to seem objective and fair, it reinforces the feeling of reciprocity by sending signals of commitment by the organization to fair treatment. In case the technology allows surveillance without developmental intent, it undermines the perception of reciprocity by making the impression of control and mistrust instead of organizational support (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

It is necessary to add that, in qualitative case study research, the mediation is not tested using formal statistics; in fact, it is conceptualized. Technology has been shown to affect reciprocity and turnover through qualitative evidence, narratives of participants and patterns that exist in archival data, instead of being studied through a quantitative path analysis. This qualitative conceptualization of mediation is still theoretically valid and it helps to comprehend the intricate relationships within organizations (Yin, 2018).

The integration of technology as a mediating construct in the context of Argosy Theory builds on the principle of classical social exchange to the new reality of the work environment and relates theoretical constructs of the past to the challenges of the modern day (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). This combination makes the Argosy Theory a vibrant and current model that can be used to answer eternal questions of human resource and new issues of technology-driven retention in the technologically advanced workplace.

5. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model guiding this research, grounded in Argosy Theory, positions voluntary turnover intentions as an outcome influenced by four interconnected factors: (1) reciprocity and organizational support, (2) organizational alignment and person-organization fit, (3) leadership quality and supervisory support, and (4) technology implementation as a mediator of how employees experi-

ence the three preceding factors. These factors operate within the overarching framework of Argosy Theory, with reciprocity serving as the central mechanism linking organizational practices to individual retention decisions, mediated by how technology either enhances or undermines perceptions of organizational support and fairness (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). **Figure 1** displays the conceptual model of the Argosy Theory, in which it is shown that reciprocity and alignment of the organization to technology and, consequently, to voluntary turnover intentions, have an effect on leadership and technology.

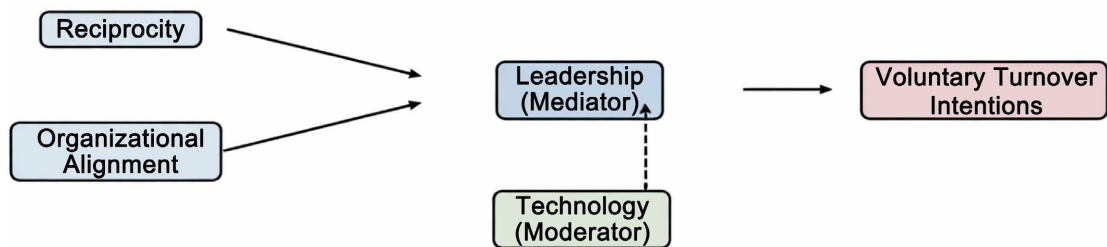


Figure 1. Conceptual model of turnover intentions.

Summary

This paper has placed the voluntary turnover intentions in the context of Argosy Theory, which has brought out the interrelationships of the concept of reciprocity, organizational alignment, leadership and technology in determining retention outcomes. Argosy Theory builds on the social exchange theory by explicitly integrating the technology as a mediating mechanism of reciprocity relationships, which provides a more detailed perspective on explaining the current retention issues in technology-intensive settings. Such theoretical framing does not only present a new theoretical framework that can be applied in call centers but also can offer practical implications to managers who are facing the twin issues of employee retention and technological change in modern organizations (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014; Yang et al., 2024; Zito et al., 2018).

6. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to examine voluntary turnover intentions within a large call center located in Arizona (Yin, 2018). Case study methodology was selected because it enables researchers to investigate complex organizational phenomena within their natural contexts, facilitating an in-depth understanding of contextual factors and participant perspectives (Yin, 2018). The focus on one high-turnover organization enriched the study's analytic depth by providing a detailed description of the lived experiences of supervisors regarding organizational retention efforts and turnover dynamics.

6.1. Setting and Participants

The study location was a large call center company that had more than 500 front-line customer service workers, and the voluntary turnover of these employees per year was more than 30. This rate of turnover is in line with the industry rates as indicated in past studies on call centers (Holman, 2002; Zito et al., 2018). The units of analysis were 12 team leaders and supervisors who were direct supervisors of the frontline employees and who directly applied HR policies, performance measurement, and impacted the daily employee experiences.

