

RETHINKING ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE WAKE OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS

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Abstract

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Migration opportunities are perceived as an incentive for many (un)satisfied employees to leave their workplace. Remaining job seekers enjoy more employment opportunities and greater bargaining power for better working conditions, which may ultimately lead to employee satisfaction and greater work autonomy. The objective of this study is to investigate the role of work overload and autonomy on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intent among employees in selected industrial sectors in the wake of migration. The job demands-resource (JD-R) model is used to examine the relationship between work overload, autonomy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intent. The study uses a cross-sectional quantitative approach with one hundred and fifty respondents from different industries. The findings reveal a negative effect of work overload and a positive impact of autonomy on job satisfaction. Results indicate that job satisfaction negatively affects turnover intent and has a positive effect on organizational commitment. Considering the increasing level of migration which serves as an additional incentive to leave organizations, the study suggests that employers should consider multiple strategies centred on the increase of employee satisfaction, reduction of work overload, and increment of autonomy.

Keywords: Migration, Job Satisfaction, Job Demands-Resource Model, Autonomy, Organizational Commitment

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — H.B.; Methodology — H.B.; Formal Analysis — M.G.; Investigation — M.G.; Writing — Original Draft — M.G.; Writing — Review & Editing — H.B.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent eruption of migration among the youth in the Republic of Kosovo has caused significant changes in the relationship between employers and

employees. According to the latest report of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS, 2021b), 42,728 citizens left Kosovo in 2021. The remaining job seekers have more employment opportunities and greater bargaining power to acquire better

working conditions, including more employee autonomy. Employers on the other side, are faced with the scarcity of relevant and skilled labour force. In the attempt to secure the staff for the long run and reduce employee turnover, employers are compelled to provide better working conditions, including various packages of employee benefits and a reduction of work overload.

Despite these positive developments (which are largely attributed to migration which, in turn, is seen as a brain drain in the country), the Republic of Kosovo as a lower-middle-income country continues to struggle with high unemployment and poverty rates. The latest figures note the unemployment rate at 25.8% (KAS, 2021a). The difficult labour market conditions have been especially severe for youth and women and for employees in the private sector. The unemployment rate among these groups has spiked at 49.1%, while the main concern in the private sector remains the unpaid extra working hours. Poor quality of education system, high level of nepotism, coupled with limited employment opportunities, make it difficult for young people to access and retain jobs and those who succeed in finding a job are typically hired into low-skilled, low-productivity positions often in the informal sectors, such as construction or service sector (Mehmeti, 2010).

Under these circumstances, securing a job remains a primary challenge for job seekers, and receiving satisfaction from the job, particularly in the private sector remains an ambition rather than part of employee wellbeing. The intention to leave the job due to work overload (Rensburg et al., 2001), dissatisfaction, and lack of autonomy followed by the minimum possible commitment to the organization remain part of the daily plans for many employees. In line with these developments, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of work overload and autonomy on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intent among employees in selected institutions in the country at the time of increasing migration rate.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a review of the relevant literature pertaining to the topic. Section 3 discusses the methodology that has been employed to conduct this research. Section 4 presents the findings, discussions, and implications of the study, and Section 5 provides the concluding remarks and limitations of the study and proposes future research agenda on the topic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of job satisfaction has been a topic of great interest to social scientists concerned with the problems of work within a society (Kalleberg, 1977). In the early 90s, the attitudes of employees toward satisfaction with the job enhanced the interest of industrial psychologists also because of the impact of attitudes on behaviour at work (Robbins, 1993). For Spector (1997), job satisfaction can be characterized as an attitude concerning the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs. Researchers have shown that job satisfaction is one of the main components of employee well-being, therefore, employee well-being can be explained through the measurement of job satisfaction (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

Previous studies have also shown that job characteristics can have a profound impact on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). For instance, job demands such as work overload, emotional demands, and role ambiguity may lead to physical and psychological problems (Doi, 2005; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), whereas job resources, such as autonomy, may instigate a motivational process leading to job-related learning, work engagement, and organizational commitment (Demerouti et al., 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Taris & Feij, 2004). Researchers have used the job demands-resource (JD-R) model to explain the antecedents and outcomes of well-being. The JD-R model proposes that working conditions can be categorized into two broad categories: job demands and job resources, which are differentially related to specific outcomes (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Therefore, the JD-R model presupposes that job demands and job resources are important for the prediction of job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This study examines how job demands and job resources affect the variables of turnover intent and organizational commitment.

