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ARTICLE

FROM CONFLICT TO INTELLIGENCE A COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE FRAMEWORK FOR PREDICTING EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTION

DO CONFLITO À INTELIGÊNCIA: UM FRAMEWORK DE INTELIGÊNCIA COMPETITIVA PARA PREDIÇÃO DA INTENÇÃO DE ROTATIVIDADE DE FUNCIONÁRIOS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study develops and empirically validates a Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) framework that treats interpersonal conflict not merely as an organizational behavior problem but as a competitive intelligence signal for detecting human capital risk. The study examines whether a formal CI architecture—based on signal collection, behavioral pattern analysis, dissemination to decision-makers, and preventive use—can predict and reduce employee turnover intention before conflict escalates into emotional exhaustion.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative cross-sectional design collected data from 312 knowledge workers across information technology, financial services, telecommunications, and consulting industries. Moderated-mediation structural equation modeling (SEM) with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) tested whether CI orientation—operationalized as systematic collection, analysis, dissemination, and use—attenuates the conflict–exhaustion pathway and channels task conflict toward retention.

Findings: Relationship conflict functioned as a valid predictive intelligence signal ($\beta = 0.542$, $p < 0.001$). Emotional exhaustion served as the diagnostic threshold at which the signal converts to strategic risk (indirect $\beta = 0.333$, VAF = 64.5%). The CI intelligence system attenuated the signal–risk relationship by 36.5% ($\beta = -0.284$, $p < 0.001$). Task conflict reduced turnover intention exclusively under high CI conditions ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating intelligence-mediated channeling.

Originality/Relevance: This study extends CI theory from external market analysis to internal human capital risk prediction, introduces PHCI as a formal CI domain, operationalizes the complete intelligence cycle for behavioral signals, and provides empirical evidence that CI systems function as scalable, institutionalizable mechanisms for workforce risk prevention. This research also reframes turnover intention as a predictable breakdown in human capital intelligence, shifting from reactive attrition analysis to proactive interception. By repositioning interpersonal conflict as an intelligence input and CI orientation as a system-level organizational capability, the study advances JSCI scholarship beyond external market intelligence toward internal competitive intelligence for human capital risk prevention.

Keywords: Predictive Human Capital Intelligence. Competitive Intelligence System. Intelligence Cycle. Interpersonal Conflict Signal. Turnover Intention. Human Capital Risk Management.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo desenvolve e valida empiricamente uma estrutura de Inteligência Preditiva de Capital Humano (Predictive Human Capital Intelligence – PHCI), tratando o conflito interpessoal não apenas como um problema de comportamento organizacional, mas como um sinal de inteligência competitiva para detecção de riscos relacionados ao capital humano. O estudo examina se uma arquitetura formal de Inteligência Competitiva — baseada na coleta de sinais, análise de padrões comportamentais, disseminação para tomadores de decisão e uso preventivo — pode prever e reduzir a intenção de rotatividade de funcionários antes que o conflito evolua para exaustão emocional.

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: Um desenho quantitativo transversal coletou dados de 312 trabalhadores do conhecimento dos setores de tecnologia da informação, serviços financeiros, telecomunicações e consultoria. A modelagem de equações estruturais (SEM) com mediação moderada e bootstrapping (5.000 reamostragens) testou se a orientação para Inteligência Competitiva — operacionalizada como coleta sistemática, análise, disseminação e uso — atenua a relação conflito–exaustão e direciona o conflito de tarefa para retenção.

Resultados: O conflito relacional funcionou como um sinal válido de inteligência preditiva (β = 0,542, p < 0,001). A exaustão emocional atuou como o limiar diagnóstico no qual o sinal se converte em risco estratégico (β indireto = 0,333, VAF = 64,5%). O sistema de Inteligência Competitiva atenuou a relação sinal–risco em 36,5% (β = −0,284, p < 0,001). O conflito de tarefa reduziu a intenção de rotatividade exclusivamente sob condições elevadas de Inteligência Competitiva (β = −0,391, p < 0,001), demonstrando direcionamento mediado por inteligência.

Originalidade/Relevância: Este estudo amplia a teoria da Inteligência Competitiva ao deslocá-la da análise de mercado externo para a predição interna de riscos relacionados ao capital humano, introduzindo a PHCI como um domínio formal de Inteligência Competitiva. O estudo operacionaliza o ciclo completo de inteligência para sinais comportamentais e fornece evidências empíricas de que sistemas de Inteligência Competitiva funcionam como mecanismos escaláveis e institucionalizáveis para prevenção de riscos da força de trabalho. A pesquisa também reconceitua a intenção de rotatividade como uma ruptura previsível na inteligência do capital humano, deslocando a análise reativa de atrito para uma interceptação proativa. Ao reposicionar o conflito interpessoal como uma entrada de inteligência e a orientação para Inteligência Competitiva como uma capacidade organizacional em nível sistêmico, o estudo amplia a produção científica da Journal of Sustainable Competitive Intelligence para além da inteligência de mercado externa, avançando em direção à inteligência competitiva interna para prevenção de riscos relacionados ao capital humano.

Palavras-chave: Inteligência Preditiva de Capital Humano. Sistema de Inteligência Competitiva. Ciclo de Inteligência. Sinal de Conflito Interpessoal. Intenção de Rotatividade. Gestão de Riscos do Capital Humano.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations often detect employee turnover too late, after withdrawal intentions have already formed and after the opportunity for preventive action has narrowed. This problem is not only an organizational behavior problem; it is also an intelligence failure. While firms routinely use competitive intelligence systems to monitor competitors, markets, technologies, customers, and regulatory changes, they rarely apply comparable intelligence processes to internal human capital risks. As a result, interpersonal tensions, communication deterioration, emotional fatigue, and early withdrawal signals remain fragmented, uncollected, and underused as strategic intelligence. The latter is not a shortcoming of organizational behavior knowledge but a lack of intelligence infrastructure for detecting human capital risks (Olaleye et al., 2023).

