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# Fostering Job Satisfaction and Loyalty: A Deep Dive into Romania's Gas Sector

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## ABSTRACT

*This research delves into how different structural factors influence employee satisfaction and organizational commitment in three job categories within a prominent public gas company in Romania. The research adopted a multidimensional perspective on organizational commitment and job satisfaction, further enriched by incorporating the propensity for maintaining the status quo. We collected survey data, which included 2,641 respondents from 32 branches of the company across the country and employed the Partial Least Squares – Path Modeling (PLS-PM) approach with WarpPLS 7.0 for our empirical analyses. The findings highlight the critical role of job satisfaction as a mediator between structural determinants, including organizational, job-related, and individual characteristics, and organizational commitment. Conversely, several predictors appear unsuitable for interventions aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction. Variations in the effects of predictors on organizational commitment across different employee categories offer insights for potential intervention strategies.*

**Keywords:** gas sector, public companies; turnover concern, job satisfaction, organizational commitment

**JEL Classification:** D23, J28, L23, L25.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment (OC) and job satisfaction (JS) are the two core concepts for value-driven approaches in both managerial practices and governance models (Herbst and Houmanfar 2009; Houmanfar and Szarko 2021). OC pertains to the extent of individuals' identification with and commitment to their employing organizations (Grego-Planer 2019). JS refers to the emotional state arising from the interactions between employees and their work environment (Wright and Davis 2003). OC and JS have been either independently or jointly explored in relation to private sector organizations, leading to robust evidence of their roles in predicting turnover intentions and organizational performance (Azam 2023; Bolt, Winterton, and Cafferkey 2022). Among existing literature, an important research stream focuses on contrasting the effects of OC and JS in private and public environments. This body of work produced mixed findings on how organizational behaviors differ specifically for employees in the public sector. While these variations in findings manifest in ways that may appear intuitive – such as lower levels of OC and JS in the public sector, these findings are inconclusive and highly heterogeneous across individuals and organizations. For instance, the differences spotted in employees' organizational behaviors may be evident only among employees with managerial roles as opposed to executive positions, or may be context-dependent such that they appear only in some specific organizational climates (Baarspul and Wilderom 2011). These limitations in prior findings are further exacerbated in the broader new public management (NPM) literature and post-NPM literature focusing on the public sector. This gives the rise to the need to explore the efficacy of organizational policies that may enhance operational efficiency and value creation in public organizations (Reiter and Klenk 2019).

Following this research stream and the suggestion that there is more variance to unveil in relation to OC and JS when looking at industries and not simply sectors (Steinhaus and Perry 1996), our paper investigates one of the largest state-owned gas enterprises in Romania and examines its employees' attitudes and perceptions toward their working environment. The state-owned enterprises (SOEs) serve as an ideal context for exploring the dynamics of human resources, given that their organizational structures commonly embody a blend of both public and private institutional logics. Moreover, SOEs have also been posited as potential catalysts for technological innovation (Tõnurist and Karo 2016). Research on SOEs in China corroborates the presence of a passive continuance commitment among employees. Specifically, these employees prioritize job stability; however, this focus on job security is misaligned with the core organizational values, resulting in diminished

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motivation to contribute to the overall organizational performance (Wang 2004; Yu and Egri 2005).

The objective of this study is to investigate the structural determinants that influence OC and JS, while additionally inquiring whether JS serves as a mediating factor for OC. Our work departs from the classical Three-Component Model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment (Meyer and Allen 1984; 1991; Allen and Meyer 1996; Meyer et al. 2002; Mathieu and Zajac 1990) by focusing on the structural determinants of O, which can be categorized into three categories – namely, job-related factors (i.e., role conflict, role ambiguity, workload, routinization, autonomy), organization-related factors (i.e., pay, distributive justice, and promotional chances), and interpersonal factors (i.e., peer support and supervisory support). This unidimensional approach was chosen as it encapsulates various organizational procedures and structures that we deem essential for differentiating between private and state-owned companies in Romania. Moreover, incorporating status-quo tendency into our model is a nuanced reflection of the communist legacy of Romania. In that historical context, the norm of enforced occupational stability was a defining feature, often manifested in individuals holding a single job throughout their lifetime. This cultural imprint continues to resonate among the mature or older segments of the population. Such a phenomenon is mirrored in the literature on the System Justification Theory (Jost and Banaji 1994), which posits that status-quo, in the context of institutions, jobs, social systems, can be positively appreciated as a coping strategy (Proudfoot and Kay 2014). Indeed, anxieties stemming from the market uncertainties, or the competitive pressures may be mitigated through reinforcing the existing status quo, hence attenuating the perceived shortcomings of a given system or occupational role.

