

# INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC STAFF TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG VIETNAMESE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*The research aims to identify the possible relationship between organizational culture with rules, norms, and beliefs of public higher education institutions and faculty turnover intention in the Vietnamese context, which can be used as hypotheses for future quantitative and qualitative studies. In an effort to examine this matter, the research presented a framework that is built based on a model given by Tierney. In this research, an illustrative case study was chosen to deeply examine this complex influence in a given instance. The hypotheses that the research generates are based on the opinions of faculty members at the selected case who were interviewed in 2019 and 2020 based on their long tenure with at least 4 years' experience and their positions as executive committee members of the trade union of the departments. The results showed that among the six dimensions of organizational culture, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership are proven to have certain effects on lecturers' intention to quit their organization, while the dimension of environment is believed not to affect their work attitudes. The influence of organizational culture on academic staff's intention to leave their organization is indirect, with varying degrees depending on different factors. Also, the research revealed the precursors of academic staff turnover intention.*

**Keywords:** Academic Staff, Organizational Culture, Turnover, Turnover Intention, Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions.

## INTRODUCTION

In the field of higher education, the role of employees, especially academic staff, is important, not only to the organization itself but also to society as a whole. This is because the main source of high-quality human resources for different professions is the university, while academics are considered as guardians, disseminators, and creators of new knowledge (Tetty, 2006; Ramli et al., 2014), and the unique nature of universities expects them “to be a repository of the most specialized and skilled intellectuals” (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). In other words, compared to the majority of other organizations, during their course of operation, universities rely more on “the intellectual and creative abilities and commitment of their academic staff”

(Ibrahim & Tasisa, 2017). Therefore, it is very significant for higher education institutions to retain their academic staff (Ng'ethe et al., 2012), and some even believe that turnover is a curse for institutions (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002).

The departure of lecturers is a concern of many higher education institutions around the world, and in the context of Vietnam, academic staff turnover is increasing and tends not to decrease, as the media revealed (Thuy, 2010; Chi, 2014; Le, 2018). Although no official reports on this theme are available nationwide, the case studies used by some researchers when examining this phenomenon almost always provide data supportive of the situation reported by the media. For instance, Pham and Dang (2018) found that academic staff turnover has increased over the past decade at Vietnam National University of Forestry. A survey conducted by Nguyen and Nguyen (2013) on a larger scale, involving institutions in a whole province in Vietnam, Lam Dong, also revealed a similar circumstance.

Compared with the amount of research on academic staff turnover in developed countries, there are not many studies documented in the literature on the matters of faculty turnover and retention in developing countries like Vietnam, and the topic of turnover in these countries is usually put into the theme of “*brain drain*” (Budhwar & Debrah, 2001; Tettey, 2006). Moreover, while the number of studies on this subject in Vietnam is so limited, they primarily explore work characteristics such as salaries or working time (Pham & Dang, 2018; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2013). They ignore or pay scant attention to factors related to the contextual variables, especially organizational culture, even though many scholars such as Oloube (2016) and Abdullah et al. (2018) affirmed that the culture of the organization has various influences on academic staff turnover and turnover intention. Moreover, among the limited number of studies relevant to this theme, organizational culture was merely mentioned as one among various factors that influence academics’ attachment to or their departure from their workplace rather than deeply examined and/or primarily focused (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2013; Pham & Dang, 2018).

Considering the current research on the organizational culture of higher education institutions and academic staff turnover, the importance of retaining qualified lecturers and the consequences of academic staff turnover, and the fact that the matter of academic staff’s departure from Vietnamese institutions has been on the rise but has received little research from scholars, the research has decided to analyze the impacts of organizational culture on employees’ turnover intention in the context of Vietnamese public higher education institutions. The paper aims to provide a framework for studying the impact of universities’ organizational culture on the intention of lecturers to leave their organizations. In the context of the lack of in-depth research on this topic and the complexity of research culture and its effects, this study sought to find hypotheses on the impact of organizational culture on faculty turnover intention to serve as a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies.

