

Intention of IT Professionals to Leave Public Organizations

Intenção de profissionais de TI sair de organizações públicas

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Resumo

Este estudo verificou os determinantes da intenção de sair das organizações públicas brasileiras por parte de profissionais de TI. Os dados foram coletados por meio de um questionário aplicado a 224 profissionais e analisados por meio dos testes estatísticos de Spearman, Mann-Whitney e Kruskal-Wallis. Os resultados demonstraram que a satisfação (tipo de atitude) e as normas subjetivas influenciaram a intenção de sair, enquanto o controle comportamental percebido não a influenciou. Grande parte dos determinantes individuais (idade, estado civil, sexo e filhos) e do burnout (determinante ocupacional) também influenciou a intenção de sair. Dentre os determinantes organizacionais, a percepção de oportunidades de aprendizagem influenciou negativamente a intenção dos profissionais de deixar as organizações públicas brasileiras. Esse estudo discutiu esses resultados e apresentou sugestões para estudos futuros.

Palavras-chave: intenção, rotatividade, organizações públicas

Abstract

This study explored the determinants of IT professionals' intention to leave public Brazilian organizations. Data were collected via a survey of 224 professionals and analyzed using Spearman, Mann-Whitney, and Kruskal-Wallis tests. The results showed that satisfaction (a type of attitude) and subjective norms influenced the intention to leave, while perceived behavioral control did not. A large part of the individual determinants (age, marital status, gender, and children) and burnout (occupational determinant) also influenced the intention to leave. Among the organizational determinants, perceived learning opportunities negatively influenced IT professionals' intention to leave public Brazilian organizations. This study discussed these results and presents suggestions for future studies.

Keywords: intention, turnover, public organizations

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Introduction

Public organizations seek to improve their efficiency and efficacy through information technology (IT) applications (Patola, Suhardi, & Kurniawan, 2016). The professionals who work in this area (IT) have specific technical and managerial competencies (Kiang et al., 2020). Their exit from organizations “means project discontinuity, potentially lost investments in qualification, difficulties in continuing to meet the demands, loss of knowledge of the institution, among other problems of managerial order” (Brazilian Federal Accounting Court, 2014, p.29).

Research indicates that various behavioral issues among professionals may trigger their exit from the organization (Prihandinisari, Rahman, & Hicks, 2020). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been one of the main theories applied in studies of the social and behavioral fields (Bosnjak, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2020). TPB establishes the intention as the cognitive determinant of behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Previous studies highlight the intention to leave the organization as the primary cognitive determinant of voluntary turnover (Cohen et al., 2016; Joo, Hahn, & Peterson, 2015). At the organizational level, turnover comprises the movement (admissions and dismissals) of professionals within an organization over a given period (Waldman & Arora, 2004). In turn, the intention to leave is understood as a cognitive, conscious, and deliberate process in which a person plans to leave their job soon (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). This process precedes the professional's effective behavior of voluntarily leaving the organization and involves thoughts about seeking new job opportunities or leaving their current job (Cho, Johanson, & Guchait, 2009). According to the TPB, intention is formed by a person's attitudes, subjective norms (social pressure), and perceived control over performing the desired behavior, such as voluntary exit from the organization. The formation of the intention predicts such behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019). Besides these determinants proposed by the TPB, there is evidence of other determinants of the intention to leave, classified into four main categories: individual determinants (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Kim, 2015), occupational determinants (Kim, 2015), organizational determinants (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Kim, 2015), and environmental determinants (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Kim, 2015).

Although the identification and understanding of the determinants of the voluntary exit of professionals are necessary to deal with the challenges caused by turnover in organizations (Ali, Alkadry, & Bishu, 2018; Cregård & Corin, 2019), studies with professionals with critical knowledge (e.g., IT professionals) are still recent and little explored in public sector organizations (Diógenes et al., 2016; Cruz Filho, 2018). To advance understanding of the topic, this study aims to verify the determinants of IT professionals' intention to leave public Brazilian organizations. The results may help managers develop initiatives aimed toward reducing professional turnover in public organizations (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008; Agapito et al., 2015).

Research Hypotheses

This study proposes that the intention to leave is influenced by the determinants of the theory of planned behavior (attitudes, subjective norms, and

perceived behavioral control), as well as by determinants classified into the following categories: individual, occupational, and organizational determinants.

