Postponing the End: Turnover Inhibiting Factors in the Military Context

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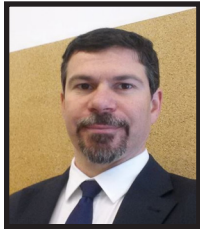
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Abstract

In several attempts to understand and predict behaviour, intention presents itself as a key element and is considered a close proxy to the actual behaviour. Nonetheless, a gap remains between intention and behaviour that still needs to be explained since intentions do not always result in actions. Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), this study addresses this gap, focusing on identifying the drivers that inhibit voluntary turnover behaviour. Emphasis is given to the *inclined abstainers*, i.e., those who have expressed a positive intention to leave but do not act, since they are key informers to understand the intention-turnover gap. A case study in the military context was used as a research strategy, through 73 semi-structured interviews and four focus groups, with academic experts and (ex-)military personnel. Results suggest that voluntary turnover is hampered by demographic, internal, social, and organisational factors such as older age, the guarantee of job stability, the cooperation by others to stay, and limitations in the external context, some with applicability in non-military organisations. Findings increase our understanding of the role these factors play in the intention-turnover relationship and inform practitioners about the courses of action to improve the retention system.

Keywords: voluntary turnover, intention-behaviour gap, inhibiting factors, military personnel, management

The current economic and social situation is diffuse, diverse, and complex. It results from drastic technological transformations combined with challenges caused by demographic changes and the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have repercussions on the organisational environment, namely in the employee's voluntary turnover behaviour.

The literature on turnover behaviour can be divided into two major phases. The first suggested turnover was the result of two simultaneous equilibrium forces: perceived desirability (job attitude/satisfaction and affective commitment) and perceived ease (job availability/opportunities/ alternatives) of leaving an organisation (March & Simon, 1958; Mobley, 1977; Price, 1977). This conceptualization proposed that turnover intention is a robust and reliable predictor of turnover behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The second phase arises when researchers show that many employees leave their organisations for other reasons, and many others remain, despite feeling dissatisfied and intending to leave (Holtom et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2001), suggesting that not all intentions are translated into actions. This inconsistency between having an intention and not turning it into action is called the "*intention-behaviour gap*" (Sheeran, 2002). To identify what lies behind this inconsistency, Sheeran (2002) suggested a two-by-two matrix, indicating that individuals who intend to perform the behaviour but do not perform it (*inclined abstainers*) are responsible for the gap.

A considerable number of behavioural theories and models have been used to investigate the most immediate and important predictor of a person's behaviour: their intention to perform it. For instance, the intermediate linkages model (Mobley, 1977) and its expanded model (Mobley, 1982); the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; more recently expanded as social cognitive theory); the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997; also known as the stages of change model); and the temporal self-regulation theory (Hall & Fong, 2007). Notwithstanding, this study aims to assess the relevance of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), particularly the gap between intention-turnover behaviour, within the military context. The TPB aims to explain human behaviours in different environments and emphasises that it

is planned and intentional (Ajzen, 1991). It was chosen for this study as it is characterized by simplicity, parsimony, and robustness (Kautonen et al., 2015). By exploring TPB, this research provides information and insights about military personnel's behaviour and gives guidelines to examine the factors that inhibit the voluntary turnover process.

The intention-behaviour gap and the fact that, in general, only half of the intentions are translated into the desired behavioural action, demonstrates the significance of the gap (Sheeran & Webb, 2016). TPB also suggests that the general relationship between intention-behaviour may be moderated (Ajzen, 2002). Previous research has stressed and advised the importance of more studies examining inhibiting factors to obtain a more detailed understanding of the cognitive foundation that underlies behavioural decisions (Ajzen, 2020; Ajzen & Albarracin, 2007). Moreover, those previous studies only present the reasons, beliefs, or antecedents of turnover intention to leave the Armed Forces. Likewise, to our best knowledge, no study has given fair consideration to the factors that inhibit military turnover. The present research aims to explore the intention behaviour gap to identify and improve the understanding of the factors that contribute more to inhibiting the intentions in the voluntary turnover process. Identifying the factors that influence the stability of behavioural intentions sheds light on the ways and means by which it may be possible to reinforce changes in intentions. This makes it relevant to the human resources (HR) literature and with relevant practical implications. We also redirect the conceptual lens from why people leave to why although people intend to leave, they stay, and we argue that the Armed Forces provide ideal conditions for studying this effect. In Portugal, it is an understudied context from an employment behavioural point of view. The military turnover index from 2014–19 recorded a sharp reduction (23%) in its military personnel, which led the Portuguese Ministry of National Defence (Ministério da Defesa Nacional, 2019) to implement an action plan for the professionalisation of military service, thus raising the study's practical relevance. The article structure is organised into seven sections. The first gives the background information, the following sets the context, the third lists the literature review and the state of the art, the

fourth describes the methodological path followed, the fifth exposes the findings, then discussed in the subsequent. The last emphasises the article main points.