In this research, turnover intention is examined instead of actual turnover since many studies showed that a significant and positive relationship exists between leaving intentions and actual leaving behaviour (Griffeth et al., 2000; Joseph et al., 2007). Besides, information on turnover intention has more practical meaning in the sense that it is still able to change the ideas of those who intend to leave the organization, especially once the organization has the awareness and effective interventions (Albaqami, 2016).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organizational Culture in Higher Education

It has been stated that the study of the organizational culture of higher education institutions was officially recognized in the 1960s with the emergence of large research projects focusing on it (Clark, 1963; Clark & Trow, 1966). At that time, some researchers viewed a university as a subculture with its own customs, traditions, and interests and the study of a university's culture as research on a "*primitive tribe or a modern community*" (Riesman & Jencks 1962, p. 104). Nonetheless, the study of the organizational culture of universities, in particular, and the culture of organizations, in general, only truly became prominent after receiving attention from many researchers and the introduction of various research works in the late 1980s (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Barley et al., 1988; Denison, 1990).

There is also the idea that the culture of higher education institutions possesses unique features, which makes it impossible to equate this culture with the corporate culture in other organizations in other fields (Stakes, 2010). At the organizational level, there are, undeniably, some similarities between higher education institutions and other organizations – for example, companies, state agencies, and non-governmental organizations – such as both having organizational structures with managers and staff (Stephens & Graham, 2010). However, research on the culture of professional organizations has illustrated that there are multiple differences between the characteristics of higher education institutions and those of their industrial and commercial counterparts (Meek, 1988; Hannan & Silver, 2000). The tradition of academic freedom and the continuous departure of students can cause the organization members to feel less invested in the culture of the organization (Richard et al., 2018). Compared to other organizations, the culture of higher education institutions is believed to be more complex (Dill, 1982). This complexity, according to Meek (1988), can cause a cultural clash. Due to this cultural complication, Peters (1987) stated that higher education institutions existed and grew in a culture of anarchy and considered their culture to be one of chaos.

In addition to some typical features, such as the degree of investment in culture from the organization members and complications, according to Alvesson (2004), in terms of the nature of work and the styles of management and leadership, knowledge-intensive organizations, such as universities, also have a further seven major features that are different from those of other organizations. First, the employees of these agencies carry out activities related to knowledge, using their symbolic and intellectual abilities in their work. Second, compared with other organizations, the levels of employee autonomy are high, and hierarchical divisions are almost non-existent. Third, the organizational forms are flexible, adaptable, and impromptu. Fourth, there are many communication requirements to help coordinate and solve problems since the level of ambiguity is high. Fifth, these organizations target consumers, especially professional service companies. Sixth, due to the experts' positions, there is an imbalance between information and authority. Seventh, the evaluation of the results of the quality of work is subjective and ambiguous. In addition to these seven features of knowledge-intensive organizations.

According to some researchers, in addition to traditions and identities, culture is believed to be a real social force in higher education institutions or a mental tool that is able to apprehend

important social forces within higher education institutions (Brennan & Shah 2000; Curri, 2002; Harman, 2002). University culture is also believed to have an impact on many facets of the university, such as management (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988), planning (Hearn et al., 1993; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996), leadership (Birnbaum, 1988), and faculty turnover intention (Abdullah et al., 2018; Ololube, 2016). Hence, change processes in and of academic institutions, including adjustments in the governance of these organizations or their identities, may be clarified by the examination of organizational culture (Levin, 2004; Tuunainen, 2005).

### **The Context of the Vietnamese System of Higher Education**

During feudal times, China dominated Vietnam, and consequently, Vietnam has been profoundly influenced by Confucianism from China in almost every aspect of life, including education. In 1076, Vietnam's first university, Quoc Tu Giam, or the Imperial Academy, was established as a place to teach the sons of imperial families about Confucianism (Tran et al., 2004). Between 1442 and 1770, Quoc Tu Giam produced 1,307 graduates, including 82 who received doctorates. Not only Confucianism but also Buddhism and Taoism, which were commonly followed in this period in China and Vietnam, have had a considerable influence on higher education in Vietnam (Pham & Fry, 2004).