The sample was chosen on purposefully because it was restricted to people in supervisory positions, who have been working with the organization at least two years, and who are directly involved in employee retention programs. There were 12 supervisors (seven females and five males) and their organizational tenure was between 2 and 15 years ($M = 6.8$ years, $SD = 3.2$ years). Each of the participants had direct management duties of 15 to 50 frontline employees. This sample design provided a variety of views among various teams, shifts, and levels of experience of the supervisor, which increased the transferability of the results (Yin, 2018).

6.2. Data Collection

Two primary sources of information were utilized in the data collection process: semi-structured interviews with supervisors and archival data on internal turnover. Twelve supervisors were interviewed in person, using semi-structured interviews to elicit their experiences and perceptions regarding predictors of turnover, leadership practices, organizational support processes, and reciprocity dynamics. The interview guides included open-ended questions that gave participants the opportunity to describe their stories in great detail and provide precise examples of their supervisory experience.

The length of all interviews was approximately 60 minutes (range: 45 - 75 minutes), and they were audio-taped with the participants' informed consent. The interviews were conducted in confidential meeting rooms at the call center to ensure confidentiality and reduce distractions on-site. To conduct triangulation of the interview results, internal turnover data from the last three years were examined, including exit interview reports, voluntary resignation rates, and HR analytics monitoring departmental turnover (Yin, 2018).

6.3. Ethical Approval

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of research, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and respect for privacy. All reporting was conducted under pseudonyms, and no identifying information about employees or companies was provided.

6.4. Data Analysis

Transcripts were verbatim typed and imported into NVivo v14 for coding. Data

were analyzed using Yin's (2018) five-stage process:

- 1) Assemble data
- 2) Disassemble data into open coding
- 3) Reassemble into categories
- 4) Theme Interpretation
- 5) Conclusion Drawing

Coding employed both deductive and inductive approaches, with initial codes informed by social exchange theory constructs (reciprocity, fairness, organizational support) while remaining open to emergent themes arising from participants' narratives (Yin, 2018). Two rounds of coding were conducted, with the first round focusing on descriptive coding and the second round on interpretive, analytical coding that connected participant experiences to theoretical concepts. Turnover records were analyzed to identify patterns in resignation timing, stated exit reasons, and departmental variations, facilitating comparison and validation of patterns identified in interview data.

6.5. Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of study findings (Yin, 2018):

- 1) Triangulation: Turnover records were triangulated with interviews.
- 2) Member checking: Respondents were sent their key informant interview summaries for verification.
- 3) Audit trail: A record of coding decisions was kept.
- 4) Peer de-briefing: The findings were discussed with academic colleagues to reduce researcher bias.

These trustworthiness strategies strengthen confidence that study findings accurately represent participant experiences and organizational dynamics related to voluntary turnover (Yin, 2018).

7. Results

Analysis of interview data and turnover records revealed four major themes shaping voluntary turnover intentions: (1) reciprocity and organizational support, (2) leadership quality, (3) work-life integration, and (4) technology as a double-edged sword. Each theme encompassed multiple sub-themes supported by participant narratives and organizational records.

7.1. Theme 1: Reciprocity and Organizational Support

Respondents repeatedly stressed the significance of reciprocity, which is the feeling that the contributions of the employees are compensated by their proper organizational support, recognition, and investment in development (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). This theme is a direct support of the main proposal of social exchange theory about the contribution of balanced exchange towards maintaining employment relationships.

7.2. Sub-Theme 1.1: Recognition and Fairness

Managers observed that those staff members that felt appreciated because of their efforts showed a stronger organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions. One of the supervisors added that employees go when they feel unrecognized. Even a mere recognition of how hard they work will go beyond what most leaders understand (Participant 3). This observation is consistent with the focus of the social exchange theory on the idea of reciprocal recognition as an appreciation of psychological contracts (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

One more supervisor explained: As soon as we introduced monthly recognition events, during which the best performers were publicly recognized, we experienced the observable rise in morale and a decrease in the number of resignation letters (Participant 7). These findings were supported by turnover records, which indicated that the annual turnover rate in the departments with formal recognition programs was about 15 percent less than in departments that did not have formal recognition programs.

7.3. Sub-Theme 1.2: Training and Development Opportunities

Lack of career growth and development opportunities emerged as a prominent theme in both interview data and exit interview records. Turnover records indicated that approximately 40% of voluntary resignations explicitly cited “lack of advancement opportunities” or “no career development” as primary exit reasons. One supervisor explained, “We train them to handle customer calls efficiently, but we don’t train them to grow their careers beyond this role. That’s when they start looking elsewhere for opportunities” (Participant 5).