2.1. Work overload and job satisfaction

Work overload is the extent to which the demands of the job are excessive (Agho et al., 1993). It describes situations in which employees feel that there are too many responsibilities or activities expected of them in light of the time available, their abilities, and other constraints (Rizzo et al., 1970). It is argued by Rensburg et al. (2001) that heavy work overload is a major reason for job dissatisfaction.

One of the dual processes of the JD-R model states that poorly designed jobs, or chronic job demands (e.g., work overload), exhaust employees' mental and physical resources and may lead to the depletion of energy, health problems, and lower job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Based on this, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H1a: Work overload is negatively related to job satisfaction.

2.2. Autonomy and job satisfaction

Autonomy is defined as the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in planning the work and in determining the procedures to be used in the implementation (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Research shows that autonomy may be crucial for job satisfaction because greater autonomy is associated with more opportunities to cope with stressful situations (Karasek et al., 1998) and can increase the job satisfaction of employees (Nasution et al., 2021). A positive relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction has been documented for a number of years (Argyris, 1957; Davis & Werling, 1960; Vroom, 1964). The typical worker is thought to be more satisfied when his or her relationship with the work process is characterized by greater self-regulation (Glenn et al., 1977). Carpenter (1971), in his study of the education setting, found that the greater the teacher autonomy and opportunity to use professional authority, the higher the job satisfaction. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1b: Autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction.

2.3. Organizational commitment and job satisfaction

Organizational commitment refers to the relationship of the employees with the organization in which they work (Bakker et al., 2003). Organizational commitment is the bond between the worker and the organization (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Employees with high commitment are loyal to the organization, share its values, and identify with the goals of the organization (Mowday et al., 1979). There is a strong argument that committed employees are seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases their involvement in the organization's goals (Meyer & Allen, 1987). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H2a: Job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment.

2.4. Turnover intent and job satisfaction

There are two general types of turnover; involuntary and voluntary (Price & Mueller, 1986). Involuntary turnover is when a person is removed from his or her job by the employer while voluntary turnover occurs when the employee chooses to quit the job (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). The authors argue that the latter occurs more frequently and tends to be more harmful to the organization than involuntary turnover (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

According to Hellman (1997), increasing dissatisfaction in employees results in a higher chance of considering other employment opportunities. The review of the literature on the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover has reported a consistent negative relationship (Vroom, 1964). A recent study by Chang et al. (2022), among employees in the Internet sector, identified job satisfaction as the most important feature for predicting turnover. Therefore, job satisfaction has been cited as a major contributory factor (Strachota et al., 2003) and a major attitudinal antecedent to turnover intention and turnover behaviour (Ladelsky & Lee, 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis was composed:

H2b: Job satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intention.

3. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire survey was used to collect data and simple random sampling and snow-bowling techniques were used for sampling the respondents. In total 150 questionnaires were distributed and analysed. All the questionnaires were physically distributed. To ensure the respondents understand every question correctly, the questionnaires were translated into the local language (Albanian) and back-translated into English for analysis.

In line with the contextual situation in the country which suggests that working conditions are worse in the private sector (Mehmeti, 2010), respondents working in private enterprises were included in the study. Respondents were segregated by gender, whereby seventy were females while fifty-three percent were males. The study could also use interviews that focus on interpretations rather than numerical reasoning and frequencies as an alternative method for data collection. With this respect, Bryman and Bell (2007) note that interviewing is

the most widespread method for data collection in qualitative research. However, since the researchers wanted this research to be a purely quantitative-based study, the questionnaire survey was used as the sole instrument for data collection.

Some of the measures are based on scales from the validated extended version of the Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work (QEEW; Dutch abbreviation: VBBA) (van Veldhoven & Meijman, 1994), and some are based on an eight-item scale.

Autonomy was measured with the QEEW/VBBA (van Veldhoven & Meijman, 1994). The autonomy scale contains 11 items about a range of aspects that can or cannot be controlled by the individual employee. All items have a four-point scale (1 = "never", 4 = "always").