Attitudes: job satisfaction

Attitudes are evaluations (favorable or unfavorable) that a person holds about a behavior they wish to perform, considering the possible consequences of performing that behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Job satisfaction is an attitude, as it refers to the "evaluative state that expresses contentment with and positive feelings about one's relationship with the organization and the job they have in it (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012, p. 343).

Satisfaction is one of the main attitudinal elements investigated in studies about voluntary turnover in organizations (Agapito et al., 2015; Cruz Filho, 2019; Steil, Floriani, & Bello, 2019). In the public context, the evidence indicates that satisfaction negatively influences the intention to leave (IL) of professionals with different occupations in organizations in the United Arab Emirates (Jabeen, Friesen, & Choudi, 2017), the United States (Bogaert et al., 2019), and Brazil (Agapito et al., 2015; Oliveira & Costa, 2019). In private organizations, a negative relationship between satisfaction and IL has also been found (Ling & Huang, 2020; Bello & Steil, 2020), as well as among satisfaction with pay, supervision, promotions, and the IL (Steil et al., 2018). From such evidence, this study proposes to verify the following hypothesis:

Hor: The lower the satisfaction levels of the IT professionals are, the higher their intention to leave public organizations.

Subjective norms

Subjective norms consist of the social pressure a person perceives to perform a behavior they desire. In other words, it reflects how the opinions of third parties (considered important to the person) influence their performance of the desired behavior and how strongly this person feels motivated to perform it (Ajzen, 1991). Hence, "when an individual perceives that people who are important to them approve (or disapprove) a behavior, they tend to have higher (or lower) intention to execute it" (Armitage & Conner, 2001, p. 474).

According to the theory of planned behavior, subjective norms are a determinant of intention (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Although there is no direct evidence of the relationship between subjective norms and the intention to leave, specifically, Coombs (2009, p. 239) found that "the factors influencing the opinions of people important to the IT professional may also have a significant effect on decisions" by this professional regarding their permanence at their current job. To advance in the understanding of the relationship between the subjective norms and the intention to leave the organizations, this study proposes to verify the following hypothesis:

Ho2: The more the people considered important to the IT professionals disapprove of their permanence at the organization, the higher their intention to leave it.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC)

PBC is the degree of ease or difficulty a person perceives in performing a behavior, given their resources and available opportunities. One of the assumptions of the TPB is that when a person lacks full control over the behavior they wish to perform, PBC moderates the relationship between intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2012). Hence, “the greater the perceived behavioral control is, the stronger the relationship between the intention and the behavior” (Armitage & Conner, 2001, p. 473). Assuming that the success of the performance of a behavior depends on both the intention and the control perceived by the person about the behavior (Garcia, 2003), this study proposes to verify the following hypothesis:

H03: The greater the control perceived by the IT professionals relative to their permanence at the organization, the lower their intentions to leave it.

Individual determinants

The individual determinants investigated in this study are age, gender, marital status, education level, and children. Regarding age, studies across various contexts have shown that younger professionals are more likely to leave public organizations (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008; Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Cho & Lewis, 2012; Zaza & Armstrong, 2016; Kols et al., 2018). However, this relationship was not confirmed in recent studies with IT professionals from public American organizations (Harden, Boakye, & Ryan, 2018) and professionals from private Brazilian IT organizations (Bello & Steil, 2020).

Regarding the variable gender, the relationship between it and the intention to leave has not yet been sufficiently investigated (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Keiser, 2012; Ali et al., 2018). On the one hand, there is evidence that male professionals show a higher intention to leave public organizations in different contexts (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008; Grissom et al., 2012; Wynen, Beeck, & Hondeghem, 2013). However, Harden et al. (2018) found that both women and men presented higher intentions to leave public American organizations. Another study did not identify a relationship between gender (men) and the intention to leave private Brazilian IT organizations (Bello & Steil, 2020).

Studies have found that married professionals across diverse organizations are less likely to leave their jobs (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Harden et al., 2018). However, this relationship was not confirmed in recent studies with professionals from public American organizations (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008) and private Brazilian IT organizations (Bello & Steil, 2020).