This study identifies three intelligence gaps in the existing literature. First, current CI research remains largely external-facing and does not sufficiently explain how internal behavioral signals can be collected and transformed into strategic foresight. Second, organizational behavior research explains conflict, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention, but it rarely treats these variables as parts of a formal intelligence cycle. Third, existing turnover models remain primarily diagnostic or explanatory, whereas CI requires a predictive and preventive decision architecture. These gaps limit the ability of organizations to convert early human capital risk signals into timely managerial intervention. CI has been theorised as an external-facing strategic function Mohd Asri & Abdul Mohsin, 2020), leaving internal risks an intelligence blind spot. Third, current organizational behaviour research views interpersonal conflict as a psychological factor that needs to be managed after it has occurred, rather than an intelligence signal that can be processed in an intelligence cycle.

Our research fills these voids by proposing and empirically testing the Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) model. Within this framework:

Interpersonal conflict is reframed from a psychological stressor to a measurable and collectible intelligence signal and is inputted into the CI system

CI orientation is defined as a full intelligence cycle with four stages: collection (regular monitoring of conflict incidents), analysis (pattern recognition to identify escalation paths), dissemination (intelligence reporting to management), and use (preventive intervention) Emotional exhaustion is presented as the diagnostic threshold, where intelligence signal turns into threat

Turnover intention is the final outcome that is forecasted and prevented by intelligence

The research question is: The central research question is: How can interpersonal conflict be transformed into a competitive intelligence signal within a Predictive Human Capital Intelligence system for forecasting and preventing employee turnover intention?

The novelty of this article lies in repositioning CI from a supporting contextual variable to the central strategic system through which internal behavioral signals are collected, analyzed, disseminated, and used for preventive decision-making. This repositioning aligns the study with the scope of sustainable competitive intelligence by shifting the unit of analysis from isolated employee attitudes to an organizational intelligence capability. The proposed PHCI framework does not treat CI as a background moderator only; rather, it conceptualizes CI as a decision architecture that transforms internal behavioral data into predictive insights for sustainable workforce advantage. In this sense, human capital risk is treated as a strategic intelligence domain, and interpersonal conflict becomes an early warning signal within the competitive intelligence system.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Competitive Intelligence as an Organizational Intelligence System

Competitive intelligence is not simply the possession of information; it is an organizational capability for transforming dispersed signals into actionable strategic knowledge. In traditional CI scholarship, this capability has mainly been applied to external environments, including competitors, customers, technologies, markets, and regulatory change. However, organizations also face internal risks that directly affect strategic sustainability. Human capital instability, employee withdrawal, conflict escalation, and emotional exhaustion can damage knowledge continuity, service quality, innovation, and competitive position. Therefore, a sustainable CI system should not be limited to external market scanning but should also include internal behavioral intelligence.

The limitation in existing CI literature is not that it ignores organizational performance, but that it rarely conceptualizes interpersonal and emotional signals as intelligence inputs. Prior studies show that CI

improves agility, resilience, decision quality, and performance, but they do not sufficiently explain how internal human capital signals move through the intelligence cycle. This creates a conceptual gap between competitive intelligence theory and organizational behavior evidence. The PHCI framework addresses this gap by treating CI as a complete system composed of collection, analysis, dissemination, and use.

In the PHCI framework, the intelligence cycle becomes the organizing logic of the entire model. Collection refers to the systematic identification of early interpersonal conflict and exhaustion signals. Analysis refers to the interpretation of patterns, escalation trajectories, and risk thresholds. Dissemination refers to the communication of intelligence outputs to managers and HR decision-makers. Use refers to preventive action before the signal becomes irreversible turnover intention. Table 1 operationalizes this cycle in the context of human capital risk.

Table 1: The Intelligence Cycle Operationalized in the PHCI Framework

Intelligence Phase	Operationalization in PHCI
Collection	Systematic monitoring of interpersonal conflict incidents, communication pattern shifts, affective friction indicators, and early-stage relational deterioration
Analysis	Pattern recognition identifying escalation trajectories, emotional exhaustion thresholds, turnover risk scoring, and differentiation between relationship conflict (destructive signal requiring intervention) and task conflict (potentially constructive signal requiring channeling)
Dissemination	Intelligence reporting to managers and HR decision-makers with actionable risk assessments, graduated trigger warnings, and recommended intervention protocols
Use (Decision)	Targeted preventive interventions before conflict reaches emotional exhaustion levels, including managerial coaching, team mediation, workload adjustment, or conflict channeling mechanisms

This reconceptualization transforms CI from a reactive external tool into a proactive internal strategic capability for workforce risk management. The PHCI framework positions the intelligence cycle not as an abstract concept but as an operational architecture that organizations can implement, measure, and continuously improve.

2.2 Interpersonal Conflict as an Intelligence Signal

While interpersonal conflict has been frequently linked to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, previous studies have considered conflict as a problem that needs to be managed rather than as intelligence to be interpreted. Asfahani (2022) used moderated mediation to demonstrate relational conflict escalates turnover through emotional exhaustion but did not capture early-stage escalation as intelligence. Saleh et al. (2023) confirmed the predictive value of emotional exhaustion using SEM but their study was limited to SMEs. Han et al. (2020) proposed burnout-turnover associations without evidence for escalation processes. Ali and Shaban (2025) showed gender role conflict through emotional intelligence within a narrow sectoral scope.

In the PHCI approach, interpersonal conflict is redefined from a psychological construct to a strategic intelligence indicator - an observable, countable, measurable, predictably downstream risk indicator for the organization. This shift follows Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which suggests that the continued exposure to relationship stressors leads to the depletion of emotional resources. Importantly, this depletion process does not occur arbitrarily; rather, it follows predictable patterns that can be tracked by an intelligence system prior to clinical resource depletion.

