

# Personal and External Factors Influencing the Attrition of Female Employees in Information Technology Industries in Chennai

<sup>1</sup>A. Vijayalakshmi

Research Scholar, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India.

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Valliammal College for Women, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. M. Selvachandra

Associate Professor (Rtd.), Head, Department of commerce

A.D.M. College for Women (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli) Nagapattinam, Tamilnadu, India

Corresponding author E-Mail id: [avijii122@gmail.com](mailto:avijii122@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** The Information Technology (IT) Industry is rapidly growing, and this growth has completely changed the silhouette of the Indian business-standard itself. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) have estimated a growth rate of 12 – 14 per cent during 2019-2020. This depicts that the IT industry is going to emerge as an important market segment in developing the Indian economy. But the high attrition rate is considered to be a bane for many IT companies as it has emerged as one of the biggest catastrophes, and these corporates are finding it challenging to unearth workers who match their requirements. It has to be curtailed down immediately and instantaneously; a synchronised premeditated technique and an inventive enhanced prototype have to be deployed to bridle the rising attrition. The analysis of various attrition models shows that different factors such as personal, psychological, social, economic, organisational, job-related and external environmental factors influence the employees to leave their job. Among these factors, it was found that personal and external factors seem to have a high impact on turnover. These are underexplored in the mid-level IT companies and specifically the causes related to female employees. This empirical study explores the personal and external factors that influence the intention of female employees to leave their job in the mid-level IT companies in Chennai.

**Keywords:** personal factors, external factors, attrition, IT sector, female employees

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## INTRODUCTION

Attrition (Turnover) is defined as "A reduction in the number of employees in a company made by not replacing those who leave, rather than forcing people to leave their jobs (Cambridge Business English Dictionary)." Employee Attrition is referred to as a reduction in the strength of employees gradually through means of firing, lay-off, and closure (Balamurugan and Amala (2019)). In other words, attrition

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means an employee leaving his present job. An Employee is considered as an asset of an organisation; when an employee leaves the organisation, he takes away the secrets and strategies of the organisation along with him. The IT sector is categorised mainly into IT software, hardware, and IT-enabled services like online services and business process outsourcing (BPO).

In 2019 the April-June 2019 period, several major Indian IT companies witnessed higher attrition as high talents switched off to another company. In companies like Infosys and Cognizant, the attrition rate crossed 20 per cent, Wipro's attrition rate reached 17 per cent, Accenture Plc reported 18per cent attrition, and Mind Tree's attrition was 15per cent (Ibid). Among them, only TCS was the company that had less attrition of 10per cent. These IT majors are taking many remedial measures to beat the attrition, like altering the compensation model, offering promotions, and increasing salaries (Basuand Sarkar (2019).

A study done by Mercer Inc illustrates that nearly 45 per cent of employers reported that the turnover cost incurred on a lost employee amounts to \$10,000, and almost 25 per cent of employers quoted around \$30,000 per employee. Further, the study pointed out that 75-90 per cent of newly joined employees decided either to remain or leave during their first six months of the job. In addition to the monetary loss incurred through recruitment, interview, hiring, and training, the employers find it challenging to handle lost morale, the company's integrity, trade secrets, and the customers. (Ghaswalla, 2018)The high attrition rate is considered a bane for many IT companies because these corporates find it challenging to unearth workers who match their requirements. It has emerged as one of the biggest catastrophes for the IT majors; it has to be curtailed immediately. Otherwise, the whole industry will be ruined. Instantaneously a synchronised premeditated technique and an inventive enhanced prototype would be employed to rein in the rising attrition rate in the IT industry. The five attrition models<sup>1</sup> analysed show that seven different factors such as personal, psychological, social, economic, organisational, job-related and external environmental factors cause employees' decision to leave their job. Among these factors, it was found that personal and external factors seem to have a high impact on turnover. This study analyses the personal and external factors that influence the female employees to leave their job in the mid-level IT companies in Chennai.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