Several supervisors noted organizational investments in training demonstrated reciprocity and strengthened retention. As one participant stated, “When we launched the leadership development program for high-performing representatives, engagement increased noticeably. Employees felt the organization was investing in their future, not just using them for today’s metrics” (Participant 9). This finding supports the social exchange principle that perceived organizational investment in employee development strengthens reciprocity perceptions and reduces turnover intentions (Saks, 2019). **Figure 2** gives a summary of the sub-themes of reciprocity which are recognition, fairness, training, and development, with the representative supervisor quotes being linked to the converging evidence of exit interviews and HR records.

Sub-theme	Quote	Evidence
Recognition	"Employees leave when they feel invisible."	Exit interviews: lack of recognition.
Fairness	"High performers treated differently causes resentment."	HR records: inconsistent policies.
Training	"We train them to handle calls but not grow."	Turnover reports: no career training.
Development	"Limited advancement pushes employees elsewhere."	Resignations: limited growth paths.

Figure 2. Reciprocity-related factors shaping turnover intentions.

7.4. Theme 2: Leadership Quality

Leadership quality emerged as a critical factor influencing the relationship between organizational practices and employee retention outcomes, consistent with transformational leadership research (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Supervisors highlighted the centrality of leadership behaviors—including communication, fairness, and developmental supporting shaping employee decisions to remain with or leave the organization.

7.5. Sub-Theme 2.1: Communication and Transparency

Open and transparent communication was found to be one of the leadership behaviors that impacted on retention. Employees appreciated supervisors who were clear in explaining policies, performance expectations and organizational decisions. One of the participants commented, “When I am unable to provide the reasons behind policies and decisions, my team will make the worst assumptions. Transparency generates faith, and faith retains individuals here” (Participant 2).

One additional supervisor observed: “When there was any change in an organization, the teams whose supervisor was proactive and open about it experienced fewer resignation cases than the teams whose supervisor was not open about it or gave vague reasons (Participant 11). This finding highlights the role of effective communication as a tool that enhances the perceived reciprocity and organizational support (Matta et al., 2017). **Figure 3** shows the combination of key leadership behavioral aspects regarding communication, support and consistency to influence the intent to voluntarily quit among employees.

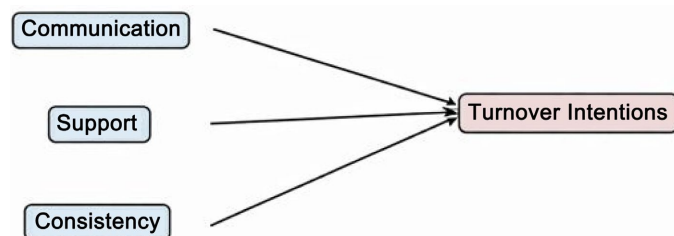


Figure 3. Leadership practices influencing turnover intentions.

7.6. Sub-Theme 2.2: Supervisor Support and Developmental Coaching

Supportive supervisory relationships significantly influenced employee stress levels and retention decisions. Supervisors who provided coaching, encouragement, and advocacy for their team members fostered higher employee loyalty. One supervisor explained, “When I take time to coach employees through difficult calls or customer situations, they know I’m on their side. That relationship matters more than any policy” (Participant 4).

Archival turnover data provided triangulated support for this observation, showing patterns consistent with the qualitative findings regarding supervisory support. Departments where supervisors were characterized by higher levels of

engagement and coaching behaviors, as described in interview narratives, tended to exhibit relatively lower annual voluntary turnover compared to departments where supervisors reported fewer coaching and support activities. Exit interview data further corroborated this pattern—employees in departments described as high-support environments less frequently cited supervisor relationship concerns, inadequate coaching, or lack of developmental support as primary exit reasons. Conversely, exit interviews from high-turnover departments frequently mentioned supervisor inconsistency, lack of support, and insufficient coaching as contributing factors to resignation decisions. This pattern of convergence between supervisory narratives about coaching practices and archival turnover data patterns reinforces the importance of leadership quality as a factor shaping retention outcomes within Argosy Theory’s framework.