There is also evidence that IT professionals with lower educational levels have a higher intention to leave organizations (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Bello & Steil, 2020). Lastly, the evidence of the variable children's influence on the intention to leave organizations remains divergent. If, on the one hand, Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) found that professionals without children are more likely to leave public organizations,

some studies have rejected the hypothesis of a relationship between children and the intention to leave (Uzoka et al., 2015; Bello & Steil, 2020). This study proposes to verify the following hypotheses:

- Ho4: Younger IT professionals have a higher intention to leave public organizations.
- Ho5: Male IT professionals have a higher intention to leave public organizations.
- Ho6: Single IT professionals have a higher intention to leave public organizations.
- Ho7: IT professionals with lower education levels have a higher intention to leave public organizations.
- Ho8: IT professionals with no children have a higher intention to leave public organizations.

Occupational determinants: salary and burnout

There is evidence of the relationship between salary and the intention to leave the organization. Studies have found that the higher a professional's salary, the lower their intention to leave public organizations (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Kim, 2015; Kols et al., 2018).

Regarding burnout, it is a psychological syndrome stemming from the professional's experiences at work (Tamayo & Tróccoli, 2002) and involves emotional exhaustion and a sense of disconnection from the job (Schuster & Dias, 2018). In the study by Hewko et al. (2014), health professionals with high burnout levels reported a higher intention to leave their organizations. Although the literature demands studies that directly explore the relationship between burnout and the intention to leave (Kim, 2015; Hämmig, 2018), there is evidence that professionals who present emotional exhaustion at work are more prone to leave the organization they work at voluntarily (Chapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Scanlan, Meredith, & Poulsen, 2013; Zaza & Armstrong, 2016). Based on the evidence presented, this study proposes to verify the following hypotheses:

- Ho9: The lower the salary of the IT professionals is, the higher their intention to leave public organizations.
- Ho10: The higher the burnout levels of the IT professionals are, the higher their intention to leave public organizations.

Organizational determinants

The organizational determinants investigated in this study are benefits and perceived learning opportunities. Perceived learning opportunities refer to professionals' perceptions of the "training, development, and education (TD&E) system and the support to learning in the organizations they are connected to" (Mourão, Abbad, & Zerbini, 2014, p. 233). There is evidence that the intention to leave is

influenced by the (lack of) training and/or development (Kim, 2015; Cruz Filho, 2018; Kols et al., 2018) and by the (lack of) perception of learning opportunities at the organizations (Proost, Ruysseveldt, & Dijke, 2012; Steil et al., 2018).

Relative to benefits, these are monetary or non-monetary incentives defined by statute or labor law and granted to the public servant (e.g., health assistance, maternity leave, private retirement). A literature review identified that benefits contribute to IT professionals having low intention to leave organizations (Chapanchi & Aurum, 2011). The present study proposes to verify the following hypotheses:

- H11: IT professionals who perceive learning opportunities have a lower intention to leave public organizations.
- H12: IT professionals who receive benefits from the public organization have a lower intention to leave such organization.

Method

Data

This is a survey with a non-probabilistic approach. The online questionnaire was sent directly to the target audience via the researchers' LinkedIn and Facebook profiles. Public organizations with IT professionals were also contacted. With the adhesion and the interest of their managers (chairpersons, human resources managers, and IT managers), the research instrument was forwarded to the respondents via institutional email. The data were collected from September 2018 to March 2019. A free and informed consent form duly approved by the Ethics Committee on Research with Human Beings of the Federal University of Santa Catarina was used (number 3,254,632).

Dependent variable

The dependent variable was the intention to leave the organization, measured through the instrument proposed by Siqueira et al. (2014). This instrument is composed of three items evaluated on a scale varying from 1 point (never) to 5 points (always): item 01 - I think about leaving the company I work at; item 02 - I plan to leave the company I work at; item 03 - I feel like leaving the company I work at. There is evidence of the validation of such items and their measurement scale (Cronbach's alpha values from the original study and the present study: 0.950 and 0.929, respectively).

Independent variables

The independent variables were benefits, burnout, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived learning opportunities, and job satisfaction (Table 1). The research instruments for such variables are validated in the investigated context.