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam was colonized by the French, and the French colonial system replaced the feudal system of higher education in Vietnam (Tran, 1995). Higher education institutions were gradually established in small numbers to serve the colonial apparatus. At the most prosperous period of the French colonization, the entire region of French-colonized Indochina had only three universities (for Law, Medicine and Pharmacy, and the Sciences) located in Hanoi, Vietnam, with 834 students of which 628 were Vietnamese (World Bank, 2005). French colonialism in Vietnam lasted for approximately 7 decades, from the 1880s to the mid-1950s, and during this period, the higher education institutions in Vietnam gradually grew in terms of quality and quantity (World Bank, 2005).

In 1954, the colonial period ended in North Vietnam, and a new higher education system was built with the assistance of the Soviet Union, which has helped enhance human and institutional resources but also laid the foundation for the operation of highly specialized institutes as well as a centrally controlled higher education system (Welch, 2010). After being under the influence of the French model for a further few years, higher education in South Vietnam started to follow the American model when the Americans were deeply engaged in the Vietnam War. In comparison with the model of North Vietnam, the higher education system developed in the American style "reflected a more Western institutional style, exhibiting a more comprehensive organizational pattern" (Welch, 2010). Accordingly, South Vietnam witnessed the operation of various types of higher education institutions, ranging from private higher education institutions to community colleges (Welch, 2010).

In April 1975, Vietnam became independent and the country was reunified. The state restructured the higher education system and placed it under their strict control (World Bank, 2008). In December 1986, a policy package of economic reform was passed, and with this policy, Vietnam shifted its economy from the centralized planning system to the market-oriented mechanism (World Bank, 2005). Due to this reform, higher education institutions became more diverse with participation from the private sector. Higher education institutions were allowed to

make their training plans and use sources of funding. In 1988, as a result of the reform, Vietnam witnessed the official establishment of the first private university, Thang Long University. However, the impact of this reform on higher education was effectively seen in 1993. On November 24, 1993, the government issued a landmark decree (Decree 90) that mentioned a strong state commitment to the unification and innovation of the higher education system of the country. With aid and investment from the state, Vietnam's higher education system expanded, and since then, this growth "*has transformed it [Vietnam's higher education system] from an elite system to one that provides opportunities for participation by a wider cross-section of the population*" (Westerheijden et al., 2010).

In the 2018–2019 academic year, Vietnam had 237 universities, excluding institutions in the security and defense sectors, where the number of public institutions was 172 and that of the non-public ones was 65. These universities trained 1,526,111 students (Ministry of Education and Training, 2020). Thus far, important fields in public higher education institutions, such as curriculum frameworks, enrollment quotas, and capital expenditure, have been controlled by the state. Nonetheless, as a result of the enforcement of new laws and regulations, there has been an increase in self-governance in higher education institutions. Higher education institutions can actively increase the number and types of training programs to meet the increasing needs of society. They are allowed to merge or establish departments/schools within their organizations; use different sources of funding, especially those that are not from state funding, such as donations and research contracts; and allocate internal resources among and within different faculties (Pham & Fry, 2004; UNESCO, 2014). In Vietnamese public universities, the rector is seen as the holder of almost all rights, and the power "will remain forever circumscribed by Communist Party policies and processes and a state disposition to govern by means of tight regulatory control" (Pham, 2010). Meanwhile, faculty members generally do not show interest in the ways in which decisions are made from the leadership level. The absence of an effective management mechanism and a system to recognize faculty contributions are also considered to be an existing situation in Vietnamese public universities (Le, 2016).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In an effort to examine organizational culture in a specific context, as in public higher education institutions in Vietnam, this study presented a framework that was built based on a model given by Tierney (1988). To be specific, six dimensions are included in Tierney's model, namely, environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership (Tierney, 1988). Different aspects in these dimensions are summarized in Table 1.