Context—Portuguese Armed Forces (PAF)

Since the beginning of their military career, recruits enter a forced "separation" from civilian life to make way for a strong identification with a military organisation (Godfrey et al., 2012). The civilian is thus incorporated and is inscribed with cultural values, including discipline, loyalty, and duty commitment (Cooper et al., 2016).

The Armed Forces have been under a series of profound changes, largely due to the Cold War, 9/11, and technological developments. Some Armed Forces have been moving away from the conscription system to a more professional and flexible system, based on high-skilled personnel and cutting-edge technology to better face all threats (symmetric and asymmetric). In recent years, the PAF has been reorganised several times, in 1976 due to the profound changes in the Portuguese Constitution, later in 1982 with full subordination to democratic political power. After 1992, when women were allowed to join and, in 2004, with the end of men's conscription, the recruitment started to develop only on volunteers. More recently, the "Defence 2020" reform limited the number of troops. The PAF is exclusively composed of Portuguese citizens, and its fundamental mission is to ensure the Republic's military (self-)defence and to carry out all the military tasks required to guarantee the sovereignty, national independence, and the freedom/security of its population against any aggression or external threats. The Portuguese citizens' rights/duties are contemplated in the Portuguese Constitution. However, there are a set of restrictions for military personnel in which the military condition stands out. This condition results in subordination to the national interest, permanent availability in the temporal dimension [any time/ no fixed duration], and the geographical dimension [any location], to fight in defence of the Motherland, if necessary, with the sacrifice of their own life—labour requirements without any similarity in non-military organisations.

To carry out its duties, the PAF is organised into a General Staff of the Armed Forces and Branches (Navy, Army, and Air Force). HR are divided into military and civilian personnel. Military personnel are recruited in the Branches and are classified into three categories: Officers, Sergeants, and Privates. Nowadays, those categories are subdivided in Permanent Staff—which represents the organisation's backbone but also serves as a guarantee to the stability and transmission of knowledge, traditions, and values; and Under Contract—military personnel serving for a limited period, after which they return to civilian life. As a maximum military service period, the Permanent Staff foresees the age limit associated with rank and, cumulatively, a pre-established period of military service to be rendered. These personnel must remain on active duty for a minimum time. If they request to be discharged before, they must pay financial compensation. If they leave after, this situation entails penalties. Under Contract, they can either join the Permanent Staff or reach the maximum time in active duty allowed by law and enjoy a set of incentives for re-entry into civilian life. If they leave earlier, they will not benefit from the incentives, and, in some cases, they will also pay monetary compensation.

Military turnover was not a concern during Mandatory Military Service when young men were subject to the obligation of serving. However, with the end of conscription, turnover started to gain relevance with a new service provision model based on volunteering. Moreover, voluntary turnover leads to the problem of refilling vacant positions, a serious concern that mainly affects the Under Contract personnel. Currently, the PAF relies highly on its recruitment and retention systems.

Literature Review

Turnover

Turnover is a dynamic concept related to the employees' movement across the borders of a social system (Price, 1977). This movement results from an employee's conscious and intentional decision to leave/end the employment relationship with the organisation (Dress & Shaw, 2001). With globalisation, turnover has become a persistent problem in organisations regardless of their size/ typology. It is penalising and extremely costly for

organisations when they carry out long recruitment processes, invest in training (Holt et al., 2007), and the employee leaves before the intended time (Peterson, 2005). Yet, turnover is also costly for workers, as they give up a career or interpersonal connections at their previous place of employment (Holtom et al., 2008). Furthermore, workers also bear financial, transaction, and psychological costs (Allen et al., 2005). The human capital of the Armed Forces is materialised in its personnel, which is the main element for its mission success. Concomitantly with other organisations, it stands out as the most valuable resource and an important asset (Croy & Duggan, 2005) for being scarce, intangible, and difficult to be replicated (Stovel & Bontis, 2002). Retaining skilled employees emerges as a strategic priority, given the labour shortage and the reduction of employed assets. The military environment is unique because employment is more than just a job/occupational choice. Service in the military involves a much-prescribed environment that influences individuals' lifestyles far beyond the boundaries of work (Alpass et al., 1997). Unmatched physical and psychological demands are placed on military personnel, usually under challenging conditions, to replicate or approach a conflict situation. These requirements compel those who cannot deal with them to leave the organisation (Mafini & Dubihlela, 2013).

In addition to financial resources, military organisations invest much of their time recruiting/classifying/selecting/integrating, and giving qualified training with their preconditions [physical/medical tests and cognitive/psychological interviews], which are rare in other organisations (Allen et al., 2010). This process makes the Armed Forces an attractive resource other than organisations that take advantage of recruiting skilled personnel since the burden of investment in training/experience takes place on military organisations. Military organisations' rewards/benefits are limited and will never be as attractive as the ones customized by civilian organisations (Coughlan et al., 2014) because the former are provided by law, while the latter makes use of the organisation's internal capabilities. The main difference between turnover in military and non-military organisations is organisational commitment, sense of patriotism, and pride in military service, which act as a buffer, making voluntary separations from service less likely (Lytell & Drasgow, 2009; Mafini & Dubihlela, 2013).