Table 1

Independent variables and their dimensions, Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient, and measured items

| Variable | Variable dimensions | | | Variable | | Items and measurement scale |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | Dimension | α (original study) | α (present study) | α (original study) | α (present study) | |
| Benefits | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | Multiple choice |
| Burnout (Schuster & Dias, 2018) | Emotional exhaustion (EE) | 0.780 | 0.780 | 0.930 | 0.895 | 13 items (6 items - EE; 7 items - DI) evaluated on a scale varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) |
| | Disengagement (DI) | 0.880 | 0.782 | | | |
| PBC | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0.495 | 3 items evaluated on a scale varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) |
| Subjective norms | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0.832 | 3 items evaluated on a scale varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) |
| PLO (Mourão et al., 2014) | --- | --- | --- | 0.940 | 0.966 | 13 items evaluated on a scale varying from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) |
| Job satisfaction (Siqueira, 2008) | Satisfaction with the colleagues | 0.736 | 0.830 | 0.906 | 0.905 | 15 items (reduced scale) evaluated on a scale varying from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied) |
| | Satisfaction with pay | 0.889 | 0.918 | | | |
| | Satisfaction with supervision | 0.950 | 0.913 | | | |
| | Satisfaction with the nature of the job | 0.859 | 0.863 | | | |
| | Satisfaction with the promotions | 0.749 | 0.883 | | | |

PBC = Perceived behavioral control; PLO = Perceived learning opportunities

Source: the authors.

The relationships between the dependent variable and the following sociodemographic variables were also investigated: marital status (single; married/steady union; divorced/separated; widowed), children (yes; no), age (in complete years), education level (complete higher education; complete post-graduation; incomplete post-graduation), salary (salary ranges), and gender (male; female).

Data processing and analysis

The SPSS software was used for the data processing and analysis. Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it was verified that, except for job satisfaction ($p > 0.000$), the other variables did not follow normal distributions ($p < 0.05$) (Hair Jr. et al., 2005). Because of this, the following statistical tests were applied to verify the research hypotheses: Spearman's test (H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} , H_{04} , H_{10} , and H_{11}), the Mann-Whitney U test (H_{05} , H_{06} , H_{07} , H_{08} , H_{12}), and the Kruskal-Wallis test (H_{09}).

Results

Target audience

The sample of this survey comprised 224 IT professionals employed by public organizations in Santa Catarina, Brazil. The sample does not involve outsourced professionals of such organizations.

The survey participants were men (84%) and women (16%) aged from 31 to 45 years (62.95%), married/steady union (73.32%), with children (59%), and with complete post-graduation (59.38%). A large proportion (67.90%) of married professionals had children, while 94.74% of single professionals did not have children. In this survey, there was a predominance of professionals who had been working at public organizations for less than five years (58.4%), held technical positions (non-management) (83%) or management positions (17%), and had a monthly salary over R\$7,000 (66.96%). Since most of the surveyed organizations centralized their IT activities in the state capital, the survey showed a predominance (93%) of professionals working at public organizations located in the Greater Florianópolis.

Result description

Satisfaction (a type of attitude) and subjective norms influenced the intention to leave the organization. Perceived behavioral control did not show a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable. A large part of the individual determinants (marital status, age, gender, and children) and the occupational determinants (salary and burnout) influenced the intention to leave. However, among the organizational determinants, only perceived learning opportunities influenced the intention to leave.

Discussion

The results are discussed in relation to the determinants of the theory of planned behavior (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) and to other determinants identified in previous studies, classified as individual, occupational, and organizational.

Attitude

In this study, the attitude was represented by satisfaction. According to the descriptive statistics, the professionals were satisfied with their jobs (33.92%) or indifferent about their job satisfaction level (40.63%). Most professionals (58.9%) had a low intention to leave the public organizations they worked for (i.e., score ≤ 2.99). These results confirmed the hypothesis that the professionals' satisfaction level (including relationships with co-workers and supervision, pay, nature of the job, and promotions) negatively influenced their intention to leave the surveyed organizations (H01).