Case study research was used in this paper to understand the relationship between organizational culture and academic staff turnover intention in public universities in Vietnam. Case study research is proven to be suitable for studies which seek to have insights into the reasons and ways a phenomenon takes place with contextual effects or when the research problem is so complicated (Guest et al., 2006; Dworkin, 2012). The use of this approach is in line with the goals and features of this study – aiming to understand how organizational culture can affect academic staff intentions to quit their institution. In addition, it is suitable for examining the different cultural complexes through the sharing of lecturers participating in the research.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>SIX DIMENSIONS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR MAIN CONTENTS</b>	
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Environment	The town-gown relationship The location of the university The environs and surroundings
Mission	The definition of the mission The spread of the mission The implementation of the mission The agreement on the mission
Socialization	The ways new members become socialized The ways socialization is articulated The fit between academic staff and the personality of the institution
Information	The constitution of information The holders of information The dissemination of information
Strategy	The process of proposing something The way in which leaders get information to serve decision making The types of decision makers
Leadership	The way leaders articulate the institution's values and goals and get support from staff The types of leaders

Specifically, in this research, UP, a public institution established in 1957 in the south of Vietnam and providing both teacher training and non-teacher training programs, was chosen as an illustrative case study. The choice mainly relates to the fact that the organization has a long-established history as many cultural elements require time to form and survive (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Moreover, given a professional network established with the academics of the institution, the author can create trust to gather the data. This is very important, particularly in the Vietnamese context, as most higher education institutions, especially public ones, traditionally do not share information related to their activities with the public (Westerheijden et al., 2010).

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic regarding faculty engagement as well as the difficulty in finding a sufficient number of faculty members who intend to quit to ensure data reliability, the hypotheses that the research generates are based on the opinions of faculty members who were selected based on their long tenure at the selected university to ensure that they understood their organization's culture comprehensively and thoroughly. In addition, the study also selected lecturers who are executive committee members of the trade union of the departments because they hold positions involving the obligation to listen to the feelings of lecturers in the departments to protect their interests, especially wishes related to changing working positions or leaving jobs. Individuals holding these positions are also able to participate in internal departmental meetings to deal with organizational issues, including those relating to the personnel, thus they are highly likely to possess information regarding the lecturers' intentions to leave their organization. The study also selected lecturers from different departments to be able to reflect in a diverse and holistic manner the different influences of

organizational culture on academic staff of the whole university. Details about the participants are summarized in Table 2.

<b>Table 2 THE PARTICIPANTS</b>		
<b>Information</b>		<b>Number</b>
Gender	Male	2
	Female	6
Tenure	4 years to less than 5 years	1
	5 years to less than 6 years	3
	6 years to less than 7 years	2
	7 years to less than 8 years	1
	8 years to less than 9 years	1

The research selected the participants through the use of purposive sampling based on the set criteria, as mentioned above. Specifically, based on faculty information on the university's website, the study screened participants with many years of experience, with an emphasis on ensuring a balance of both male and female participants as well as representatives from different departments. Subsequently, the study compared this screened list with the list of executive committee members of the trade union of the departments, and individuals who were on both lists were emailed regarding the purpose of the study with a request to interview them. Eight interviews were conducted in Vietnamese in rooms for academics on campus and the average time of the official interviews was one hour. The number stopped at eight since after the seventh interview, the information reached saturation. This number is also within the range recommended by Dworkin (2012), who stated that the number normally believed to be sufficient for a qualitative case study ranges from five to fifty. In relation to the number of interviews, Guest et al. (2006) also indicated that high-level, overarching themes can be determined from as few as six interviews from a homogeneous sample. However, as there may be individuals with new ideas that this study has not yet reached, this limitation needs to be considered in reading and using the information provided by this research. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, after being transcribed, the content of the interviews was sent to the participants in both Vietnamese and English, translated by the interviewer, to receive feedback from them. All interviewed lecturers agreed with the two versions, and there were no additional requirements from them. The opinions shared by the participants were also compared to information from related research studies.

## FINDINGS

There are different ways to analyze qualitative data. In this research, the data were analyzed based on the themes given in the framework. These are aspects, as shared by Tierney (1988), which reflect the core of a university. Since the study focused on understanding the connection between organizational culture and academic staff's intention to leave their organization, only the cultural factors that were said to cause this intention were highlighted within the scope of this paper.

## Environment

All of the interviewees agreed that the current environment has certain effects on lecturers working at the university. The environment makes it easy for lecturers to reach the workplace and access various services (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, and 4). This is clearly one of the advantages of the university compared with many others located in suburban areas.

With its current position, the university has many advantages, but it cannot avoid some disadvantages. One of the drawbacks is that many classes of the university are influenced by different types of noise as the narrow space of the university is surrounded by many buildings such as houses and malls (all interviewees).