Military turnover can then turn out to be negative, dysfunctional, inevitable, and costly to any country's defence agencies (Campion, 1991). Human behaviour is the product of a multitude of interrelated factors, and it is natural that, given the complexity underlying the military voluntary turnover, it is very difficult to systematically summarise the reasons for turnover, what is known about them and how they interact with each other. It is also pertinent to point out that, in the event of military separation, they leave not only the organisation but also the profession of arms. Although individuals may find work in similar jobs to those they performed in the military, their active affiliation with the military is often lost (Heilmann et al., 2009).

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) revolutionised the understanding of the attitude-behaviour relationship by introducing the mediating role of intention when they developed the theory of reasoned action, which intended to explain, predict, and understand the causes of the behaviour under the individual's complete volitional control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), and establish that the behaviour effectiveness is determined by the intention to perform it, originated in the attitudes toward the act and the subjective norms related to the performance (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).The intention is assumed to capture the individual's motivation factors, which influence behaviour. It represents how much an individual is willing to try and how much energy they are willing to invest to realise the behaviour. The attitudes begin with assessing a set of beliefs about the likely consequences of the behaviour, such as the predisposition to react in a (un)favourable way to an object/person/event—it is thus characterised as the behaviour-result link that is expected to produce (Ajzen, 1985). The subjective norms are the evaluation of normative beliefs, the importance that the individual gives to the perceptions, approval or not, of those important to them in the behaviour to be performed—it focuses on the perceived influence or social strength (Ajzen, 1985). To expand the model to behaviours that are not under the individual's complete volitional

control or to involuntary/thoughtless behaviours, which are influenced by other beliefs in predicting behaviours (Ajzen, 1991; Sheeran et al., 2003), TPB added the perceived behaviour control—defined as an individual's belief about the probability of easy/difficult behaviour performance (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). It assumes that it is related to predicted impediments/obstacles (Ajzen, 1991), which may spring the behaviour performance. On the other hand, perceived behaviour control can serve as an indicator of actual behaviour control and contribute to the behaviour prediction, if real (Ajzen, 1991). The crucial factor determining if the formed intention is translated into the behaviour, is the actual behaviour control, as a moderator (Ajzen, 2020)—the ability of people to have full control over their behaviour. If there are barriers or inhibitors to intention, the behavior will likely not occur. On the opposite side, the TPB has also been questioned for: not predicting variables related to moral obligation (Kurland, 1995) and self-identity (Sparks & Guthrie, 1998), not giving importance to the role of emotions beyond the expected results (Sutton, 1994), having limitations in predicting change and for its explanatory static nature which does not help to understand the behaviour's effect on cognition and future behaviour (Sutton, 2010).

In short, TPB postulates that an individual has a greater intention to perform a given behaviour when he or she has a positive attitude towards it, believe that it is socially accepted, and feels that he or she can control his or her behavioural performance. The intention is more likely to change to real behaviour when the individual has real control over it (Ajzen, 2002). However, the individual does not always have real control, given the existence of factors that inhibit behaviours. Within this background, the first research question (RQ1) is stated as follows: *How does the TPB contribute to a better understanding of the inhibiting factors of military personnel in the voluntary turnover process?*

Intention-Behaviour Gap

Turnover intentions explain only 15–20% of the turnover variance, and even the most comprehensive turnover models leave the majority of variance unexplained (Griffeth et al., 2000). These findings suggest that although there is a consensus about the positive relationship between quit intention-actual quitting, and concerning the strength of this relationship, alarming discrepancies exist (Cohen et al., 2016), suggesting that behavioural prediction is not always straightforward and other factors may be important predictors/moderators, influencing the relationship—this supports and reinforces the purpose of our research.

Several theoretical bodies have tried to explain the intention-behaviour gap, like the temporal self-regulation theory (Hall & Fong, 2007), the multi-process action control (Rhodes, 2017), and the theory of behavioural control (Lim & Weissmann, 2023). In our research to identify and explore the inhibiting voluntary turnover factors in the military context, we use the dichotomisation, endogenous and exogenous categories because they are more comprehensive and realistic (Price, 2001). The intention-behaviour gap entails a cognitive dimension that involves thinking, planning, and wanting to leave a job and a behavioural one that refers to the turnover action itself (Cohen et al., 2016). The gap is still poorly understood, although it has theoretical/practical significance for researchers/managers (Carrington et al., 2010). In addition, research explaining the gap using the TPB model is lacking to date, as well as in the explanation of factors that weaken the intention-behaviour relationship. Against this background, the "*inclined abstainer*" is the main focus of the present research. Given that the intention-behaviour gap of military voluntary turnover has yet to be explored formally, this seems a worthy line of inquiry. In most cases, it is easier to express intentions than to quit, thus, expressed intentions may predict turnover better in some cases than in others (Allen et al., 2005). In this vein, Vardaman et al. (2015) suggest that key contextual factors likely explain when turnover intentions are more/less likely to translate into a turnover.