7.7. Sub-Theme 2.3: Inconsistent Leadership Practices

Unequal treatment of employees and inconsistency in the implementation of policies proved to be major sources of perceived unfairness and turnover intentions. Some of the supervisors openly admitted that infrequent leadership behavior hurt employee confidence and images of reciprocity. According to one of the supervisors, the reason why sometimes high performers receive more flexibility in the schedule or enforcement of policies than average performers is because it creates resentment among team members who recognize the inconsistency (Participant 8).

This observation is consistent with the studies that have shown that perceived justice variability, whereby employees have been treated differently (over time or by different people), leads to higher stress and turnover intentions as compared to unfair treatment that is consistent (Matta et al., 2017). The significance of quality and consistent leadership came out as a practical implication of great significance to retention management.

7.8. Theme 3: Work-Life Integration

Work-life balance emerged as a critical determinant of voluntary turnover intentions, particularly salient in high-pressure call center environments characterized by rigid scheduling, high call volumes, and constant performance monitoring (Holman, 2002; Shah et al., 2023). This theme reflects contemporary shifts in employee expectations regarding work-life integration as a component of organizational reciprocity.

7.9. Sub-Theme 3.1: Scheduling Flexibility

Supervisors consistently explained that rigid, inflexible scheduling practices contributed significantly to employee attrition. One supervisor noted, “When someone can’t attend their child’s school event because of strict shift requirements and no flexibility, they start applying to companies that offer more accommodating schedules” (Participant 6). This observation reflects the importance of work-life

integration as a form of organizational support within social exchange relationships (Shah et al., 2023).

Another supervisor elaborated: “We’ve lost several strong performers not because they disliked the work, but because they needed schedule flexibility that our systems couldn’t accommodate. They went to competitors who offered remote work or flexible hours” (Participant 10). Turnover records indicated that scheduling conflicts were explicitly mentioned in approximately 25% of exit interviews, suggesting that scheduling inflexibility represents a substantial retention risk.

7.10. Sub-Theme 3.2: Stress and Burnout

High call volumes, demanding performance metrics, and constant monitoring created significant stress and burnout among call center employees. Exit interviews frequently mentioned “constant pressure,” “unrealistic performance expectations,” and “emotional exhaustion” as primary reasons for voluntary resignation. One supervisor stated, “The pace is relentless. Employees feel they can’t take a breath between calls, and over time, that wears them down until they decide it’s not worth the toll on their health” (Participant 1).

This finding aligns with research documenting the relationship between job demands, burnout, and voluntary turnover in call center contexts (Holman, 2002; Zito et al., 2018). The stress-turnover relationship underscores the importance of workload management and employee wellbeing as components of organizational reciprocity and support. Figure 4 summarizes work-life integration sub-themes of flexibility, burnout, and schedule conflicts, which are related to supervisor narratives and exit interviews and HR-report evidence.

Sub-theme	Quote	Evidence
Flexibility	"Strict shifts force employees to look elsewhere."	Exit interviews: lack of flexibility.
Burnout	"Constant monitoring leaves staff drained."	Resignations: stress and exhaustion.
Scheduling Conflicts	"Rigid schedules make life balance impossible."	HR reports: rigid scheduling issues.

Figure 4. Work-life integration issues affecting intention.

7.11. Theme 4: Technology as a Double-Edged Sword

Technology, particularly AI-driven scheduling and performance monitoring tools, played a contradictory role in shaping turnover intentions, functioning simultaneously as a mechanism that could facilitate efficiency and fairness while also generating employee anxiety and perceptions of surveillance (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). This theme contributes to emerging HR literature examining technology’s role in contemporary retention dynamics.

7.12. Sub-Theme 4.1: Efficiency Gains and Perceived Fairness

Several supervisors admitted that AI-based scheduling systems decreased inter-

personal conflicts and increased perceptions of procedural fairness. One of the supervisors said, “Automated scheduling system made complaints less frequent as it seems to be more objective and fairer to all. Employees have faith that the algorithm does not favor its own team (Participant 12). This finding implies that, in transparent application, technology can reinforce the sense of reciprocity by improving procedural justice (Strohmeier and Parry, 2014).

One more supervisor remarked that the AI tools that allow us to recognize areas of training and pair an employee with development opportunities have been positively received. Employees value that the technology aids us to assist in their growth in a more organized way (Participant 9). This observation demonstrates how technology can be helpful in supporting and reciprocating organizations as long as the developmental targets of employees are met.

