

# **You Better Be Glad I Love My Job!**

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*Purpose - This paper investigates the effect of job satisfaction as it moderates the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload when deviant behavior is the dependent variable.*

*Design/methodology/approach - A survey was used with a sample size of 171.*

*Findings- Results show that despite prior research to the contrary, role overload is negatively associated with deviant behavior. Also, we confirmed that job satisfaction buffers role overload and intent to turnover.*

*Practical implications - The findings offer important insights into the power of job satisfaction. When the employees are content with their role, they are willing to deal with conditions that are less than ideal.*

*Originality - This study extends our understanding of the effect of job satisfaction in a negative environment. It also demonstrates the need to revisit the relationship between role overload and deviant behavior.*

*Keywords: organizational citizenship behaviors, intent to turnover, role overload, job satisfaction*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Losing employees is expensive. From the cost of replacing them (Allen et al., 2010), to the lost productivity (Kacmar et al., 2006) to the potential issues with customer service (Hancock et al., 2013), the loss of good people can hurt the firm and its standing in the community. Apart from direct costs is knowledge loss (Cascio, 2006). After being in a position for an extended period of time, one develops techniques that improve their effectiveness and their efficiency. When that person leaves, their knowledge leaves with them and one of the key contributors is role overload (Jones et al., 2007; Christian & Ellis, 2014).

Role overload is the perception of having more work than time to complete the assignments (Coverman, 1989; Pearlin 1989; Hecht, 2001). While there are times when role overload forces an employee to stretch and discover that they can do more than they expected (Tariq et. al., 2023), it is assumed that being in this

state is negative as the typical response to the stress of role overload is aggravation which can lead to deviant behavior (Eissa & Lester, 2017). Therefore, this paper theorizes that there is a direct relationship between role overload and deviant behavior.

Deviant behavior is defined as the willful committing of acts that are meant to cause harm to the people of the organization, the organization itself, or both (Kelloway et al., 2010). The open nature of the definition allows for the inclusion of behaviors such as theft (Greenberg, 1990), sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002), workplace violence, and aggression (Barling, Dupre', & Kelloway, 2009; Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006), incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), revenge (Bies & Tripp, 2005), service sabotage (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002), substance abuse on company time, aggression, call outs, and tardiness (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Spector et al., 2006).

The direct and indirect costs of deviant behavior have largely driven the continued interest in the topic. Every year, American companies lose billions to theft which is partly responsible for many failures (Buss, 1993; Camara & Schneider, 1994; Greenberg, 1990, 1997). In the service sector, it is estimated that theft is responsible for \$200 million in annual loss (Green, 1997; Murphy, 1993; Thoms et al., 2001; Christian & Ellis, 2013). Along with the direct cost are the indirect costs of "loss of productivity, damage to the organization's reputation, and even loss of customers" (Bowling & Gruys, 2010). Other associated indirect costs include detrimental effects on the mental health of the employees who are having to deal with this person.

It has been found that job satisfaction creates a buffer against role overload (Gillet et al., 2021) through the reduction of stress (Wang et al., 2020). The purpose of this paper is to explore this connection when job satisfaction moderates the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload when deviant behavior is the outcome variable. In doing so, it will advance the literature and take another step towards understanding the workplace.

## **THEORY**

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, postulates that people desire to build, maintain, and defend their resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Such resources are "those entities that either are centrally valued in their own right (e.g., self-esteem, close attachments, health and inner peace) or act as a means to obtain centrally valued ends (e.g. money, social support and credit)" (Hobfoll, 2002: 307). COR, has two central tenets. The first says that the psychological strain of losing a resource is worse than the benefit of gaining (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Considering that people actively work to prevent losses, this event can have a profound effect (Halbesleben et.al, 2014). The second tenet is the investment of resources. Persons attempt to use the resources at their disposal to prevent a loss, regain from a loss, and/or rebuild (Hobfoll, 2001). When either of these tenets are not satisfied, stress results and the most common reaction to stressful work events is burnout (Hutchins et al., 2017), which Maslach (1982) describes as emotional exhaustion. Halbesleben and Buckley (2004) describe those in this state as feeling as though they have given all that they can and now feel empty. Hobfoll (2001) also provided three corollaries. First, it is easier to invest when you have something to invest. Second, as resources dwindle, the difficulty of investing increases. Third, as your investments yield more resources, it is easier to invest more.

As role overload describes having more to do than time to do it, time is the resource (Coverman, 1989; Pearlin, 1989; Hecht, 2001). Due to the finite nature of the resource of time, if the work continues to increase, at a given point there will not be enough time to complete the work assigned. Employees with insufficient time (resources) to complete tasks may contemplate leaving the organization as a method of protecting themselves from further loss. This corresponds to the second tenet of COR as the employee seeks to regain and rebuild from the consistent loss of the resource of time. Thoughts of leaving an organization have been deemed turnover intention (Adebayo, 2011). Therefore, due to the positive relationship between role overload and intent to turnover (Jones et al., 2007), we hypothesize that:

***Hypothesis #1: There is a positive relationship between intent to turnover and role overload.***

As role overload is the feeling of having too much to do without the time or other resources to accomplish the task, it can lead to stress. To deal with this stress the employee may engage in coping mechanisms that may include deviant behavior (Spector & Fox, 2010). The feelings of role overload have also been associated with burnout, which Bolino & Turnley (2005) discovered could also lead to deviant behavior. Last, role overload load has been found to negatively affect the employee's commitment to the organization. In doing so, the employee feels less attached and as such is more willing to participate in deviant behavior (Penney & Spector, 2005), therefore we hypothesize that:

***Hypothesis #2: There is a positive relationship between Role Overload and Deviant Behavior.***

Employees who are pleased with their position, feel a sense of organizational support, which reduces the intent turnover (Afsar & Badir, 2016). This can be explained by Bakker et al. (2020). Their work demonstrates that those who are satisfied in their work are less likely to burnout. Given that burnout is associated with intent to turnover, decreasing the likelihood of burnout will decrease the likelihood of intent to turnover, therefore we hypothesize that:

***Hypothesis #3: Job Satisfaction moderates the relationship between Intent to Turnover and Role Overload such that when Job satisfaction is high the relationship between Intent to Turnover and Role Overload weakens.***

In their work, Christian and Ellis (2014) found a strong positive connection between intent to turnover and deviant behavior through moral disengagement. Further, they state that there is an inverse relationship between bonds that ensure organizationally normed behavior and intent to turnover. Therefore, as the desire to leave increases, the decreasing felt obligation to abide by the rules paves the way for the increased likelihood of deviant behavior (Christian & Ellis, 2014), therefore we hypothesize that:

***Hypothesis #4: There is a positive, direct relationship between intent to turnover and deviant behavior.***

## **METHODS**

### **Role Overload**

Participants described the level of their perceived role overload. The survey utilizes a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Peterson et al., 1995). Five items evaluate role overload. Sample items are "The amount of work I have to do interferes with the quality I want to maintain" and "I feel overburdened in my role at work" (Peterson et al., 1995). The Cronbach alpha is 0.93.

### **Intent to Turnover**

Subordinates indicated their intent to turnover with three items from Seashore et al. (1982). The survey utilizes a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Seashore et al., 1982). Sample items are "It is likely that I will actively look for a new job in the next year" and "I will probably look for a new job in the next year" (Seashore et al., 1982). The Cronbach alpha is 0.92.

### **Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)**

Subordinates indicated their propensity for deviant behavior with eight items from Aquino et al. (1999). The survey utilizes a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Aquino et al., 1999). Sample items are "I have taken undeserved breaks to avoid work" and "I have lied about the number of hours I worked" (Aquino et al., 1999). The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.89.

## Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured with Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh's (1979) three-item scale ( $\alpha=.86$ ) from the Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. A sample item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job."

## RESULTS

Table 1 includes means, correlations, and standard deviations of the variables used in this study. As expected, the correlations between intent to turnover and role overload ( $r = 0.33, p < .001$ ) as well as job satisfaction and intent to turnover ( $r = -.028, p < .001$ ) were significant.

**TABLE 1**  
**MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, & CORRELATIONS**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. ROLE OVERLOAD	2.36	0.95				
2. INTENT	2.61	1.29	0.33***			
3. DEVIANT BEHAVIOR	1.61	0.63	0.15*	0.33***		
4. JOB SATISFACTION	4.17	0.72	-0.28***	-0.55***	-0.33***	

Notes: N=175.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To determine the discriminant validity, the Fornell Larcker (1981) test was applied. In doing so, the square root of the average variance explained (AVE) of every scale presents a value that must be greater than its aligning associated latent variable (Carlson et al., 2008). As seen on the diagonal in Tables 5a and 5b, all scales passed.

To test the hypotheses, Model 7 of the process macro in SPSS was employed (Hayes, 2015) and the output can be found in Tables 2 - 4. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed as the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload is significant ( $b = 0.1856, p = .0038$ ), Table 2. The relationship between role overload and deviant behavior was also significant ( $b = -0.1392, p = .0056$ ), therefore the second hypothesis is also confirmed. This finding suggests that despite previous literature (e.g., Spector & Fox, 2005), increased role overload may decrease the likelihood of deviant behavior. However, the indirect effect of intent to turnover on deviant behavior, mediated by role overload, lacked significance (LLCI =  $-.0403$ , ULCI =  $.1047$ ), which suggests that role overload did not mediate the relationship.

Table 4 confirms hypothesis 3 as it shows that job satisfaction when moderate and high, significantly moderates this relationship between intent to turnover and role overload. Low ( $b = .0854, p = .2433$ ), moderate ( $b = .1513, p = .0207$ ), and high ( $b = .3490, p < .001$ ). Therefore, highly satisfied employees have a greater ability to resist the negative impact of the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload.

