

Rethinking Authoritarian Leadership: Exploring Job Satisfaction as a Pathway to Employee Retention

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Abstract

Leadership remains a pivotal determinant of organizational outcomes, influencing employee experiences, attitudes, and long-term commitment. While transformational and participative leadership styles dominate contemporary scholarship for their positive impact on motivation and innovation, authoritarian leadership persists as a widespread practice across industries and national contexts. Characterized by centralized authority, strict control, and minimal tolerance for dissent, authoritarian leadership is often critiqued for undermining autonomy and creativity. Yet, its continued presence raises important questions regarding its nuanced implications for workforce outcomes, particularly job satisfaction and employee retention. This paper addresses the paradoxical role of authoritarian leadership by exploring its impact on job satisfaction as a mediating pathway toward employee retention. Drawing from Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Locke's Value Theory of Satisfaction, and Self-Determination Theory, the study evaluates how authoritarian leadership meets—or fails to meet—employees' intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Turnover theories, including Mobley's intermediate linkages model and March and Simon's organizational equilibrium framework, are applied to examine how satisfaction operates as a predictor of retention. Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory provide additional lenses to interpret the dynamic exchanges between leaders and employees under authoritarian structures. A mixed-methods design is proposed, combining large-scale surveys with in-depth interviews, enabling triangulation of quantitative and qualitative insights. The study aims to contribute to three domains: theoretical refinement of authoritarian leadership's role in contemporary organizations, empirical evidence on job satisfaction as a mediator, and practical recommendations for retention strategies across cultural and organizational contexts. Anticipated findings suggest that authoritarian leadership generally diminishes job satisfaction and heightens turnover intentions, particularly in autonomy-driven workplaces. However, in high-risk, compliance-

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heavy, or collectivist cultural contexts, authoritarian leadership may paradoxically foster perceived security and stability, which could reinforce retention in the short term. The paper concludes that a contextualized understanding of authoritarian leadership is essential for advancing leadership theory, enhancing managerial practice, and informing HRM policies aimed at sustainable workforce retention in the 21st century.

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