Our study adopts a partial least squares-path modeling (PLS-PM) approach to investigate the relationships between the structural determinants and OC, as well as JS. Additionally, the study examines the mediating role of JS and account for potential nonlinearities within the path model, thereby offering robust insights for the design of human resources interventions aimed at enhancing motivation and improving organizational climate. Furthermore, a multi-group analysis is conducted to shed light on the differences in perceptions across various job positions (i.e., middle management, support/administrative staff, and workers) within the same organization. This approach advances the understanding of the sources of heterogeneity in our comparative findings.

Our findings confirm the applicability of the classically derived TCM model, demonstrating statistical significance for most predicting variables, as well as the relevance of extending the model to include the status-quo tendency. JS indeed acts as a mediator between structural determinants and

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OC, suggesting the need for further exploration of these constructs. Our study enriches the management literature on OC and JS, which has primarily focused on private sectors, by leveraging novel data from a Romanian SOE, an organizational context that has been largely underexplored. We examine a work environment where employees are inclined to prioritize career stability over job fulfillment and propose a theoretical extension of the model through the inclusion of status-quo tendencies. The observed positive influence of status-quo on OC and JS suggests that such a tendency may serve as a coping strategy for employees to navigate the complexities of organizational culture under the constraints of formalized human resource management procedures. Our study also recognizes the role of administrative staff in organizational management - a group often overlooked by the existing literature, while taking into account the positional heterogeneity among workers and managers.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. JOB-RELATED FACTORS**

The job-related determinants for OC and JS refer to employees' perceptions of tasks associated with their occupational roles. One pivotal factor relates to the workload with a given position (Bowling and Kirkendall 2012). Extensive research substantiates that excessive workload can be a significant stressor (Pindek et al. 2023), negatively influencing both OC and JS in a non-linear fashion (Bowling et al. 2015). Conversely, interventions designed to calibrate workloads have shown efficacy in enhancing employees' JS and OC in public sectors (Nguyen and Tuan 2022). Additionally, role ambiguity and role clarity are also found impactful. On the one hand, role ambiguity, characterized by the absence of clear information regarding task responsibilities or role expectations (Satheesh et al. 2023), tends to elicit negative emotions, thereby adversely influencing JS and OC, particularly in contexts involving public-private collaborations, (Crosno et al. 2009; Gaertner 1999). On the other hand, role clarity, where expectations and responsibilities are clearly delineated, has been shown to positively correlate with JS and OC across various sectors, such as healthcare (Orgambidez and Almeida 2020), higher education (Locke, Fitzpatrick, and White 1983), service industries (Chung, Jang, and Edelson 2021). Moreover, employees' perceived empowerment and autonomy further emerge as critical structural determinants. Prior studies affirm that employee autonomy exerts the strongest positive effects on JS when compared to other structural factors (Lamberti 2021).

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H1a. A reasonable perception of the workload positively influences OC and JS.

H1b. A low sense of role ambiguity positively influences OC and JS.

H1c. Role clarity positively influences OC and JS.

H1d. Perceived autonomy positively influences OC and JS.

## **2.2. ORGANIZATION-RELATED FACTORS**

The role of recognition in influencing JS and OC often proves to be a subject of contention. In sectors as diverse as information technology in the United States and Brazil (Joseph et al. 2007; Ramalho Luz, Luiz de Paula, and de Oliveira 2018), to the travel industry in Serbia (Dramićanin, Perić, and Pavlović 2021), as well as the oil and gas sectors in Bahrain (Ayari and AlHamaqi 2022) and Libya (Shurbagi and Zahari 2014), recognition with financial incentives has been empirically established as a significant factor affecting JS and OC. However, financial recognition is not the sole determinants of JS and OC. Among other organization-related determinants, the perception of evaluation fairness, often conceptualized as distributive justice, has been identified as exerting the strongest positive influence on both JS and OC (Gaertner 1999). Additionally, research in the US healthcare sector has illuminated the relationship between organizational support and employees' continuance intention, suggesting that opportunities for development and career promotion hold comparable significance to pay levels and evaluation practices (Kasdorf and Kayaalp 2021).