In previous studies, several events were found preventing the execution of the intention: forgetting to act (Einstein et al., 2003), missing opportunities to act (Dholakia & Bagozzi, 2006), and failure to engage in preparatory behaviours (Carvalho et al., 2015). Also, some potential factors emerge from the intended and actual turnover relationship (Cho & Lewis, 2012): financial/psychological costs, self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality,

risk aversion (Allen et al., 2005), shocks (Holtom et al., 2005), and network structure (Vardaman et al., 2015). In contrast, the TPB grouped the inhibitors of the behaviour in two dimensions (Ajzen, 2002, 2020; Kidwell & Jewell, 2003), although it presents them only as an example without demonstrating their reasons: internal (e.g., knowledge, intelligence, emotions, skills, and physical stamina) and external factors (e.g., legal barriers, availability, and time), influences that act as a barrier to behavioural performance (Kidwell & Jewell, 2010). Lewin (1997) assumes that the realisation or not of a given behaviour does not depend on the presence/absence of a single factor but the combination of several. Against this background, a second research question (RQ2) was formulated: *What are the factors that most contribute to inhibiting military personnel in the voluntary turnover process?*

Method

Research Design

This article used a case study as a research strategy to allow a more detailed understanding and to retain the holistic phenomenon of real-life context (Yin, 1989), thus answering the research questions. For the data collection, the following methods were applied: a literature review [comprehensive summary of previous research], documental analysis [review of printed documents], semi-structured interviews [allows the participant to be interviewed individually, with both predetermined/emergent questions], and focus groups [allows several participants to be interviewed at once], the last two in Portuguese. Data were categorized through thematic analysis [qualitative data analysis that focuses on identifying, organising, interpreting, and reporting themes/categories (King & Brooks, 2018)].

Participants

The interviewed participants [N = 73] were selected based on the convenience sampling method. All of them were voluntary and selected based on their knowledge and familiarity with the theory used/organisation/behaviour, which brought added value to the investigation. They were previously contacted by e-mail and later divided into three groups: academic experts [N = 18]—who had already investigated the theme; HR managers responsible for the retention/turnover in the Branches [N = 6]—who had more than two years in the field and with updated knowledge of the voluntary turnover reality; military personnel [N = 26]—who are in the PAF, as such, know the factors that inhibit their decision; ex-military personnel [N = 23]—who recently left the PAF and also knew the factors that inhibited their decision. Twenty-one interviewees were women, and 52 were men, with an average age of 39 and a variation from 20–65 years. Participants of the focus groups (composed of 5–7) were military personnel in active duty from different categories, forms of service provision, and Branches [N = 24], six women and 18 men, average age of 27, ranging from 20–50 years.

Data Collection

The data were collected in three phases: the literature review, interviews, and focus groups. The first phase was dedicated to the keywords bibliographic research and took place from March 2019 to December 2021. In the second phase, the participants of interviews were chosen for their quality and representativeness to collect a diversity of opinions with insightful, informed, and relevant views of voluntary military turnover (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012).

The targets outlined for the participants in the interviews were: academic experts—theoretical questions to approach the voluntary turnover, the theories related, its framework and influences for the context; HR managers—to understand the phenomenon of military voluntary turnover, its main background and how inhibiting factors contribute to this process; (ex-)military—to understand the factors that inhibit/ed them from performing the behaviour. For each group, specific interview guides were developed following an open-ended question to more particular and directed questions logic. The data were collected individually through 73 interviews (28 face-to-face interviews, average duration of 65 minutes, varying from 40–75 minutes, and 45 internet interviews through Skype, average duration of 50 minutes, variation from 30–75 minutes). This phase took place from May 2020 to August 2021. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. In the third phase, the four focus groups' framework was built. The

focus groups started by presenting the subject/rules, and in the end, the factors identified in the previous phase were discussed. The data were collected in four different occasions. The focus groups were in person and with different participants [average duration of 65 minutes, varying from 50–80 minutes]. This phase started in June 2020 and ended in August 2021.

Data Analysis

Building on the thematic analysis approach, the data were examined to better understand the factors that most contribute to inhibiting the intentions of military personnel in the voluntary turnover process. Braun and Clarke's (2006) best practice guidelines and the suggestion of King and Brooks (2018) for thematic analysis were followed. In the first instance, transcripts were read repeated for data familiarisation. Following this, transcripts were summarized, and key discussion points were compared, generating initial factors. These were then grouped to search for coherent sub-categories, which were then reviewed and applied to the transcripts to finally find the categories (King & Brooks, 2018). The thematic analysis of the transcripts highlighted nine main factors, then the factors were grouped into four sub-categories, and in the end, these were

grouped into two categories. Each of the factors is described by a series of quotation extracts from the transcripts to substantiate the identified categories. The participants' contributions were abbreviated as follows: sex [female = F, male = M]; function [academic experts = A, HR managers = H, military personnel = M, ex-military personnel = E], and age.