The intelligence of conflict is its lead time: relationship conflict begins and progresses prior to turnover. Organizations with CI systems can "see" the onset of conflict (interpersonal tensions, deterioration of communication, affective tensions) and act during the time lag between signal and resource depletion. Converting conflict from a problem into intelligence enables consideration of it as a resource. Accordingly, relationship conflict is treated in this article as a lead indicator rather than a lagging symptom. Its strategic value lies in the time interval between the appearance of conflict signals and the formation of turnover

intention. A CI system creates value precisely in this interval by converting weak behavioral signals into managerial foresight. Thus, conflict is not only something to be managed after disruption occurs; it is a form of internal competitive intelligence that can be collected, interpreted, and used to protect human capital continuity.

2.3 Emotional Exhaustion as the Diagnostic Threshold

Existing research has pointed to emotional exhaustion as the intermediary element in the stress-to-outcome conversion process. Van Greunen et al. (2021) revealed relationship conflict decreases knowledge sharing, with task conflict being situation-specific. Mairech (2021) found competitive climates increase conflict and reduce commitment. Losada-Otálora et al. (2021) showed conflict results in knowledge hiding through diminished well-being, advocating exhaustion as a mediator. Lee (2020) associated interpersonal competition with negative attitudes. Ullah (2022) identified emotional intelligence as a moderator.

In the PHCI model, emotional exhaustion has a special status: it is the diagnostic gate at which intelligence (conflict) turns into strategy (turnover intention). Emotional exhaustion is not only a mediator variable in a statistical model but also the operational intelligence trigger point. Organisations that keep track of employees' exhaustion levels can forecast turnover more accurately than those that track conflict. The intelligence system's analysis process detects when intelligence signals (conflict) have progressed into exhaustion, prompting the dissemination and use processes for early action.

2.4 CI Orientation as a System-Level Intelligence Capability

In this study, CI orientation is not treated as a simple contextual moderator but as a system-level organizational capability that enables the PHCI architecture to function. Burki et al. (2020) and Hayat et al. (2022) showed that emotional intelligence weakens the stress–turnover link. Mir and Rastogi (2025) found emotional intelligence reduces turnover in hotels. Ratasuk (2022) extended this to cultural intelligence. Cheung et al. (2022) showed the moderating effect of mentoring and emotional intelligence. Ullah and Kundi (2023) and Nazir et al. (2022) presented the moderating role of goal orientation and organizational aspects.

Our PHCI framework proposes CI orientation as the capability that enables the intelligence cycle. Organizations with high CI orientation have: (1) ongoing monitoring systems to pick up conflict signals (collection); (2) analytic expertise to differentiate functional task disagreements and dysfunctional relational conflict and to identify escalation trajectories (analysis); (3) dissemination systems to ensure intelligence is delivered to decision-makers with recommendations (dissemination); and (4) decision-making mechanisms to intervene to prevent escalation (use). This institutional capability reduces the conflict-exhaustion link by "stopping the train" before it reaches the point of no return. This distinction is important for JSCI alignment. A psychological moderator, such as emotional intelligence, operates mainly at the individual level, whereas CI orientation operates at the organizational system level. It can be institutionalized through routines, dashboards, reporting channels, managerial protocols, and preventive decision rules. Therefore, CI orientation represents the strategic infrastructure through which interpersonal conflict becomes actionable intelligence.

2.5 Research Gap and Hypotheses

The review identifies three key limitations the PHCI framework overcomes. First, previous studies consider interpersonal conflict as a consequence rather than a prescriptive intelligence signal. Second, CI is limited to market-based intelligence rather than human capital intelligence. Third, moderators are reactive psychological rather than systemic intelligence capabilities.

The proposed PHCI model leads to the following hypotheses:

H1 (Signal Validity): The intelligence signal, relationship conflict, positively predicts intelligence diagnostic threshold (emotional exhaustion).

H2 (Signal Transmission): Emotional exhaustion helps transmit the relationship from the conflict signal to turnover intention, and represents the threshold for the signal to become strategic risk.

H3 (Intelligence System Attenuation): CI orientation (defined as the full intelligence cycle) moderates the positive effect of the conflict signal on emotional exhaustion as intervention efficacy of the intelligence system.

H4 (Intelligence-Mediated Channeling): Task conflict negatively predicts turnover intention only when CI orientation is high, showing that intelligence system determines whether constructive disagreement turns into retention enhancing channeling or not.

2.6. Conceptual Framework And Ci Architecture

The Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) Architecture: Before presenting the empirical model, it is essential to specify the complete CI architecture that grounds this study. Figure 1 illustrates the PHCI framework as an intelligence system comprising four sequential phases:

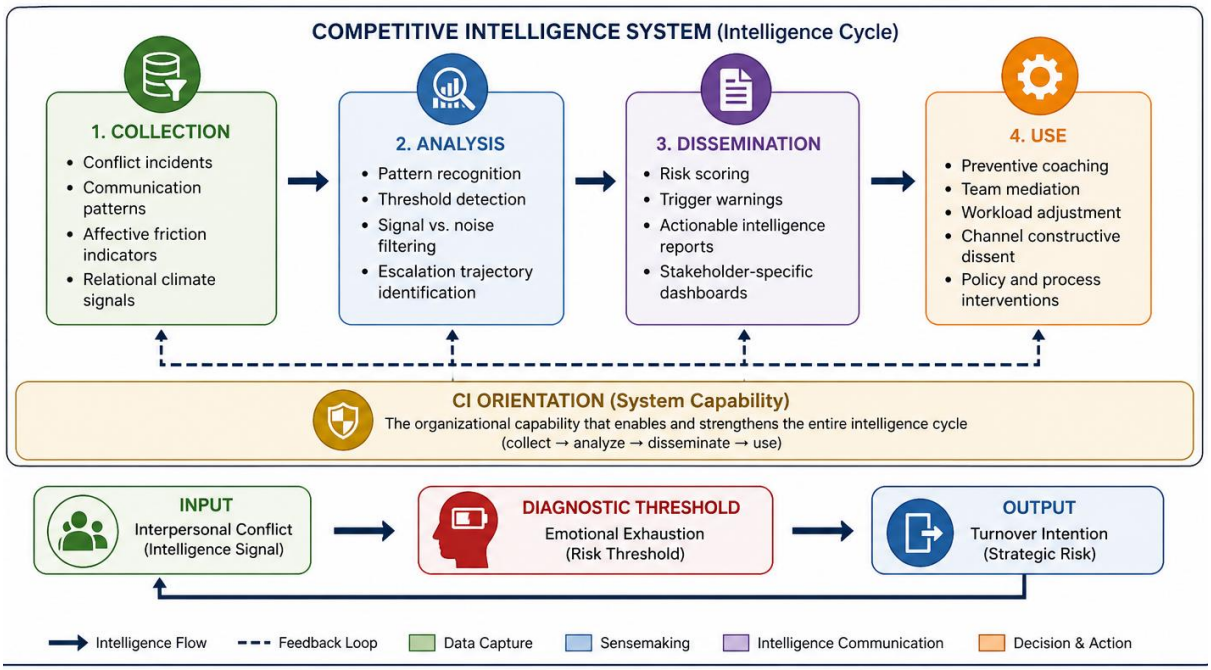

Figure 1: Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) Architecture

Figure 1 The PHCI architecture positions interpersonal conflict as the intelligence signal entering the system. The CI orientation capability operationalizes the four-phase intelligence cycle (collection, analysis, dissemination, use). Emotional exhaustion serves as the diagnostic threshold at which the system determines that signal has escalated to strategic risk. Turnover intention is the final outcome to be predicted and prevented. The intelligence system attenuates the signal–risk relationship (H3) and channels task conflict toward retention-enhancing outcomes (H4). The framework therefore differs from a conventional SEM model. In a conventional organizational behavior model, relationship conflict, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention are treated as psychological variables. In the PHCI model, the same variables are repositioned as intelligence elements: relationship conflict is the input signal, emotional exhaustion is the diagnostic threshold, turnover intention is the strategic risk output, and CI orientation is the system capability that governs how signals are processed. This architecture directly responds to the need for a CI-based decision system rather than a purely HR-based explanatory model.

2.7. Empirical Model Specification

Based on the PHCI architecture, the empirical structural equation model is specified as follows:

Equation 1. Intelligence Signal to Diagnostic Threshold with System Attenuation

$$EE_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RC_i + \beta_2 CI_i + \beta_3 (RCi \times CI_i) + k = \sum_{k=1}^{m} \gamma_k \; Controls_{k_i} + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

Where:

EE = Emotional exhaustion (diagnostic threshold)

RC = Relationship conflict (intelligence signal)

CI = CI orientation (intelligence system capability, operationalizing the four-phase cycle)

RC × CI = Intelligence system attenuation effect (H3)

Equation 2. Diagnostic Threshold to Strategic Risk with Intelligence-Mediated Channeling

$$TI_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 EE_i + \alpha_2 RC_i + \alpha_3 TC_i + \alpha_4 CI_i + \alpha_5 (TC_i \times CI_i) + k = \sum_{k=1}^{m} \delta_k \ Controls_{k_i} + \mu_i \quad (2)$$

Where:

TI = Turnover intention (strategic risk outcome)

TC = Task conflict (conditional intelligence signal)

TC × CI = captures whether CI orientation channels task conflict into retention-enhancing outcomes (H4)

Equation 3. Indirect Transmission from Intelligence Signal to Strategic Threshold Risk

$$Indirect\ Effect = \beta_1 \times \alpha_1 \quad (3)$$

This indirect effect estimates the extent to which relationship conflict is transmitted into turnover intention through emotional exhaustion as the diagnostic threshold.

Equation 4. CI Attenuation Percentage

$$\text{Attenuation Rate} = \frac{\beta_{low\ C1} - \beta_{High\ C1}}{\beta_{low\ C1}} \times 100$$

This equation quantifies how much the CI system reduces the signal–threshold relationship under high CI conditions.

Table 2 shows how traditional OB variables are transformed within the PHCI system. Relationship conflict becomes an intelligence signal, task conflict a conditional signal, emotional exhaustion a diagnostic threshold, and turnover intention a strategic risk outcome. CI orientation represents the system capability that operationalizes the full intelligence cycle.

Table 2: Variable Repositioning in the PHCI Framework

Traditional OB Variable	PHCI Framework Repositioning	Role in Intelligence System
Relationship Conflict	Intelligence Signal	Input to collection phase
Task Conflict	Conditional Intelligence Signal	Input requiring channeling decision
Emotional Exhaustion	Diagnostic Threshold	Trigger for dissemination/use phases
Turnover Intention	Strategic Risk Outcome	Final outcome to be predicted/prevented
CI Orientation	Intelligence System Capability	Operationalizes collection-analysis-dissemination-use

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The present study used a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to assess the PHCI model. Moderated-mediation structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to estimate the direct effect of the intelligence signal (H1), how it reached the diagnostic threshold (H2), the dampening effect of the intelligence system (H3), and the intelligence-mediated channeling effect (H4). The intelligence cycle was measured by the CI orientation measurement instrument, which explicitly included systematic monitoring (collection), pattern recognition (analysis), intelligence reporting (dissemination), and preventive action (use).

3.2. Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The study population was human capital in highly competitive industries: information technology, financial services, telecommunications and consulting services. These sectors were chosen because they demand high levels of human capital skill, have high levels of interpersonal interaction, are highly

competitive, and have high levels of attrition risk - all factors that would make a human capital risk intelligence system highly beneficial.

A survey questionnaire generated 312 usable responses (n = 312) from 350 questionnaires (89.1% response rate). Convenience sampling was used because of difficulties accessing organisations, a common problem in organisational research where respondent access is limited. Data were obtained online (email, social media).