If an employee has a conflict with his work and home or has to attend to domestic responsibilities, either their home situation can push him/her to think of quitting. In another way, the employer can move the employee out of the job if he concentrates more on his home than a job. The external factors missed out in the earlier attrition models strongly influence the decisions to leave the job. Personal factors like kinship responsibilities, health issues and career development influence attrition. Job dissatisfaction in the IT service industry arises because of poor work-life balance (Banerjee and Ghosh, (2017). The factors which induce motivation and the strategies deployed by the organisation get them attracted to their job; this, in turn, reflects on job satisfaction (Banerjee and Ghosh, 2017). Women employees' lives are centred more or less on challenging familial hassles like child care and family circle work (Bhattacharjee and Richardson, 2018). Datta and Agarwal (2017) found that spouse and family

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<sup>1</sup>Mobley's Model of Turnover (1977), Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover (1994), Porter and Steers (1973), Charles W. Mueller and James L. Price (1990), John E. Sheridan and Michael A. Abelson (1983) Cusp Catastrophe model

support act as a stimulator for women employees while taking decisions related to their career development. An employee expects variance in their job, such that monotonous in the job is changed and feels that his/her thirst for knowledge is fulfilled and that she/ he can hone their skills (David et al., 2015). A highly skilled employee who likes their job and the company prefers to leave just because his career development objectives are not met (Bairi et al., 2011). Also, if due recognition is not given for their work and there is no scope for career development, an employee tends to leave (Sunanda, 2017; Raja and Kumar, 2015). For new-generation women managers, financial incentives are considered to be a motivating factor for securing a career in a corporate (Datta and Agarwal, 2017).

The external factors like more opportunities available, higher remuneration in other organisations and a job that provides an opportunity to stay with family are the key reasons in deciding to stay or leave the job (Vijayalakshmi and Selvachandra, 2019). The Indian IT industry job market is quite optimistic, and this gave an impression to professionals working in the IT industry that even if they leave their present job, they can easily find an alternative job (Upadhya, 2009). This mindset has been a major reason for the increase in attrition. If a recruiter offers an employee twice the pay of his present with some extra benefits, he naturally tends to switch over (Bairi et al., 2011).

The literature points out that personal and external factor strongly influence employees' decisions to leave the company. However, not many studies have analysed these reasons among female employees. Therefore, this study focuses mainly on female employees working in the mid-level IT companies in Chennai who intend to leave due to personal and external factors.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1) To understand the level of intended attrition of employees, especially the female employees in the mid-level Information Technology (IT) industry in Chennai.
- 2) To identify the factors, mainly the various personal and external factors influencing the intention of female employees' attrition in the IT industry.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Since understanding the level of attrition of women employees in the IT industries, especially in the mid-level companies, and the reasons for their leaving is underexplored, this study adopted an exploratory research design. It followed a quantitative research methodology using a questionnaire survey to collect data from the employees working in the middle level IT companies in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. To understand the relative position of the women employees, the study also covered male staff. Having difficulties in accessing the sampling frame (list of staff) from the companies, the study deployed a convenience sampling technique. The study covered a total sample of 600 employees, of which 352 of them were female and 248 of them were male. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, section -I consisted of demographic details and section - II consisted of attrition factors. The collected data was entered and analysed using SPSS version 21.0.

## **RESULTS**

The first part of this section presents the results related to the level of attrition of the female employees, and the second part analyses the various personal and external factors that influence the employees to leave their job.

### **Level of Intended Attrition of Employees**

The percentage of intended attrition of employees gives a status of the attrition level of employees who intends to leave the company.

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**Table -1 Level of Intended and Unintended Attrition Of Employees**

Employee category	Intent to leave or change the job		
	Yes	No	Total
	Column N %	Column N %	Column N %
Male	35	45	41
Female	65	55	59
Total	100	100	100

Table 1 depicts the level of intended attrition of employees. Attrition seems to be high among female employees. Nearly 65per cent of female employees have the intention to leave their current job. This shows that the women's attrition rate is on the upper side.