7.13. Sub-Theme 4.2: Perceived Surveillance and Erosion of Trust

The deployment of applications of surveillance-oriented technology and constant performance monitoring resulted in high levels of employee distrust and stress, which derailed the feeling of reciprocity. One of the supervisors replied that when individuals get the impression that every movement, every break, every moment is tracked and analyzed, they will not feel important, but they will think they can be replaced. It is then that the trust is lost and individuals begin seeking employment in other places (Participant 5).

Several supervisors indicated that excessive monitoring sent the message of organizational mistrust towards the employees, which was contrary to the messages of the value of employees and support. One of them remarked that, as employees are told by their leaders that they are their most valuable asset, they spy on them as though they do not trust them. Their contradiction is not wasted on them” (Participant 3). This observation highlights the fact that technology can destroy reciprocity when it is introduced in a manner that can be perceived as punitive or controlling by the employees (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

7.14. Sub-Theme 4.3: Training and Technology Adaptation

Inadequate training for new technology systems emerged as an additional source of stress and turnover risk. Exit interview data indicated higher resignation rates among employees who struggled to adapt to new technological systems without sufficient training support. One supervisor explained, “We implemented new software without adequate training, and employees who couldn’t quickly master it felt frustrated and inadequate. Several left within months of the implementation” (Participant 7).

This finding highlights the importance of comprehensive training and change management as components of responsible technology implementation, ensuring that technological adoption strengthens rather than undermines organizational reciprocity and employee support (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). **Figure 5** shows the effect of technology-related variables on retention outcomes: fair scheduling,

efficiency gains, surveillance, stress, and lack of training.

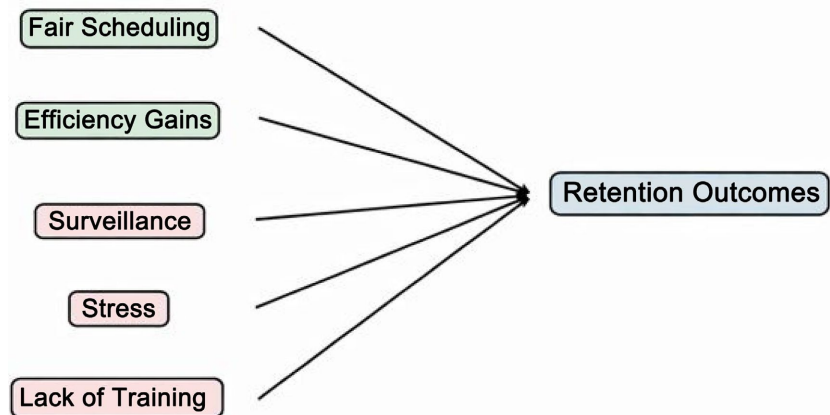


Figure 5. Technology-related factors shaping retention outcomes.

7.15. Data Triangulation and Evidence Integration

Interview findings were systematically compared with archival turnover data to validate emergent themes and identify corroborating evidence across qualitative and quantitative organizational records. For example, supervisors' reports of recognition program effectiveness aligned with turnover records showing patterns of reduced resignation rates in departments with formal recognition initiatives compared to those without. Specifically, turnover analytics indicated that departments with implemented formal recognition systems had approximately 15% lower annual resignation rates—a descriptive finding derived from internal dashboards that provided contextual support for supervisory narratives emphasizing recognition's importance.

Additionally, supervisors' narratives about scheduling flexibility challenges were substantiated by exit interview data, in which approximately 25% of departing employees explicitly cited scheduling inflexibility as a primary or contributing reason for leaving. Moreover, the descriptions of supervisors of high-stress working conditions with a high rate of surveillance and excessive calls were consistent with exit-interview patterns, and the frequent use of such terms as constant pressure, unrealistic expectations, and emotional exhaustion. As bosses complained of techno surveillance, exit interviews records revealed timing trends where resignation rates went up after significant technology implementation roll outs especially with lack of adequate training and communication.

This systematic triangulation between qualitative supervisor narratives and descriptive patterns from archival turnover records strengthened confidence in the study's findings by providing multiple perspectives on retention dynamics and validating core themes across independent data sources (Yin, 2018). All quantitative descriptors are presented as descriptive summaries of archival organizational data, not as products of formal mixed-methods statistical analysis, consistent with the study's qualitative single-case design.