H2a. A strong sense of recognition positively influences OC and JS.

H2b. Promotion opportunities positively influence OC and JS.

H2c. Evaluation fairness positively influences OC and JS.

## **2.3. INTERPERSONAL FACTORS**

Falling under the broader umbrella of social support, both peer and supervisory support serve as vital relational mechanisms that offer employees assistance and guidance. Peer support manifests in two distinct dimensions: affective and instrumental nature. The affective dimension entails empathic listening and the expression of care, while the instrumental aspect involves practical support such as assisting with work responsibilities and facilitating schedule changes (Major et al. 2008). Empirical evidence suggests that peer support positively influence both OC and JS by improving job performance and reducing turnover intentions (Findler, Wind, and Barak 2007; Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, and King 2008; Tamer and Dereli 2014). Comparatively, the influence of supervisor support on JS appears to be more potent than that

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of peer support (Gaertner 1999). This may be attributed to the established relationship between supervisor support and career development and reduced turnover intentions (Kalidass and Bahron 2015). Furthermore, within the framework of social exchange theory, support provided by supervisors who are often viewed as organizational proxies can foster positive attitudes towards the organization (Casper et al. 2011). Supervisory support also contribute to the cultivation of affective organizational commitment, thereby highlight its salient role in enhancing JS and OC (Gagnon and Michael 2004).

H3a. Peer support positively influences OC and JS.

H3b. Supervisor support positively influences OC and JS.

#### **2.4. STATUS QUO**

Status quo bias is defined as a preference for preserving the current way of doing things (Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988). This bias has been widely investigated across many industries and contexts (Godefroid, Plattfaut, and Niehaves 2022), with some recent applications on organizational citizenship behaviors (Proudfoot and Kay 2014). More specifically, there is evidence showing that the instances of sportsmanship (e.g., employees' willingness to tolerate less than ideal workplace circumstances without complaining) (Organ and Paine 1999) and compliance (e.g., adherence to organizational rules and norms) as derivatives of status quo and system justifying tendencies. While the underlying mechanisms are related to the avoidance of the negative aspects in a system, with respect to the legitimization of those aspects perceived as being unchangeable, the outcomes are that those bearing such beliefs will be more committed to the organization and, at least declaratively, more satisfied, with their job.

H4. A tendency towards the status quo positively influences OC and JS.

#### **2.5. MEDIATION**

Based on samples across various occupations (e.g., teachers, agricultural professionals, auto workers, hospital employees, nurses, white-collar workers, and physicians), the meta-analytical study conducted by (Gaertner 1999) revealed a structural employee turnover model in which the impacts of job-related structural determinants and one of the interpersonal determinants – peer support – on OC are fully mediated by employees' JS. For the rest of the categories, the extant research does not explicitly test for mediation, but we consider an aggregate perspective in our current framework, thus, we extend the logic to the entire set of determinants.

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H5: JS is a mediator between our considered set of determinants and OC.

In addition to the cultural and industrial differences, the inconsistent findings on the determinants of OC and JS may also be the results of the different “positional” perspectives. In other words, the structural determinants may exert differential impacts on employees with different job positions (e.g., employees, managers, or department heads). For example, (Korsakienė et al. 2015) found that in an IT company of Lithuania, senior specialists’ and managers’ job satisfaction is most correlated with their co-worker relationships, while having competitive financial rewards and self-realization opportunities are most correlated with job satisfaction of the department heads. Moreover, they also found that ‘specialists’ and senior ‘specialists’ decisions to leave the company are more likely to be influenced by inadequate financial compensation, while the leadership style and the learning and advancement opportunities may have more deterministic influences on the turnover decisions of project managers and department heads. More recently, (Lamberti 2021) has adopted Pathmox multi-group analysis to categorize employees of a Spanish bank into junior employees, senior employees, and managers primarily based on their job level and experience. They show that pay and leadership are more important to junior employees, whereas empowerment is more relevant to senior employees. Also, managers care more about company reputation and work conditions compared to other employee groups (Lamberti, Aluja Banet, and Rialp Criado 2022).