**Table 2: Socio-Demographic background for leaving or not leaving the job**

		Intent to leave or change the job								
		Yes			No			Total		
		Gender			Gender			Gender		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
		Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %	Col. N %
Age	Below 30	56	37	43	28	41	35	35	39	38
	30-35 Yrs	16	29	25	35	22	28	30	25	27
	36-40 Yrs	10	14	13	16	16	16	14	16	15
	Above 40	18	20	19	21	21	21	20	21	21
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Marital Status	Unmarried	75	58	64	40	48	45	50	52	51
	Married	25	42	36	60	52	55	50	48	49
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Spouse Employment	Yes	47	85	76	34	85	61	36	85	65
	No	53	15	24	66	15	39	64	15	35
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Edu Qual.	BE./ ME	66	52	57	50	43	46	54	47	50
	Com.Sci	22	27	25	23	30	27	23	29	27
	Others	12	21	18	27	26	27	23	24	24
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 2 shows that 37 per cent of the female respondents and 56per cent of the male respondents below 30 years have intentions to leave. It supports the reality in the IT industry because the majority of employees in this industry belong to this age group and the eagerness to earn more is high in this category. Similarly, under marital status, most unmarried respondents chose to leave; 58 per cent of unmarried female respondents and 75 per cent of unmarried male respondents intended to leave. Factually, only unmarried persons can change their stay of frequently living as the rest of the family does not need to shift along with them. Most of the respondent's spouses are working regarding the variable spouse employment. Normally, in IT industries, a major part of the employees are engineering graduates. Notably, the intention to leave was high in BE/ME category, with 52 per cent of women respondents and 66 per cent of male respondents intending to leave.

### Factors Influencing Attrition of Employees

Though the study has identified several factors (related to personal, economic, psychological, job-related, sociological, organisational and external factors), it found that personal and external factors strongly influence their decision to leave or not to leave. Moreover, these factors are under-analysed by other studies. The following analysis focuses on analysing different personal and external factors that influence their decision-making.

### Personal Factors Associated with Attrition

Personal factors such as kinship responsibilities, health issues, career development, friends who joined another company and domestic responsibilities of employees are analysed to see if these factors influence the employees' intention to leave their job.

**Kinship Responsibilities:** Among the respondents who intend to leave their job, only 16 per cent agreed that kinship responsibilities are a factor in leaving the job. However, among the female respondents, 23 per cent of them admitted that kinship responsibilities are a factor in leaving the job compared to only 4 per cent of males agreeing to this factor.

Table 3: Influence of personal factors on the attrition of employees

Personal Factors		Male	Female	Total
		Column N %	Column N %	Column N %
Kinship Responsibilities	Strongly Disagree	67	37	48
	Disagree	26	31	29
	Neutral	3	9	7
	Agree	4	20	14
	Strongly Agree	0	3	2
	Total	100	100	100
Health Issues	Strongly Disagree	54	20	32
	Disagree	26	21	23
	Neutral	9	18	14
	Agree	10	21	17
	Strongly Agree	1	20	13
	Total	100	100	100
Career Development	Strongly Disagree	69	23	39
	Disagree	20	30	26
	Neutral	0	3	2
	Agree	6	20	15
	Strongly Agree	6	24	18
	Total	100	100	100
Friends joined another company	Strongly Disagree	4	15	11
	Disagree	11	27	22
	Neutral	16	8	10
	Agree	34	28	30
	Strongly Agree	34	21	26

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	Total	100	100	100
Domestic Responsibilities of Employees	Strongly Disagree	70	15	34
	Disagree	27	28	28
	Neutral	0	15	9
	Agree	3	15	10
	Strongly Agree	0	27	18
	Total	100	100	100

Source: Primary data collected by the author.

**Health Issues:** Amongst the respondents who intend to leave their job, 30 per cent of the respondents stated that health issues are a factor in leaving the job. Among the female respondents, 41 per cent of them agree that health issue makes them quit their job compared to only 11 per cent of them state that this factor.

**Career Development:** Among the respondents who intended to leave their job, 33 per cent of them stated that the factor of career development is a factor in leaving their job. The percentage of respondents who agree with this reason is more among female respondents (44%) compared to only 12 per cent among males.