Although affirming the effects of the environment on the work of lecturers, all of the interviewees said that whatever the environment is like, lecturers' attachment to the workplace and the formation of their turnover intention depend on other factors rather than geographical ones. In other words, the dimension of environment does not show its impacts on academics' attachment to the organization.

## Mission

All the participants said that there is inconsistency between the mission and the policies formulated in their university, and this can be one of the reasons for lecturers' forming the intention not to continue working for the organization (all interviewees). The mission emphasizes investing in the development of scientific research activities, but in fact, the university more highly appreciates other activities that cannot provide clear connections with the mission and show any solid support to the mission.

*"The university has not paid attention to lecturers' engagement in academic activities. In contrast, non-professional activities are promoted (...). This has many problems. It makes lecturers feel unfair. Hence, they may intend to leave for a different organization. (Interviewee 4)"*

As shared by some participants, this inconsistency can also be seen through the fact that although the university positions itself as a key institution specializing in teacher training, the number of student teachers has been decreasing compared with that of students in non-teacher training programs because of the university's admission policy (all interviewees). Because of this trend, many lecturers feel that it is no longer an environment with the mission they desire to pursue. Consequently, some have transferred to other teacher training institutions (all interviewees).

## Socialization

All of the interviewees held the belief that the university has no activities organized to connect staff with the workplace as a whole. Instead, the degrees of success in socializing with others in the organization rely on the department for which the academic staff are working. This feature is believed to contribute to academic staff's intention not to continue working for the university.



*“Depending on each department. There are departments whose lecturers do not often meet each other. Accordingly, academic staff in these departments have few chances to interact with their peers. This causes new members to spend more time being able to socialize with other academics. This process may lead to the situation that they feel isolated, which results in the formation of their intention to leave the organization. (Interviewee 8)”*

Moreover, to socialize with other members and maintain networks, lecturers must know how to work with different types of people and have relationships, and it is even the case that they have striven to “act” (Interviewee 4), which may cause them to intend to leave the organization. This is because to meet these norms, they probably neither really have these “tactics” nor like these ways of socializing with others. Therefore, they think about leaving the organization, and they will depart once they cannot endure these cultural features anymore.

### **Information-Digitalization**

Many interviewees in this research agreed that some features in this dimension have substantially contributed to the departure of academic staff in various ways. One of them pertains to the fact that information has not always been accessible to lecturers.

*“Of course, it has a great impact on academic staff turnover intention, which results from feeling isolated from others and the workplace day by day when they have missed so much important information. (Interviewee 4)”*

Sometimes, the dissemination of information is “a mess” (Interviewee 1), and many lecturers prefer to work logically and systematically, and they can only work effectively when they have sufficient time. Frequently leaving not-to-finished-yet work to solve other things as required is said to be a reason for academic staff turnover intention (Interviewee 1).

Among various forms of spreading information in the institution, one way is called word-of-mouth communication, which refers to information provided by “a little bird,” as mentioned by five interviewees. Nonetheless, the fact that spreading information by word of mouth is popular and official channels for information dissemination do not effectively work is also believed to cause academic staff turnover intention because they “feel fake and uncomfortable” (Interviewee 4) when forcing themselves to build “relationships” to gain information and/or support from these individuals even for simple matters such as reserving a classroom for teaching (five interviewees).

Currently, some academics “must try to accept and ignore if possible” (Interviewee 6), but they are also thinking about quitting their job in the future in case their suffering reaches its limits (five interviewees).

### **Strategy**

The majority of decisions are made through a top-down approach, which rarely considers opinions from various stakeholders. This makes lecturers lose their interest and trust in decisions made by the university, which gradually causes them to form the intention to depart from their organization (all interviewees).

Plus, since their ideas have been rarely considered, academic staff sometimes find it very

difficult to understand decisions made by the university and feel unfair, and through time, they form the intention to leave the organization.