Results

In order to understand the target population of the study, Sheeran's matrix (2002) was used and adapted to the context, with the contributions of academic experts (Figure 1).

In addition, definitions and measures for the actors were suggested:

Inclined Actor—"*Those who have positive intentions to leave and complete the action, so they go*" and "*with facilitating factors, it is likely that they will leave.*" Measure: "*Identify the factors that facilitate them to leave.*"

Disinclined Actor—"*Those who do not have intentions to leave, but they go*" and "something compels them to go, such as age, active duty limit, disease or death." Measure: Nothing left to do except to be sure that *"in the future, they will be*

Figure 1

Decomposition of the Intention-Behaviour Relationship

Note. Adapted from "Intention—Behavior Relations: A Conceptual and Empirical Review," by P. Sheeran, 2002, *European Review of Social Psychology, 12*(1), p.6 (https://doi.org/10.1080/14792772143000003). Copyright © 2002 European Association of Social Psychology, reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, http://www.tandfonline.com on behalf of European Association of Social Psychology. Adapted with permission from the author.

good messengers of the organisation and military career."

Disinclined Abstainer—"*The individuals who intend to stay, so they remain for as long as possible.*" Measure: Must be "identify the factors that make them want to stay."

Inclined Abstainer—The focus of our research "*those who have positive intentions to leave, but do not perform the behaviour, so they stay.*" Measure: "*Identify the factors that hinder their leave and therefore prevent/compel them to stay.*"

This article aims to explore the intention-behaviour gap to identify and improve the understanding of the factors that most contribute to inhibiting the intentions of military personnel in the voluntary turnover process. To that end, two RQ were formulated. Regarding RQ1: *How does the TPB contribute to a better understanding of the inhibiting factors of the military personnel voluntary turnover process?*

Findings highlight the following key aspects: As a result of the law and training, military personnel have a set of increased duties, which inevitably distinguish them from other non-military personnel. According to nine academic experts and in line with Lytell and Drasgow (2009), "*this inequality raises apprehension in the applicability of general HR theories to the military context and should be carefully adapted.*"

There was a consensus to justify and classify the voluntary turnover process as planned behaviour because it "*involves planning and several procedural steps that culminate in the decision-making process*" and "*the turnover behaviour is not under the complete volitional control of the individuals.*" Cumulatively, the HR managers added that given the distinct reality that they integrate "*when characterising the voluntary turnover process, military personnel should be grouped and analysed by forms of service provision; otherwise, the results will not be conclusive.*"

While TPB can contribute to a better understanding of voluntary turnover, "*the intention, the intention-behaviour gap, and behaviour must be dissected, contextualised and adapted to the context*" FA50. This finding stemmed from general

participants' unanimity when they stated that: "*last few years, the reasons for the military personnel to leave are numerous, which leads to a strong intention to leave, but in most cases, the action is not carried out, which indicates that other factors affect the direction and/or the strength of this relationship, something foreseen, but not detailed in the TPB*" MA55, a fact that is in agreement with Amireault and colleagues (2008).

Furthermore, "*a large number of military personnel have a strong intention to leave, but the presence of inhibiting factors prevents them from doing so. These factors mitigated, overcome, or change the initial turnover intentions*" MH47 "*by not only considering various beliefs/determinants that precede the formation of intentions but also control factors who can be responsible for creating the intention-behaviour gap, TPB provides a good framework and the necessary background for examining and understanding the turnover behaviour*" FA54.

By contrast, the "*TPB postulates that the perceived/actual behaviour control moderates the intention-behaviour gap, without the necessary details and constructs of their differences, even admitting that under certain conditions they are the same*" FA58. In addition, "*although there are other behavioural theories, the TPB is the one that suitably fits the current subject, but it is necessary to clarify what is occurring between turnover intention-behaviour or integrate different conceptual models to help overcome some of the problems related, and thus better understand the behaviour*" MA56.

Subsequently, all HR managers agreed that "*if beyond the turnover intention, the factors that influence the turnover behaviour are understood, better-targeted strategies can be established.*" Finally, HR managers referred that "*the military recruitment system is well-defined in the Ministry of National Defence and in the Branches, but the retention system can be improved because the activity is spread over several departments, with shared responsibilities making it difficult to implement plans.*"

Regarding RQ2: *What are the factors that most contribute to inhibiting military personnel in the voluntary turnover process?*

We would like to stress the following, the key inhibiting factors for those not leaving the Armed

Forces emerge from the data, which was divided into three groups; permanent staff personnel, under contract personnel, and both personnel.

The contributions of each factor to understanding the voluntary turnover gap are discussed below.