**Friends joined in another company:** Amongst the respondents who intend to leave their job, 56 per cent of respondents agreed that the factor 'friends joined in another company' is a factor for leaving their job. The percentage of respondents who agreed is slightly higher among male respondents (68%) than females (49%). Moreover, this shows that the influence of this factor is very high on attrition.

**Domestic responsibilities of employees:** Forty-two per cent of the female respondents agreed that domestic responsibilities influence their intention to leave the job. Only 3 per cent of males agreed with this factor.

**Statistical significance of the association of personal factors with attrition**

The descriptive analysis in Table 3 showed that 16 per cent of the employees who intend to leave their job stated that 'kinship responsibilities' is the reason for their intention to leave their job, and that confirmed statistically significant (at a 5% significance level) from the Chi-square test (Table 4). However, Cramer's V test value shows that the strength of this relationship is weak (<0.2). Among the gender category, though a higher percentage (23%) of female employees agreed that kinship responsibility is the reason for their intention to leave their job compared to a smaller percentage (4%) of males, statistically, this reason is significantly associated with the attrition of male employees. The strength of this relationship is moderately stronger (0.2 to 0.3). The above findings are a typical example of how the percentage-based descriptive analysis cannot be considered the basis for generalising the results to the study population.

Table 4: Statistical significance of personal factors associated with attrition

Personal Factors	Gender	Chi-Square Test results		Cramer's V test results	
		Pearson Chi-Square Value*	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	Cramer's V Value	Approximate Significance
Kinship Responsibilities	Female	1.343	.511	.062	.511
	Male	13.437	.001	.233	.001
	Total	7.056	.029	.108	.029
Health problems of employees	Female	.822	.663	.048	.663
	Male	1.064	.587	.066	.587
	Total	.743	.690	.035	.690
For Career Development	Female	11.171	.004	.178	.004
	Male	4.460	.108	.134	.108
	Total	15.485	.000	.161	.000
Friends joined another company	Female	15.841	.000	.212	.000
	Male	47.954	.000	.417	.000
	Total	.000	.000	.283	.000
Domestic Responsibilities of Employees	Female	.788	.674	.047	.674
	Male	2.828	.243	.107	.243
	Total	.863	.650	.038	.650

\* Chi-square output tables showed that all the cells had a minimum expected count

Though a moderate percentage (31%) of employees who intended to leave their job agreed that personal health problem is one of the reasons for their intention to leave the job, the statistical tests confirmed that it is not significant enough to generalise to the study population. The same pattern was observed among the female employees. Similarly, though the descriptive Table 3 shows that an average percentage of overall (28%) employees and female (42%) employees associated the factor 'domestic responsibilities' with their intention to leave the job, the statistical tests have not confirmed the same.

However, there is an association of an average percentage (33%) of total employees who intended to leave their job with the factor 'lack of career development is confirmed to be statistically significant (at a 1% significance level). Among the gender category, the higher percentage of female employees agreed to this reason is statistically significant. However, the strength of the relationship is weak in both cases (total employees and female employees' intent to leave).

The descriptive analysis indicated that a high percentage of total employees (56%), female (50%) and male (68%) employees' intention to leave their job are associated with the fact that their friends have left and joined another company, and they also wanted to leave. The statistical tests confirmed that this factor is significantly associated with their intention to leave the job. Notably, the Cramer's V test value confirms that the relationship between this factor and the male employee's intent to quit is powerful. The strength of these associations for the total employees and female employees is moderately stronger.

Overall, the personal factors such as kinship responsibilities, friends leaving and joint in another company and lack of career development have significantly associated with employees who

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intend to leave their job. Notably, the female employees who intend to leave their jobs are significantly associated with a lack of career development and friends who left and joined another company. Kinship responsibilities and friends who left and joined another company are the factors significantly associated with male employees' intention to leave their job. The factor 'friends left and joined another company' is a common factor for both female and male employees.

**External Factors Associated with Attrition**

External factors like more job opportunities available, higher remuneration in other organisations, expecting a job with more career development opportunities, willingness to change companies if the new job was with the more friendly people, the opportunity for more shared responsibility in a new job and a job that provide a chance to stay with the family have been chosen for the study.