*“For example, those whose tasks are evaluated “excellently completed” based on the university’s criteria may not have such a performance in reality. (Interviewee 3)”*

Additionally, in the university, lecturers must abide by decisions without having opinions listened, and this cultural reality also makes them intend to leave the organization. This intention develops from their feeling of being forced when *“they (decisions) are like orders which lecturers must obey”* (Interviewee 2). Moreover, *“there are tasks that allow too little time to complete. Lecturers will find the university unprofessional and gradually have an intention to find a new environment.”* (Interviewee 7)

## **Leadership**

As shared by some interviewees, in this university, the lecturers are forced to complete tasks assigned by leaders, and the sharing of their opinions, especially adverse ones, is not encouraged. This type of leadership is believed to make academic staff have the intention to leave the organization (Interviewees 1, 6, and 7) since they “feel as if living under dictatorships, which is very stuffy and stressful. (Interviewee 1).

Additionally, one of the features of the leadership dimension in this university is that university leaders mainly get information from other leaders and Communist Party members for knowing the situation of every department as well as for disseminating information, which is also a reason for the formation of lecturers’ turnover intention. With little attention from the university leaders, the academic staff feel that their effort is not recognized (all interviewees). This belief is strengthened by the fact that “regardless of how you perform, your salary and benefits are unchanged (Interviewee 2), and lecturers’ ideas are rarely considered (Interviewee 4).

You used to share ideas with enthusiasm. You wished to develop the university. However, after you had tried several times in vain, the fire began to die down because what you commented on has not been improved. (Interviewee 4)

## **DISCUSSION**

Similar to the ideas of Ololube (2016) and Abdullah et al. (2018), who affirmed the role of organizational culture as a determinant of turnover intention, this study also confirms the existence of this relationship. Among the six dimensions of organizational culture as proposed by Tierney (1988), the research found that five contribute to lecturers’ intention to depart from the organization. The other – environment – showed no impact on academic staff’s attachment to the organization, although it is said to have the advantage of offering lecturers and other subjects easy access to the location and the disadvantage of being a small campus with various types of noise. In other words, it has no impact on academic staff turnover intention. This is congruent with findings presented by other researchers such as Yan, Yue, & Niu (2015) and Nair et al. (2016). Accordingly, lecturers often intend to quit their present job when they compare their workplace with other organizations in terms of the distance from their home to the places, the

traffic conditions, and the presence of different means of transport from their house to the organizations. The location of the selected case is considered favorable to the participants, so it may be the reason why it does not cause their turnover intention. In addition, the comparison seems ineffective as the other university which also offers both teacher training and non-teacher training programs in the city also shares similar features regarding location and space. Hence, this feature may be found different for other cases.

Through the information shared by the participants, a new dimension in the organizational culture of the university emerged – relationships. It is believed to be a common feature of the university, and its existence in the organizational culture of the university has contributed to academics' intention to leave their institutions. This impact comes from the fact that relationships are believed to be required for socialization and information sharing if lecturers hope for success in socializing with others and receiving timely information. Having relationships with leaders also helps to determine whether these academics' opinions are heard and considered. The university leaders also mainly get information on departments and lecturers from a small group of individuals including other leaders and Communist Party members. The role of "relationships" in other Vietnamese universities is also confirmed by various studies that mention its dominating influence in the recruiting process (Pham & Nguyen, 2020) and the collaboration among academics as well as between academics and their departments (Le, 2016), among different impacts. From these findings, the research formed hypothesis 1:

*H1 Six dimensions in the organizational culture of the university including mission, socialization, information, strategy, leadership, and relationships influence faculty turnover intention*

Among various elements in the dimensions of the university's organizational culture, the ones which are thought to cause lecturers to leave their university include "*decisions and the mission do not match, the university almost has no activities to guide or support the socialization of academic staff, some departments do not provide support for academic staff socialization, information is shared by word-of-mouth communication while official information channels are ineffective, academic staff do not always get the information, news and/or notices are often disseminated late, opinions from academic staff and other stakeholders except leaders are rarely taken into account, leaders lack care about academic staff' situations, academic staff must have skills/tactics to be able to socialize with others, academic staff must have relationships to be able to socialize with others, getting information in a timely manner must be based on relationships, academic staff must obey whatever the leaders demand, and academic staff should not make adverse comments on leaders' decisions and ideas.*" These elements cause lecturers to have different kinds of feelings, attitudes, and thinking considered as precursors of academic staff turnover intention. Among many states of mind, Cave et al. (2013) have also affirmed that the level of academics' attachment to the workplace is closely related to their intention to quit, and for Meyer et al. (2002), it is even the strongest predictor. The relationship between turnover intention and employees' perception of organizational justice is also addressed by various studies, stating that the higher the perception of justice in the organization, the lower the employee turnover intention. Thus, employees are likely to quit their job when there is an opposite perception (Byrne, 2005; Harris et al., 2007). Compared with other precursors of