Such evidence corroborates the findings of previous studies with professionals of different occupations (Jabeen et al., 2017; Bogaert et al., 2019; Agapito et al., 2015; Oliveira & Costa, 2019; Lin & Huang, 2020; Bello & Steil, 2020; Steil et al., 2018). Moreover, these results reinforce the importance of considering satisfaction as an

attitude in the formation of the professional's behavioral intention in the organizational context (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

Subjective norms

We verified that when the people important to the professionals disapprove of their permanence at the organizations, they are more likely to consider leaving their jobs, thus confirming hypothesis Ho2. The statistics reinforce this finding, revealing that 58.48% of the surveyed professionals reported medium subjective norms score over 3.50 (with a maximum of 5), indicating that they cared about third parties' opinions regarding their permanence at their current jobs. This result contributes to the evidence found by Coombs (2009, p. 239) that the "factors that influence the opinions of people important to the IT professionals may also have a significant effect on decisions" these professionals make about remaining at their current job.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC)

A large proportion of professionals (97.77%) reported a mean PBC score over 3 (maximum 5), indicating that they considered they had control over their permanence at the organization they worked at. Despite the indications from the presented descriptive statistics, we rejected the hypothesis that the degree of ease or difficulty perceived by IT professionals regarding their permanence at the organizations interferes with their intention to leave the organizations (Ho3).

The data collection for this survey occurred in the second semester of 2018 and the first semester of 2019. During this period, according to the National Continuous Sample Survey of Households (PNADC, from the Portuguese "Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua"), the Brazilian labor market proved to be considerably deteriorated in terms of job generation (Lameiras et al., 2019). In the fourth quarter of 2018, the economic sectors with the most significant job expansion (including Public Administration) registered favorable growth rates, yet below 3% (Lameiras, Carvalho, & Corseuil, 2019). We also add that, while in the first quarter of 2015 the rate of occupied people (formal work bonds) was 51.4% in the public and private sectors, in the second quarter of 2019, this rate decreased to 47.1%, representing the lowest level recorded by the PNADC so far (IPEA, 2019). This scenario might have contributed to the results of this study and reinforces the idea that professionals' intentions may be influenced by other variables, in addition to those proposed by the TPB (attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC) (Ajzen, 2011).

Studies have shown that the intention to leave is more frequently translated into behavior in certain situations than in others (Cregård, 2017). For example, some studies found that the recession of the economy influenced (negatively) the perception of the professional about their employability and their consequent exit from the organization they worked at (Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001; Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Complementarily, a literature review identified the predominance of studies investigating the relationships between variables such as perceived job opportunities and the state of the economy and the intention to leave the organization (Steel & Loundsbury, 2009).

Individual determinants

A large part of the individual determinants influenced the intention to leave the organization. Only the education level did not present a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable of this study; thus, the hypothesis that the lower the education levels of the professionals are, the higher their intention to leave the surveyed organizations (Ho7) was rejected. Similarly, previous studies did not find this relationship among IT professionals from various organizations (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011) or among professionals from IT organizations (Bello & Steil, 2020).

Regarding the other individual determinants (age, marital status, children, and gender), we found that younger professionals are more prone to leaving the surveyed organizations, thus confirming hypothesis Ho4. This result corroborates the findings of previous studies (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Cho & Lewis, 2012; Zaza & Armstrong, 2016; Kols et al., 2018). In the present study, the mean age of the professionals was 42 years, with 49 years for men and 46 years for women. Parallel to these results, Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) found that professionals aged 30 or younger are more likely to leave a public organization than older professionals. This evidence may be understood upon considering that younger professionals tend to have fewer family ties and, therefore, better conditions to enhance their knowledge (studies) and/or invest in their careers (Ahuja et al., 2007).

Single professionals are more likely to leave a public organization than those with a different marital status, confirming hypothesis Ho5. It was also found that professionals with no children had an average length of service in the organizations (7.78 years; standard deviation of 6.26 years), shorter than professionals with children (15.83 years; standard deviation of 12.31 years), thus confirming hypothesis Ho8. These results may be related to the fact that the marital status of people may significantly impact their length of service in the organizations (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Harden et al., 2018; Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008), given that "married people more often make job decisions based on relatively complicated concerns" (Huang, Lin, & Chuang, 2006, p. 493), such as having children. According to the descriptive statistics, 51.79% of the surveyed professionals were married and had children. In comparison, 16.96% of the professionals were single and had no children, which corroborates evidence from previous studies on decision-making under delicate circumstances. In their study with professionals from Brazilian IT organizations, Bello (2017, p. 153) found that dependence on others (e.g., children) is "an indicator of the intention to stay of people who are married and have children".