Work overload contains 8 items that measure work overload, and the items have a five-point scale (1 = "never", 5 = "always"). Job satisfaction was measured with one single item derived from a larger questionnaire developed by Dolbier et al. (2005). The item reads "Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about your job as a whole?". The item is answered on a seven-point scale (1 = "extremely dissatisfied", 7 = "extremely satisfied").

Organizational commitment is measured with the eight-item scale based on Allen and Meyer (1990). The respondents were asked to make evaluations about their connection with the organization. All items have a four-point scale (1 = "never", 4 = "always").

Turnover intent is measured by the following single item: "Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it that you will make a genuine effort to find a new job (with another employer) within the next year?". This item has two answering scales (1 = "very likely", 2 = "not likely at all") (Lambert et al., 2001). Age, educational level, and gender were controlled as suggested by previous studies that men and women may differ in the appraisal of job demands (Geller & Hobfoll, 1994).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As a common procedure, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted for each scale with multiple items. The autonomy scale consisted of 11 items and the results showed that it has a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.804). The work overload scale also showed a good level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.746. This was followed by the reliability test for organizational commitment (Cronbach's alpha = 0.798) and principal component analysis (PCA) on 29 questions that measured 5 different items: work overload, autonomy, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and organization commitment.

Results showed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. However, 4 questions were excluded from the analysis as they did not have any correlation greater than 0.3. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data was likely factorable. Principal component analysis revealed 5 components that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 30.8%, 10.4%, 6.4%, 4.9%, and 4.6% of the total variance. The five-component solution explained 57.1% of the total variance. Component loadings and communalities of the rotated solution are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Rotated structure matrix for PCA with varimax rotation

Items	Rotated component coefficients					
	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5	Communalities
Commitment_Q2	0.838	-0.063	-0.119	0.090	0.069	0.733
Commitment_Q1	0.694	0.154	-0.290	0.034	0.008	0.590
Commitment_Q8	0.651	0.167	-0.042	0.245	-0.312	0.610
Commitment_Q5	0.644	0.188	0.000	0.266	0.158	0.546
Commitment_Q3	0.622	0.200	0.162	0.188	-0.193	0.525
Commitment_Q6	0.608	0.268	-0.165	0.204	-0.059	0.514
Commitment_Q4	0.536	0.410	0.180	0.301	-0.260	0.646
Autonomy_Q5	0.072	0.680	-0.133	0.166	-0.214	0.559
Autonomy_Q6	0.269	0.635	0.107	0.008	-0.260	0.554
Autonomy_Q4	0.134	0.628	-0.252	0.130	-0.195	0.530
Autonomy_Q2	0.196	0.625	-0.117	-0.092	0.445	0.649
Autonomy_Q1	0.183	0.595	-0.316	0.137	-0.015	0.506
Autonomy_Q7	0.464	0.468	-0.078	0.198	-0.215	0.525
Workoverload_Q4	-0.020	-0.099	0.802	-0.137	0.051	0.675
Workoverload_Q3	-0.037	-0.072	0.787	-0.113	0.239	0.697
Job_satisfaction_Q1	0.212	0.329	-0.526	0.074	-0.351	0.558
Reverse-coded						
Workoverload_Q2	-0.169	-0.208	0.493	0.081	0.472	0.545
Autonomy_Q9	0.226	0.136	-0.206	0.725	0.041	0.640
Autonomy_Q10	0.334	0.142	-0.184	0.713	-0.087	0.682
Autonomy_Q11	0.294	0.250	-0.120	0.617	-0.135	0.562
Autonomy_Q8	0.256	0.309	-0.004	0.566	-0.332	0.592
Workoverload_Q6	-0.009	-0.242	0.080	0.432	0.160	0.277
Workoverload_Q1	-0.054	-0.148	0.394	-0.132	0.617	0.578
Workoverload_Q8	-0.036	-0.168	0.212	0.034	0.591	0.424

Note: Extraction method: PCA.

Table 2 presents the correlations of the main variables used in the study. The results confirm the hypothesized negative relationship between job satisfaction, work overload, and turnover intent, and it shows the positive link between job satisfaction, autonomy, and organizational commitment. As can

be seen, the correlations between job satisfaction and turnover intent (-0.385, $p < 0.001$); autonomy (0.474, $p < 0.001$); work overload (-0.608, $p < 0.001$), and organizational commitment (0.342, $p < 0.01$) are all significant.