turnover intention, stress is more widely discussed by scholars, such as Gillespie et al. (2001) and Albaqami (2016). They claimed that job stress – coming from different sources like role conflict – causes employees to intend to leave their workplace. Hassan (2014) also considered it to be the most important influencing factor for employee turnover intention. With these findings, hypothesis 2 can be created:

*H2 Organizational culture has an indirect influence on faculty turnover intention*

Another point worth mentioning is that many of the cultural aspects found in this case were also identified in other Vietnamese public higher education institutions by other works. Le (2016), in a study of four public universities in Vietnam to investigate the formation of academic identity by lecturers, found that their mission and the reality of their operations have incompatibilities. In addition, these institutions do not provide specific or formal instructions to help lecturers in socialization. When illustrative case studies are non-generalizable, these similarities may originate from and reflect common realities in the majority of Vietnamese higher education institutions, one of which is related to the fact that Vietnamese universities have very limited autonomy. They have to implement regulations set by the state and line ministries or state instrumentalities (Vo & Laking, 2020). Given this reality, some performances may not be closely associated with the university's mission. The existence of some cultural features as mentioned above may also involve the rector's almost ultimate power and the characteristics of this position at Vietnamese public higher education institutions. The rector is also a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party in his or her university; hence, he or she prioritizes ideas and activities consistent with Party resolutions than others (Hayden & Lam, 2010). Furthermore, the fact that lecturers' opinions are rarely considered in decision-making may come from top-down management that is commonplace in Vietnamese public universities (Salmi & Pham, 2019). Beyond a nation's borders, issues related to information in universities, such as the contrast between the lecturers' needs for information and the ambiguity and lack of information are believed to be one of the common problems often found in higher education institutions across the world (Alvesson, 2004).

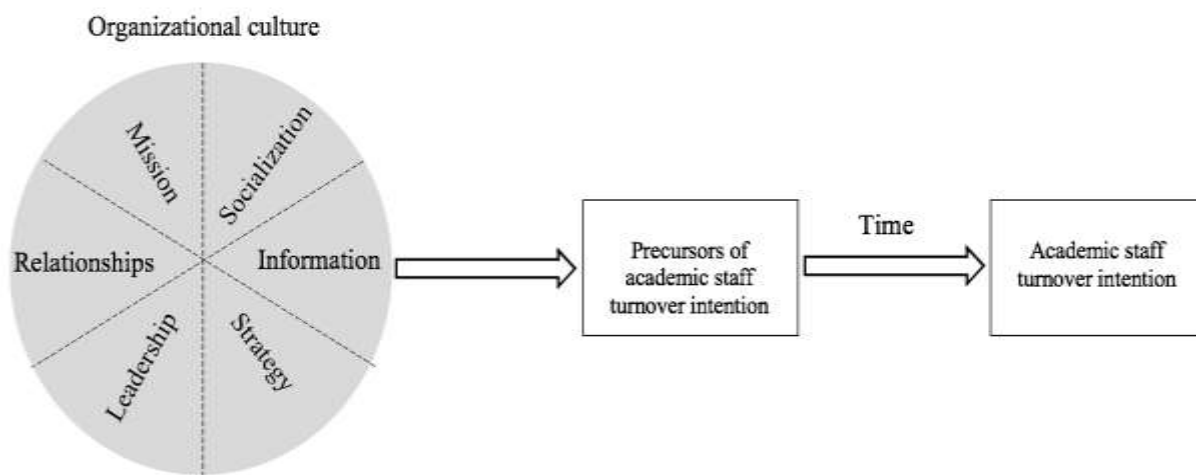
When examining the impacts of organizational culture on academic staff turnover intention, time is a factor that emerged from the analyzed data. Most of the lecturers interviewed used words or phrases about time, such as “*day by day*,” “*through time*,” “*gradually*,” and “*in the future*,” to mention the influence of organizational culture on academic staff turnover intention. These are effects that will not produce immediate results but future consequences. In other words, lecturers will have different attitudes and emotions, such as feeling stressed, disrespected, isolated, and unfairly treated, before they form their intention to quit work, and time acts as a catalyst for these precursors to change to turnover intention. With these findings, hypothesis 3 can be created:

*H3 The formation of faculty turnover intention as a result of the influence of organizational culture takes place gradually*

As can be seen, based on the analytical framework, organizational culture is divided into various dimensions so that the core of organizational culture of a university can be extensively

analyzed. This division also creates slices to penetrate organizational culture that is diverse and complex.

The separation does not necessarily mean that the dimensions of organizational culture have no connections with each other. Six dimensions of the university's organizational culture are proven to have certain effects on lecturers' intention to quit their organization, including mission, socialization, information, strategy, leadership, and relationships. The influences of organizational culture on faculty's intention to quit their organization is indirect. This means that organizational culture causes the formation of factors that are precursors to lecturers' intention to leave the university. Time acts as a catalyst for the change of these precursors into the intention to leave the organization. From these features, the possible impact of organisational culture on academic staff turnover intention can be illustrated in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1**  
**THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE ON ACADEMIC STAFF TURNOVER INTENTION**

As the research showed, organizational culture is believed to contribute to the creation of precursors of turnover intention, which, over time, turn into turnover intention. This means that if this is a case in reality, recognizing these precursors and having timely and suitable solutions can intervene in the process of turning these factors into turnover intention. Additionally, as can be seen from relevant studies, with the same kind of emotion, there may be different causes, such as university policies or organizational culture. Therefore, investigating the main causes is necessary for taking appropriate interventions or solutions. If they are related to organizational culture, the measures will not be the same as when they are derived from other sources such as individual matters or institutional policies. Cultural change then requires the identification and adaptation of various elements, which is extremely challenging partly because of the fact that implicit notions of organizational culture are passed from generation to generation.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study tried to find out features related to the possible relationship of organizational culture and academics' turnover intention through an illustrative case study. The influence of organizational culture is examined through the framework introduced by Tierney (1988). Among the six dimensions of the university's organizational culture analyzed in this research, five are proven to have certain effects on lecturers' intention to quit their organization – mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership – while the environment dimension is said to make no impact on academic staff turnover intention. A new dimension – relationships – is also believed to contribute to faculty turnover intention. Although various factors have been proven to cause academic staff intention to leave their organization such as job stress and feelings of organizational justice, they are rarely investigated and recognized in association with organizational culture. They are thought to stem from personal or institutional matters, such as management policies and promotions (Gillespie et al., 2001; Byrne, 2005; Harris et al., 2007; Albaqami, 2016). This research shows that before lecturers intend to quit their institution as a result of organizational culture-related impacts, they have formed different thoughts, emotions, and attitudes which are said to change into this kind of intention through time. The lecturers interviewed believed that the effects of these cultural factors on individuals may be different, depending on the department and academics' backgrounds. Elements in the dimensions which exert effects on academic staff turnover intention are believed to have mutual relationships rather than existing and making impacts as individual entities. The data also revealed that while the existence of some cultural factors causes the academic staff's intention to quit their organization, the changes to some of these factors are also the reason for their intention to stop working for their current university.

Some features in the organizational culture of the case in this research may not only be specific to Vietnamese educational contexts, but are also found in the academic environments of other Asian countries, especially Confucian societies given that Vietnamese educational culture is influenced by Confucianism (Nguyen, 2020). Yang (2016), for instance, in his study on academic culture of East Asian universities, revealed cultural traits found in this paper. As shown by this researcher, some cultural features, such as the situation that academic merit is not used in decision making but rather personal relationships and preferential treatment found in this research, were also speculated to contribute to making the academic culture of East Asian universities "toxic", which has negative influences on the development of the whole national higher education systems in this region. Because of the cultural impacts on the academic staff's attachment to the university, it is important to have measures in place to prevent or reduce these influences.

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