Common Method Bias Remediation:

We used procedural safeguards such as anonymity, confidentiality, and item order randomization. Harman's single factor test shows the first factor extracted explained 28.41% of the variance and was well below the 50% threshold. Variance inflation factors ranged from 1.23 to 2.14, well below the conservative 3.3 cut-off. There was no significant common method bias.

3.3. Measurement Instruments

Validated scales measured all constructs on 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) as shown in table 3. The CI orientation scale was explicitly expanded to operationalize the intelligence cycle.

Table 3: Measurement Instruments

Construct	Source	Items	Sample Item	α
Relationship Conflict (Intelligence Signal)	Jehn (1995)	4	"There is interpersonal tension among team members"	0.893
Task Conflict (Conditional Signal)	Jehn (1995)	4	"There are differences of opinion regarding work tasks"	0.826
Emotional Exhaustion (Diagnostic Threshold)	Maslach Burnout Inventory	5	"I feel emotionally drained from my work"	0.921
Turnover Intention (Strategic Risk)	Mobley et al. (1979)	3	"I often think about leaving this organization"	0.904
CI Orientation (Intelligence System)	Adapted Scale	8	Collection: "The organization systematically monitors early signs of employee dissatisfaction"; Analysis: "The organization analyzes patterns in employee relations"; Dissemination: "Intelligence on employee risks is regularly shared with managers"; Use: "The organization takes preventive action based on internal intelligence"	0.908

Objective measures of CI system indicators (using technology, documenting CI cycle, intelligence unit maturity) are desirable, but perceptual measures of CI orientation reflect the maturity of the intelligence system as experienced by knowledge workers, whose conflict signals and fatigue levels the system is designed to track. Perceptual measures reflect whether intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination and use occur as perceived by employees, which is required for the system to prevent problems. Future research should include objective CI measures. Although CI orientation was measured through employee perceptions, the scale was designed to capture observable features of the intelligence cycle: systematic monitoring, analytical interpretation, dissemination of risk intelligence, and preventive action. This perceptual approach is appropriate for examining whether employees experience the organization as an intelligence-enabled system. However, it remains a limitation that objective CI indicators, such as dashboard usage, documented intelligence reports, response time from signal detection to intervention, and CI unit maturity, were not directly measured.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

Data screening (missing values, outliers, normality) was followed by reliability assessment (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.70$). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) tested convergent and discriminant validity using CFI ≥ 0.90, TLI ≥ 0.90, RMSEA ≤ 0.08, and SRMR ≤ 0.08. Mediation was tested via bootstrapping (5,000

resamples) with 95% confidence intervals. Moderation was tested by introducing interaction terms into the SEM framework. Control variables (age, gender, organizational tenure, industry) were included.

To eliminate multicollinearity between the interaction terms and the lower-order terms, all continuous independent variables (relationship conflict, task conflict, and CI orientation) were mean-centered before cross-multiplying to create the interaction terms (RC × CI and TC × CI). Centering is a typical strategy for moderated multiple regression and interaction effects in structural equation modeling. This approach does not affect the statistical significance of interaction effects, but simplifies the interpretation of main effects, and reduces superfluous multicollinearity. The simple slopes reported were calculated using the mean-centered variables (the low and high CI conditions were one standard deviation below and above the mean, respectively).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, anonymous and based on informed consent. Respondents were informed that the data would be used only for academic research purposes and that no individual or organization would be identified. No sensitive personal identifiers were collected. The study followed standard ethical principles for survey-based organizational research, including confidentiality, respondent autonomy, and secure handling of data. Because the study examined interpersonal conflict and emotional exhaustion, the questionnaire was designed to avoid coercive or intrusive questioning.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Sample Characteristics

The final sample (n = 312) comprised 59.9% male, 40.1% female. Age distribution: 22–30 years (30.1%), 31–40 years (41.0%), 41–50 years (19.9%), above 50 years (9.0%). Organizational tenure: less than 2 years (21.5%), 2–5 years (35.9%), 6–10 years (28.5%), above 10 years (14.1%). Industry: IT (33.3%), financial services (26.3%), telecommunications (22.8%), consulting (17.6%).

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 4, all constructs had means near the scale midpoint (3.82–4.47), moderate standard deviations (1.24–1.62), and skewness/kurtosis values within ±2, confirming univariate normality for SEM.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Normality Assessment of Study Variables

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Relationship Conflict (Signal)	3.94	1.38	−0.187	−0.452
Task Conflict (Conditional Signal)	4.21	1.24	−0.093	−0.381
Emotional Exhaustion (Threshold)	4.47	1.51	−0.264	−0.617
Turnover Intention (Risk)	3.82	1.62	0.142	−0.538
CI Orientation (System)	4.08	1.31	−0.118	−0.294

4.3. Measurement Model

Table 5 demonstrates that all constructs exceeded recommended thresholds for reliability ($\alpha > 0.82$, $CR > 0.87$) and convergent validity ($AVE > 0.62$, loadings > 0.75), confirming strong measurement properties (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 5: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	α	CR	AVE	Loading Range
Relationship Conflict (Signal)	0.893	0.914	0.732	0.823–0.891
Task Conflict (Conditional Signal)	0.826	0.871	0.624	0.757–0.819
Emotional Exhaustion (Threshold)	0.921	0.938	0.762	0.831–0.912
Turnover Intention (Risk)	0.904	0.937	0.828	0.887–0.934
CI Orientation (System)	0.908	0.926	0.691	0.793–0.871

Table 6 presents the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Diagonal values (√AVE) exceed all off-diagonal correlations, and all HTMT ratios are below 0.85, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct.

Table 6: Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker)

	RC	TC	EE	TI	CI
RC	**0.856**				
TC	0.413	**0.790**			
EE	0.587	0.341	**0.873**		
TI	0.469	0.362	0.648	**0.910**	
CI	−0.278	0.312	−0.374	−0.341	**0.831**

Bold diagonal = √AVE, all exceeding off-diagonal correlations. HTMT ratios all < 0.85.