H6: There are perception differences about the determinants of OC and JS among groups of employees (i.e., middle management, administration/support staff, and workers).

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **3.1. DATA**

Our data was collected on a voluntary basis from 32 branches of the company, located all over the country, and consists of 2641 respondents, aged 20 – 69 (mean = 48.33 years, median = 50 years), 73% men. Out of the total, 7.1% are top and middle management representatives, 30.6% are support employees, and the rest are workers. This distribution mirrors the overall structure of the company staff. The time spent in the energy field varies between half a year and 47 years (mean = 19.48 years, median = 20 years), similar to the time spent in a company ranges between a minimum of half a year and a maximum of 47 years (mean = 17.32 years, median = 88 years).

### 3.2. MEASUREMENT

To measure organizational commitment, we used the Three-Component Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer and Allen 1991; Meyer, Allen, and Smith 1993; Allen and Meyer 1993), and for the job satisfaction measure, the team employed the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, and England 1967). In addition, we followed the research design proposed by (Gaertner 1999) to develop our research model and hypotheses. Table 1 summarizes the main variables used in the mode, along with the exact wording for each item and their corresponding measurement scale.

#### Variables involved in the model

Table 1

Variable	Acronym	Item	Measurement
<b>Organization-related factors</b>			
Recognition	REC	How satisfied are you with the level of recognition you receive in your organization?	Likert 1-5
Promotion opportunities	PO	I am satisfied with the promotion opportunities that I have.	1-10
Evaluation fairness	EF	My work is assessed based on fair performance criteria.	Likert 1-5
<b>Interpersonal factors</b>			
Peer support	PS	I collaborate well with my work colleagues	Likert 1-5
Supervisor support	SS	My supervisor is providing me with the needed guidance and support. I can always count on my supervisor for support and advice when I need it. My supervisor understands my needs and problems.	Likert 1-5
<b>Job-related factors</b>			
Workload	WL	I find my daily workload reasonable.	Likert 1-5
Role ambiguity	ROLE_AM	I know what results are expected from me.	Likert 1-5
Perceived autonomy	AUTONOM	My supervisor trusts me.	Likert 1-5
Role clarity	ROUTIN	I know what I have to do with my job.	Likert 1-5
Status quo	SQ	Too much would change if I left the company and went to a different one. If I were given a new job offer from a different company tomorrow, I would probably refuse it.	Likert 1-5
Job satisfaction	JS1 JS2	I would recommend the company to my close friends and family as a good workplace. If you could assess your job from 1 to 10, where 1 is very bad, and 10 is very good, what grade would you give it?	1-10
Organizational commitment	OC1 OC2	I care about the faith of the company I work for. I am genuinely proud that I work for this company.	Likert 1-5



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### 3.3. METHOD

A Partial Least Squares – Path Modeling (PLS-PM) (Joreskog and Wold 1982) with WarpPLS 7.0 is adopted to test our hypotheses. PLS-PM is a component-based modeling approach compared to the covariance-based structural equation models that allows maximizing the explained variance of the endogenous variables – i.e., job satisfaction and organizational commitment- as explained by the determinants in the conceptual framework presented in Table 1. Our PLS-PM analysis conducted through WarpPLS accounts for the nonlinearity among the factors in the path model. The PLS-PM model consists of the outer model (or measurement model) and the inner model (or the structural model). The outer model estimates the relationship between the latent constructs in terms of composite indices, while the inner model tests the path relationships among the latent variables themselves. In the following section, we first present the descriptive statistics of our sample. Next, we assess the composite reliability, the reliability among variables, and the convergent and discriminant validities among constructs of our outer model. We then estimate our inner structural model using Warp 3.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. THE OUTER MODEL

Although the responses were highly skewed, indicating an overall tendency towards high scores, the measurement shows good internal consistency, as Table 2 presents. The Cronbach's Alpha values are higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7 for three out of the latent constructs (Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and Supervisor support), but it is very low for the fourth latent construct, Leaving company, with a value of only 0.354. However, the composite reliability index falls within the interval of 0.756 to 0.946, above the theoretical threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 2010). We rely on previous recommendations available in the literature and accept Leaving the company as a reliable measure based on the composite reliability index (Nunnally and Bernstein, 2010; Cortina 1993). The values of the average variance extracted are higher than the recommended value of 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988), starting with a minimum of 0.608 for Leaving the company up to a maximum of 0.869 for Organizational commitment. The convergent validity holds.