**TABLE 2  
MEDIATION RESULTS**

DV	Role Overload					Deviant Behavior				
	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
IV										
<i>Intent</i>	.1856	.0632	.0038	.0609	.3103	.0322	.0367	.3817	-.0403	.1047
Mediator										
<i>Role Overload</i>						-.1392	.0496	.0056	-.2371	-.0413
R <sup>2</sup>					.1658					.0438
F					11.3250					3.9440

N=175

LLCI= Lower - Level Confidence Interval

ULCI = Upper – Level Confidence Interval

DV = Dependent Variable

IV = Independent Variable

**TABLE 3  
INDEX OF MODERATED MEDIATION**

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
JobSat	-.0275	.0150	-.0593	-.0011

**TABLE 4  
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF THE FOCAL PREDICTOR AT VALUES OF THE MODERATOR**

JobSat	Effect	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Low (-1 SD)	.0854	.0730	1.1709	.2433	-.0586	.2295
Moderate (mean)	.1513	.0648	2.3352	.0207	.0234	.2793
High (+1 SD)	.3490	.0810	4.3066	.0000	.1890	.5090

LLCI= Lower - Level Confidence Interval

ULCI = Upper – Level Confidence Interval

Values are standardized regression coefficients

**TABLES 5**  
**HTMT & FORNELL LARKER CRITERION**

intent <-> deviant	0.358
jobsat <-> deviant	0.383
jobsat <-> intent	0.614
rover <-> deviant	0.173
rover <-> intent	0.360
rover <-> jobsat	0.309

	deviant	intent	jobsat	rover
deviant	0.760			
intent	0.330	0.932		
jobsat	-0.339	-0.561	0.885	
rover	0.200	0.342	-0.306	0.883

### **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The results of this study introduce the possibility that there are circumstances when role overload does not necessarily lead to deviant behavior, which is counter to the findings of previous studies by Spector & Fox (2005), Eissa & Lester (2017), and others. It also demonstrates that job satisfaction is enough to counter the effect of the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study adds to the literature that is devoted to the reduction of deviant behaviors in the workplace. The finding that job satisfaction buffers the effect of the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload informs us that organizations should be focused on ensuring that their members are satisfied in their roles. This can be done in a myriad of ways. First, invest in getting to know and understand the members of the organization. It will be difficult to increase their satisfaction without knowing what parts of the job please and displease them. Second, as the relationship between role overload and intent to turnover is positive, it is imperative to develop practices that assist in the proper management of the workload. The overseers must be charged with ensuring that the workload is fair to both the employee and the company. This includes performance goals and evaluations that are rooted in reality. It also includes schedules that are as flexible as the position permits. Last, the managers should be equipped and empowered to aide overloaded workers. Whether it is due to their position or their home life, workers can find themselves overburdened and overloaded. The manager must be able to spot this and provide the needed assistance.

### **CONCLUSION**

This work runs counter to previous research that suggests that overloaded employees are going to participate in deviance. Our research suggests that this is not always the case and as such, more work is needed. This study also informs of the buffering ability of job satisfaction when moderating the relationship between intent to turnover and role overload. Considering the costs of lost productivity and acquisition of new talent, it is in the best interests of organizations to maintain a low turnover. This work helps to inform supervisors of the power of ensuring the highest level of job satisfaction possible.

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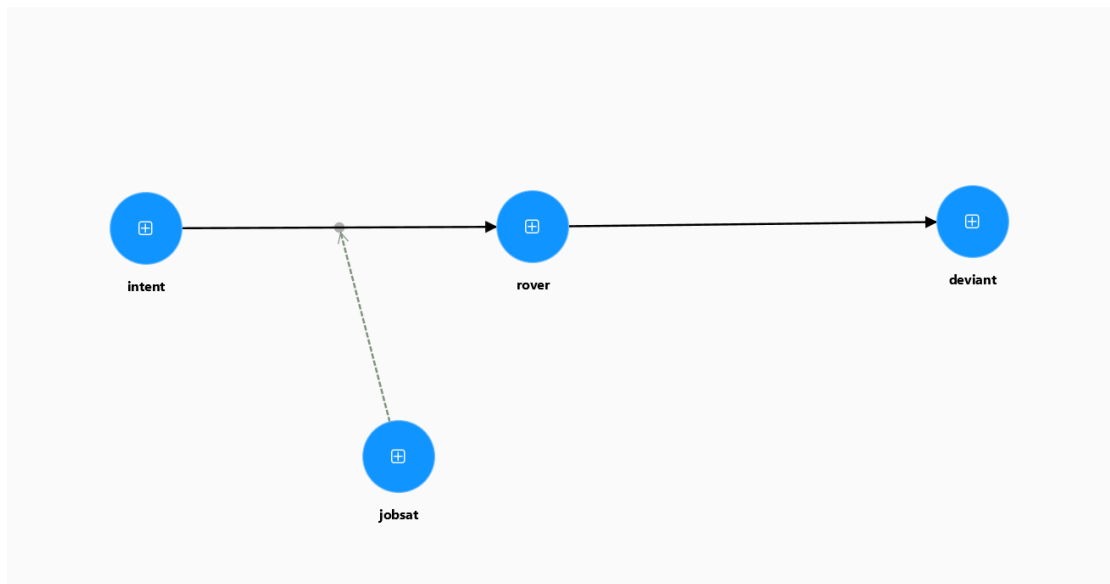
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## APPENDIX 1: MODEL



## APPENDIX 2: SIMPLE SLOPE