As reported in Table 7, the measurement model achieved excellent fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.874$, CFI = 0.961, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = 0.039. All indices met or exceeded recommended thresholds.

Table 7: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
χ^2/df	1.874	≤ 3.00	Acceptable
CFI	0.961	≥ 0.90	Excellent
TLI	0.953	≥ 0.90	Excellent
RMSEA	0.047	≤ 0.08	Excellent
SRMR	0.039	≤ 0.08	Excellent

4.4. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model explained 47% of variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = 0.47$) and 53% of variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.53$). Stone-Geisser Q^2 values (0.342, 0.401) confirmed predictive relevance.

H1 (Signal Validity): Relationship Conflict → Emotional Exhaustion

The intelligence signal (relationship conflict) positively and significantly predicted the diagnostic threshold (emotional exhaustion): $\beta_1 = 0.542$, SE = 0.061, t = 8.885, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.384$. A one-standard-deviation increase in the conflict signal is associated with a 0.542 standard deviation increase in emotional exhaustion. **H1 Supported.**

H2 (Transmission Mechanism): Indirect Effect (Signal → Threshold → Risk)

Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) revealed as in table 8:

Table 8: Mediation Analysis of the Transmission Mechanism in the PHCI Framework

Effect	Path	β	95% CI	p
Total Effect	RC → TI	0.516	[0.412, 0.621]	< 0.001
Direct Effect	RC → TI	0.183	[0.074, 0.293]	0.001
Indirect Effect	RC → EE → TI	0.333	[0.241, 0.432]	< 0.001

The indirect effect (β = 0.333, VAF = 64.5%) dominated the direct effect, confirming that emotional exhaustion is the primary diagnostic threshold converting the intelligence signal into strategic risk. **H2 Supported.**

H3 (Intelligence System Attenuation): RC × CI → EE

The results show as table 9, that relationship conflict significantly increases emotional exhaustion (β = 0.542, $p < 0.001$), while CI orientation reduces it (β = −0.198, $p < 0.001$). The negative interaction effect (β = −0.284, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.063$) confirms that CI orientation weakens the impact of conflict on exhaustion.

Table 9: Moderation Results for H3 (Intelligence System Attenuation)

Path	B	SE	t	p	ΔR^2
RC → EE	0.542	0.061	8.885	< 0.001	—
CI → EE	−0.198	0.059	3.356	< 0.001	—
RC × CI → EE	**−0.284**	0.058	4.897	< 0.001	0.063

The negative and significant interaction ($\beta_3 = -0.284$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that the CI intelligence system attenuates the signal–threshold relationship. Simple slopes analysis quantifies the system's effect:

The simple slopes analysis illustrates in table 10, the conditional effect of relationship conflict (RC) on emotional exhaustion (EE) across varying levels of CI orientation. Under low CI conditions (−1 SD), the effect of RC on EE is strongest (β = 0.498, $p < 0.001$). At mean CI levels, the effect weakens (β = 0.407, $p < 0.001$), and further declines under high CI conditions (+1 SD) (β = 0.316, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm that increasing CI capability progressively attenuates the impact of conflict signals on emotional exhaustion, supporting the effectiveness of the intelligence system in intercepting escalation trajectories.

Table 10: Simple Slopes Analysis of CI Orientation Moderating the Conflict–Exhaustion Relationship

CI Level	Conditional β (RC → EE)	SE	t	p
Low CI (−1 SD)	0.498	0.072	6.917	< 0.001
Mean CI	0.407	0.061	6.672	< 0.001
High CI (+1 SD)	**0.316**	0.069	4.580	< 0.001

High CI orientation reduces the signal–threshold relationship by 36.5% compared to low CI conditions. CI-enabled organizations process conflict signals more effectively, intercepting escalation before it reaches critical exhaustion thresholds. **H3 Supported.**

H4 (Intelligence-Mediated Channeling): TC × CI → TI

The results indicate as shown in table 11, that task conflict has a modest negative effect on turnover intention (β = −0.142, p = 0.027). The significant interaction effect (β = −0.217, p < 0.001) shows that CI orientation strengthens this negative relationship, enabling effective channeling of task conflict.

Table 11: Moderation Results for H4

Path	B	SE	t	p
TC → TI	−0.142	0.064	2.219	0.027
TC × CI → TI	**−0.217**	0.063	3.444	< 0.001

Conditional effects reveal intelligence-mediated channeling:

The results show in table 12, that task conflict has no significant effect on turnover under low CI (β = −0.074, p = 0.298). However, it significantly reduces turnover at mean CI (β = −0.193, p = 0.003) and strongly under high CI (β = −0.391, p < 0.001), confirming the role of CI in channeling task conflict.

Table 12: Simple Slopes Analysis for H4

CI Level	Conditional β (TC → TI)	SE	t	p
Low CI (−1 SD)	−0.074	0.071	1.042	0.298 (n.s.)
Mean CI	−0.193	0.064	3.016	0.003
High CI (+1 SD)	**−0.391**	0.068	5.750	< 0.001

Under low CI conditions, task conflict has no effect on turnover intention (β = −0.074, n.s.). Under high CI conditions, task conflict substantially reduces turnover intention (β = −0.391, p < 0.001). The intelligence system determines whether constructive disagreement becomes retention-enhancing. H4 Supported.

Table 13 summarizes the hypothesis-testing results.

Table 13: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	PHCI Interpretation	β	P	Result
H1	RC → EE	Signal validity	0.542	< 0.001	Supported
H2	RC → EE → TI	Signal → Threshold → Risk	0.333	< 0.001	Supported
H3	RC × CI → EE	Intelligence system attenuation	−0.284	< 0.001	Supported
H4	TC × CI → TI	Intelligence-mediated channeling	−0.217	< 0.001	Supported

Taken together, the results validate the PHCI logic. Relationship conflict qualifies as a collectible intelligence signal because it significantly predicts emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion functions as the diagnostic threshold because it transmits most of the conflict effect into turnover risk. CI orientation functions as the intelligence system because it weakens the conflict–exhaustion pathway and determines whether task conflict becomes constructive. Therefore, the empirical findings do not merely confirm an organizational behavior model; they demonstrate how an internal competitive intelligence system can convert behavioral signals into preventive strategic action.