Lastly, we verified a statistically significant difference in the intention to leave between male and female IT professionals. Male professionals had an average length of service in the organizations (11.38 years, with a standard deviation of 10.08 years), shorter than that of female professionals (18.30 years; standard deviation of 13.51 years), which helped confirm hypothesis Ho6. This result reinforces evidence from previous studies conducted at public organizations across different contexts (Grissom et al., 2012; Wynen et al., 2013). A possible explanation for this result is that male professionals have greater career mobility than female professionals (Grissom et al., 2012).

Occupational determinants: salary and burnout

This study rejects hypothesis H₀₉ that salary negatively influences the intention of surveyed professionals to leave, thereby reinforcing evidence from previous studies (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Kim, 2015; Kols et al., 2018).

In Brazil, there is still much discussion regarding the remuneration of professionals from public organizations (Moriconi, 2007). On the one hand, public organizations are considered attractive alternatives for professionals to remain in the labor market due to salary prospects, employment security, and stability (Nogueira, 2005). On the other hand, various professional categories express discontent regarding their salaries and respective salary increases (Moriconi, 2007).

Concerning burnout, a large part (65%) of the surveyed IT professionals demonstrated relatively low burnout levels (below 2.5, with 4 being the maximum score). More specifically, there was a predominance of professionals with relatively low (below 2.5) levels of emotional exhaustion (71.43% of the professionals) and disengagement (62.50% of the professionals). Additionally, a large proportion of professionals (58.9%) demonstrated a low intention to leave (scores ≤ 2.99 , with a maximum score of 5). These data helped confirm the hypothesis that burnout levels are positively related to the intention to leave the surveyed organizations (H₁₀). These results add to the evidence from previous studies to advance understanding of the relationship between burnout and the intention to leave the organization (Hewko et al., 2014; Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Scanlan et al., 2013; Zaza & Armstrong, 2016).

Organizational determinants

A large part of the professionals stated that their organizations encouraged formal or informal learning. Together with the low intention to leave among the professionals, these data confirmed the hypothesis that professionals who perceive learning opportunities are less prone to leaving the organizations (H₁₁). These results corroborate the findings of previous studies (Proost et al., 2012; Steil et al., 2018). Due to the nature of IT professionals' work and the rapid pace of technological change, these professionals continuously seek to enhance their knowledge (Moquin, Riemenschneider, & Wakefield, 2019). Thus, upon perceiving fair opportunities to develop themselves within the organizations they work at, these professionals tend to have a low propensity to leave them (Kim, 2005).

This study also found that the benefits are not associated with the intention to leave (H₁₂). In other words, the fact that public organizations offer benefits to their professionals does not necessarily mean that these professionals feel valued (Thompson et al., 2004), especially considering benefits established by law, which make it mandatory for the organizations to offer them to employees.

Conclusion

This study verified the determinants of IT professionals' intention to leave public Brazilian organizations. The results demonstrated that both elements of the TPB (attitudes and subjective norms) and elements external to this theory influenced the intention to leave (IL). These external elements were age, marital status, gender, and

children (individual determinants), burnout (occupational determinant), and perceived learning opportunities (organizational determinant).

These results add to the literature, as although studies investigate the determinants of the IL, those that use the TPB and consequently examine the influence of subjective norms and PBC on the IL remain scarce. Moreover, the evidence reinforces the importance of considering satisfaction as an attitude when studying the formation of the intention to leave organizations and helps explain the voluntary exit of professionals from public organizations. Furthermore, from the perspective of professionals, public managers can develop and/or propose improvements to actions related to the identified issues regarding the voluntary exit of these professionals from the organizations. However, it is important to consider that the surveyed organizations do not always act deliberately on such issues, given that they need to align with state or federal government policies.

To advance in understanding the voluntary exit from the organizations, we suggest: reapplying the conceptual model of this study with wider samples; comparing the perception of the investigated determinants among manager and non-manager professionals; verifying the relationship between each category of determinants (i.e. individual, occupational, organizational) and the IL; performing longitudinal studies to verify the predictive effect of the PBC and subjective norms on the IL. As salary and benefits were measured objectively, we suggest verifying, using a perception scale, the relationships between salary and benefits and the IL, respectively.

Since the data collection and analysis are cross-sectional, we highlight that the conclusions about the investigated relationships are limited, as the results refer to a specific period and are therefore not generalizable.

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