**Measurement reliability – convergent validity**

*Table 2*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Composite reliability index</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Organizational commitment	0.930	0.849	0.869
Job Satisfaction	0.874	0.712	0.776
Supervisor support	0.946	0.914	0.854
Status quo	0.756	0.354	0.608

Tables 3 and 4 support discriminant validity. First, Table 3 shows that all the diagonal blocks include values above the minimum recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair 1998), and all the non-diagonal values are lower than the corresponding block diagonal values.

**Combined loadings and cross-loadings**

*Table 3*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Organizational commitment</b>	<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>Supervisor support</b>	<b>ROLE_CO</b>
OC1	0.932	-0.149	0.021	-0.024
OC2	0.932	0.149	-0.021	0.024
JS1	0.262	0.881	-0.073	0.019
JS2	-0.262	0.881	0.073	-0.019
SS1	-0.051	0.048	0.892	-0.013
SS2	0.025	-0.035	0.946	0.002
SS3	0.023	-0.011	0.934	0.010
SQ1	-0.105	-0.054	-0.086	0.779
SQ2	0.105	0.054	0.086	0.779

In addition, Table 4 shows that all the diagonal values are higher than 0.8, and all the non-diagonal values are lower than the corresponding diagonal values (Kennedy 2008).

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**Correlation between latent constructs (sqrt AVE on the main diagonal)**

*Table 4*

	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Supervisor support	Leaving company
Organizational commitment	0.932	0.725	0.426	0.337
Job satisfaction	0.725	0.881	0.502	0.346
Supervisor support	0.426	0.502	0.924	0.201
Leaving company	0.337	0.346	0.201	0.779

**4.2. THE INNER MODEL**

We estimated a structural model exploring the determinants of organizational commitment, as identified in the literature (Price 2001; Gaertner 1999; Kim et al. 1996; Curry et al. 1986) using job satisfaction as a mediator. Table 5 presents the estimated coefficients of the model, showing that the model has good explanatory power, with an R2 of 53.3% (adjusted R2 = 53.1%) in explaining the mediator and 64.5% (adjusted R2 = 64.4%) in explaining organizational commitment. The Tenenhaus GoF is large (0.739), showing a good fit. No Simpson Paradox, statistical suppression, or bivariate causal direction have been identified.

The results show that the employees' perceptions of how merit is recognized, promotion opportunities, fairness of assessment, quality of team relationships, the support received from the hierarchical superiors, the amount of workload, the trust that the hierarchical superior has in the employee, the understanding of the employee's role, are all in a direct relationship with job satisfaction and with the degree of organizational commitment.

The coefficients of the estimated model

Table 5

Variable	Direct effects		Indirect effect (via mediator)	Total effect
	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Organizational commitment	Organizational commitment
Job satisfaction	-	0.542*** (<0.001)	-	0.542*** (<0.001)
Recognition	0.169*** (<0.001)	0.012 (0.280)	0.092*** (<0.001)	0.103*** (<0.001)
Promotion opportunities	0.210*** (<0.001)	0.057** (0.003)	0.114*** (<0.001)	0.171*** (<0.001)
Evaluation fairness	0.149*** (<0.001)	0.050** (0.007)	0.081*** (<0.001)	0.131*** (<0.001)
Peer support	0.092*** (<0.001)	0.053** (0.005)	0.050*** (<0.001)	0.103*** (<0.001)
Supervisor support	0.041* (0.024)	0.056** (0.003)	0.022. (0.064)	0.078*** (<0.001)
Workload	0.128*** (<0.001)	0.050** (0.007)	0.069*** (<0.001)	0.119*** (<0.001)
Status-quo	0.151*** (<0.001)	0.072*** (<0.001)	0.082*** (<0.001)	0.153*** (<0.001)
Role ambiguity	0.019 (0.171)	0.067*** (<0.001)	0.011 (0.234)	0.078*** (<0.001)
Autonomy	0.037* (0.036)	0.050** (0.007)	0.020. (0.084)	0.070*** (<0.001)
Role clarity	0.047* (0.011)	0.108*** (<0.001)	0.025* (0.040)	0.133*** (<0.001)
R2/Adjusted R2	53.3%/53.1%	64.6%/64.4%	-	-
Tenehaus GoF	0.739 (large)			

\* -  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* -  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* -  $p < 0.001$

The last column in Table 5 shows that all predictors have a significant overall effect on organizational commitment, which confirms that they can be potential levers for employer intervention. Columns 2, 3, and 4 in Table 5 show how the total effect is decomposed into direct and indirect effects because of the proposed mediator – job satisfaction.