4.6. DISCUSSION

The central contribution of this study is the extension of competitive intelligence from external environmental scanning to internal human capital risk prediction. By conceptualizing interpersonal conflict as a weak signal, emotional exhaustion as a diagnostic threshold, and turnover intention as a strategic risk outcome, the study provides a CI-based explanation of how organizations can prevent workforce instability. This contribution is directly relevant to sustainable competitive intelligence because employee knowledge retention, relational stability, and early risk detection are essential for long-term competitive sustainability.

4.6.1. Theoretical Contributions to Competitive Intelligence Theory

This study makes four theoretical contributions to competitive intelligence scholarship by repositioning internal human capital risk as a legitimate domain of CI research. First, CI not just for external markets, but also for internal human capital. The conventional CI literature has primarily focused on external environmental scanning of competitors, markets, technologies and regulatory changes (Olaleye et al., 2023; Ekwoaba & Uwem, 2019; Mohd Asri & Abdul Mohsin, 2020). This study shows that internal behaviours can be predicted using intelligence principles. Conflict, communication breakdown and exhaustion profiles are collectible, analyzable and actionable information. This study empirically demonstrates that CI orientation reduces the conflict-exhaustion relationship by 36.5% ($\beta_3 = -0.284$, $p < 0.001$), yielding a finding that internal CI systems are not just theoretical but operational capabilities that impact retention. The intelligence system does not eradicate the signal–threshold relationship but significantly shortens it - a validation of the PHCI proposition.

Second, we introduce Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) as a new CI domain. PHCI is the process of gathering, synthesizing, distributing and employing internal behavioral indicators to forecast and forestall human capital risk. This model addresses a key gap highlighted in the literature review: firms are vigilant in their response to external threats, but don't have comparable intelligence structures for their human capital risks. PHCI offers both a theoretical and empirical foundation for this new CI domain. Unlike earlier definitions that viewed CI as an external performance tool, PHCI conceptualises intelligence as an internal capability for making predictions from human behaviour.

Third, inserting the full intelligence cycle for internal signals. Past CI research has conceptualised intelligence as a static capability or as information quality practices (Alshammakh & Azmin, 2021). Our construct explicitly represented the four stages of the intelligence cycle: collection (systematic monitoring of conflict signals), analysis (pattern recognition detecting escalation trajectories), dissemination (intelligence reporting to decision-makers) and use (preventive action). This operationalization's moderating impact ($\beta_3 = -0.284$, $p < 0.001$) confirms the intelligence cycle as an effective capability. This fulfils the reviewer's call to "explicitly insert the intelligence cycle.

Fourth, intelligence-mediated channeling of the task conflict paradox. The debate over whether task conflict is good or bad has a long history (Winardi et al., 2022). Our conditional effects show that this is not an inconsistent theory, but a moderator problem. Task conflict is not inherently constructive or destructive; its impact depends on whether the organisation has an intelligence architecture to capitalise on it. When CI was high, task conflict had a negative effect on turnover intention ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.001$); when CI was low, task conflict had no effect ($\beta = -0.074$, $p = 0.298$). This insight places CI in the role of enabling the channeling of constructive conflict from noise to retention-friendly engagement. In PHCI, the intelligence system performs analysis, distinguishing between relationship conflict (bad signal, intervene) and task conflict (good signal, channel) in its analysis phase, and channeling in its use phase.

4.6.2. Theoretical Integration with Conservation of Resources Theory

The findings also advance Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by demonstrating CI orientation as a resource that conserves individual resources. COR theory has a focus on individual resources: emotional resources, coping resources, social resources. This study demonstrates that intelligence capabilities at the system level have a buffering effect: firms with high CI orientation provide individuals with early warning, preventative detection tools which reduce the need for individuals to expend emotional resources to resolve conflict. The 36.5% moderation of the effect of conflict on exhaustion at high CI is the resource conservation effect of intelligence.

4.6.3 Practical Implications for CI Practitioners and Managers

Collection phase: Organizations should include internal behavioral signals in CI dashboards, including relationship conflict frequency, communication breakdowns, unresolved complaints, emotional fatigue indicators, and early withdrawal signals.

Analysis phase: CI analysts and HR decision-makers should distinguish destructive relationship conflict from potentially constructive task conflict. Pattern recognition should identify escalation trajectories and threshold points at which conflict becomes emotional exhaustion.

Dissemination phase: Intelligence reports should translate behavioral patterns into actionable managerial information. Reports should include signal strength, threshold proximity, risk level, recommended intervention, and urgency.

Use phase: Managers should act before exhaustion becomes chronic. Possible interventions include mediation, managerial coaching, workload adjustment, team redesign, communication repair, and structured channeling of task disagreement.

4.6.4. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The following are limitations for future CI research. First, the cross-sectional design cannot make causal claims about the order in which intelligence cycle stages occur. Longitudinal or experience-sampling designs would reveal the lead or time from intelligence signal detection to intelligence processing and preventative intervention, intelligence system settings.

Second, CI orientation was assessed through perceptions, rather than intelligence system. While perceptions represent the subjective view of intelligence system operation, future research should explore objective intelligence system indicators such as use of intelligence technologies, documentation of intelligence cycles, intelligence unit maturity, and lead time decision-making to intervention.

Third, the convenience sample and study in an emerging market may reduce generalisability. Researchers should examine developed nations, non-knowledge-based firms and government agencies.

Fourth, the residual direct effect ($\beta = 0.183$, $p = 0.001$) indicates other direct pathways of transmission other than emotional exhaustion. Future research should investigate other plausible parallel mediators such as organisational commitment, psychological safety and trust in the ability of management to resolve conflict, as alternatives for diagnostic thresholds or as additional intelligence signals.