Field-of-Study Mismatch—The preponderance of this factor was identified within those with a specific military qualification (horizontal mismatch), "*my background is fighting arms, and I cannot perform it in civilian employment*" MM47. This group of military personnel argues that their base formation and strictly military qualifications are not desired in the civilian market, "*my qualifications have no demand outside*" FM45. The factor focuses on the imperfect matching or discrepancy between the qualifications attainments (characteristics) of military personnel and the qualifications requirements of jobs (Desjardins & Rubenson, 2011) outside the Portuguese Army. Researchers evaluating how people are affected by educational attainment have suggested that some people may suffer in the labour market from a qualifications/skills mismatch, learning qualifications/skills that are less valued by contemporary employers (Handel, 2003). For some combat positions, service members learn qualifications that are little used (misalignment) in civilian jobs, although there is a vertical match.

Age—This factor was essentially expressed by the elder military. They saw old age as an impediment to leave due to difficulties in finding a new job, "*with my age, I cannot find a better job*" MM58, not having the desire to start a new professional challenge "*I am no longer old enough to start a new career*" MM55, or even be close to the end of the professional career "*I look forward to my retirement*" MM57. As one ages, workers value the conditions for retirement and are less willing to invest time in activities with a long and uncertain payback period (Fung et al., 2001), such as starting a venture or developing new activities (Hatak et al., 2015). Ng and Feldman (2009) suggested that older workers are less likely than younger adults to voluntarily turnover. Since "*as individuals age, there are underlying changes in their emotional experiences, preferred social relationships, and self-concepts,*"

making them more likely to experience positive emotions at work but "*less likely to feel confident about getting comparable jobs in the external labor market*" (Ng & Feldman, 2009, p. 285).

Cooperation by Others—Involves an employee's perceptions of what family, friends, or co-workers expect them to do concerning the job, "*it would be a disappointment for my family*" MM22 or the feeling others had about the military job they had "*being in the military is a pride for my friends*" MM25. On the other hand, is the relation they had with others, "*my friends are my comrades in arms*" MM21. Heilmann et al. (2009) examined the influences of the work-family conflict on military retention decisions, concluding that family members' general satisfaction with military life improves members' willingness to remain.

Job Stability—This factor was mentioned by all participants, which suggests that the Armed Forces are an organisation that protects and preserves its human capital, but more importantly that military personnel are not afraid of losing their jobs during the period of service, "*I know where and when, and what to expect*" MM43. In addition, a comparison was even made with the outside labour market "*here, I have a contractual relationship, outside I do not know*" MM45. In reinforcement, the benefits were listed as "*military health support, for me and my family, gives me confidence, particularly when I am on international missions*" MM40. Issues related to financial stability were also evidenced, "*here the salary may not be much but it is certain. On the 21st of every month, I have the salary in my bank account*" FM24. Many labour markets, where the military is included, are regulated, and much of the regulation provides various degrees of job security to workers (Fu et al., 2017). Origo and Pagani (2009) empirically tested the combined effect exerted by the (objective) type of contract and the (subjective) perceived job security/satisfaction and suggested that the type of contract by itself is not fully able to explain the effect on job satisfaction, since it is similar for permanent/non-permanent workers.

Inertia—Polites and Karahanna (2012) define inertia as an attachment to, and persistence of, existing behavioural patterns, even if there are better

alternatives or incentives to change. This factor is directly linked to accommodation "*I currently have no alternatives to consider leaving*" FM44, conformity "*I am comfortable with my professional situation* [...] *it is still too early to leave*" MM47, propensity to resist change "*my salary is sufficient for my expenses*" MM22, habits/routines "*I am already organised for my professional life, I do not want to change my status quo*" MM45. In some situations, participants are reluctant to leave because this decision requires an action that they are unwilling to take "*if I leave now I will not achieve all the benefits*" FM20.

Uncertainty—The perception of an individual's inability to predict something accurately (Milliken, 1987) seems to be a good definition for the uncertainty that the military feels about the possible consequences of their decision, "*I am afraid I will regret it in the future*" MM20. This uncertainty is typically related to the process and expected outcomes of the change and its implications for the military's life and its prospects "*I am afraid I will not find suitable employment or a similar job*" FM44, which leads to a feeling of lack of control (Bordia et al., 2004), such as "*I am afraid of instability*" FM24.

Organisational Relationship—Participants mentioned feelings attached to the worker-organisation relationship that results from the aggregation of the following categories: (i) organisation identification—describes the feeling of partial overlap between the self, group, and internalization of the organisation's core values and central identity features (van Dick et al., 2004), such as "*the organisation has great significance for me*" MM45, "*I feel integrated into the military family, and I identify with organisational values and culture*" MM40. According to social identity theory, this may ward off the desire to quit the organisation (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). (ii) Job identification— is based on the importance that is attributed to the job (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), the satisfaction that is derived from the job, and the psychological attachment, the employees' feelings towards the job "*I cannot find another job that gives me the same experience/adventure*" MM20. Consequently, employees with stronger job identification should

be more likely to tie their future to the organisation in which their job is embedded (Hatak et al., 2015), "*I liked the military discipline*" FE34, "*I feel good about serving my country,* [...] *participating in the defence and representing my country*" MM45. By contrast, the possibility to change function/local of service was shared "*I have the opportunity to work in diverse areas, some of them unique/exclusive, like drive a tank*" MM22. (iii) Employee loyalty—is the product of various factors that bind the individual to the organisation and thus making exit costly. Something very evident in the statements made: "*I want to respect my contract because something better is going to happen*" FM20, "*it was the option I made, so I will stick to it until the end*" MM22 or "*I have a feeling of obligation to the people/ organisation I work for*" FM45.