**Table Error! No text of specified style in document.: Influence of external factors on the attrition of employees**

Variables		Male	Female	Total
		Column N %	Column N %	Column N %
More Opportunity Available	Strongly Disagree	21	16	18
	Disagree	7	15	11
	Neutral	3	11	8
	Agree	15	35	27
	Strongly Agree	55	25	35
	Total	100	100	100
Higher Remuneration In Other Organisations	Strongly Disagree	20	21	20
	Disagree	9	13	11
	Neutral	5	21	15
	Agree	16	31	25
	Strongly Agree	51	15	28
	Total	100	100	100
Expect a job with more career development opportunities	Strongly Disagree	27	6	13
	Disagree	20	6	11
	Neutral	7	11	9
	Agree	20	55	36
	Strongly Agree	26	32	30
	Total	100	100	100
Willing to change companies if the new job was with the more friendly people	Strongly Disagree	55	21	29
	Disagree	30	18	22
	Neutral	13	11	12
	Agree	3	26	18
	Strongly Agree	10	25	19
	Total	100	100	100
More Creative Freedom	Strongly Disagree	36	15	22
	Disagree	27	25	25



	Neutral	5	8	6
	Agree	16	25	21
	Strongly Agree	17	29	25
	Total	100	100	100
Searching for a job which will provide an opportunity to stay with spouse or family	Strongly Disagree	50	21	27
	Disagree	56	13	25
	Neutral	6	9	8
	Agree	7	38	27
	Strongly Agree	1	19	13
	Total	100	100	100
Opportunity for more shared responsibility in a new job	Strongly Disagree	33	20	25
	Disagree	20	21	21
	Neutral	15	21	19
	Agree	19	17	17
	Strongly Agree	15	21	18
	Total	100	100	100

Source: Primary data collected by the author.

**More Opportunity Available:** Among those who intend to leave their job, 62 per cent of respondents agreed that the factor of more opportunities available influences turnover.

Only 29 per cent of the respondents disagreed that the factor 'more opportunity available' is not a factor for leaving the job. The percentage of respondents who agreed is more among female and male respondents (59% and 69%), respectively. It is observed from the analysis that an employee prefers to leave their job if more opportunities are available.

**Higher remuneration in other organisations:** Among those who intend to leave their job, 53 per cent of the respondents agreed that the factor 'higher remuneration in other organisations' is a factor for leaving the job. Only 32 per cent of respondents disagreed that remuneration in other organisations influences turnover. The percentage of respondents who agreed is high among female and male respondents (46% and 67%). It is observed from the analysis that an employee leaves their job if higher remuneration is offered in other organisations.

**Willing to change companies if the new job was with the more friendly people:** Among those who intend to leave their job, 51 per cent of the respondents disagreed that the factor 'willing to change companies if the new job was with the people who were more friendly' is not a factor for leaving their job. About 37 per cent of the respondents agreed that this factor influences turnover. The percentage of female respondents agreeing is high, with nearly 50 per cent. It is observed from the analysis that mostly female employees are willing to change companies if the new job is with the friendlier people.

**More Creative Freedom:** About 56 per cent of respondents agreed that the factor more creative freedom influences turnover. The percentage of respondents who disagreed is more among male respondents with 63 per cent. It is observed from the analysis that mostly female employee prefers to leave their job if more creative freedom is not offered.

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**Opportunity for more shared responsibility in a new job:** Among those who intend to leave their job, 36 per cent of respondents agreed that the factor of opportunity for more shared responsibility in a new job influences their intention to leave the job. The percentage of respondents who agreed is more or less the same for both female and male respondents (49% and 47%), respectively.

**A job that provides an opportunity to stay with family:** Among those who intend to leave their job, 37 per cent of respondents agreed that this factor influences turnover. Among the gender, 44% of female and 39% of male respondents agreed that this factor influenced their intention to leave the job.