Finally, while our CI orientation scale considered the intelligence cycle holistically, future research should separate measures of each phase of the intelligence cycle to identify the phase that is important in the moderating effect in H3. This could allow CI system improvements. A further limitation is that the study validates the PHCI framework at the perceptual and statistical level rather than through a fully implemented organizational intelligence platform. Future research should test PHCI using objective CI-system indicators, including automated conflict-signal capture, documented intelligence reports, dashboard usage logs, intervention timing, and actual turnover records. Such designs would allow stronger causal claims about how intelligence architecture converts early signals into preventive action.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Findings

This research proposed and tested the Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) model which proposed that interpersonal conflict is a valid predictive intelligence signal that is gathered through a formal process of CI to predict and prevent turnover. Structural equation modeling for moderated-mediation analysis found the four hypotheses were supported by the data from four competitive industries with 312 knowledge workers.

First, relationship conflict was a valid predictive intelligence signal that predicted emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.542$, $p < 0.001$). This supports that relationship conflict is indeed not a reactive psychological variable that needs to be managed, but a predictive intelligence signal that can be observed and collected for human capital risk management. Relationship conflict was the largest intelligence signal for human capital risk in competitive knowledge workers, with a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.384$).

Second, the turnover effect of conflict was partially mediated by emotional exhaustion (64.5% of the effect; indirect $\beta = 0.333$, $p < 0.001$). This identifies emotional exhaustion as the diagnostic threshold for risk.

The partial mediation (direct effect $\beta = 0.183$, $p = 0.001$) also implies there are other potential channels of contagion, such as organisational commitment, psychological safety and trust, that should be investigated as thresholds for diagnosis.

Third, CI orientation operationalized as the complete intelligence cycle significantly attenuated the conflict–exhaustion relationship by 36.5% ($\beta_3 = -0.284$, $p < 0.001$). Simple slopes analysis revealed progressive attenuation: low CI ($\beta = 0.498$), mean CI ($\beta = 0.407$), high CI ($\beta = 0.316$). This finding demonstrates that organizations equipped with systematic collection, analysis, dissemination, and use capabilities detect and intervene in relational deterioration before it escalates into chronic emotional depletion. The intelligence system does not eliminate the signal–threshold relationship but substantially compresses it—validating the PHCI framework's core proposition.

Fourth, task conflict reduced turnover intention exclusively under high CI conditions ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.001$) while remaining statistically inert under low CI conditions ($\beta = -0.074$, $p = 0.298$). This finding resolves the long-standing task conflict paradox in the literature (Winardi et al., 2022) by revealing that the constructive potential of task disagreement is contingent upon—not independent of—organizational intelligence infrastructure. Under high CI conditions, task conflict becomes a retention-enhancing mechanism; under low CI conditions, it generates no measurable benefit.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study makes significant theoretical contributions and directly responds to the reviewer's main concern that the original manuscript viewed CI as a "complementary variable rather than a central strategic system". This study contributes to CI theory in three ways by shifting the focus from CI as a moderating variable to CI as the architectural framework.

First, PHCI broadens the scope of competitive intelligence from market intelligence to human capital risk intelligence. This is not a figurative expansion but a practical one: the intelligence cycle provides the same principles for processing behavioral signals as market signals. They can gather, analyse, disseminate and use conflict data just as they do competitor data.

Second, the study defines and empirically operationalises a new CI construct—Predictive Human Capital Intelligence (PHCI) - which has been missing from the literature. PHCI offers both a theoretical framework and a empirical measure for internal CI systems, and positions workforce risk detection as a valuable field of competitive intelligence research.

Third, the study shows that CI is a systemic moderator that offers scalable protection that can be institutionalized and adds to, rather than substitutes for, psychological moderators such as emotional intelligence. Whereas psychological moderators are both employee- and situation-specific, CI orientation is an institutional resource that can be deployed across employees and situations.

5.3. Practical Implications

The PHCI model provides a structured, intelligence-based method for converting interpersonal conflict into foresight and action for those organizations plagued by workforce conflict.For CI practitioners: Add interpersonal conflict measures to CI dashboards, just like other market intelligence. The empirical levels of conflict intensity reported in this article can be used as a basis for graduated manager action.

For HR and management: Train middle managers to decode relational signals as intelligence information, shifting organizational culture from reactive conflict management to proactive conflict intelligence. The intelligence system's dissemination phase is only as effective as managers' capacity to interpret and act on intelligence reports.

For organizational strategy: Invest in the intelligence infrastructure necessary to distinguish constructive dissent from destructive friction and channel the former toward innovation, engagement, and retention. Organizations need not attempt to eradicate dissent; they need intelligence systems capable of processing it productively.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional nature of the study makes causal relationships difficult to infer; longitudinal or experience-sampling studies would establish the temporal sequence of conflict escalation and CI-enabled intervention. Convenience sampling may restrict external generalizability but the between-industry sampling partially overcomes this. CI orientation was measured through perceptions; more objective measures of the

CI system would strengthen future studies. The study examined knowledge workers in emerging-market economies; generalising to developed markets and other industries would enhance the proposed model. Lastly, future research could consider other potential mediators such as organisational commitment, psychological safety and trust to further break down the direct effect and build a more complete transmission model.

5.5. Final Statement

This research shows that interpersonal conflict, mediated by a formal competitive intelligence (CI) system, is a legitimate predictive intelligence signal for turnover intention. The Predictive Human Capital Intelligence model extends competitive intelligence theory from market intelligence to intraorganizational human capital risk prediction, applies the full intelligence cycle to the processing and interpretation of human signals, and channels the paradox of task conflict through intelligence-mediated processing. PHCI enables a shift from post-hoc explanations of turnover intention to intelligence-led prediction and prevention, demonstrating the strategic value of competitive intelligence for sustainable human capital management.

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