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Workplace Autonomy and Affective Commitment: Psychological Mechanisms Linking Job Satisfaction and Organizational Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

The present research explores the relationship between workplace autonomy and employees' emotional commitment within Romanian organizations, highlighting the role of job satisfaction as a mediating factor. In the Romanian socio-cultural context, where collectivist tendencies often prioritize compliance and collaboration over individual decision-making, autonomy at work has been less frequently studied. This study aimed to investigate whether granting employees greater freedom in task execution and decision-making strengthens their emotional attachment to the organization.

A quantitative correlational design was employed, with a sample of 215 employees from public and private institutions across several Romanian cities, representing diverse professional sectors. Data were collected through validated instruments measuring workplace autonomy, emotional commitment, and job satisfaction, with strong reliability indices (Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$). Results indicated a significant positive correlation between autonomy and emotional commitment ($r = .521, p < .01$), as well as between autonomy and job satisfaction ($r = .401, p < .01$). Regression analyses demonstrated that autonomy at work is a significant predictor of emotional commitment, explaining 27.4% of its variance, while job satisfaction further enhanced this relationship, raising the explained variance to 34.1%.

The findings suggest that in Romanian organizations, workplace autonomy contributes to stronger emotional bonds between employees and their employers, reinforcing organizational loyalty and reducing turnover intentions. These results underline the importance of managerial strategies that promote independence, decision-making flexibility, and trust in employees' capacities. By fostering autonomy, Romanian organizations can enhance both psychological well-being and long-term organizational commitment.

Keywords: workplace autonomy, emotional commitment, job satisfaction, Romanian organizations, organizational psychology