Table 2. Correlations matrix

Variable	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(1) Age	33.85	12.379							
(2) Gender	0.51	0.502	-0.317***						
(3) Education	0.43	0.497	-0.007	0.056					
(4) Job satisfaction	3.56	1.623	0.117	-0.046	-0.028				
(5) Work overload	2.02	0.533	-0.151	0.061	0.13	-0.608***			
(6) Autonomy	3.45	0.739	-0.015	-0.042	0.027	0.474***	-0.416***		
(7) Turnover intent	1.82	0.385	-0.200*	0.024	0.06	-0.385***	0.275***	-0.306***	
(8) Organizational commitment	2.08	0.611	0.023	-0.028	-0.112	0.342***	-0.225***	0.664***	-0.194**

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.1. The relation of work overload and autonomy to job satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis was carried out to examine the proposed hypotheses. In order to test *H1a*, the control variables were entered in block 1, work overload and autonomy in block 2, and job satisfaction was the dependent variable. In order to test *H2a*, the control variables were entered in block 1, job satisfaction in block 2, and organizational commitment was the dependent variable. In order to test *H2b*, the control variables were entered in block 1, job satisfaction in block 2, and turnover intent was the dependent variable.

Firstly, hypotheses *H1a* and *H1b* were tested. The assumptions of linearity, independence of errors, homoscedasticity, unusual points, and normality of residuals were met. The model summary in Table 3 explains 43.3% of the variance in the scores and this

percentage (R^2) represents the proportion of variance in job satisfaction that can be explained by the work overload and autonomy. Furthermore, Model 2, which includes age, gender, education, autonomy, and work overload explains more variance than Model 1, where only the control variables were included. In Model 2, the independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable (job satisfaction), $F(5, 144) = 21.957$, $p < 0.001$. None of the control variables explains a significant amount of the variance in this multiple-regression analysis. However, the two independent variables, such as autonomy ($\beta = 0.270$) and work overload ($\beta = -0.493$), showed a strong significance, therefore, the findings confirm that autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction and work overload is negatively related to job satisfaction. Regression coefficients, F-change, and standard errors can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis (H1a and H1b)

Variable	Model 1 (Job satisfaction)			Model 2 (Job satisfaction)		
	B	S.E.	β	B	S.E.	β
Age	0.015	0.011	0.114	0.006	0.009	0.049
Gender	-0.027	0.281	-0.008	0.03	0.215	0.009
Education	-0.088	0.269	-0.027	0.093	0.208	0.028
Autonomy				0.821	0.212	0.270***
Work overload				-1.083	0.156	-0.493***
R ²		0.014			0.433	
Adj. R ²		-0.006			0.413	
F		0.712			21.957	
df		3-146			5-144	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. The relationship between job satisfaction and organization commitment

When testing the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the assumptions for linearity, independence of errors, unusual points, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals were met. In Model 2, all variables significantly predicted the dependent variable (organizational commitment), $F(4, 145) = 5.302$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.104$. Whereas the control variables in

Model 1 did not significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(3, 146) = 0.656$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = -0.007$. All three control variables did not add any significant explanation to this regression equation. However, the independent variable (job satisfaction) significantly predicted organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.341$), hence confirming that job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment. Regression coefficients and standard errors are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis (H2a)

Variable	Model 1 (Organizational commitment)			Model 2 (Organizational commitment)		
	B	S.E.	β	B	S.E.	β
Age	0.001	0.004	0.017	-0.001	0.004	-0.021
Gender	-0.02	0.106	-0.016	-0.016	0.1	-0.013
Education	-0.137	0.101	-0.111	-0.125	0.096	-0.102
Job satisfaction				0.128	0.029	0.341***
R ²		0.013			0.128	
Adj. R ²		-0.007			0.104	
F		0.656			5.302	
df		3-146			4-145	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intent

A logistic regression analysis was performed to ascertain the effects of job satisfaction and three control variables (age, gender, and education) on the turnover intent as a dependent variable. The reason that logistic regression analysis is used in testing the hypothesis was because the outcome variable (turnover intent) was binary or dichotomous. The outcome variable was reverse-coded 1 = "not

likely at all" and 2 = "very likely". The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\text{Chi-square}(1) = 26.922$, $p < 0.001$. The model explained 26.9% (Nagelkerke R^2) of variance in turnover intentions and correctly classified 82% of cases. Of the four predictor variables, only age and job satisfaction were statistically significant (-0.640) as shown in Table 5. Therefore, these findings confirm H2b that job satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intentions.