**Statistical significance of the association of external factors with attrition**

Many female and male employees agreed on too many external factors as reasons for their intention to leave the job; the statistical tests also confirm the same pattern. For example, factors such as 'do not have the opportunity to utilise skills and knowledge, 'expect a job with more career development opportunities' and 'a lot of opportunity for more employments' have significantly associated with the female employees' intended attrition. All these factors are moderately strongly associated with their attrition.

Factors such as 'lack of support from reporting manager', 'a lot of opportunity for more employments' and 'searching for a job which will provide an opportunity to stay with spouse or family' are significantly associated with the male employees' intended attrition. However, the strengths of the two relationships ('lack of support from reporting manager' and searching for a job which will provide an opportunity to stay with spouse or family') are weak. Only the factor 'lack of support from the reporting manager' has a moderately strong relationship.

**Table 6: Statistical significance of external factors associated with attrition**

ExternalFactors	Gender	Chi-Square Test results		Cramer's V test results	
		Pearson Chi-Square Value*	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	Cramer's V Value	Approximate Significance
Lack of support from reporting manager	Female	1.576	.578	.065	.578
	Male	6.953	.031	.167	.031
	Total	.952	.625	.050	.625
Do not have the opportunity to utilise skills and knowledge	Female	23.131	.000	.256	.000
	Male	5.961	.085	.151	.085
	Total	11.253	.005	.137	.005
Lot of opportunities for more employment	Female	15.122	.001	.200	.001
	Male	13.656	.001	.235	.001
	Total	22.175	.000	.192	.000
Searching for a job which will provide an opportunity to	Female	5.755	.056	.128	.056
	Male	10.851	.005	.209	.005
	Total	2.071	.355	.059	.355

stay with family					
Expect a job with more career development opportunities	Female	18.236	.000	.228	.000
	Male	.915	.633	.061	.633
	Total	9.503	.009	.126	.009
New job provides more Non-financial rewards	Female	3.900	.152	.105	.152
	Male	6.255	.055	.159	.055
	Total	5.953	.051	.100	.051
Willing to change companies if the new job was with the more friendly people	Female	6.182	.055	.133	.055
	Male	5.105	.128	.129	.128
	Total	5.595	.101	.088	.101

\* Chi-square output tables showed that all the cells had a minimum expected count

Overall, more external factors are strongly associated with the female employees' intended attrition than male employees.

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The intended attrition rate of employees in the mid-level IT companies is 40 per cent. The female employees' intended attrition rate is 32 percent; almost double that of the male employees (18%). Though the enrolment of women employees in the IT industry has been increasing over the years, this study shows that their rate of intended attrition is also higher.

The descriptive analysis showed that most of the female respondents agreed that the factors of kinship responsibility, health issues, career development and domestic responsibilities impact their intention to leave their current job. Babajide (2010) has also found that the turnover of female employees occurs mainly of work-family role conflict. However, the female employees who intend to leave their jobs are significantly associated with a lack of career development and friends who left and joined another company.

External factors such as 'do not have the opportunity to utilise skills and knowledge, 'expect a job with more career development opportunities' and 'a lot of opportunity for more employments' have significantly associated with female employees' attrition.

Though some of these factors also influenced the male employees' attrition significantly, more personal and external factors influenced the intended attrition of female employees.

To reduce attrition, retention of talented and skilled employees is a must for the organisation. So, the IT organisations have to take remedial measures like up-skilling and re-skilling their digital knowledge, providing monetary and non-monetary rewards, incentives and retention bonuses. These act as a motivating tool and boost their confidence and help achieve their target, which leads to satisfaction and high morale. Recognition of good performance and rewarding the performers will give a clearer idea about their career growth within the organisation, leading to retention and lessening attrition. It was observed from this study that attrition seems to be high among female employees. Nearly 65 per

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cent of female employees have the intention to leave. This shows that the women's attrition rate is on the upper side. Due to family commitment, there is high attrition among female employees, but the male employees differ. The organisations have to implement the right strategies that instil the morale of the employees, which will boost their liking towards the organisation, which unsurprisingly reduces attrition and increases retention of female employees.

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