External Context—A set of situations that prevent the military's personnel voluntary turnover behaviour, namely: occasional impediments, lack of job alternatives, or legal barriers. Most of the participants were in a function/activity/mission that prevented them from leaving, "*I cannot leave right now, presently I am on an international mission*" MM22, "*I am attending a certified and expensive course*" MM24, "*only if I stay I can achieve a bigger goal*" FM23. In a moment of few alternatives "*in the job market, there are no opportunities available that I like*" FM22, "*I did not receive a proposal abroad that would allow me to leave*" MM24 or "*I am afraid of unemployment*" MM24. Due to financial issues, "*leaving now would seriously undermine me financially*" MM20, loss of benefits/incentives "*if I leave I no longer enjoy the incentives that are provided for me*" FM21. Permanent Staff personnel also mentioned the legal barriers "*the specific and particular rules and norms are an obstacle to leave*" MM47.

Social Recognition—We are all aware of the pride and appreciation we receive for our work, "*if I leave, I will not be so socially recognized*" MM43, it gives us the feeling of being acknowledged by others "*my family and friends admire me for being soldier*" MM58 and that likely encourages them to work even harder (Stocker et al., 2010). Cardoso and colleagues (2009) highlighted the prominent place occupied by the Armed Forces in modern

nation-states, considering it as a pole of expression of national sovereignty. The participants agreed that "*as I am part of the organisation, I have social status and indirect benefits*" FM23 or "*the organisation has social prestige*" FE31.

Discussion

Key findings show that, despite a general awareness and understanding of inhibiting factors, particularly amongst military personnel, there appears to be a significant theoretical and practical knowledge gap concerning HR managers, namely how they approach and manage turnover. On the other hand, we can suggest that, given the specificity of the military environment, the intention of turnover often arises as soon as one enters the organisation. However, the turnover behaviour is based on a decision-making process, making it more rational and less emotional, which gives relevance to post-intention over pre-intention. Bearing in mind that turnover is not under the complete volitional control of the individuals, the results obtained suggest that the TPB can provide a useful contribution to understanding the intention-behaviour gap and the inhibitors of the voluntary turnover process.

However, the integration of different conceptual models can help to overcome some of the problems related to understanding turnover behaviour. There is evidence that the TPB is insufficient to address the intention-behaviour gap (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2014; Sheeran, 2002), namely because it is not detailed enough. So, it can be suggested that the TPB model is appropriate to understand the gap, but it needs to better clarify and explore the role of perceived/actual behaviour control; proof of that is the lack of evolution that those concepts have received. Our research proposes that the intention-behaviour gap must be analysed from two perspectives: endogenous and exogenous to the individual.

Regarding the RQ2, to assess the factors, a double assessment was carried out, the first with (ex-)military personnel—to obtain data with regard to the factors that inhibit the process, and the second with academic experts and HR managers—to validate the data obtained in the first step. Figure 2 summarises the factors identified in this study as impeding military voluntary turnover.

If we try to frame the factors identified in non-military contexts, there is low applicability in: field-of-study mismatch (horizontal)—rare civilian qualifications are unique to a single organisation (Desjardins & Rubenson, 2011; Handel, 2003), cooperation by others—few civilian organisations require such intense teamwork (in the extreme,

Figure 2

Decomposition Breakdown of the Turnover Influences
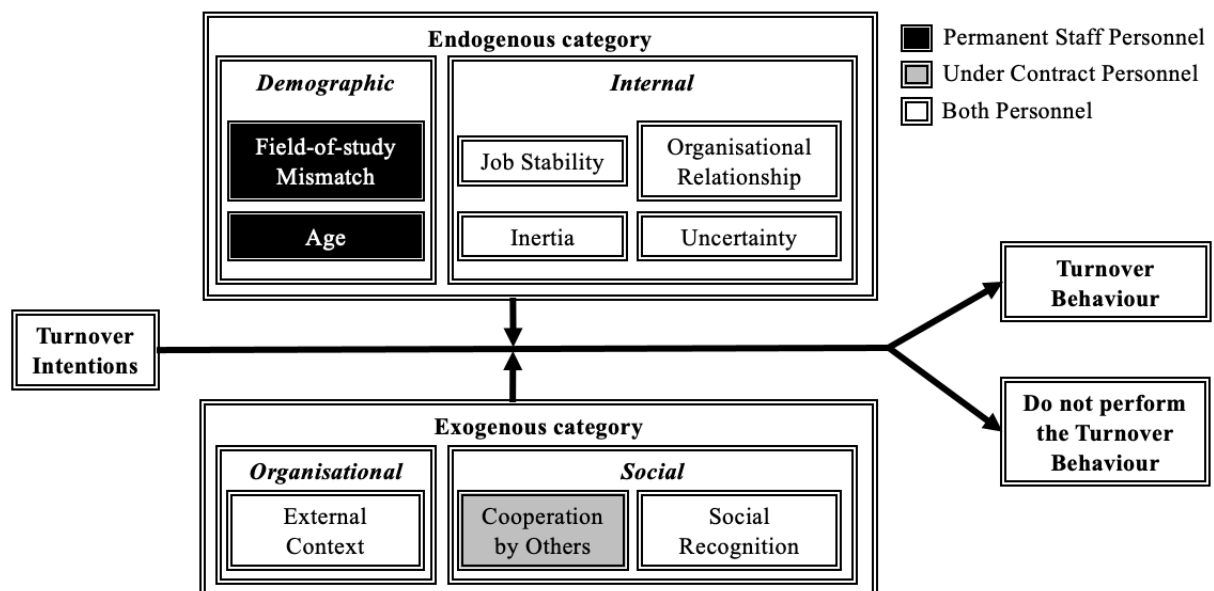
life itself), characterised by the close union that leads to support the actions of others and induces them with the need to help each other, and external context—few civilian organisations are immune to the external environment, in times of recession it is common for organisations to reduce costs, among others in personnel.