7.16. Summary of Results

The findings show that voluntary turnover intentions are influenced by interconnected factors operating within the complex framework of reciprocity, alignment, leadership, and technology-mediated exchange relations between employees and organizations. Themes such as perceptions of reciprocity, leadership quality, work-life integration, and technology implementation were found to be the most essential, and each theme had dimensions supported by supervisor narratives and archival turnover records. Supervisors noted that employees left, mostly voluntarily, when reciprocity was perceived as unequal, leadership practices were inconsistent or unsupportive, work schedules were rigid, or technology was introduced punitively without sufficient training or communication. These results support the use of Argosy Theory in the research on voluntary turnover in the call center setting, providing empirical evidence that the framework incorporates reciprocity, alignment, leadership, and technology as interrelated factors contributing to retention. The results also indicate that technology acts as a mediating variable and affects the way employees perceive organizational support and fairness, supporting or weakening the sense of reciprocity based on the implementation strategy used and the communication strategy applied (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014; Yang et al., 2024).

8. Discussion

The results of the present study deepen the knowledge of voluntary turnover in call centers by placing the phenomenon in the framework of the integrated system of reciprocity, organizational alignment, leadership quality, and technology mediation of the Argosy Theory (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). The findings confirm that the perceptions of reciprocity by employees, that their efforts are reciprocated by equal organizational support, recognition, and development opportunities, are crucial predictors of retention, and that they are fundamentally influenced by the technology on experiences of fairness and support. This result builds on and confirms previous studies that emphasize the significance of social exchange and equity in informing turnover intentions, along with presenting the mediating role of technology as a new aspect of reciprocity relationships (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Saks, 2019; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014; Zito et al., 2018).

8.1. Reciprocity and Organizational Alignment

The prevalence of the reciprocity themes supports the central idea of social exchange theory that relationships of balance of exchange maintain employment in the long run (Blau, 1964). Workers who felt they were recognized, had a chance for career development, and were treated fairly showed greater engagement and lower turnover intentions. On the other hand, employees who reported unfairness in their rewards or a lack of developmental support had higher turnover inten-

tions and sought other job opportunities. These results are the continuation of the study by [Kristof-Brown et al. \(2005\)](#) who showed that value alignment and expectation congruence are especially susceptible to the situation in the call center, where organizational goals, which are often efficiency-driven, conflict with the needs of the employees to be autonomous, grow, and receive recognition.

The research is relevant to social exchange theory because it documents specific expressions of reciprocity in modern call center settings, such as official recognition schemes, leadership growth prospects, and clear communication regarding career advancement ([Cropanzano et al., 2017](#); [Saks, 2019](#)). These specific examples can be used practically in guiding organizations in operationalizing the concept of reciprocity in retention management.

8.2. Leadership as a Critical Influence

The quality of leadership became a key determinant of perceived reciprocity, which is consistent with the transformational leadership literature ([Bass & Riggio, 2006](#); [Breevaart & Bakker, 2018](#)). Open communication from their supervisors, fair treatment of employees, and developmental coaching reinforced the perception of reciprocity and support within the organization. On the other hand, the lack of coherent leadership practices created a sense of inequity, eroded trust, and heightened intentions to disengage and turnover.

This result is consistent with studies showing that leadership consistency is a powerful predictor of employee engagement and retention ([Matta et al., 2017](#)). This paper situates leadership within the context of social exchange theory. It emphasizes the fact that reciprocity can be seen as not only an organizational process but also a relational phenomenon, which is mediated—or not—by frontline supervisors as the direct representatives of the organizational commitment towards employees ([Bass & Riggio, 2006](#); [Matta et al., 2017](#)).

The practical implication is that policies cannot be the solution to achieving retention goals, as organizations should invest heavily in developing supervisors to ensure that frontline leaders have communication, coaching, and fairness skills that enhance the perception of reciprocity among employees ([Breevaart & Bakker, 2018](#)).

8.3. Work-Life Integration as Contemporary Reciprocity

The nature of work-life integration issues also puts the concept of organizational reciprocity into proper context in the contemporary employment relationship. Employees perceived strict scheduling and a lack of flexibility as a violation of the psychological contract, which diminished their sense of being supported by the manager and heightened their turnover intentions. These results confirm studies on burnout and turnover and demonstrate that work-life balance is a key factor in retention across industries ([Holman, 2002](#); [Shah et al., 2023](#); [Yang et al., 2024](#)).