Table 5. Logistic regression analysis (Turnover intent – H2b)

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds ratio (OR)	95% confidence interval for the OR	
							Lower	Upper
Age	-0.039*	0.019	4.266	1	0.039	0.962	0.927	0.998
Gender	-0.302	0.514	0.345	1	0.557	0.740	0.270	2.024
Education	0.339	0.495	0.468	1	0.494	1.403	0.532	3.700
Job satisfaction	-0.640***	0.154	17.226	1	0.000	0.527	0.390	0.713
Constant	5.526	1.134	23.749	1	0.000	251.079		

Note: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$.

5. CONCLUSION

The study used the job demands-resource (JD-R) model to investigate how the job demand (work overload) and the job resource (autonomy) are related to job satisfaction, turnover intent, and commitment. The JD-R model predicts that high job demands are negatively related to job satisfaction. A sample of 150 respondents in the private sector

was used to test the hypotheses. The results from this study confirmed the negative correlation between work overload and job satisfaction. The findings show that there is a direct effect of work overload on job satisfaction. The second part of the JD-R model attests that job resources contribute positively to job satisfaction. The findings confirm that autonomy as a job resource directly affects job satisfaction. Therefore, two working

conditions were identified to be the main causes of job satisfaction among employees in the country.

The study provides strong evidence for the role which job satisfaction has on organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Results show that job satisfaction has a direct effect on organizational commitment and a strong effect on turnover intentions. In line with previous studies, results indicate that employees in Kosovo tend to leave their organizations when their satisfaction with the job is low.

Employees perceive work overload as one of the determinants of organizational commitment and their job satisfaction to link these two variables. Therefore, employees tend to be quite sensitive toward their work overload, and as their work overload increases, the intent to leave the organization increases. According to the findings, when work overload is present among employees, job satisfaction decreases, therefore they begin to consider leaving the organization. The increasing migration opportunities serve as additional motivating factors for quitting the job.

Finally, the findings show strong evidence that autonomy is a very important element for employees, and it serves as a means of increasing or decreasing one's job satisfaction. Therefore, the research supports the argument that autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The findings also reveal that employees are committed to the organization only when they are satisfied with their jobs and this satisfaction is followed by autonomy in their workplace. The primary condition for employees is to be satisfied with basic working conditions and then to look for some sort of autonomy which serves as a motivating factor for commitment to the organization. This explains that job resource such as autonomy is preferred by the employees only when job satisfaction is increased. Unfortunately, the results show that employees in the private sector

experience low autonomy and job satisfaction, therefore the tendencies to leave the organizations fuelled by migration prospects remain high. Considering the ongoing migration at an increasing rate, the intention to leave the organizations among employees may further increase.

This paper has two main limitations: First, most of the data were collected from the staff employed in the private sector and does not represent the perspectives of employees working in the public sector. Second, the study included sectors that are mostly hit by migration opportunities and involved only 150 respondents. Expanding the study in the public sector and increasing the number of sectors and respondents would provide additional insights to the findings. Therefore, future researchers could include a wider national representative sample which would give much more confident findings. Moreover, as the research was done only in one country, future researchers might want to conduct a cross-country analysis to compare two or more countries, thus producing better assumptions and predictions regarding the level of employee wellbeing in Kosovo.

Further studies are needed to investigate approaches and measures that employers need to take to ensure the retention of employees. Future studies should examine the most prevailing and motivating factors for employees to remain and leave the organization. Researchers could investigate employee turnover caused by migration over the last years at specific industries or selected organizations and the benefits that have been provided by employers as protective measures to retain employees. Finally, researchers could use the JD-R model to conduct a comparative study between the public and private sectors and investigate the effects of migration on employee turnover in each sector.

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