The range of potential endogenous/ exogenous factors is not conclusive. However, factors discussed in previous research are acknowledged here because they are absent and, as such, do not explain the diversity of responses between different individuals. It was not within this article's aim to confirm these factors' predictive value. The model shows factors that moderate the intention to leave and its failure.

Finally, findings suggest that although slight differences between Branches exist in frequency and justification of some factors, the macrostructure remains the same.

Implications for the HRM Praxis

As a result of the study, we can verify that turnover intention is not the only predictor of turnover behaviour. As such, for organisations to lower their turnover rate, they have to promote initiatives that reinforce the endogenous/exogenous factors which will impact the individual and their relationship with the organisation. Given the approach taken in the present study, it is believed that a good basis for reflection and an investigation framework was created to study a specific context and not to try and focus on building parsimonious and generalized theory (Hom et al., 2017). Finally, the retention system is an area where organisations must prioritize and focus their most specialized HR. As a corollary of the article, we found that most researchers try to investigate the causes of turnover but do not pay attention to the inhibiting factors that ensure that intention does not turn into turnover behaviour.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although based on rich and reliable contributions, the current study is limited to the bibliography found/analysed and the (numerous) participants' contributions who accepted the challenge to participate in this research. The major strength of this study was the multi-stakeholder sample, consisting of four different group-perspectives, thus creating broader and more nuanced results that would have been the case if all participants shared the same field of expertise and experience. We acknowledge that we did not develop definitive and universal answers to the theme. Though we believe we have presented a comprehensive view of the intention-behaviour gap in the Portuguese military context, we still consider that certain applications may be extended to non-military contexts. We propose further research to examine the contributions identified through a quantitative approach.

Conclusions

This study explored the intention-behaviour gap to identify and improve the understanding of the factors that contribute the most to inhibiting the intentions of military personnel in the voluntary turnover process. Much time has been spent investigating the causes of employee turnover—identifying the reasons for terminations so that they can be corrected and reduce turnover.

However, this approach seems limited, as it only looks at one side of the problem (the termination side) and neglects why others stay (namely, the reasons that prevent/inhibit them from leaving). From the data collection, it was possible to observe two phenomena, the military who, although intending to leave, remain because of their loyalty or ties with the organisation, and those who stay because they have no other option. In this context, the Armed Forces must reinforce the "right" reasons to stay, which are following the objectives of the Institution.

On the other hand, awareness campaigns, endomarketing plans, and gamification strategies should be implemented to reduce the intention and the facilitating factors and concomitantly enhance the inhibiting factors. It is suggested that such preventative measures will not only be effective but will also help to establish a better connection to the organisation. This research provides the first and only focused examination of the factors impeding voluntary turnover; therefore, it is of theoretical and

practical importance because its results have been collected from those targeted, that is, the perception of the military that are living or have already lived within the situation.

Given the specific context under study, few factors identified in the literature were eligible, making it necessary to exclude those that do not adapt, those that are conceptually repeated, or those that do not translate into added value. Moreover, there was a need to include factors of vital interest to the context. Counteracting turnover intentions is a prerogative for organisations that invest significant resources in the recruitment and onboarding processes, such as military ones (Holt et al., 2007). Some studies have used the TPB in voluntary turnover, but in a superficial way and with an emphasis on Time 1 (intention formation stage) of the Vardaman et al. (2015) conceptualization. In our research, we have been able to deepen and fill this gap of Time 2 (behavioural decision stage) in an organisation with a significant exodus of individuals.

For other non-military contexts, we leave our decomposition breakdown of the turnover influences, from which we propose not to include the following factors: field-of-study mismatch (horizontal), cooperation by others, and external context. Still, we strongly advise the use of the following factors: age, job stability, inertia, uncertainty, organisational relationship, and social recognition.

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