Connecting work-life integration with social exchange theory, this paper notes that the concept of reciprocity expectations is not limited to traditional compen-

sation and recognition but also includes the organization's ability to accommodate employees' personal and family-related responsibilities (Shah et al., 2023). This broadened notion is indicative of growing expectations among employees in modern labor markets, where work-life integration is becoming a form of organizational support and a means of reciprocal investment in workers' well-being.

Companies that do not offer flexibility in scheduling and workload control may easily breach psychological contracts and create imbalances in reciprocity, which can encourage voluntary turnover (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Zito et al., 2018). This result has specific implications for call center settings that are traditionally characterized by inflexible scheduling and high workload.

8.4. Technology as a Mediating Mechanism in Argosy Theory

The findings are relevant to the growing body of HR research on the applicability of technology in employee retention by reporting about the concrete process through which AI-based HR systems affect perceptions of reciprocity and turnover intentions (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). Although AI scheduling tools, when used correctly, led to increased procedural fairness and transparency, overperformance monitoring undermined employee trust and broke the norms of reciprocity. This observation proves that technology is a mediating factor in reciprocity relationships, which determine how practices and leadership activities in organizations ultimately affect turnover intentions. Technology makes or breaks the balance of exchange, depending on how it is implemented, the clarity of communication, and whether it aligns with the objectives of employee support (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

Recent studies also emphasize the paradox of technology as both a facilitator of organizational efficiency and a possible cause of employee surveillance stress (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). The application of technology, as a modern, vital conduit of reciprocity, is incorporated into the Argosy Theory, which adds to the theoretical discourse and practical implementation of retention management within technologically advanced work environments. The risk of turnover rose with poor training on new systems, further underscoring the need to ensure that adoption of technology is supported by extensive management and employee development to maintain a balance of reciprocity. The theoretical importance of this finding lies in the fact that the technology mediation role is not only related to the technology itself, but also to the organizational background and practices of technology implementation (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

8.5. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes four primary theoretical contributions. First, it introduces the Argosy Integrative Framework as an integrative conceptual model that synthesizes social exchange theory, person-organization fit, and HR technology scholarship, and provides preliminary qualitative evidence that the framework is useful for interpreting voluntary turnover in technology-intensive environments. Ar-

gosity Theory advances theoretical understanding by explicitly proposing that employment relationships are shaped by three interconnected domains—reciprocity, alignment, and technology mediation—operating simultaneously rather than in isolation (Blau, 1964; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

Second, the research confirms the persistence of reciprocity and organizational alignment as predictors of voluntary turnover in the modern call center environment, supporting the empirical evidence of the underlying principles of social exchange in a more contemporary, technology-driven environment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Third, it sets the quality of leadership as a key determinant of the perception of reciprocity, which proves that organizational-level policies and practices are implemented and construed through the actions of the supervisors, the fundamental determinants of psychological contracts and retention decision-making in employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Matta et al., 2017).

Fourth, it builds on conventional social exchange theory by clearly defining and integrating technology as a mediating factor in reciprocity relationships, thereby addressing a notable gap in the traditional social exchange literature. Based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework for understanding mediation, the paper can also show that technology can explain how and why organizational practices and leadership actions affect turnover intentions, i.e., by either reinforcing or weakening the sense of fairness and support among employees. The given conceptualization leads to new debates about the role of technology in modern employment relations and establishes the Argosity Theory as a dynamic model for understanding retention in technologically enhanced workplaces (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

8.6. Implications for Practice

The findings yield several evidence-based recommendations for HR managers and organizational leaders seeking to reduce voluntary turnover in call center environments:

1) Strengthen Reciprocity Through Recognition and Development: Organizations should implement formal recognition systems that acknowledge employee contributions and invest in career development programs that signal organizational commitment to employee growth (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Saks, 2019).

2) Prioritize Leadership Development: Supervisor training in communication, fairness, and coaching skills should be treated as a strategic retention investment, ensuring that frontline leaders possess competencies necessary to strengthen reciprocity perceptions (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018).

3) Implement Flexible Work-Life Integration Policies: Schedule flexibility, remote work options where feasible, and workload management practices demonstrate organizational reciprocity by accommodating employees' personal responsibilities and wellbeing needs (Shah et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024).

4) Apply Technology Transparently and Supportively: AI scheduling and

performance management tools should be implemented with clear communication about their purpose, adequate training, and emphasis on fairness and employee development rather than surveillance (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

5) Link Retention to Strategic Outcomes: HR leaders must articulate clear connections between retention efforts and organizational outcomes such as customer satisfaction, service quality, and profitability, positioning retention as a strategic business priority rather than merely an HR metric (Albrecht et al., 2015; Batt & Colvin, 2011).