### 4.3. EFFECT SIZES

Table 6 presents the effect sizes of each predictor. The implications of the results are presented in the Discussion section.

### Direct and indirect effect size

Table 6

	Job satisfaction	Indirect effect via mediator	Organizational commitment
Job satisfaction	-		0.397
Recognition	0.105	0.049	0.006
Promotion opportunities	0.123	0.056	0.028
Evaluation fairness	0.090	0.043	0.027
Peer support	0.042	0.022	0.023
Supervisor support	0.021	0.010	0.025
Workload	0.059	0.029	0.021
Status quo	0.053	0.028	0.024
Role ambiguity	0.007	0.005	0.029
Autonomy	0.017	0.009	0.021
Role clarity	0.015	0.010	0.044

Values below 0.2 are too weak to be considered for intervention.

#### 4.4. THE MODEL BY EMPLOYEE CATEGORY

Table 7 presents the results of a multi-group analysis by employee categories, showing the direct effects of the predictors for the middle management category, TESA, and the Workers category. Although there are important differences between coefficients in some places, not all of them are significant.

#### Estimated coefficients by category

Table 7

	Middle management		Administration		Workers	
	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment
Job satisfaction		0.347		0.593		0.500
Recognition	0.081	0.042	0.171	-0.004	0.141	0.048
Promotion opportunities	0.145	0.175	0.253	0.021	0.186	0.059
Evaluation fairness	0.215	-0.011	0.198	0.104	0.120	0.015
Peer support	0.145	0.176	0.083	0.041	0.115	0.065
Supervisor support	0.065	0.144	0.003	0.060	0.076	0.037
Workload	0.022	0.007	0.114	0.001	0.145	0.096
Status quo	0.179	0.127	0.210	0.057	0.118	0.080
Role ambiguity	0.169	0.001	0.043	0.044	-0.002	0.089
Autonomy	0.160	0.140	0.023	0.072	0.069	0.037
Role clarity	0.052	0.200	0.000	0.129	0.067	0.082

Table 8 shows the comparison between pairs of professional categories. Only those boxes in the table that have one or more significant stars or at least marginally significant differences ( $p < 0.1$ ) will be further discussed.

**Differences between paired coefficients across categories**

*Table 8*

	Middle management compared with Administration		Middle management compared with Workers		Administration compared with Workers	
	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment
Job satisfaction	-	***	-	*	-	*
Recognition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Promotion opportunities	-	*	-	Marginally significant	Marginally significant	-
Evaluation fairness	-	Marginally significant	-		*	*
Peer support	-	Marginally significant	-	Marginally significant	-	-
Supervisor support	-	-	-	Marginally significant	Marginally significant	-
Workload	-	-	-	-	-	*
Status quo	-	-	-	-	*	-
Role ambiguity	Marginally significant	-	-	-	-	-
Autonomy	Marginally significant	-	-	-	-	-
Role clarity	-	-	-	Marginally significant	Marginally significant	-

\*\*\* -  $p < 0.001$ ; \* -  $p < 0.05$ ; Marginally significant –  $p < 0.1$

**Middle management versus Staff Support group.**

The first difference concerns how the degree of satisfaction contributes to the promotion of OC: Table 8 illustrates that for the staff support category, the contribution of job satisfaction is much more important (coefficient 0.593) than the contribution of the same variable in the middle management category. (0.347). There are other differences in terms of promotion opportunities, which are much more important in increasing OC in the case of middle management (coefficient 0.175) than in the case of staff support (coefficient 0.021). This

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result likely reflects the nature of the job and the job advancement opportunities specific to the two categories. Other differences included in Table 8 are only marginally significant.