8.7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study should be considered in light of the following limitations. First, the single-site structure limits generalization to other call centers, industries, and organizational contexts. The application of a case study method, although enabling contextual detail to be presented, may consequently limit generalizations with alternative cultures, structures, and labor market conditions. Second, the sample was limited to supervisors and did not include frontline staff, potentially excluding critical dimensions of perceptions and experiences with this tool. Third, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it is inappropriate to draw causal inferences about relationships between reciprocity perceptions and turnover outcomes. Fourth, interview-based, self-reported data are at risk of social desirability bias or retrospective rationalization. Third, the study was based on a single geographical area (Arizona, USA), and the transferability of results to other cultural or economic contexts in which labor market peculiarities and employee expectations differ may be low.

Several research avenues could help avoid these limitations in the future. First, multiple case studies could examine how organizational context moderates the link between reciprocity, leadership, and turnover across various call center sites (Yin, 2018). A second limitation is that research into this topic using data collected from front-line employees, as well as from a sample of their supervisors, would offer an even broader view of employees' perspectives and experiences. Third, following participants longitudinally would enable stronger causal inferences and identify temporal dynamics in the development of the psychological contract (Holtom et al., 2008). Fourth, researchers might examine the hypothesized links between particular dimensions of reciprocity and turnover intentions in larger, more representative samples. Finally, cross-cultural studies of the social exchange process in different national and cultural settings would investigate the underlying mechanisms of retention and whether they are universal or culture-bound (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Further avenues of research to pursue in light of the research model presented here include further exploring the role and technological dimension, particularly how specific design features of AI systems affect employee perceptions regarding spare versus surveillance and looking at situations where technology either en-

hances or deteriorates reciprocity (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

9. Conclusion

The research has added to the theoretical and practical concept of voluntary turnover in call center settings by using the theory of Argosy as a framework to explore the relationship of reciprocity, organizational alignment, leadership, work-life integration, and technology as correlating factors of turnover intentions (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). The results highlight that employees' perceptions of balanced exchange relations, in which organizational support, recognition, and development opportunities are equivalent to employee input, are key processes that maintain employment and mitigate voluntary turnover.

The study contributes to the Argosy Integrative Framework by illustrating how its components operate in a single call center context and by generating propositions that future multi-site and quantitative research can test more rigorously. First, it provides qualitative evidence consistent with the importance of reciprocity and organizational alignment as predictors of retention in modern conditions, thereby offering initial support for the Argosy Integrative Framework within the call center setting (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Second, it establishes the quality of leadership as a key determinant of the perception of reciprocity and shows that organizational-level policies and practices are implemented and perceived through supervisors' behaviors, which define the psychological contracts of employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Matta et al., 2017). Third, it expands social exchange theory by directly introducing the concept of technology as a mediating force of reciprocity relationships, which is a critical gap to the existing body of scholarship in social exchange and is relevant to the newer discourse on the role of technology in modern employment relationships (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014).

The limitations of the study include a single-site design, cross-sectional data collection, and geographic limitations, which limit generalizability and causal inference. Future studies need to address these constraints by using multi-site comparative designs, direct sampling of employees, longitudinal data collection, and cross-cultural studies that focus on social exchange dynamics across different contexts.

To summarize, retention management in call center settings, and probably in other high-turnover sectors, needs a long-term organizational investment in the combined concepts of the Argosy Theory: balanced reciprocity, value congruence, leadership performance, and the introduction of technology that would complement, not diminish, employees' perceptions of fairness and support. Those organizations that invest in the relationships of the balanced exchange with mutual support, open communication, developmental opportunities and respectful treatment of employees and carefully introduce technologies that promote the above-mentioned objectives and do not compromise them will be in a better position to

attain the stability of the workforce, improved customer service and long-lasting competitive edge in the increasingly competitive labor markets (Albrecht et al., 2015; Batt & Colvin, 2011; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Strohmeier & Parry, 2014). The Argosy Theory is an overall model of the retention process and management of a modern technology-intensive organization because it explicitly acknowledges the fact that technology is not a neutral process, but instead a mediating process that essentially influences how employees perceive organizational reciprocity and support.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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