#### **Middle management versus Workers.**

The only statistically significant difference between these two categories concerns the contribution of JS to OC. In the case of workers, this value is higher (coefficient 0.500) than in the case of middle management (0.347), suggesting that job satisfaction is a reason that weighs more for workers than for the middle management category. What is interesting and particular about this comparison of categories is that there is no significant difference between the predictor's contribution to the construction of satisfaction in either case. It can be seen in Table 9 that this only happens in the case of these two categories (see columns 2, 4, and 6 of Table 9). Marginally significant differences appear when there are involved promotion opportunities, the quality of teamwork, and the support of the superior towards the construction of the organizational commitment. All this seems to matter more for the middle management category, the coefficients by categories being 0.175 (middle management) compared to 0.021 (workers) for the promotion possibilities, 0.176 (middle management) compared to 0.041 (workers) for the quality of relationships with colleagues; 0.144 (middle management) compared to 0.060 (workers) for the quality of the relationship with the hierarchical superior. These results and the differences between the coefficients suggest that these two categories most likely show differently articulated needs and are guided by different benchmarks.

#### **Staff support versus Workers.**

This last pair also brings the most significant differences. We start with the contribution of JS to OC: the coefficients in Table 8 tell us that in the case of the staff support group, it is more important (0.593) than in the case of workers (0.500). The fairness of evaluation is also received differently in terms of impact on JS and OC, which is much more important for the staff support category. The perception of the given workload determines the organizational commitment differently, this time being a variable with a greater contribution for workers. Finally, the attitude towards the possibility of leaving the company has a greater contribution in the case of staff support, in terms of job satisfaction, than in the case of workers. For both professional categories, the further away from the employee the prospect of making a change, the higher the degree of satisfaction. This relationship is stronger for staff support (coefficient 0.210) compared to workers (coefficient 0.118).

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## 5. DISCUSSION

Our research examines the structural determinants of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among the employees of a large gas-oriented public Romanian company. We rely on a cross-cultural validated theoretical background (Vandenberghe et al. 2001), and we contribute to the literature that expands the applicability of the model previously used in Western countries (such as Belgium (Lee et al. 2001), France (Burakova, McDowall, and Bianvet 2022), or USA (Redditt, Gregory, and Ro 2019), to name only a few) to other cultural contexts (such as India (Moideenkutty et al. 2001), Greece (Xenikou 2014) or China (Cheng and Stockdale 2003).

The importance of our contribution is both theoretical and practical. From a theoretical perspective, we expand previous research that applied the conceptual framework mainly to private companies and apply it to a different type of organization – a large Romanian state-owned company. As such, we align with previous contributions on how job satisfaction and organizational commitment are formed in public companies (Addae, Praveen Parboteeah, and Velinor 2008; Redditt, Gregory, and Ro 2019). Namely, we confirm almost all our hypotheses testing classical determinants (H1, H2, and H3), the exception being H1b, which is partially rejected. That is, a low sense of role ambiguity has a positive influence only on OC but not on JS.

We further delve into the specific flavor of a post-communist context such as the Romanian one by investigating the importance of maintaining the status quo as a coping strategy within an uncertain environment. Thus, H4 is confirmed: employees with higher scores on the status quo have higher levels of OC and JS. It remains an open question to what extent the relationship between these variables is dictated by a decision of the employees to stay in the company and consequently to do everything to improve their careers, or if high scores on this variable are the result of the fact that the employees are already satisfied and organizationally involved, therefore they see no reason to go elsewhere.

The aggregated mediation hypothesis, H5, is also largely confirmed, the exception being role ambiguity (e.g., JS is not a mediator between role ambiguity and OC). Marginal significance has been obtained for autonomy and for supervisor support. At the other end, a complete mediation relationship appears between the way the merits of an employee are recognized in the organization and OC. Recognition is directly associated with both outcome variables, JS and OC. Nevertheless, if we check what happens after considering JS as the mediator, we observe that the direct effect of recognition on OC remains statistically insignificant. In other words, job satisfaction completely mediates the relationship between recognition and OC, the only relationship in



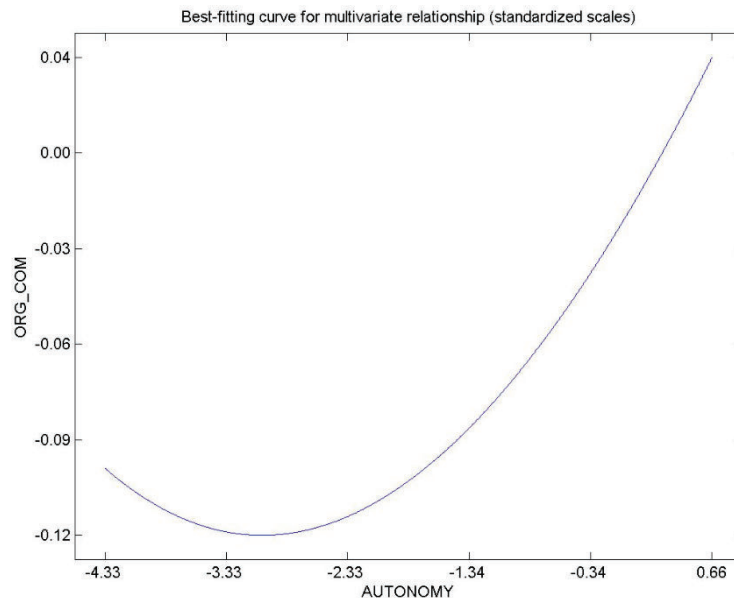
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this model that is completely mediated. Alternatively, the mechanism (unique, according to our results) by which the recognition of merits leads to OC is increasing the degree of JS.

The existence of nonlinearities further provides an in-depth perspective on the analyzed relationships. For instance, H1d is fully confirmed: an employee's perceived autonomy is statistically significant as a predictor of satisfaction and organizational commitment. This result aligns with the idea that psychological contracts are suitable to enhance employees' commitment (Gadomska-Lila and Rogozińska-Pawelczyk 2021). At the same time, Figure 2 shows that the indirect effect of autonomy via the mediator is only marginally significant. Thus, prioritizing interventions does not stand in the frontline (at least not for our case study). More so, it has to be carefully treated because if the perceived level of autonomy is not high enough, adverse effects may appear, namely, OC tends to decrease.

### The relation between the level of autonomy and organizational commitment

Figure 2



The graph also shows that only from one point onwards, this relation is direct, and it can be assimilated into a linear relation. This result again raises the question of the order of determinants, namely: for a superior to have a high

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degree of trust in an employee, the latter must have demonstrated involvement and commitment, so it is necessary to consider whether trust can be used as means of increasing the satisfaction of the employees.

From a practical, managerial perspective, and unlike other contributions in the extant literature, we identify personalized actionable determinants by researching three different employee categories: top and middle management, staff support, and workers. Indeed, H6 is confirmed, with the most salient differences in perception being found between support staff and workers. This suggests rejecting the “one size fits all” approach and replacing it with tailored strategies for homogenous groups of employees (in terms of responsibilities, income, etc.).

In terms of implementable options, the values of direct and indirect effects are recorded in Table 6. It can be observed that the highest number in the set of values is the one concerning the relationship between JS and OC. This result shows that, indeed, of all the means of increasing OC, focusing on job satisfaction is the most effective method, at least within the limits of the variables we have considered in this model. With some reasonable effect size, the perception of the recognition of merit, the possibilities for promotion, and the correctness of the evaluation are high-impact predictors. Also, with smaller effect sizes, we find peer and supervisor support, perceived workload, and the ‘employees’ status quo tendency as potential triggers. Finally, there are three predictors that do not seem appropriate at all to intervene in order to increase JS: they are related to role ambiguity, perceived autonomy, and role clarity. The small values of the effect size show that, although these variables are statistically significant predictors, investing in domestic policies that would improve the parameters they capture would not considerably impact satisfaction to be worth the effort.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The public sector and the energy industry have been amid consistent debates and attention for the last few years (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, various market shifts due to the war in Ukraine, etc.). This global context has increased competitive pressures on organizational performance, translating similar concerns at the level of employees. Thus, investigating the drivers of job satisfaction and organizational commitment stands as a rational response to the need to develop better human resource policies. Our research aimed to illuminate the dynamics of various structural determinants in generating direct and indirect effects in the organizational climate of a state-owned company. We enrich the extant literature by confirming the role of traditional factors related

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to the organization, the job, and the individual, and we further explore a locally justified variable: the tendency to favor the status quo. Moreover, we highlight the importance of paying attention to the organizational positional and cultural differences for distinct employee categories, and we suggest how to prioritize organizational interventions based on the effect sizes of the predictors and not only by considering the mere hints of statistical significance.

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